

The Wandering Jew — Volume 11 eBook

The Wandering Jew — Volume 11 by Eugène Sue

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CHAPTER L.

The ruins of the abbey of st. John the Baptist.

The sun is fast sinking. In the depths of an immense piny wood, in the midst of profound solitude, rise the ruins of an abbey, once sacred to St. John the Baptist. Ivy, moss, and creeping plants, almost entirely conceal the stones, now black with age. Some broken arches, some walls pierced with ovals, still remain standing, visible on the dark background of the thick wood. Looking down upon this mass of ruins from a broken pedestal, half-covered with ivy, a mutilated, but colossal statue of stone still keeps its place. This statue is strange and awful. It represents a headless human figure. Clad in the antique toga, it holds in its hand a dish and on that dish is a head. This head is its own. It is the statue of St. John the Baptist and Martyr, put to death by wish of Herodias.



The silence around is solemn. From time to time, however, is heard the dull rustling of the enormous branches of the pine-trees, shaken by the wind. Copper-colored clouds, reddened by the setting sun, pass slowly over the forest, and are reflected in the current of a brook, which, deriving its source from a neighboring mass of rocks, flows through the ruins. The water flows, the clouds pass on, the ancient trees tremble, the breeze murmurs.

Suddenly, through the shadow thrown by the overhanging wood, which stretches far into endless depths, a human form appears. It is a woman. She advances slowly towards the ruins. She has reached them. She treads the once sacred ground. This woman is pale, her look sad, her long robe floats on the wind, her feet covered with dust. She walks with difficulty and pain. A block of stone is placed near the stream, almost at the foot of the statue of John the Baptist. Upon this stone she sinks breathless and exhausted, worn out with fatigue. And yet, for many days, many years, many centuries, she has walked on unwearied.



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For the first time, she feels an unconquerable sense of lassitude. For the first time, her feet begin to fail her. For the first time, she, who traversed, with firm and equal footsteps, the moving lava of torrid deserts, while whole caravans were buried in drifts of fiery sand—who passed, with steady and disdainful tread, over the eternal snows of Arctic regions, over icy solitudes, in which no other human being could live—who had been spared by the devouring flames of conflagrations, and by the impetuous waters of torrents—she, in brief, who for centuries had had nothing in common with humanity—for the first time suffers mortal pain.

Her feet bleed, her limbs ache with fatigue, she is devoured by burning thirst. She feels these infirmities, yet scarcely dares to believe them real. Her joy would be too immense! But now, her throat becomes dry, contracted, all on fire. She sees the stream, and throws herself on her knees, to quench her thirst in that crystal current, transparent as a mirror. What happens then? Hardly have her fevered lips touched the fresh, pure water, than, still kneeling, supported on her hands, she suddenly ceases to drink, and gazes eagerly on the limpid stream. Forgetting the thirst which devours her, she utters a loud cry—a cry of deep, earnest, religious joy, like a note of praise and infinite gratitude to heaven. In that deep mirror, she perceives that she has grown older.

In a few days, a few hours, a few minutes, perhaps in a single second, she has attained the maturity of age. She, who for more than eighteen centuries has been as a woman of twenty, carrying through successive generations the load of her imperishable youth—she has grown old, and may, perhaps, at length, hope to die. Every minute of her life may now bring her nearer to the last home! Transported by that ineffable hope, she rises, and lifts her eyes to heaven, clasping her hands in an attitude of fervent prayer. Then her eyes rest on the tall statue of stone, representing St. John. The head, which the martyr carries in his hand, seems, from beneath its half-closed granite eyelid, to cast upon the Wandering Jewess a glance of commiseration and pity. And it was she, Herodias who, in the cruel intoxication of a pagan festival, demanded the murder of the saint! And it is at the foot of the martyr's image, that, for the first time, the immortality, which weighed on her for so many centuries, seems likely to find a term!

“Oh, impenetrable mystery! oh, divine hope!” she cries. “The wrath of heaven is at length appeased. The hand of the Lord brings me to the feet of the blessed martyr, and I begin once more to feel myself a human creature. And yet it was to avenge his death, that the same heaven condemned me to eternal wanderings!

“Oh, Lord! grant that I may not be the only one forgiven. May he—the artisan, who like me, daughter of a king, wanders on for centuries—likewise hope to reach the end of that immense journey!



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“Where is he, Lord? where is he? Hast thou deprived me of the power once bestowed, to see and hear him through the vastness of intervening space? Oh, in this mighty moment, restore me that divine gift—for the more I feel these human infirmities, which I hail and bless as the end of my eternity of ills, the more my sight loses the power to traverse immensity, and my ear to catch the sound of that wanderer’s accent, from the other extremity of the globe?”

Night had fallen, dark and stormy. The wind rose in the midst of the great pine-trees. Behind their black summits, through masses of dark cloud, slowly sailed the silver disk of the moon. The invocation of the Wandering Jewess had perhaps been heard. Suddenly, her eyes closed—with hands clasped together, she remained kneeling in the heart of the ruins—motionless as a statue upon a tomb. And then she had a wondrous dream!

CHAPTER LI.

The Calvary.

This was the vision of Herodias: On the summit of a high, steep, rocky mountain, there stands a cross. The sun is sinking, even as when the Jewess herself, worn out with fatigue, entered the ruins of St. John’s Abbey. The great figure on the cross—which looks down from this Calvary, on the mountain, and on the vast, dreary plain beyond—stands out white and pale against the dark, blue clouds, which stretch across the heavens, and assume a violent tint towards the horizon. There, where the setting sun has left a long track of lurid light, almost of the hue of blood—as far as the eye can reach, no vegetation appears on the surface of the gloomy desert, covered with sand and stones, like the ancient bed of some dried-up ocean. A silence as of death broods over this desolate tract. Sometimes, gigantic black vultures, with red unfeathered necks, luminous yellow eyes, stooping from their lofty flight in the midst of these solitudes, come to make their bloody feast on the prey they have carried off from less uncultivated regions.

How, then, did this Calvary, this place of prayer, come to be erected so far from the abodes of men? This Calvary was prepared at a great cost by a repentant sinner. He had done much harm to his fellow-creatures, and, in the hope of obtaining pardon for his crimes, he had climbed this mountain on his knees, and become a hermit, and lived there till his death, at the foot of this cross, only sheltered by a roof of thatch, now long since swept away by the wind. The sun is still sinking. The sky becomes darker. The luminous lines on the horizon grow fainter and fainter, like heated bars of iron that gradually grow cool. Suddenly, on the eastern side of the Calvary, is heard the noise of some falling stones, which, loosened from the side of the mountain, roll down rebounding to its base. These stones have been loosened by the foot of a traveller, who, after traversing the plain below, has, during the last hour, been climbing the steep

ascent. He is not yet visible—but one hears the echo of his tread—slow, steady, and firm. At length, he reaches the top of the mountain, and his tall figure stands out against the stormy sky.



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The traveller is pale as the great figure on the cross. On his broad forehead a black line extends from one temple to the other. It is the cobbler of Jerusalem. The poor artisan, who hardened by misery, injustice and oppression, without pity for the suffering of the Divine Being who bore the cross, repulsed him from his dwelling, and bade him: "Go on! Go on! Go on!" And, from that day, the avenging Deity has in his turn said to the artisan of Jerusalem: "Go on! Go on! Go on!"

And he has gone on, without end or rest. Nor did the divine vengeance stop there. From time to time death has followed the steps of the wanderer, and innumerable graves have been even as mile-stones on his fatal path. And if ever he found periods of repose in the midst of his infinite grief, it was when the hand of the Lord led him into deep solitudes, like that where he now dragged his steps along. In passing over that dreary plain, or climbing to that rude Calvary, he at least heard no more the funeral knell, which always, always sounded behind him in every inhabited region.

All day long, even at this hour, plunged in the black abyss of his thoughts, following the fatal track—going whither he was guided by the invisible hand, with head bowed on his breast, and eyes fixed upon the ground, the wanderer had passed over the plain, and ascended the mountain, without once looking at the sky—without even perceiving the Calvary—without seeing the image upon the cross. He thought of the last descendants of his race. He felt, by the sinking of his heart, that great perils continued to threaten him. And in the bitterness of a despair, wild and deep as the ocean, the cobbler of Jerusalem seated himself at the foot of the cross. At this moment a farewell ray of the setting sun, piercing the dark mass of clouds, threw a refection upon the Calvary, vivid as a conflagration's glare. The Jew rested his forehead upon his hand. His long hair, shaken by the evening breeze, fell over his pale face—when sweeping it back from his brow, he started with surprise—he, who had long ceased to wonder at anything. With eager glance he contemplated the long lock of hair that he held between his fingers. That hair, until now black as night, had become gray. He also, like unto Herodias, was growing older.

His progress towards old age, stopped for eighteen hundred years, had resumed its course. Like the Wandering Jewess, he might henceforth hope for the rest of the grave. Throwing himself on his knees, he stretched his hands towards heaven, to ask for the explanation of the mystery which filled him with hope. Then, for the first time, his eyes rested on the Crucified One, looking down upon the Calvary, even as the Wandering Jewess had fixed her gaze on the granite eyelids of the Blessed Martyr.

The Saviour, his head bowed under the weight of his crown of thorns, seemed from the cross to view with pity, and pardon the artisan, who for so many centuries had felt his curse—and who, kneeling, with his body thrown backward in an attitude of fear and supplication, now lifted towards the crucifix his imploring hands.



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“Oh, Messiah!” cried the Jew, “the avenging arm of heaven brings me back to the foot of this heavy cross, which thou didst bear, when, stopping at the door of my poor dwelling, thou wert repulsed with merciless harshness, and I said unto thee: ‘Go on! go on!’—After my long life of wanderings, I am again before this cross, and my hair begins to whiten. Oh Lord! in thy divine mercy, hast thou at length pardoned me? Have I reached the term of my endless march? Will thy celestial clemency grant me at length the repose of the sepulchre, which, until now, alas! has ever fled before me?—Oh! if thy mercy should descend upon me, let it fall likewise upon that woman, whose woes are equal to mine own! Protect also the last descendants of my race! What will be their fate? Already, Lord, one of them—the only one that misfortune had perverted—has perished from the face of the earth. Is it for this that my hair grows gray? Will my crime only be expiated when there no longer remains in this world one member of our accursed race? Or does this proof of thy powerful goodness, Lord, which restores me to the condition of humanity, serve also as a sign of the pardon and happiness of my family? Will they at length triumph over the perils which beset them? Will they, accomplishing the good which their ancestor designed for his fellow creatures, merit forgiveness both for themselves and me? Or will they, inexorably condemned as the accursed scions of an accursed stock, expiate the original stain of my detested crime?

“Oh, tell me—tell me, gracious Lord! shall I be forgiven with them, or will they be punished with me?”

The twilight gave place to a dark and stormy night, yet the Jew continued to pray, kneeling at the foot of the cross.

CHAPTER LII.

The Council.

The following scene took place at Saint-Dizier House, two days after the reconciliation of Marshal Simon with his daughters. The princess is listening with the most profound attention to the words of Rodin. The reverend father, according to his habit, stands leaning against the mantelpiece, with his hands thrust into the pockets of his old brown great-coat. His thick, dirty shoes have left their mark on the ermine hearth-rug. A deep sense of satisfaction is impressed on the Jesuit’s cadaverous countenance. Princess de Saint-Dizier, dressed with that sort of modest elegance which becomes a mother of the church, keeps her eyes fixed on Rodin—for the latter has completely supplanted Father d’Aigrigny in the good graces of this pious lady. The coolness, audacity lofty intelligence, and rough and imperious character of the ex-socius have overawed this proud woman, and inspired her with a sincere admiration. Even his filthy habits and often brutal repartees have their charm for her, and she now prefers them to the exquisite politeness and perfumed elegance of the accomplished Father d’Aigrigny.



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“Yes, madame,” said Rodin, in a sanctified tone, for these people do not take off their masks even with their accomplices, “yes, madame, we have excellent news from our house at St. Herem. M. Hardy, the infidel, the freethinker, has at length entered the pale of the holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church.” Rodin pronounced these last word with a nasal twang, and the devout lady bowed her head respectfully.

“Grace has at length touched the heart of this impious man,” continued Rodin, “and so effectually that, in his ascetic enthusiasm, he has already wished to take the vows which will bind him forever to our divine Order.”

“So soon, father?” said the princess, in astonishment.

“Our statutes are opposed to this precipitation, unless in the case of a penitent in articulo mortis—on the very gasp of death—should such a person consider it necessary for his salvation to die in the habit of our Order, and leave us all his wealth for the greater glory of the Lord.”

“And is M. Hardy in so dangerous a condition, father?”

“He has a violent fever. After so many successive calamities, which have miraculously brought him into the path of salvation,” said Rodin, piously, “his frail and delicate constitution is almost broken up, morally and physically. Austerities, macerations, and the divine joys of ecstasy, will probably hasten his passage to eternal life, and in a few clays,” said the priest, shaking his head with a solemn air, “perhaps—”

“So soon as that, father?”

“It is almost certain. I have therefore made use of my dispensations, to receive the dear penitent, as in articulo mortis, a member of our divine Company, to which, in the usual course, he has made over all his possessions, present and to come—so that now he can devote himself entirely to the care of his soul, which will be one victim more rescued from the claws of Satan.”

“Oh, father!” cried the lady, in admiration; “it is a miraculous conversion. Father d’Aigrigny told me how you had to contend against the influence of Abbe Gabriel.”

“The Abbe Gabriel,” replied Rodin, “has been punished for meddling with what did not concern him. I have procured his suspension, and he has been deprived of his curacy. I hear that he now goes about the cholera hospitals to administer Christian consolation; we cannot oppose that—but this universal comforter is of the true heretical stamp.”

“He is a dangerous character, no doubt,” answered the princess, “for he has considerable influence over other men. It must have needed all your admirable and irresistible eloquence to combat the detestable counsels of this Abbe Gabriel, who had



taken it into his head to persuade M. Hardy to return to the life of the world. Really, father, you are a second St. Chrysostom.”

“Tut, tut, madame!” said Rodin, abruptly, for he was very little sensible to flattery; “keep that for others.”



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"I tell you that you're a second St. Chrysostom father," repeated the princess with enthusiasm; "like him, you deserve the name of Golden Mouth."

"Stuff, madame!" said Rodin, brutally, shrugging his shoulders; "my lips are too pale, my teeth too black, for a mouth of gold. You must be only joking."

"But, father—"

"No, madame, you will not catch old birds with chaff," replied Rodin, harshly. "I hate compliments, and I never pay them."

"Your modesty must pardon me, father," said the princess, humbly; "I could not resist the desire to express to you my admiration, for, as you almost predicted, or at least foresaw, two members of the Rennepont family, have, within the last few months, resigned all claim to the inheritance."

Rodin looked at Madame de Saint-Dizier with a softened and approving air, as he heard her thus describe the position of the two defunct claimants. For, in Rodin's view of the case, M. Hardy, in consequence of his donation and his suicidal asceticism, belonged no longer to this world.

The lady continued: "One of these men, a wretched artisan, has been led to his ruin by the exaggeration of his vices. You have brought the other into the path of salvation, by carrying out his loving and tender qualities. Honor, then to your foresight, father! for you said that you would make use of the passions to attain your end."

"Do not boast too soon," said Rodin, impatiently. "Have you forgotten your niece, and the Hindoo, and the daughters of Marshal Simon? Have they also made a Christian end, or resigned their claim to share in this inheritance?"

"No, doubtless."

"Hence, you see, madame, we should not lose time in congratulating ourselves on the past, but make ready for the future. The great day approaches. The first of June is not far off. Heaven grant we may not see the four surviving members of the family continue to live impenitent up to that period, and so take possession of this enormous property—the source of perdition in their hands—but productive of the glory of the Church in the hands of our Company!"

"True, father!"

"By the way, you were to see your lawyers on the subject of your niece?"

"I have seen them, father. However uncertain may be the chance of which I spoke, it is worth trying. I shall know to-day, I hope, if it is legally possible."



“Perhaps then,—in the new condition of life to which she would be reduced, we might find means to effect her conversion,” said Rodin, with a strange and hideous smile; “until now, since she has been so fatally brought in contact with the Oriental, the happiness of these two pagans appears bright and changeless as the diamond. Nothing bites into it, not even Faringhea’s tooth. Let us hope that the Lord will wreak justice on their vain and guilty felicity!”

This conversation was here interrupted by Father d’Aigrigny, who entered the room with an air of triumph, and exclaimed, “Victory!”



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“What do you say?” asked the princess.

“He is gone—last night,” said Father d’Aigrigny.

“Who?” said Rodin.

“Marshal Simon,” replied the abbe.

“At last!” said Rodin, unable to hide his joy.

“It was no doubt his interview with General d’Havrincourt which filled up the measure,” cried the princess, “for I know he had a long conversation with the general, who like so many others, believed the reports in circulation. All means are good against the impious!” added the princess, by way of moral.

“Have you any details?” asked Rodin.

“I have just left Robert,” said Father d’Aigrigny. “His age and description agree with the marshal’s, and the latter travels with his papers. Only one thing has greatly surprised your emissary.”

“What is that?” said Rodin.

“Until now, he had always to contend with the hesitations of the marshal, and had moreover noticed his gloomy and desponding air. Yesterday, on the contrary, he found him so bright with happiness, that he could not help asking him the cause of the alteration.”

“Well?” said Rodin and the princess together, both extremely surprised.

“The marshal answered: ‘I am indeed the happiest man in the world; for I am going joyfully to accomplish a sacred duty!’”

The three actors in this scene looked at each other in silence.

“And what can have produced this sudden change in the mind of the marshal?” said the princess, with a pensive air. “We rather reckon on sorrow and every kind of irritation to urge him to engage in this adventurous enterprise.”

“I cannot make it out,” said Rodin, reflecting; “but no matter—he is gone. We must not lose a moment, to commence operations on his daughters. Has he taken that infernal soldier with him?”



“No,” said Father d’Aigrigny; “unfortunately, he has not done so. Warned by the past, he will redouble his precautions; and a man, whom we might have used against him at a pinch, has just been taken with the contagion.”

“Who is that?” asked the princess.

“Morok. I could count upon him anywhere and for anything. He is lost to us; for, should he recover from the cholera, I fear he will fall a victim to a horrible and incurable disease.”

“How so?”

“A few days ago, he was bitten by one of the mastiffs of his menagerie, and, the next day, the dog showed symptoms of hydrophobia.”

“Ah! it is dreadful,” cried the princess; “and where is this unfortunate man?”

“He has been taken to one of the temporary hospitals established in Paris, for at present he has only been attacked with cholera. It is doubly unfortunate, I repeat, for he was a devoted, determined fellow, ready for anything. Now this soldier, who has the care of the orphans, will be very difficult to get at, and yet only through him can we hope to reach Marshal Simon’s daughters.”



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“That is clear,” said Rodin, thoughtfully.

“Particularly since the anonymous letters have again awakened his suspicions,” added Father d’Aigrigny “and—”

“Talking of the anonymous letters,” said Rodin suddenly, interrupting Father d’Aigrigny, “there is a fact that you ought to know; I will tell you why.”

“What is it?”

“Besides the letters that you know of, Marshal Simon has received a number of others unknown to you, in which, by every possible means, it is tried to exasperate his irritation against yourself—for they remind him of all the reasons he has to hate you, and mock at him, because your sacred character shelters you from his vengeance.”

Father d’Aigrigny looked at Rodin with amazement, colored in spite of himself, and said to him: “But for what purpose has your reverence acted in this manner?”

“First of all, to clear myself of suspicion with regard to the letters; then, to excite the rage of the marshal to madness, by incessantly reminding him of the just grounds he has to hate you, and of the impossibility of being avenged upon you. This, joined to the other emotions of sorrow and anger, which ferment in the savage bosom of this man of bloodshed, tended to urge him on to the rash enterprise, which is the consequence and the punishment of his idolatry for a miserable usurper.”

“That may be,” said Father d’Aigrigny, with an air of constraint: “but I will observe to your reverence, that it was, perhaps, rather dangerous thus to excite Marshal Simon against me.”

“Why?” asked Rodin, as he fixed a piercing look upon Father d’Aigrigny.

“Because the marshal, excited beyond all bounds, and remembering only our mutual hate, might seek me out—”

“Well! and what then?”

“Well! he might forget that I am a priest—”

“Oh, you are afraid are you?” said Rodin, disdainfully, interrupting Father d’Aigrigny.

At the words: “You are afraid,” the reverend father almost started from his chair; but recovering his coolness, he answered: “Your reverence is right; yes, I should be afraid under such circumstances; I should be afraid of forgetting that I am a priest, and of remembering too well that I have been a soldier.”



“Really?” said Rodin, with sovereign contempt. “You are still no further than that stupid and savage point of honor? Your cassock has not yet extinguished the warlike fire? So that if this brawling swordsman, whose poor, weak head, empty and sonorous as a drum, is so easily turned with the stupid jargon of ‘Military honor, oaths, Napoleon II.’—if this brawling bravo, I say, were to commit some violence against you, it would require a great effort, I suppose, for you to remain calm?”

“It is useless, I think,” said Father d’Aigrigny, quite unable to control his agitation, “for your reverence to enter upon such questions.”

“As your superior,” answered Rodin, severely, “I have the right to ask. If Marshal Simon had lifted his hand against you—”



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“Sir,” cried the reverend father.

“There are no sirs here—we are only priests,” said Rodin, harshly. Father d’Aigrigny held down his head, scarcely able to repress his rage.

“I ask you,” continued Rodin, obstinately, “if Marshal Simon had struck you? Is that clear?”

“Enough! in mercy,” said Father d’Aigrigny, “enough!”

“Or, if you like it better, had Marshal Simon left the marks of his fingers on your cheek?” resumed Rodin, with the utmost pertinacity.

Father d’Aigrigny, pale as death, ground his teeth in a kind of fury at the very idea of such an insult, while Rodin, who had no doubt his object in asking the question, raised his flabby eyelids, and seemed to watch attentively the significant symptoms revealed in the agitated countenance of the ex-colonel.

At length, recovering partly his presence of mind, Father d’Aigrigny replied, in a forcedly calm tone: “If I were to be exposed to such an insult, I would pray heaven to give me resignation and humility.”

“And no doubt heaven would hear your prayers,” said Rodin, coldly, satisfied with the trial to which he had just put him. “Besides, you are now warned, and it is not very probable,” added he, with a grim smile, “that Marshal Simon will ever return to test your humility. But if he were to return,” said Rodin, fixing on the reverend father a long and piercing look, “you would know how to show this brutal swordsman, in spite of all his violence, what resignation and humility there is in a Christian soul!”

Two humble knocks at the door here interrupted the conversation for a moment. A footman entered, bearing a large sealed packet on a salver, which he presented to the princess. After this, he withdrew. Princess de Saint-Dizier, having by a look asked Rodin’s permission to open the letter, began to read it—and a cruel satisfaction was soon visible on her face.

“There is hope,” cried she addressing herself to Rodin: “the demand is rigorously legal, and the consequence may be such as we desire. In a word, my niece may, any day, be exposed to complete destitution. She, who is so extravagant! what a change in her life!”

“We shall then no doubt have some hold on that untamable character,” said Rodin with a meditative air; “for, till now, all has failed in that direction, and one would suppose some kinds of happiness are invulnerable,” added the Jesuit, gnawing his flat and dirty nails.



“But, to obtain the result we desire, we must exasperate my niece’s pride. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary, that I should see and talk to her,” said the Princess de Saint-Dizier, reflecting.

“Mdlle. de Cardoville will refuse this interview,” said Father d’Aigrigny.

“Perhaps,” replied the princess. “But she is so happy that her audacity must be at its height. Yes, yes—I know her—and I will write in such a manner, that she will come.”



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“You think so?” asked Rodin, with a doubtful air.

“Do not fear it, father,” answered the lady, “she will come. And her pride once brought into play, we may hope a good deal from it.”

“We must then act, lady,” resumed Rodin; “yes, act promptly. The moment approaches. Hate and suspicion are awake. There is not a moment to lose.”

“As for hate,” replied the princess, “Mdlle. de Cardoville must have seen to what her lawsuit would lead, about what she called her illegal detention in a lunatic asylum, and that of the two young ladies in St. Mary’s Convent. Thank heaven, we have friends everywhere! I know from good authority, that the case will break down from want of evidence, in spite of the animosity of certain parliamentary magistrates, who shall be well remembered.”

“Under these circumstances,” replied Rodin, “the departure of the marshal gives us every latitude. We must act immediately on his daughters.”

“But how?” said the princess.

“We must see them,” resumed Rodin, “talk with them, study them. Then we shall act in consequence.”

“But the soldier will not leave them a second,” said Father d’Aigrigny.

“Then,” replied Rodin, “we must talk to them in presence of the soldier, and get him on our side.”

“That hope is idle,” cried Father d’Aigrigny. “You do not know the military honor of his character. You do not know this man.”

“Don’t I know him?” said Rodin, shrugging his shoulders. “Did not Mdlle. de Cardoville present me to him as her liberator, when I denounced you as the soul of the conspiracy? Did I not restore to him his ridiculous imperial relic—his cross of honor—when we met at Dr. Baleinier’s? Did I not bring him back the girls from the convent, and place them in the arms of their father?”

“Yes,” replied the princess; “but, since that time, my abominable niece has either guessed or discovered all. She told you so herself, father.”

“She told me, that she considered me her most mortal enemy,” said Rodin. “Be it so. But did she tell the same to the marshal? Has she ever mentioned me to him? and if she have done so, has the marshal communicated this circumstance to his soldier? It may be so; but it is by no means sure; in any case. I must ascertain the fact; if the



soldier treats me as an enemy, we shall see what is next to be done—but I will first try to be received as a friend.”

“When?” asked the princess.

“To-morrow morning,” replied Rodin.

“Good heaven, my dear father!” cried the Princess de Saint-Dizier, in alarm; “if this soldier were to treat you as an enemy—beware—”

“I always beware, madame. I have had to face worse enemies than he is,” said the Jesuit showing his black teeth; “the cholera to begin with.”

“But he may refuse to see you, and in what way will you then get at Marshal Simon’s daughters?” said Father d’Aigrigny.



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"I do not yet know," answered Rodin. "But as I intend to do it, I shall find the means."

"Father," said the princess, suddenly, on reflection, "these girls have never seen me, and I might obtain admittance to them, without sending in my name."

"That would be perfectly useless at present, madame, for I must first know what course to take with respect to them. I must see and converse with them, at any cost, and then, after I have fixed my plan, your assistance may be very useful. In any case, please to be ready to-morrow, madame, to accompany me."

"To what place, father?"

"To Marshal Simon's."

"To the marshal's?"

"Not exactly. You will get into your carriage, and I will take a hackney-coach. I will then try to obtain an interview with the girls, and, during that time, you will wait for me at a few yards from the house. If I succeed, and require your aid, I will come and fetch you; I can give you my instructions without any appearance of concert between us."

"I am content, reverend father; but, in truth, I tremble at the thought of your interview with that rough trooper."

"The Lord will watch over his servant, madame!" replied Rodin. "As for you, father," added he, addressing the Abbe d'Aigrigny, "despatch instantly to Vienna the note which is all prepared to announce the departure and speedy arrival of the marshal. Every precaution has been taken. I shall write more fully this evening."

The next morning, about eight o'clock, the Princess de Saint-Dizier, in her carriage, and Rodin, in his hackney-coach, took the direction of Marshal Simon's house.

CHAPTER LIII.

Happiness.

Marshal Simon has been absent two days. It is eight o'clock in the morning. Dagobert, walking on tip-toe with the greatest caution, so as not to make the floor creak beneath his tread, crosses the room which leads to the bedchamber of Rose and Blanche and applies his ear to the door of the apartment. With equal caution, Spoil-sport follows exactly the movements of his master. The countenance of the soldier is uneasy and full of thought. As he approaches the door, he says to himself: "I hope the dear children heard nothing of what happened in the night! It would alarm them, and it is much better that they should not know it at present. It might afflict them sadly, poor dears! and they



are so gay, so happy, since they feel sure of their father's love for them. They bore his departure so bravely! I would not for the world that they should know of this unfortunate event."

Then as he listened, the soldier resumed: "I hear nothing—and yet they are always awake so early. Can it be sorrow?"

Dagobert's reflections were here interrupted by two frank, hearty bursts of laughter, from the interior of the bedroom.

"Come! they are not so sad as I thought," said the soldier, breathing more freely. "Probably they know nothing about it."

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Soon, the laughter was again heard with redoubled force, and the soldier, delighted at this gayety, so rare on the part of “his children,” was much affected by it: the tears started to his eyes at the thought that the orphans had at length recovered the serenity natural to their age; then, passing from one emotion to the other, still listening at the door, with his body leaning forward, and his hands resting on his knees, Dagobert’s lip quivered with an expression of mute joy, and, shaking his head a little, he accompanied with his silent laughter, the increasing hilarity of the young girls. At last, as nothing is so contagious as gayety, and as the worthy soldier was in an ecstasy of joy, he finished by laughing aloud with all his might, without knowing why, and only because Rose and Blanche were laughing. Spoil-sport had never seen his master in such a transport of delight; he looked at him for a while in deep and silent astonishment, and then began to bark in a questioning way.

At this well-known sound, the laughter within suddenly ceased, and a sweet voice, still trembling with joyous emotion, exclaimed: “Is it you, Spoil-sport, that have come to wake us?” The dog understood what was said, wagged his tail, held down his ears, and, approaching close to the door, answered the appeal of his young mistress by a kind of friendly growl.

“Spoil-sport,” said Rose, hardly able to restrain her laughter, “you are very early this morning.”

“Tell us what o’clock it is, if you please, old fellow?” added Blanche.

“Young ladies, it is past eight,” said suddenly the gruff voice of Dagobert, accompanying this piece of humor with a loud laugh.

A cry of gay surprise was heard, and then Rose resumed: “Good-morning, Dagobert.”

“Good-morning, my children. You are very lazy to-day, I must tell you.”

“It is not our fault. Our dear Augustine has not yet been to call us. We are waiting for her.”

“Oh! there it is,” said Dagobert to himself, his features once more assuming an expression of anxiety. Then he returned aloud, in a tone of some embarrassment, for the worthy man was no hand at a falsehood: “My children, our companion went out this morning—very early. She is gone to the country—on business—she will not return for some days—so you had better get up by yourselves for today.”

“Our good Madame Augustine!” exclaimed Blanche, with interest. “I hope it is nothing bad that has made her leave suddenly—eh, Dagobert?”

“No, no—not at all—only business,” answered the soldier. “To see one of her relations.”



“Oh, so much the better!” said Rose. “Well, Dagobert, when we call you can come in.”

“I will come back in a quarter of an hour,” said the soldier as he withdrew; and he thought to himself: “I must lecture that fool Loony—for he is so stupid, and so fond of talking, that he will let it all out.”



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The name of the pretended simpleton will serve as a natural transition, to inform the reader of the cause of the hilarity of the sisters. They were laughing at the numberless absurdities of the idiot. The girls rose and dressed themselves, each serving as lady's-maid to the other. Rose had combed and arranged Blanche's hair; it was now Blanche's turn to do the same for her sister. Thus occupied, they formed a charming picture. Rose was seated before the dressing-table; her sister, standing behind her, was smoothing her beautiful brown hair. Happy age! so little removed from childhood, that present joy instantly obliterates the traces of past sorrow! But the sisters felt more than joy; it was happiness, deep and unalterable, for their father loved them, and their happiness was a delight, and not a pain to him. Assured of the affection of his children, he, also, thanks to them, no longer feared any grief. To those three beings, thus certain of their mutual love, what was a momentary separation? Having explained this, we shall understand the innocent gayety of the sisters, notwithstanding their father's departure, and the happy, joyous expression, which now filled with animation their charming faces, on which the late fading rose had begun once more to bloom. Their faith in the future gave to their countenances something resolute and decisive, which added a degree of piquancy to the beauty of their enchanting features.

Blanche, in smoothing her sister's hair, let fall the comb, and, as she was stooping to pick it up, Rose anticipated her, saying: "If it had been broken, we would have put it into the handle-basket."

Then the two laughed merrily at this expression, which reminded them of an admirable piece of folly on the part of Loony.

The supposed simpleton had broken the handle of a cup, and when the governess of the young ladies had reprimanded him for his carelessness, he had answered: "Never mind, madame; I have put it into the handle basket."

"The handle-basket, what is that?"

"Yes, Madame; it is where I keep all the handles I break off the things!"

"Dear me!" said Rose, drying her eyes; "how silly it is to laugh at such foolishness."

"It is droll," replied Blanche; "how can we help it?"

"All I regret is, that father cannot hear us laugh."

"He was so happy to see us gay!"

"We must write to him to-day, the story of the handle-basket."

"And that of the feather-brush, to show that, according to promise, we kept up our spirits during his absence."



“Write to him, sister? no, he is to write to us, and we are not to answer his letters.”

“True! well then, I have an idea. Let us address letters to him here, Dagobert can put them into the post, and, on his return, our father will read our correspondence.”

“That will be charming! What nonsense we will write to him, since he takes pleasure in it!”



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“And we, too, like to amuse ourselves.”

“Oh, certainly! father’s last words have given us so much courage.”

“As I listened to them, I felt quite reconciled to his going.”

“When he said to us: ‘My children, I will confide in you all I can. I go to fulfill a sacred duty, and I must be absent for some time; for though, when I was blind enough to doubt your affection, I could not make up my mind to leave you, my conscience was by no means tranquil. Grief takes such an effect on us, that I had not the strength to come to a decision, and my days were passed in painful hesitation. But now that I am certain of your tenderness, all this irresolution has ceased, and I understand how one duty is not to be sacrificed to another, and that I have to perform two duties at once, both equally sacred; and this I now do with joy, and delight, and courage!’”

“Go on, sister!” cried Blanche, rising to draw nearer to Rose. “I think I hear our father when I remember those words, which must console and support us during his absence.”

“And then our father continued: ‘Instead of grieving at my departure, you would rejoice in it, you should be proud and happy. I go to perform a good and generous act. Fancy to yourselves, that there is somewhere a poor orphan, oppressed and abandoned by all—and that the father of that orphan was once my benefactor, and that I had promised him to protect his son—and that the life of that son is now in peril—tell me, my children; would you regret that I should leave you to fly to the aid of such an orphan?’—”

“‘No, no, brave father!’ we answered: ‘we should not then be your daughters!’” continued Rose, with enthusiasm. “Count upon us! We should be indeed unhappy if we thought that our sorrow could deprive thee of thy courage. Go! and every day we will say to ourselves proudly, ‘It was to perform a great and noble duty that our father left us—we can wait calmly for his return.’”

“How that idea of duty sustains one, sister!” resumed Rose, with growing enthusiasm. “It gave our father the courage to leave us without regret, and to us the courage to bear his absence gayly!”

“And then, how calm we are now! Those mournful dreams, which seemed to portend such sad events, no longer afflict us.”

“I tell you, sister, this time we are really happy once for all.”

“And then, do you feel like me? I fancy, that I am stronger and more courageous and that I could brave every danger.”

“I should think so! We are strong enough now. Our father in the midst, you on one side, I on the other—”



“Dagobert in the vanguard, and Spoil-sport in the rear! Then the army will be complete, and let 'em come on by thousands!” added a gruff, but jovial voice, interrupting the girl, as Dagobert appeared at the half open door of the room. It was worth looking at his face, radiant with joy; for the old fellow had somewhat indiscreetly been listening to the conversation.



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“Oh! you were listening, Paul Pry!” said Rose gayly, as she entered the adjoining room with her sister, and both affectionately embraced the soldier.

“To be sure, I was listening; and I only regretted not to have ears as large as Spoil-sport’s! Brave, good girls! that’s how I like to see you—bold as brass, and saying to care and sorrow: ‘Right about face! march! go to the devil!’”

“He will want to make us swear, now,” said Rose to her sister, laughing with all her might.

“Well! now and then, it does no harm,” said the soldier; “it relieves and calms one, when if one could not swear by five hundred thousand de—”

“That’s enough!” said Rose, covering with her pretty hand the gray moustache, so as to stop Dagobert in his speech. “If Madame Augustine heard you—”

“Our poor governess! so mild and timid,” resumed Blanche. “How you would frighten her!”

“Yes,” said Dagobert, as he tried to conceal his rising embarrassment; “but she does not hear us. She is gone into the country.”

“Good, worthy woman!” replied Blanche, with interest. “She said something of you, which shows her excellent heart.”

“Certainly,” resumed Rose; “for she said to us, in speaking of you, ‘Ah, young ladies! my affection must appear very little, compared with M. Dagobert’s. But I feel that I also have the right to devote myself to you.’”

“No doubt, no doubt! she has a heart of gold,” answered Dagobert. Then he added to himself, “It’s as if they did it on purpose, to bring the conversation back to this poor woman.”

“Father made a good choice,” continued Rose. “She is the widow of an old officer, who was with him in the wars.”

“When we were out of spirits,” said Blanche, “you should have seen her uneasiness and grief, and how earnestly she set about consoling us.”

“I have seen the tears in her eyes when she looked at us,” resumed Rose. “Oh! she loves us tenderly, and we return her affection. With regard to that, Dagobert, we have a plan as soon as our father comes back.”

“Be quiet, sister!” said Blanche, laughing. “Dagobert will not keep our secret.”



“He!”

“Will you keep it for us, Dagobert?”

“I tell you what,” said the soldier, more and more embarrassed; “you had better not tell it to me.”

“What! can you keep nothing from Madame Augustine?”

“Ah, Dagobert! Dagobert!” said Blanche, gayly holding up her finger at the soldier; “I suspect you very much of paying court to our governess.”

“I pay court?” said the soldier—and the expression of his face was so rueful, as he pronounced these words, that the two sisters burst out laughing.

Their hilarity was at its height when the door opened and Loony advanced into room announcing, with a loud voice, “M. Rodin!” In fact, the Jesuit glided almost imperceptibly into the apartment, as if to take possession of the ground. Once there, he thought the game his own, and his reptile eyes sparkled with joy. It would be difficult to paint the surprise of the two sisters, and the anger of the soldier, at this unexpected visit.



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Rushing upon Loony, Dagobert seized him by the collar, and exclaimed: "Who gave you leave to introduce any one here without my permission?"

"Pardon, M. Dagobert!" said Loony, throwing himself on his knees, and clasping his hands with an air of idiotic entreaty.

"Leave the room!—and you too!" added the soldier, with a menacing gesture, as he turned towards Rodin, who had already approached the girls, with a paternal smile on his countenance.

"I am at your orders, my dear sir," said the priest, humbly; and he made a low bow, but without stirring from the spot.

"Will you go?" cried the soldier to Loony, who was still kneeling, and who, thanks to the advantages of this position, was able to utter a certain number of words before Dagobert could remove him.

"M. Dagobert," said Loony in a doleful voice, "I beg pardon for bringing up the gentleman without leave; but, alas, my head is turned, because of the misfortune that happened to Madame Augustine."

"What misfortune?" cried Rose and Blanche together, as they advanced anxiously towards Loony.

"Will you go?" thundered Dagobert, shaking the servant by the collar, to force him to rise.

"Speak—speak!" said Blanche, interposing between the soldier and his prey. "What has happened to Madame Augustine?"

"Oh," shouted Loony, in spite of the cuffs of the soldier. "Madame Augustine was attacked in the night with cholera, and taken—"

He was unable to finish. Dagobert struck him a tremendous blow with his fist, right on the jaw, and, putting forth his still formidable strength, the old horse-grenadier lifted him to his legs, and with one violent kick bestowed on the lower part of his back, sent him rolling into the ante chamber.

Then turning to Rodin, with flushed cheek and sparkling eye, Dagobert pointed to the door with an expressive gesture, and said in an angry voice: "Now, be off with you and that quickly!"

"I must pay my respects another time, my dear sir," said Rodin, as he retired towards the door, bowing to the young girls.



CHAPTER LIV.

Duty.

Rodin, retreating slowly before the fire of Dagobert's angry looks, walked backwards to the door, casting oblique but piercing glances at the orphans, who were visibly affected by the servant's intentional indiscretion. (Dagobert had ordered him not to speak before the girls of the illness of their governess, and that was quite enough to induce the simpleton to take the first opportunity of doing so.)

Rose hastily approached the soldier, and said to him: "Is it true—is it really true that poor Madame Augustine has been attacked with the cholera?"

"No—I do not know—I cannot tell," replied the soldier, hesitating; "besides, what is it to you?"

"Dagobert, you would conceal from us a calamity," said Blanche. "I remember now your embarrassment, when we spoke to you of our governess."



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“If she is ill, we ought not to abandon her. She had pity on our sorrows; we ought to pity her sufferings.”

“Come, sister; come to her room,” said Blanche, advancing towards the door, where Rodin had stopped short, and stood listening with growing attention to this unexpected scene, which seemed to give him ample food for thought.

“You will not leave this room,” said the soldier, sternly, addressing the two sisters.

“Dagobert,” replied Rose, firmly, “it is a sacred duty, and it would be cowardice not to fulfil it.”

“I tell you that you shall not leave the room,” said the soldier, stamping his foot with impatience.

“Dagobert,” replied Blanche, with as resolute an air as her sister’s, and with a kind of enthusiasm which brought the blood to her fair cheek, “our father, when he left us, give us an admirable example of devotion and duty. He would not forgive us were we to forget the lesson.”

“What,” cried Dagobert, in a rage, and advancing towards the sisters to prevent their quitting the apartment; “you think that if your governess had the cholera, I would let you go to her under the pretext of duty?—Your duty is to live, to live happy, for your father’s sake—and for mine into the bargain—so not a word more of such folly!”

“We can run no danger by going to our governess in her room,” said Rose.

“And if there were danger,” added Blanche, “we ought not to hesitate. So, Dagobert, be good! and let us pass.”

Rodin, who had listened to what precedes, with sustained attention, suddenly started, as if a thought had struck him; his eye shone brightly, and an expression of fatal joy illumined his countenance.

“Dagobert, do not refuse!” said Blanche. “You would do for us what you reproach us with wishing to do for another.”

Dagobert had as it were, till now stood in the path of the Jesuit and the twins by keeping close to the door; but, after a moments reflection, he shrugged his shoulders, stepped to one side, and said calmly: “I was an old fool. Come, young ladies; if you find Madame Augustine in the house, I will allow you to remain with her.”

Surprised at these words, the girls stood motionless and irresolute.

“If our governess is not here, where is she, then?” said Rose.



“You think, perhaps, that I am going to tell you in the excitement in which you are!”

“She is dead!” cried Rose growing pale.

“No, no—be calm,” said the soldier, hastily; “I swear to you, by your father’s honor, that she is not dead. At the first appearance of the disorder, she begged to be removed from the house, fearing the contagion for those in it.”

“Good and courageous woman!” said Rose tenderly, “And you will not allow us—”

“I will not allow you to go out, even if I have to lock you up in your room,” cried the soldier, again stamping with rage; then, remembering that the blunderhead’s indiscretion was the sole cause of this unfortunate incident, he added, with concentrated fury: “Oh! I will break my stick upon that rascal’s back.”



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So saying, he turned towards the door, where Rodin still stood, silent and attentive, dissembling with habitual impassibility the fatal hopes he had just conceived in his brain. The girls, no longer doubting the removal of their governess, and convinced that Dagobert would not tell them whither they had conveyed her, remained pensive and sad.

At sight of the priest, whom he had forgotten for the moment, the soldier's rage increased, and he said to him abruptly: "Are you still there?"

"I would merely observe to you, my dear sir," said Rodin, with that air of perfect good nature which he knew so well how to assume, "that you were standing before the door, which naturally prevented me from going out."

Well, now nothing prevents you—so file off!"

"Certainly, I will file off, if you wish it, my dear sir though I think I have some reason to be surprised at such a reception."

"It is no reception at all—so begone!"

"I had come, my dear sir to speak to you—"

"I have no time for talking."

"Upon business of great importance."

"I have no other business of importance than to remain with these children."

"Very good, my dear sir," said Rodin, pausing on the threshold. "I will not disturb you any longer; excuse my indiscretion. The bearer of excellent news from Marshal Simon, I came—"

"News from our father!" cried Rose, drawing nearer to Rodin.

"Oh, speak, speak, sir!" added Blanche.

"You have news of the marshal!" said Dagobert, glancing suspiciously at Rodin. "Pray, what is this news?"

But Rodin, without immediately answering the question, returned from the threshold into the room, and, contemplating Rose and Blanche by turns with admiration, he resumed: "What happiness for me, to be able to bring some pleasure to these dear young ladies. They are even as I left them graceful, and fair, and charming—only less sad than on the day when I fetched them from the gloomy convent in which they were kept prisoners, to restore them to the arms of their glorious father!"



“That was their place, and this is not yours,” said Dagobert, harshly, still holding the door open behind Rodin.

“Confess, at least that I was not so much out of place at Dr. Baleinier’s,” said the Jesuit, with a cunning air. “You know, for it was there that I restored to you the noble imperial cross you so much regretted—the day when that good Mdlle. de Cardoville only prevented you from strangling me by telling you that I was her liberator. Aye! it was just as I have the honor of stating, young ladies,” added Rodin, with a smile; “this brave soldier was very near strangling me, for, be it said without offense, he has, in spite of his age, a grasp of iron. Ha, ha! the Prussians and Cossacks must know that better than !”

These few words reminded Dagobert and the twins of the services which Rodin had really rendered them; and though the marshal had heard Mdlle. de Cardoville speak of Rodin as of a very dangerous man, he had forgotten, in the midst of so many anxieties, to communicate this circumstance to Dagobert. But this latter, warned by experience, felt, in spite of favorable appearances, a secret aversion for the Jesuit; so he replied abruptly: “The strength of my grasp has nothing to do with the matter.”



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"If I allude to that little innocent playfulness on your part, my dear sir," said Rodin, in his softest tone, approaching the two sisters with a wriggle which was peculiar to him; "if I allude to it, you see, it was suggested by the involuntary recollection of the little services I was happy enough to render you." Dagobert looked fixedly at Rodin, who instantly veiled his glance beneath his flabby eyelids.

"First of all," said the soldier, after a moment's silence, "a true man never speaks of the services he has rendered, and you come back three times to the subject."

"But Dagobert," whispered Rose, "if he brings news of our father?"

The soldier made a sign, as if to beg the girl to let him speak, and resumed, looking full at Rodin: "You are cunning, but I'm no raw recruit."

"I cunning?" said Rodin, with a sanctified air.

"Yes, very. You think to puzzle me with your fine phrases; but I'm not to be caught in that way. Just listen to me. Some of your band of black-gowns stole my cross; you returned it to me. Some of the same band carried off these children; you brought them back. It is also true that you denounced the renegade D'Aigrigny. But all this only proves two things: first, that you were vile enough to be the accomplice of these scoundrels; and secondly, that, having been their accomplice, you were base enough to betray them. Now, those two facts are equally bad, and I suspect you most furiously. So march off at once; your presence is not good for these children."

"But, my dear sir—"

"I will have no buts," answered Dagobert, in an angry voice. "When a man of your look does good, it is only to hide some evil; and one must be on guard."

"I understand your suspicions," said Rodin coolly, hiding his growing disappointment, for he had hoped it would have been easy to coax the soldier; but, if you reflect, what interest have I in deceiving you? And in what should the deception consist?"

"You have some interest or other in persisting to remain here, when I tell you to go away."

"I have already had the honor of informing you of the object of my visit, my dear sir."

"To bring news of Marshal Simon?"

"That is exactly the case. I am happy enough to have news of the marshal. Yes, my dear young ladies," added Rodin, as he again approached the two sisters, to recover, as it were, the ground he had lost, "I have news of your glorious father!"



“Then come to my room directly, and you can tell it to me,” replied Dagobert.

“What! you would be cruel enough to deprive these dear ladies of the pleasure—”

“By heaven, sir!” cried Dagobert, in a voice of thunder, “you will make me forget myself. I should be sorry to fling a man of your age down the stairs. Will you be gone?”

“Well, well,” said Rodin mildly, “do not be angry with a poor old man. I am really not worth the trouble. I will go with you to your room, and tell you what I have to communicate. You will repent not having let me speak before these dear young ladies; but that will be your punishment, naughty man!”



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So saying, Rodin again bowed very low, and, concealing his rage and vexation, left the room before Dagobert, who made a sign to the two sisters, and then followed, closing the door after him.

“What news of our father, Dagobert?” said Rose anxiously, when the soldier returned, after a quarter of an hours absence.

“Well, that old conjurer knows that the marshal set out in good spirits, and he seems acquainted with M. Robert. How could he be informed of all this? I cannot tell,” added the soldier, with a thoughtful air; “but it is only another reason to be on one’s guard against him.”

“But what news of our father?” asked Rose.

“One of that old rascal’s friends (I think him a rascal still) knows your father, he tells me, and met him five-and-twenty leagues from here. Knowing that this man was coming to Paris, the marshal charged him to let you know that he was in perfect health, and hoped soon to see you again.”

“Oh, what happiness!” cried Rose.

“You see, you were wrong to suspect the poor old man, Dagobert,” added Blanche. “You treated him so harshly!”

“Possibly so; but I am not sorry for it.”

“And why?”

“I have my reasons; and one of the best is that, when I saw him come in, and go sidling and creeping round about us, I felt chilled to the marrow of my bones, without knowing why. Had I seen a serpent crawling towards you, I should not have been more frightened. I knew, of course, that he could not hurt you in my presence; but I tell you, my children, in spite of the services he has no doubt rendered us, it was all I could do to refrain from throwing him out of the window. Now, this manner of proving my gratitude is not natural, and one must be on one’s guard against people who inspire us with such ideas.”

“Good Dagobert, it is your affection for us that makes you so suspicious,” said Rose, in a coaxing tone; “it proves how much you love us.”

CHAPTER LV.

THE IMPROVISED HOSPITAL



Among a great number of temporary hospitals opened at the time of the cholera in every quarter of Paris, one had been established on the ground-floor of a large house in the Rue du Mont-Blanc. The vacant apartments had been generously placed by their proprietor at the disposal of the authorities; and to this place were carried a number of persons, who, being suddenly attacked with the contagion, were considered in too dangerous a state to be removed to the principal hospitals.

Two days had elapsed since Rodin's visit to Marshal Simon's daughters. Shortly after he had been expelled, the Princess de Saint-Dizier had entered to see them, under the cloak of being a house-to-house visitor to collect funds for the cholera sufferers.

Choosing the moment when Dagobert, deceived by her lady-like demeanor, had withdrawn, she counselled the twins that it was their duty to go and see their governess, whom she stated to be in the hospital we now describe.



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It was about ten o'clock in the morning. The persons who had watched during the night by the sick people, in the hospital established in the Rue du Mont-Blanc, were about to be relieved by other voluntary assistants.

"Well, gentlemen," said one of those newly arrived, "how are we getting on? Has there been any decrease last night in the number of the sick?"

"Unfortunately, no; but the doctors think the contagion has reached its height."

Then there is some hope of seeing it decrease."

"And have any of the gentlemen, whose places we come to take, been attacked by the disease?"

"We came eleven strong last night; we are only nine now."

"That is bad. Were these two persons taken off rapidly?"

"One of the victims, a young man of twenty-five years of age, a cavalry officer on furlough, was struck as it were by lightning. In less than a quarter of an hour he was dead. Though such facts are frequent, we were speechless with horror."

"Poor young man!"

"He had a word of cordial encouragement and hope for every, one. He had so far succeeded in raising the spirits of the patients, that some of them who were less affected by the cholera than by the fear of it, were able to quit the hospital nearly well."

"What a pity! So good a young man! Well, he died gloriously; it requires as much courage as on the field of battle."

"He had only one rival in zeal and courage, and that is a Young priest, with an angelic countenance, whom they call the Abbe Gabriel. He is indefatigable; he hardly takes an hour's rest, but runs from one to the other, and offers himself to everybody. He forgets nothing. The consolation; which he offers come from the depths of his soul, and are not mere formalities in the way of his profession. No, no, I saw him weep over a poor woman, whose eyes he had closed after a dreadful agony. Oh, if all priests were like him!"

"No doubt, a good priest is most worthy of respect. But! who is the other victim of last night?"

"Oh! his death was frightful. Do not speak of it. I have still the horrible scene before my eyes."



“A sudden attack of cholera?”

“If it had only been the contagion, I should not so shudder at the remembrance.”

“What then did he die of?”

“It is a string of horrors. Three days ago, they brought here a man, who was supposed to be only attacked with cholera. You have no doubt heard speak of this personage. He is the lion-tamer, that drew all Paris to the Porte-Saint-Martin.”

“I know the man you mean. Called Morok. He performed a kind of play with a tame panther.”

“Exactly so; I was myself present at a similar scene, which a stranger, an Indian, in consequence of a wager, was said at the time, jumped upon the stage and killed the panther.”

“Well, this Morok, brought here as a cholera-patient, and indeed with all the symptoms of the contagion, soon showed signs of a still more frightful malady.”



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“And this was—”

“Hydrophobia.”

“Did he become mad?”

“Yes; he confessed, that he had been bitten a few days before by one of the mastiffs in his menagerie; unfortunately, we only learnt this circumstance after the terrible attack, which cost the life of the poor fellow we deplore.”

“How did it happen, then?”

“Morok was in a room with three other patients. Suddenly seized with a sort of furious delirium, he rose, uttering ferocious cries, and rushed raving mad into the passage. Our poor friend made an attempt to stop him. This kind of resistance increased the frenzy of Morok, who threw himself on the man that crossed his path, and, tearing him with his teeth, fell down in horrible convulsions.”

“Oh! you are right. 'Twas indeed frightful. And, notwithstanding every assistance this victim of Morok's—”

“Died during the night, in dreadful agony; for the shock had been so violent, that brain-fever almost instantly declared itself.”

“And is Morok dead?”

“I do not know. He was to be taken to another hospital, after being fast bound in the state of weakness which generally succeeds the fit. But, till he can be removed he has been confined in a room upstairs.”

“But he cannot recover.”

“I should think he must be dead by this time. The doctors did not give him twenty-four hours to live.”

The persons engaged in this conversation were standing in an ante-chamber on the ground-floor, in which usually assembled those who came to offer their voluntary aid to the sick. One door of this room communicated with the rest of the hospital, and the other with the passage that opened upon the courtyard.

“Dear me!” said one of the two speakers, looking through the window. “See what two charming girls have just got out of that elegant carriage. How much alike they are! Such a resemblance is indeed extraordinary.”



“No doubt they are twins. Poor young girls! dressed in Mourning. They have perhaps lost father or mother.”

“One would imagine they are coming this way.”

“Yes, they are coming up the steps.”

And indeed Rose and Blanche soon entered the antechamber, with a timid, anxious air, though a sort of feverish excitement was visible in their looks. One of the two men that were talking together, moved by the embarrassment of the girls, advanced toward them, and said, in a tone of attentive politeness: “Is there anything I can do for you, ladies?”

“Is not this, sir,” replied Rose, “the infirmary of the Rue du Mont Blanc?”

“Yes, miss.”

“A lady, called Madame Augustine du Tremblay, was brought here, we are told, about two days ago. Could we see her?”

“I would observe to you, miss, that there is some danger in entering the sick-wards.”

“It is a dear friend that we wish to see,” answered Rose, in a mild and firm tone, which sufficiently expressed that she was determined to brave the danger.



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"I cannot be sure, miss," resumed the other, "that the person you seek is here; but, if you will take the trouble to walk into this room on the left, you will find there the good Sister Martha; she has the care of the women's wards, and will give you all the information you can desire."

"Thank you, sir," said Blanche, with a graceful bow; and she and her sister entered together the apartment which had been pointed out to them.

"They are really charming," said the man, looking after the two sisters, who soon disappeared from his view. "It would be a great pity if—"

He was unable to finish. A frightful tumult, mingled with cries of alarm and horror, rose suddenly from the adjoining rooms. Almost instantly, two doors were thrown open, and a number of the sick, half-naked, pale, fleshless, and their features convulsed with terror, rushed into the antechamber, exclaiming: "Help! help! the madman!" It is impossible to paint the scene of despairing and furious confusion which followed this panic of so many affrighted wretches, flying to the only other door, to escape from the perils they dreaded, and there, struggling and trampling on each other to pass through the narrow entrance.

At the moment when the last of these unhappy creatures succeeded in reaching the door, dragging himself along upon his bleeding hands, for he had been thrown down and almost crushed in the confusion—Morok, the object of so much terror—Morok himself appeared. He was a horrible sight. With the exception of a rag bound about his middle, his wan form was entirely naked, and from his bare legs still hung the remnants of the cords he had just broken. His thick, yellow hair stood almost on end, his beard bristled, his savage eyes rolled full of blood in their orbits, and shone with a glassy brightness; his lips were covered with foam; from time to time, he uttered hoarse, guttural cries. The veins, visible on his iron limbs were swollen almost to bursting. He bounded like a wild beast, and stretched out before him his bony and quivering hands. At the moment Morok reached the doorway, by which those he pursued made their escape, some persons, attracted by the noise, managed to close this door from without, whilst others secured that which communicated with the sick-ward.

Morok thus found himself a prisoner. He ran to the window to force it open, and threw himself into the courtyard. But, stopping suddenly, he drew back from the glittering panes, seized with that invincible horror which all the victims of hydrophobia feel at the sight of any shining object, particularly glass. The unfortunate creatures whom he had pursued, saw him from the courtyard exhausting himself in furious efforts to open the doors that just had been closed upon him. Then, perceiving the inutility of his attempts, he uttered savage cries, and rushed furiously round the room, like a wild beast that seeks in vain to escape from its cage.



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But, suddenly, those spectators of this scene, who had approached nearest to the window, uttered a loud exclamation of fear and anguish. Morok had perceived the little door which led to the closet occupied by Sister Martha, where Rose and Blanche had entered a few minutes before. Hoping to get out by this way, Morok drew the door violently towards him, and succeeded in half opening it, notwithstanding the resistance he experienced from the inside. For an instant the affrighted crowd saw the stiffened arms of Sister Martha and the orphans, clinging to the door, and holding it back with all their might.

CHAPTER LVI.

Hydrophobia.

When the sick people, assembled in the courtyard, saw the desperate efforts of Morok to force the door of the room which contained Sister Martha and the orphans, their fright redoubled. "It is all over, Sister Martha!" cried they.

"The door will give way."

"And the closet has no other entrance."

"There are two young girls in mourning with her."

"Come! we must not leave these poor women to encounter the madman. Follow me, friends!" cried generously one of the spectators, who was still blessed with health, and he rushed towards the steps to return to the ante-chamber.

"It's too late! it's only exposing yourself in vain," cried many persons, holding him back by force.

At this moment, voices were heard, exclaiming: "Here is the Abbe Gabriel."

"He is coming downstairs. He has heard the noise."

"He is asking what is the matter."

"What will he do?"

Gabriel, occupied with a dying person in a neighboring room, had, indeed, just learned that Morok, having broken his bonds, had succeeded in escaping from the chamber in which he had been temporarily confined. Foreseeing the terrible dangers which might result from the escape of the lion-tamer, the missionary consulted only his courage, and hastened down, in the hope of preventing greater misfortunes. In obedience to his orders, an attendant followed him, bearing a brazier full of hot cinders, on which lay



several irons, at a white heat, used by the doctors for cauterizing, in desperate cases of cholera.

The angelic countenance of Gabriel was very pale; but calm intrepidity shone upon his noble brow. Hastily crossing the passage, and making his way through the crowd, he went straight to the ante-chamber door. As he approached it, one of the sick people said to him, in a lamentable voice; "Ah, sir! it is all over. Those who can see through the window say that Sister Martha is lost."

Gabriel made no answer, but grasped the key of the door. Before entering the room, however, he turned to the attendant, and said to him in a firm voice: "Are the irons of a white heat?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then wait here, and be ready. As for you, my friends," he added, turning to some of the sick, who shuddered with terror, "as soon as I enter shut the door after me. I will answer for the rest. And you; friend, only bring your irons when I call."



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And the young missionary turned the key in the lock. At this juncture, a cry of alarm, pity, and admiration rose from every lip, and the spectators drew back from the door, with an involuntary feeling of fear. Raising his eyes to heaven, as if to invoke its assistance at this terrible moment, Gabriel pushed open the door, and immediately closed it behind him. He was alone with Morok.

The lion-tamer, by a last furious effort, had almost succeeded in opening the door, to which Sister Martha and the orphans were clinging, in a fit of terror, uttering piercing cries. At the sound of Gabriel's footsteps, Morok turned round suddenly. Then, instead of continuing his attack on the closet, he sprang, with a roar and a bound, upon the new-comer.

During this time, Sister Martha and the orphans, not knowing the cause of the sudden retreat of their assailant, took advantage of the opportunity to close and bolt the door, and thus placed themselves in security from a new attack. Morok, with haggard eye, and teeth convulsively clinched, had rushed upon Gabriel, his hands extended to seize him by the throat. The missionary stood the shock valiantly. Guessing, at a glance, the intention of his adversary, he seized him by the wrists as he advanced, and, holding him back, bent him down violently with a vigorous hand. For a second, Morok and Gabriel remained mute, breathless, motionless, gazing on each other; then the missionary strove to conquer the efforts of the madman, who, with violent jerks, attempted to throw himself upon him, and to seize and tear him with his teeth.

Suddenly the lion-tamer's strength seemed to fail, his knees quivered, his livid head sank upon his shoulder, his eyes closed. The missionary, supposing that a momentary weakness had succeeded to the fit of rage, and that the wretch was about to fall, relaxed his hold in order to lend him assistance. But no sooner did he feel himself at liberty, thanks to his crafty device, than Morok flung himself furiously upon Gabriel. Surprised by this sudden attack, the latter stumbled, and at once felt himself clasped into the iron arms of the madman. Yet, with redoubled strength and energy, struggling breast to breast, foot to foot, the missionary in his turn succeeded in tripping up his adversary, and, throwing him with a vigorous effort, again seized his hands, and now held him down beneath his knee. Having thus completely mastered him, Gabriel turned his head to call for assistance, when Morok, by a desperate strain, succeeded in raising himself a little, and seized with his teeth the left arm of the missionary. At this sharp, deep, horrible bite, which penetrated to the very bone, Gabriel could not restrain a scream of anguish and horror. He strove in vain to disengage himself, for his arm was held fast, as in a vice, between the firm-set jaws of Morok.



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This frightful scene had lasted less time than it has taken in the description, when suddenly the door leading to the passage was violently opened, and several courageous men, who had learned from the patients to what danger the young priest was exposed, came rushing to his assistance, in spite of his recommendation not to enter till he should call. The attendant was amongst the number, with the brazier and the hot irons. Gabriel, as soon as he perceived him, said to him in an agitated voice: "Quick, friend! your iron. Thank God I had thought of that."

One of the men who had entered the room was luckily provided with a blanket; and the moment the missionary succeeded in wresting his arm from the clinched teeth of Morok, whom he still held down with his knee, this blanket was thrown over the madman's head, so that he could now be held and bound without danger, notwithstanding his desperate resistance. Then Gabriel rose, tore open the sleeve of his cassock, and laying bare his left arm, on which a deep bite was visible, bleeding, of a bluish color, he beckoned the attendant to draw near, seized one of the hot irons, and, with a firm and sure hand, twice applied the burning metal to the wound, with a calm heroism which struck all the spectators, with admiration. But soon so many various emotions, intrepidly sustained, were followed by a natural reaction. Large drops of sweat stood upon Gabriel's brow; his long light hair clung to his temples; he grew deadly pale, reeled, lost his senses, and was carried into the next room to receive immediate attention.

An accidental circumstance, likely enough to occur, had converted one of the Princess de Saint-Dizier's falsehoods into a truth. To induce the orphans to go to the hospital, she had told them Gabriel was there, which at the time she was far from believing. On the contrary, she would have wished to prevent a meeting, which, from the attachment of the missionary to the girls, might interfere with her projects. A little while after the terrible scene we have just related, Rose and Blanche, accompanied by Sister Martha, entered a vast room, of a strange and fatal aspect, containing a number of women who had suddenly been seized with cholera.

These immense apartments, generously supplied for the purpose of a temporary hospital, had been furnished with excessive luxury. The room now occupied by the sick women, of whom we speak, had been used for a ball-room. The white panels glittered with sumptuous gilding, and magnificent pier-glasses occupied the spaces between the windows, through which could be seen the fresh verdure of a pleasant garden, smiling beneath the influence of budding May. In the midst of all this gilded luxury, on a rich, inlaid floor of costly woods, were seen arranged in regular order four rows of beds, of every shape and kind, from the humble truckle-bed to the handsome couch in carved mahogany.



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This long room was divided into two compartments by a temporary partition, four or five feet in height. They had thus been able to manage the four rows of beds. This partition finished at some little distance from either end of the room, so as to leave an open space without beds, for the volunteer attendants, when the sick did not require their aid. At one of these extremities of the room was a lofty and magnificent marble chimney piece, ornamented with gilt bronze. On the fire beneath, various drinks were brewing for the patients. To complete the singular picture, women of every class took their turns in attending upon the sick, to whose sighs and groans they always responded with consoling words of hope and pity. Such was the place, strange and mournful, that Rose and Blanche entered together, hand in hand, a short time after Gabriel had displayed such heroic courage in the struggle against Morok. Sister Martha accompanied Marshal Simon's daughters. After speaking a few words to them in a whisper, she pointed out to them the two divisions in which the beds were arranged, and herself went to the other end of the room to give some orders.

The orphans, still under the impression of the terrible danger from which Gabriel had rescued them without their knowing it, were both excessively pale; yet their eyes were expressive of firm resolution. They had determined not only to perform what they considered an imperative duty, but to prove themselves worthy of their valiant father; they were acting too for their mother's sake, since they had been told that, dying in Siberia without receiving the sacrament, her eternal felicity might depend on the proofs they gave of Christian devotion. Need we add that the Princess de Saint-Dizier, following the advice of Rodin, had, in a second interview, skillfully brought about without the knowledge of Dagobert, taken advantage of the excitable qualities of these poor, confiding, simple, and generous souls, by a fatal exaggeration of the most noble and courageous sentiments. The orphans having asked Sister Martha if Madame Augustine du Tremblay had been brought to this asylum within the last three days, that person had answered, that she really did not know, but, if they would go through the women's wards, it would be easy for them to ascertain. For the abominable hypocrite, who, in conjunction with Rodin, had sent these two children to encounter a mortal peril, had told an impudent falsehood when she affirmed that their governess had been removed to this hospital. During their exile, and their toilsome journey with Dagobert, the sisters had been exposed to many hard trials. But never had they witnessed so sad a spectacle as that which now offered itself to their view.



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The long row of beds, on which so many poor creatures writhed in agony, some uttering deep groans, some only a dull rattle in the throat, some raving in the delirium of fever, or calling on those from whom they were about to part forever—these frightful sights and sounds, which are too much even for brave men, would inevitably, (such was the execrable design of Rodin and his accomplices) make a fatal impression on these young girls, urged by the most generous motives to undertake this perilous visit. And then—sad memory! which awoke, in all its deep and poignant bitterness, by the side of the first beds they came to—it was of this very malady, the Cholera, that their mother had died a painful death. Fancy the twins entering this vast room, of so fearful an aspect, and, already much shaken by the terror which Morok had inspired, pursuing their search in the midst of these unfortunate creatures, whose dying pangs reminded them every instant of the dying agony of their mother! For a moment, at sight of the funeral hall, Rose and Blanche had felt their resolution fail them. A black presentiment made them regret their heroic imprudence; and, moreover, since several minutes they had begun to feel an icy shudder, and painful shootings across the temples; but, attributing these symptoms to the fright occasioned by Morok, their good and valiant natures soon stifled all these fears. They exchanged glances of affection, their courage revived, and both of them—Rose on one side of the partition, and Blanche on the other—proceeded with their painful task. Gabriel, carried to the doctors' private room, had soon recovered his senses. Thanks to his courage and presence of mind, his wound, cauterized in time, could have no dangerous consequences. As soon as it was dressed he insisted on returning to the women's ward, where he had been offering pious consolations to a dying person at the moment they had come to inform him of the frightful danger caused by the escape of Morok.

A few minutes before the missionary entered the room, Rose and Blanche arrived almost together at the term of their mournful search, one from the left, the other from the right-hand row of beds, separated by the partition which divided the hall into compartments. The sisters had not yet seen each other. Their steps tottered as they advanced, and they were forced, from time to time, to lean against the beds as they passed along. Their strength was—rapidly failing them. Giddy with fear and pain, they appeared to act almost mechanically. Alas! the orphans had been seized almost at the same moment with the terrible symptoms of cholera. In consequence of that species of physiological phenomenon, of which we have already spoken—a phenomenon by no means rare in twins, which had already been displayed on one or two occasions of their sickness—their organizations seemed liable to the same sensations, the same simultaneous accidents, like two flowers on one stem, which bloom and fade together. The



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sight of so much suffering, and so many deaths, had accelerated the development of this dreadful disease. Already, on their agitated and altered countenances, they bore the mortal tokens of the contagion, as they came forth, each on her own side, from the two subdivisions of the room in which they had vainly sought their governess. Until now separated by the partition, Rose and Blanche had not yet seen each other; but, when at length their eyes met, there ensued a heart rending scene.

CHAPTER LVII.

The guardian angel.

To the charming freshness of the sisters' faces had succeeded a livid pallor. Their large blue eyes, now hollow and sunk in, appeared of enormous dimensions. Their lips, once so rosy, were now suffused with a violet hue, and a similar color was gradually displacing the transparent carmine of their cheeks and fingers. It was as if all the roses in their charming countenances were fading and turning blue before the icy blast of death.

When the orphans met, tottering and hardly able to sustain themselves, a cry of mutual horror burst from their lips. Each of them exclaimed, at sight of the fearful change in her sister's features. "Are you also ill, sister?" And then, bursting into tears, they threw themselves into each other's arms, and looked anxiously at one another.

"Good heaven, Rose! how pale you are!"

"Like you, sister."

"And do you feel a cold shudder?"

"Yes, and my sight fails me."

"My bosom is all on fire."

"Sister, we are perhaps going to die."

"Let it only be together!"

"And our poor father?"

"And Dagobert?"



“Sister, our dream has come true!” cried Rose, almost deliriously, as she threw her arms round Blanche’s neck. “Look! look! the Angel Gabriel is here to fetch us.”

Indeed, at this moment, Gabriel entered the open space at the end of the room. “Heaven! what do I see?” cried the young priest. “The daughters of Marshal Simon!”

And, rushing forward, he received the sisters in his arms, for they were no longer able to stand. Already their drooping heads, their half-closed eyes, their painful and difficult breathing, announced the approach of death. Sister Martha was close at hand. She hastened to respond to the call of Gabriel. Aided by this pious woman, he was able to lift the orphans upon a bed reserved for the doctor in attendance. For fear that the sight of this mournful agony should make too deep an impression on the other patients, Sister Martha drew a large curtain, and the sisters were thus in some sort walled off from the rest of the room. Their hands had been so tightly clasped together, during a nervous paroxysm, that it was impossible to separate them. It was in this position that the first remedies were applied—remedies incapable of conquering the violence of the disease,

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but which at least mitigated for a few moments the excessive pains they suffered, and restored some faint glimmer of perception to their obscured and troubled senses. At this moment, Gabriel was leaning over the bed with a look of inexpressible grief. With breaking heart, and face bathed in tears, he thought of the strange destiny, which thus made him a witness of the death of these girls, his relations, whom but a few months before he had rescued from the horrors of the tempest. In spite of his firmness of soul, the missionary could not help shuddering as he reflected on the fate of the orphans, the death of Jacques Rennepont, and the fearful devices by which M. Hardy, retired to the cloistered solitude of St. Herein, had become a member of the Society of Jesus almost in dying. The missionary said to himself, that already four members of the Rennepont family—his family—had been successively struck down by some dreadful fate; and he asked himself with alarm, how it was that the detestable interests of the Society of Loyola should be served by a providential fatality? The astonishment of the young missionary would have given place to the deepest horror, could he have known the part that Rodin and his accomplices had taken, both in the death of Jacques Rennepont, by exciting, through Morok, the evil propensities of the artisan, and in the approaching end of Rose and Blanche, by converting, through the Princess de Saint-Dizier, the generous inspirations of the orphans into suicidal heroism.

Roused for a moment from the painful stupor in which they had been plunged, Rose and Blanche half-opened their large eyes, already dull and faded. Then, more and more bewildered they both gazed fixedly at the angelic countenance of Gabriel.

“Sister,” said Rose, in a faint voice, “do you see the archangel—as in our dreams, in Germany?”

“Yes—three days ago—he appeared to us.”

“He is come to fetch us.”

“Alas! will our death save our poor mother from purgatory?”

“Angel! blessed angel! pray God for our mother—and for us!” Until now, stupefied with amazement and sorrow, almost suffocated with sobs, Gabriel had not been able to utter a word. But at these words of the orphans, he exclaimed: “Dear children, why doubt of your mother’s salvation? Oh! never did a purer soul ascend to its Creator. Your mother? I know from my adopted father, that her virtues and courage were the admiration of all who knew her. Oh! believe me; God has blessed her.”

“Do you hear, sister?” cried Rose, as a ray of celestial joy illumined for an instant the livid faces of the orphans. “God has blessed our mother.”



“Yes, yes,” resumed Gabriel; “banish these gloomy ideas. Take courage, poor children! You must not die. Think of your father.”

“Our father?” said Blanche, shuddering; and she continued, with a mixture of reason and wild excitement, which would have touched the soul of the most indifferent: “Alas! he will not find us on his return. Forgive us, father! we did not think to do any harm. We wished, like you, to do something generous—to help our governess.”



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“And we did not think to die so quickly, and so soon. Yesterday, we were gay and happy.”

“Oh, good angel! you will appear to our father, even as you have appeared to us. You will tell him that, in dying—the last thought of his children—was of him.”

“We came here without Dagobert’s knowing it—do not let our father scold him.”

“Blessed angel!” resumed the other sister in a still more feeble voice; “appear to Dagobert, also. Tell him, that we ask his forgiveness, for the grief our death will occasion him.”

“And let our old friend caress our poor Spoil-sport for us—our faithful guardian,” added Blanche, trying to smile.

“And then,” resumed Rose, in a voice that was growing still fainter, “promise to appear to two other persons, that have been so kind to us—good Mother Bunch—and the beautiful Lady Adrienne.”

“We forget none whom we have loved,” said Blanche, with a last effort. “Now, God grant we may go to our mother, never to leave her more!”

“You promised it good angel—you know you did—in the dream. You said to us: ‘Poor children—come from so far—you will have traversed the earth—to rest on the maternal bosom!’”

“Oh! it is dreadful—dreadful! So young—and no hope!” murmured Gabriel, as he buried his face in his hands. “Almighty Father! Thy views are impenetrable. Alas! yet why should these children die this cruel death?”

Rose heaved a deep sigh and said in an expiring tone: “Let us be buried together!—united in life, in death not divided—”

And the two turned their dying looks upon Gabriel, and stretched out towards him their supplicating hands.

“Oh, blessed martyrs to a generous devotion!” cried the missionary, raising to heaven his eyes streaming with tears. “Angelic souls! treasures of innocence and truth! ascend, ascend to heaven—since God calls you to him, and the earth is not worthy to possess you!”

“Sister! father!” were the last words that the orphans pronounced with their dying voices.

And then the twins, by a last instinctive impulse, endeavored to clasp each other, and their eyes half-opened to exchange yet another glance. They shuddered twice or thrice,



their limbs stiffened, a deep sigh struggled from their violet-colored lips. Rose and Blanche were both dead! Gabriel and Sister Martha, after closing the eyes of the orphans, knelt down to pray by the side of that funeral couch. Suddenly a great tumult was heard in the room. Rapid footsteps, mingled with imprecations, sounded close at hand, the curtain was drawn aside from this mournful scene, and Dagobert entered precipitately, pale, haggard, his dress in disorder. At sight of Gabriel and the Sister of Charity kneeling beside the corpses of his children, the soldier uttered a terrible roar, and tried to advance—but in vain—for, before Gabriel could reach him, Dagobert fell flat on the ground, and his gray head struck violently on the floor.



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It is night—a dark and stormy night. One o'clock in the morning has just sounded from the church of Montmartre. It is to the cemetery of Montmartre that is carried the coffin which, according to the last wishes of Rose and Blanche contains them both. Through the thick shadow, which rests upon that field of death, may be seen moving a pale light. It is the gravedigger. He advances with caution; a dark lantern is in his hand. A man wrapped in a cloak accompanies him. He holds down his head and weeps. It is Samuel. The old Jew—the keeper of the house in the Rue Saint-Francois. On the night of the funeral of Jacques Rennepont, the first who died of the seven heirs, and who was buried in another cemetery, Samuel had a similar mysterious interview with the gravedigger, to obtain a favor at the price of gold. A strange and awful favor! After passing down several paths, bordered with cypress trees, by the side of many tombs, the Jew and the gravedigger arrived, at a little glade, situated near the western wall of the cemetery. The night was so dark, that scarcely anything could be seen. After moving his lantern up and down, and all about, the gravedigger showed Samuel, at the foot of a tall yew-tree, with long black branches, a little mound of newly-raised earth, and said: "It is here."

"You are sure of it?"

"Yes, yes—two bodies in one coffin! it is not such a common thing."

"Alas! two in the same coffin!" said the Jew, with a deep sigh.

"Now that you know the place, what do you want more?" asked the gravedigger.

Samuel did not answer. He fell on his knees, and piously kissed the little mound. Then rising, with his cheeks bathed in tears, he approached the gravedigger, and spoke to him for some moments in a whisper—though they were alone, and in the centre of that deserted place. Then began between those two men a mysterious dialogue, which the night enveloped in shade and silence. The gravedigger, alarmed at what Samuel asked him, at first refused his request.

But the Jew, employing persuasions, entreaties, tears, and at last the seduction of the jingling gold, succeeded in conquering the scruples of the gravedigger. Though the latter trembled at the thought of what he promised, he said to Samuel in an agitated tone: "To-morrow night, then, at two o'clock."

"I shall be behind the wall," answered Samuel, pointing out the place with the aid of a lantern. "I will throw three stones into the cemetery, for a signal."

"Yes, three stones—as a signal," replied the gravedigger shuddering, and wiping the cold sweat from his forehead.

With considerable remains of vigor, notwithstanding his great age, Samuel availed himself of the broken surface of the low wall, and climbing over it, soon disappeared. The gravedigger returned home with hasty strides. From time to time, he looked fearfully behind him, as though he had been pursued by some fatal vision.



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On the evening after the funeral of Rose and Blanche, Rodin wrote two letters. The first, addressed to his mysterious correspondent at Rome, alluded to the deaths of Jacques Rennepont, and Rose and Blanche Simon, as well as to the cession of M. Hardy's property, and the donation of Gabriel—events which reduced the claimants of the inheritance to two—Mdlle. de Cardoville and Djalma. This first note written by Rodin for Rome, contained only the following words: "Five from seven leaves two. Announce this result to the Cardinal-Prince. Let him go on. I advance advance-advance!" The second note, in a feigned hand, was addressed to Marshal Simon, to be delivered by a sure messenger, contained these few lines: "If there is yet time, make haste to return. Your daughters are both dead. You shall learn who killed them."

CHAPTER LVIII.

Ruin.

It is the day after the death of Marshal Simon's daughters. Mdlle. de Cardoville is yet ignorant of the sad end of her young relatives. Her countenance is radiant with happiness, and never has she looked more beautiful; her eye has never been more brilliant, her complexion more dazzling white, her lip of a richer coral. According to her somewhat eccentric custom of dressing herself in her own house in a picturesque style, Adrienne wears to-day, though it is about three o'clock in the afternoon, a pale green watered-silk dress, with a very full skirt, the sleeves and bodice slashed with rose-colored ribbon, and adorned with white bugle-beads, of exquisite workmanship; while a slender network, also of white bugle-beads, concealing the thick plait of Adrienne's back hair, forms an oriental head-dress of charming originality, and contrasts agreeably with the long curls which fall in front almost to the swell of the bosom. To the expression of indescribable happiness which marks the features of Mdlle. de Cardoville, is added a certain resolute, cutting, satirical air, which is not habitual to her. Her charming head, and graceful, swan-like neck, are raised in an attitude of defiance; her small, rose-colored nostrils seem to dilate with ill-repressed ardor, and she waits with haughty impatience for the moment of an aggressive and ironical interview. Not far from Adrienne is Mother Bunch. She has resumed in the house the place which she at first occupied. The young sempstress is in mourning for her sister, but her countenance is expressive of a mild, calm sorrow. She looks at Mdlle. de Cardoville with surprise; for never, till now, has she seen the features of the fair patrician impressed with such a character of ironical audacity. Mdlle. de Cardoville was exempt from the slightest coquetry, in the narrow and ordinary sense of the word. Yet she now cast an inquiring look at the glass before which she was standing, and, having restored the elastic smoothness to one of her long, golden curls, by rolling it for a moment



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round her ivory finger, she carefully effaced with her hands some almost imperceptible folds, which had formed themselves in the thick material of her elegant corsage. This movement, and that of turning her back to the glass, to see if her dress sat perfectly on all points, revealed, in serpentine undulations, all the charms and graces of her light and elegant figure; for, in spite of the rich fulness of her shoulders, white and firm as sculptured alabaster, Adrienne belonged to that class of privileged persons, who are able at need to make a girdle out of a garter.

Having performed, with indescribable grace, these charming evolutions of feminine coquetry, Adrienne turned towards Mother Bunch, whose surprise was still on the increase, and said to her, smiling: "My dear Magdalen, do not laugh at my question—but what would you say to a picture, that should represent me as I am now?"

"Why, lady—"

"There you are again, with your lady-ing," said Adrienne, in a tone of gentle reproach.

"Well, then, Adrienne," resumed Mother Bunch, "I think it would be a charming picture, for you are dressed, as usual with perfect taste."

"But am I not better dressed than on other days, my dear poetess? I began by telling you that I do not ask the question for my own sake," said Adrienne, gayly.

"Well, I suppose so," replied Mother Bunch, with a faint smile. "It is certainly impossible to imagine anything that would suit you better. The light green and the pale rose-color, with the soft lustre of the white ornaments, harmonize so well with your golden hair, that I cannot conceive, I tell you, a more graceful picture."

The speaker felt what she said, and she was happy to be able to express it, for we know the intense admiration of that poetic soul for all that was beautiful.

"Well!" went on Adrienne, gayly, "I am glad, my dear, that you find me better dressed than usual."

"Only," said the hunchback, hesitating.

"Only?" repeated Adrienne, looking at her with an air of interrogation.

"Why, only," continued the other, "if I have never seen you look more pretty, I have also never observed in your features the resolute and ironical expression which they had just now. It was like an air of impatient defiance."



“And so it was, my dear little Magdalen,” said Adrienne, throwing her arms round the girl’s neck with joyous tenderness. “I must kiss you, for having guessed it. You see, I expect a visit from my dear aunt.”

“The Princess de Saint-Dizier?” cried Mother Bunch, in alarm. “That wicked lady, who did you so much evil?”

“The very same. She has asked for an interview, and I shall be delighted to receive her.”

“Delighted?”

“Yes—a somewhat ironical and malicious delight, it is true,” answered Adrienne, still more gayly. “You shall judge for yourself. She regrets her gallantries, her beauty, her youth—even her size afflicts the holy woman!—and she will see me young, fair, beloved—and above all thin—yes, thin,” added Mdlle. de Cardoville, laughing merrily. “And you may imagine, my dear, how much envy and despair, the sight of a young, thin woman excites in a stout one of a certain age!”



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“My friend,” said Mother Bunch, gravely, “you speak in jest. And yet, I know not why, the coming of this princess alarms me.”

“Dear, gentle soul, be satisfied!” answered Adrienne, affectionately. “I do not fear this woman—I no longer have any fear of her—and to prove it to her confusion, I will treat her—a monster of hypocrisy and wickedness, who comes here, no doubt, on some abominable design—I will treat her as an inoffensive, ridiculous fat woman!” And Adrienne again laughed.

A servant here entered the room, and interrupted the mirth of Adrienne, by saying: “The Princess de Saint-Dizier wishes to know if you can receive her?”

“Certainly,” said Mdlle. de Cardoville; and the servant retired. Mother Bunch was about to rise and quit the room; but Adrienne held her back, and said to her, taking her hand with an air of serious tenderness: “Stay, my dear friend, I entreat you.”

“Do you wish it?”

“Yes; I wish—still in revenge, you know,” said Adrienne, with a smile, “to prove to her highness of Saint-Dizier, that I have an affectionate friend—that I have, in fact, every happiness.”

“But, Adrienne,” replied the other, timidly, “consider—”

“Silence! here is the princess. Remain! I ask it as a favor. The instinct of your heart will discover any snare she may have laid. Did not your affection warn me of the plots of Rodin?”

Mother Bunch could not refuse such a request. She remained, but was about to draw back from the fireplace. Adrienne, however, took her by the hand, and made her resume her seat in the arm-chair, saying: “My dear Magdalen, keep your place. You owe nothing to the lady. With me it is different; she comes to my house.”

Hardly had Adrienne uttered these words, than the princess entered with head erect, and haughty air (we have said, she could carry herself most loftily), and advanced with a firm step. The strongest minds have their side of puerile weakness; a savage envy, excited by the elegance, wit, and beauty of Adrienne, bore a large part in the hatred of the princess for her niece; and though it was idle to think of eclipsing Adrienne, and the Princess de Saint-Dizier did not seriously mean to attempt it, she could not forbear, in preparing for the interview she had demanded, taking more pains even than usual in the arrangement of her dress. Beneath her robe of shot silk, she was laced in and tightened to excess—a pressure which considerably increased the color in her cheeks. The throng of jealous and hateful sentiments, which inspired her with regard to Adrienne, had so troubled the clearness of her ordinarily calm judgment, that, instead of



the plain and quiet style, in which, as a woman of tact and taste, she was generally attired, she now committed the folly of wearing a dress of changing hues, and a crimson hat, adorned with a magnificent bird of paradise. Hate, envy, the pride of triumph—for she thought of the skillful perfidy with which she had sent to almost certain death the daughters of Marshal Simon—and the execrable hope of succeeding in new plots, were all expressed in the countenance of the Princess de Saint-Dizier, as she entered her niece's apartment.



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Without advancing to meet her aunt, Adrienne rose politely from the sofa on which she was seated, made a half-curtsey, full of grace and dignity, and immediately resumed her former posture. Then, pointing to an arm chair near the fireplace, at one corner of which sat Mother Bunch, and she herself at the other, she said: "Pray sit down, your highness." The princess turned very red, remained standing, and cast a disdainful glance of insolent surprise at the sempstress, who, in compliance with Adrienne's wish, only bowed slightly at the entrance of the Princess de Saint-Dizier, without offering to give up her place. In acting thus, the young sempstress followed the dictates of her conscience, which told her that the real superiority did not belong to this base, hypocritical, and wicked princess, but rather to such a person as herself, the admirable and devoted friend.

"Let me beg your highness to sit down," resumed Adrienne, in a mild tone, as she pointed to the vacant chair.

"The interview I have demanded, niece," said the princess "must be a private one."

"I have no secrets, madame, from my best friend; you may speak in the presence of this young lady."

"I have long known," replied Madame de Saint-Dizier, with bitter irony, "that in all things you care little for secrecy, and that you are easy in the choice of what you call your friends. But you will permit me to act differently from you. If you have no secrets, madame, I have—and I do not choose to confide them to the first comer."

So saying, the pious lady glanced contemptuously at the sempstress. The latter, hurt at the insolent tone of the princess, answered mildly and simply:

"I do not see what can be the great difference between the first and the last comer to Mdlle. de Cardoville's."

"What! can it speak!" cried the princess, insolently.

"It can at least answer, madame," replied Mother Bunch, in her calm voice.

"I wish to see you alone, niece—is that clear?" said the princess, impatiently, to her niece.

"I beg your pardon, but I do not quite understand your highness," said Adrienne, with an air of surprise. "This young lady, who honors me with her friendship, is willing to be present at this interview, which you have asked for—I say she has consented to be present, for it needs, I confess, the kindest condescension in her to resign herself, from affection for me, to hear all the graceful, obliging, and charming things which you have no doubt come hither to communicate."



“Madame—” began the princess, angrily.

“Permit me to interrupt your highness,” returned Adrienne, in a tone of perfect amenity, as if she were addressing the most flattering compliments to her visitor. “To put you quite at your ease with the lady here, I will begin by informing you that she is quite aware of all the holy perfidies, pious wrongs, and devout infamies, of which you nearly made me the victim. She knows that you are a mother of the Church, such as one sees but few of in these days. May I hope, therefore, that your highness will dispense with this delicate and interesting reserve?”



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“Really,” said the princess, with a sort of incensed amazement, “I scarcely know if I wake or sleep.”

“Dear me!” said Adrienne, in apparent alarm; “this doubt as to the state of your faculties is very shocking, madame. I see that the blood flies to your head, for your face sufficiently shows it; you seem oppressed, confined, uncomfortable—perhaps (we women may say so between ourselves), perhaps you are laced a little too tightly, madame?”

These words, pronounced by Adrienne with an air of warm interest and perfect simplicity, almost choked the princess with rage. She became crimson, seated herself abruptly, and exclaimed: “Be it so, madame! I prefer this reception to any other. It puts me at my ease, as you say.”

“Does it indeed, madame?” said Adrienne, with a smile. “You may now at least speak frankly all that you feel, which must for you have the charm of novelty! Confess that you are obliged to me for enabling you, even for a moment, to lay aside that mask of piety, amiability, and goodness, which must be so troublesome to you.”

As she listened to the sarcasms of Adrienne (an innocent and excusable revenge, if we consider all the wrongs she had suffered), Mother Bunch felt her heart sink within her; for she dreaded the malignity of the princess, who replied, with the utmost calmness: “A thousand thanks, madame, for your excellent intentions and sentiments. I appreciate them as I ought, and I hope in a short time to prove it to you.”

“Well, madame,” said Adrienne, playfully, “let us have it all at once. I am full of impatient curiosity.”

“And yet,” said the princess, feigning in her turn a bitter and ironical delight, “you are far from having the least notion of what I am about to announce to you.”

“Indeed! I fear that your highness’s candor and modesty deceive you,” replied Adrienne, with the same mocking affability; “for there are very few things on your part that can surprise me, madame. You must be aware that from your highness, I am prepared for anything.”

“Perhaps, madame,” said the princess, laying great stress on her words, “if, for instance, I were to tell you that within twenty-four hours—suppose between this and tomorrow-thou will be reduced to poverty—”

This was so unexpected, that Mdlle. de Cardoville started in spite of herself, and Mother Bunch shuddered.

“Ah, madame!” said the princess, with triumphant joy and cruel mildness, as she watched the growing surprise of her niece, “confess that I have astonished you a little.



You were right in giving to our interview the turn it has taken. I should have needed all sorts of circumlocution to say to you, 'Niece, to-morrow you will be as poor as you are rich to day.' But now I can tell you the fact quite plainly and simply."

Recovering from her first amazement, Adrienne replied, with a calm smile, which checked the joy of the princess: "Well, I confess frankly, madame, that you have surprised me; I expected from you one of those black pieces of malignity, one of those well-laid plots, in which you are known to excel, and I did not think you would make all this fuss about such a trifle."



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“To be ruined—completely ruined,” cried the princess, “and that by to morrow—you that have been so prodigal, will see your house, furniture, horses, jewels, even the ridiculous dresses of which you are so vain, all taken from you—do you call that a trifle? You, that spend with indifference thousands of louis, will be reduced to a pension inferior to the wages you gave your foot-boy—do you call that a trifle?”

To her aunt’s cruel disappointment, Adrienne, who appeared quite to have recovered her serenity was about to answer accordingly, when the door suddenly opened, and, without being announced, Prince Djalma entered the room. A proud and tender expression of delight beamed from the radiant brow of Adrienne at sight of the prince, and it is impossible to describe the look of triumphant happiness and high disdain that she cast upon the Princess de Saint-Dizier. Djalma himself had never looked more handsome, and never had more intense happiness been impressed on a human countenance. The Hindoo wore a long robe of white Cashmere, adorned with innumerable stripes of gold and purple; his turban was of the same color and material; a magnificent figured shawl was twisted about his waist. On seeing the Indian, whom she had not hoped to meet at Mdlle. de Cardoville’s, the Princess de Saint-Dizier could not at first conceal her extreme surprise. It was between these four, then, that the following scene took place.

CHAPTER LIX.

Memories.

Djalma, having never before met the Princess de Saint-Dizier at Adrienne’s, at first appeared rather astonished at her presence. The princess, keeping silence for a moment, contemplated with implacable hatred and envy those two beings, both so fair and young, so loving and happy. Suddenly she started, as if she had just remembered something of great importance, and for some seconds she remained absorbed in thought.

Adrienne and Djalma availed themselves of this interval to gaze fondly on each other, with a sort of ardent idolatry, which filled their eyes with sweet tears. Then, at a movement of the Princess de Saint-Dizier, who seemed to rouse herself from her momentary trance, Mdlle. de Cardoville said to the young prince, with a smile: “My dear cousin, I have to repair an omission (voluntary, I confess, and for good reasons), in never having before mentioned to you one of my relations, whom I have now the honor to present to you. The Princess de Saint-Dizier!”

Djalma bowed; but Mdlle. de Cardoville resumed, just as her aunt was about to make some reply: “Her Highness of Saint-Dizier came very kindly to inform me of an event which is a most fortunate one for me, and of which I will speak to you hereafter, cousin

—unless this amiable lady should wish to deprive me of the pleasure of making such a communication.”



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The unexpected arrival of the prince, and the recollections which had suddenly occurred to the princess, had no doubt greatly modified her first plans: for, instead of continuing the conversation with regard to Adrienne's threatened loss of fortune, the princess answered, with a bland smile, that covered an odious meaning: "I should be sorry, prince, to deprive my dear and amiable niece of the pleasure of announcing to you the happy news to which she alludes, and which, as a near relative, I lost no time in communicating to her. I have here some notes on this subject," added the princess, delivering a paper to Adrienne, "which I hope will prove, to her entire satisfaction, the reality of what I have announced to her."

"A thousand thanks, my dear aunt," said Adrienne, receiving the paper with perfect indifference; "these precautions and proofs are quite superfluous. You know that I always believe you on your word, when it concerns your good feeling towards myself."

Notwithstanding his ignorance of the refined perfidy and cruel politeness of civilized life, Djalma, endowed with a tact and fineness of perception common to most natures of extreme susceptibility, felt some degree of mental discomfort as he listened to this exchange of false compliments. He could not guess their full meaning, but they sounded hollow to his ear; and moreover, whether from instinct or presentiment, he had conceived a vague dislike for the Princess de Saint-Dizier. That pious lady, full of the great affair in hand, was a prey to the most violent agitation, which betrayed itself in the growing color of her cheeks, her bitter smile, and the malicious brightness of her glance. As he gazed on this woman, Djalma was unable to conquer his rising antipathy, and he remained silent and attentive, whilst his handsome countenance lost something of its former serenity. Mother Bunch also felt the influence of a painful impression. She glanced in terror at the princess, and then imploringly at Adrienne, as though she entreated the latter to put an end to an interview of which the young sempstress foresaw the fatal consequences. But, unfortunately, the Princess de Saint-Dizier was too much interested in prolonging this conversation; and Mdlle. de Cardoville, gathering new courage and confidence from the presence of the man she adored, took delight in vexing the princess with the exhibition of their happy love.

After a short silence, the Princess de Saint-Dizier observed, in a soft and insinuating tone: "Really, prince, you cannot think how pleased I was to learn by public report (for people talk of nothing else, and with good reason) of your chivalrous attachment to my dear niece; for, without knowing it, you will extricate me from a difficult position."

Djalma made no answer, but he looked at Mdlle. de Cardoville with a surprised and almost sorrowful air, as if to ask what her aunt meant to insinuate.



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The latter, not perceiving this mute interrogation, resumed as follows: "I will express myself more clearly, prince. You can understand that, being the nearest relative of this dear, obstinate girl, I am more or less responsible for her conduct in the eyes of the world; and you, prince, seem just to have arrived on purpose, from the end of the earth, to take charge of a destiny which had caused me considerable apprehension. It is charming, it is excellent; and I know not which most to admire, your courage or your good fortune." The princess threw a glance of diabolical malice at Adrienne, and awaited her answer with an air of defiance.

"Listen to our good aunt, my dear cousin," said the young lady, smiling calmly. "Since our affectionate kinswoman sees you and me united and happy, her heart is swelling with such a flood of joy, that it must run over, and the effects will be delightful. Only have a little patience, and you will behold them in their full beauty. I do not know," added Adrienne, in the most natural tone, "why, in thinking of these outpourings of our dear aunt's affection, I should remember what you told me, cousin, of a certain viper in your country which sometimes, in a powerless bite, breaks its fangs, and, absorbing its own venom, becomes the victim of the poison it distills. Come, my dear aunt, you that had so good and noble a heart, I am sure you must feel interested in the fate of those poor vipers."

The princess darted an implacable look at her niece, and replied, in an agitated voice, "I do not see the object of this selection of natural history. Do you, prince?"

Djalma made no answer; leaning with his arm on the mantelpiece, he threw dark and piercing glances upon the princess. His involuntary hatred of this woman filled his heart.

"Ah, my dear aunt!" resumed Adrienne, in a tone of self-reproach; "have I presumed too much on the goodness of your heart? Have you not even sympathy for vipers? For whom, then, have you any? After all, I can very well understand it," added Adrienne, as if to herself; "vipers are so thin. But, to lay aside these follies," she continued, gayly, as she saw the ill-repressed rage of the pious woman, "tell us at once, my dear aunt, all the tender things which the sight of our happiness inspires."

"I hope to do so, my amiable niece. First, I must congratulate this dear prince, on having come so far to take charge, in all confidence, and with his eyes shut, of you, my poor child, whom we were obliged to confine as mad, in order to give a decent color to your excesses. You remember the handsome lad, that we found in your apartment. You cannot be so faithless, as already to have forgotten his name? He was a fine, youth, and a poet—one Agricola Baudoin—and was discovered in a secret place, attached to your bed-chamber. All Paris was amused with the scandal—for you are not about to marry an unknown person, dear prince; her name has been in every mouth."

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At these unexpected and dreadful words, Adrienne, Djalma, and Mother Bunch, though under the influence of different kinds of resentment, remained for a moment mute with surprise; and the princess, judging it no longer necessary to repress her infernal joy and triumphant hatred, exclaimed, as she rose from her seat, with flushed cheek, and flashing eyes, "Yes, I defy you to contradict me. Were we not forced to confine you, on the plea of madness? And did we not find a workman (your lover) concealed in your bedroom?"

On this horrible accusation, Djalma's golden complexion, transparent as amber, became suddenly the color of lead; his eyes, fixed and staring showed the white round the pupil—his upper lip, red as blood, was curled in a kind of wild convulsion, which exposed to view the firmly-set teeth—and his whole countenance became so frightfully threatening and ferocious, that Mother Bunch shuddered with terror. Carried away by the ardor of his blood, the young Oriental felt a sort of dizzy, unreflecting, involuntary rage—a fiery commotion, like that which makes the blood leap to the brave man's eyes and brain, when he feels a blow upon his face. If, during that moment, rapid as the passage of the lightning through the cloud, action could have taken the place of thought, the princess and Adrienne, Mother Bunch and himself, would all have been annihilated by an explosion as sudden and fatal as that of the bursting of a mine. He would have killed the princess, because she accused Adrienne of infamous deception he would have killed Adrienne, because she could even be suspected of such infamy—and Mother Bunch, for being a witness of the accusation—and himself, in order not to survive such horrid treachery. But, oh wonder! his furious and bloodshot gaze met the calm look of Adrienne—a look so full of dignity and serene confidence—and the expression of ferocious rage passed away like a flash of lightning.

Much more: to the great surprise of the princess and the young workgirl, as the glances which Djalma cast upon Adrienne went (as it were) deeper into that pure soul, not only did the Indian grow calm, but, by a kind of transfiguration, his countenance seemed to borrow her serene expression, and reflect, as in a mirror, the noble serenity impressed on the young lady's features. Let us explain physically this moral revolution, as consoling to the terrified workgirl, as provoking to the princess. Hardly had the princess distilled the atrocious calumny from her venomous lips, than Djalma, then standing before the fireplace, had, in the first paroxysm of his fury, advanced a step towards her; but, wishing as it were to moderate his rage, he held by the marble chimney-piece, which he grasped with iron strength. A convulsive trembling shook his whole body, and his features, altered and contracted, became almost frightful. Adrienne, on her part, when she heard the accusation, yielding to a first impulse of just indignation, even



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as Djalma had yielded to one of blind fury, rose abruptly, with offended pride flashing from her eyes; but, almost immediately appeased by the consciousness of her own purity, her charming face resumed its expression of adorable serenity. It was then that her eyes met Djalma's. For a second, the young lady was even more afflicted than terrified at the threatening and formidable expression of the young Indian's countenance. "Can stupid indignity exasperate him to this degree?" said Adrienne to herself. "Does he suspect me; then?"

But to this reflection, as rapid as it was painful, succeeded the most lively joy, when the eyes of Adrienne rested for a short time on those of the Indian, and she saw his agitated countenance grow calm as if by magic, and become radiant and beautiful as before. Thus was the abominable plot of the princess de Saint-Dizier utterly confounded by the sincere and confiding expression of Adrienne's face. That was not all. At the moment, when, as a spectator of this mute and expressive scene (which proved so well the wondrous sympathy of those two beings, who, without speaking a word, had understood and satisfied each other), the princess was choking with rage and vexation—Adrienne, with a charming smile and gesture, extended her fair hand to Djalma, who, kneeling, imprinted on it a kiss of fire, which sent a light blush to the forehead of the young lady.

Then the Hindoo, placing himself on the ermine carpet at the feet of Mdlle. de Cardoville, in an attitude full of grace: and respect, rested his chin on the palm of one of his hands, and gazed on her silently, in a sort of mute adoration—while Adrienne, bending over him with a happy smile "looked at the babies in his eyes," as the song says, with as much amorous complacency, as if the hateful princess had not been present. But soon, as if something were wanting to complete her happiness, Adrienne beckoned to Mother Bunch, and made her sit down by her side. Then, with her hand clasped in that of this excellent friend, Mdlle. de Cardoville smiled on Djalma, stretched adoringly at her feet, and cast on the dismayed princess a look of such calm and firm serenity, so nobly expressive of the invincible quiet of her happiness, and her lofty disdain of all calumnious attacks, that the Princess de Saint-Dizier, confused and stupefied, murmured some hardly intelligible words, in a voice trembling with passion, and, completely losing her presence of mind, rushed towards the door. But, at this moment, the hunchback, who feared some ambush, some perfidious plot in the background, resolved, after exchanging a glance with Adrienne, to accompany the princess to her carriage.



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The angry disappointment of the Princess de Saint-Dizier, when she saw herself thus followed and watched, appeared so comical to Mdlle. de Cardoville that she could not help laughing aloud; and it was to the sound of contemptuous hilarity that the hypocritical princess, with rage and despair in her heart, quitted the house to which she had hoped to bring trouble and misery. Adrienne and Djalma were left alone. Before relating the scene which took place between them, a few retrospective words are indispensable. It will easily be imagined, that since Mdlle. de Cardoville and the Oriental had been brought into such close contact, after so many disappointments, their days had passed away like a dream of happiness. Adrienne had especially taken pains to bring to light, one by one, all the generous qualities of Djalma, of which she had read so much in her books of travels. The young lady had imposed on herself this tender and patient study of Djalma's character, not only to justify to her own mind the intensity of her love, but because this period of trial, to which she had assigned a term, enabled her to temper and divert the violence of Djalma's passion—a task the more meritorious, as she herself was of the same ardent temperament. For, in those two lovers, the finest qualities of sense and soul seemed exactly to balance each other, and heaven had bestowed on them the rarest beauty of form, and the most adorable excellence of heart, as if to legitimize the irresistible attraction which drew and bound them together. What, then, was to be the term of this painful trial, which Adrienne had imposed on Djalma and on herself? This is what Mdlle. de Cardoville intended to tell the prince, in the interview she had with him, after the abrupt departure of the Princess de Saint-Dizier.

CHAPTER LX.

The ordeal.

Adrienne de Cardoville and Djalma had remained alone. Such was the noble confidence which had succeeded in the Hindoo's mind to his first movement of unreflecting fury, caused by the infamous calumny, that, once alone with Adrienne, he did not even allude to that shameful accusation.

On her side (touching and admirable sympathy of those two hearts!), the young lady was too proud, conscious of the purity of her love, to descend to any justification of herself.

She would have considered it an insult both to herself and him. Therefore, the lovers began their interview, as if the princess had never made any such remark. The same contempt was extended to the papers, which the princess had brought with her to prove the imminent ruin to which Adrienne was exposed. The young lady had laid them down, without reading them, on a stand within her reach. She made a graceful sign to Djalma to seat himself by her side, and accordingly he quitted, not without regret, the place he had occupied at her feet.



“My love,” said Adrienne, in a grave and tender voice, “you have often impatiently asked me, when would come the term of the trial we have laid upon ourselves. That moment is at hand.”



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Djalma started, and could not restrain a cry of surprise and joy; but this almost trembling exclamation was so soft and sweet, that it seemed rather the expression of ineffable gratitude, than of exulting passion.

Adrienne continued: "Separated—surrounded by treachery and fraud—mutually deceived as to each other's sentiments—we yet loved on, and in that followed an irresistible attraction, stronger than every opposing influence. But since then, in these days of happy retirement from the world, we have learned to value and esteem each other more. Left to ourselves in perfect freedom, we have had the courage to resist every temptation, that hereafter we might be happy without remorse. During these days, in which our hearts had been laid open to each other, we have read them thoroughly. Yes, Djalma! I believe in you, and you in me—I find in you all that you find in me—every possible human security for our future happiness. But this love must yet be consecrated; and in the eyes of the world, in which we are called upon to live, marriage is the only consecration, and marriage enchains one's whole life."

Djalma looked at the young lady with surprise.

"Yes, one's whole life! and yet who can answer for the sentiments of a whole life?" resumed Adrienne. "A God, that could see into the future, could alone bind irrevocably certain hearts for their own happiness; but, alas! to human eyes the future is impenetrable. Therefore, to accept indissoluble ties, for any longer than one can answer for a present sentiment, is to commit an act of selfish and impious folly."

Djalma made no reply, but, with an almost respectful gesture, he urged the speaker to continue.

"And then," proceeded she, with a mixture of tenderness and pride, "from respect for your dignity and mine, I would never promise to keep a law made by man against woman, with contemptuous and brutal egotism—a law, which denies to woman soul, mind, and heart—a law, which none can accept, without being either a slave or perjured—a law, which takes from the girl her name, reduces the wife to a state of degrading inferiority, denies to the mother all rights over her own children, and enslaves one human creature to the will of another, who is in all respects her equal in the sight of God!—You know, my love," added the young lady, with passionate enthusiasm, "how much I honor you, whose father was called the Father of the Generous. I do not then fear, noble and valiant heart, to see you use against me these tyrannical powers; but, throughout my life, I never uttered a falsehood, and our love is too sacred and celestial to be purchased by a double perjury. No, never will I swear to observe a law, that my dignity, and my reason refuse to sanction. If, to-morrow, the freedom of divorce were established, and the rights of women recognized, I should be willing to observe usages, which would then be in accordance with my conscience, and with what is just, possible,



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and humane.” Then, after a pause, Adrienne continued, with such deep and sweet emotion, that a tear of tenderness veiled her beautiful eyes: “Oh! if you knew, my love, what your love is to me: if you knew how dear and sacred I hold your happiness—you would excuse, you would understand, these generous superstitions of a loving and honest heart, which could only see a fatal omen in forms degraded by falsehood and perjury. What I wish, is, to attach you by love, to bind you in chains of happiness—and to leave you free, that I may owe your constancy only to your affection.”

Djalma had listened to the young girl with passionate attention. Proud and generous himself, he admired this proud and generous character. After a moment's meditative silence, he answered, in his sweet, sonorous voice, in an almost solemn tone: “Like you, I hold in detestation, falsehood and perjury. Like you, I think that man degrades himself, by accepting the right of being a cowardly tyrant, even though resolved never to use the power. Like you, I could not bear the thought, that I owed all I most valued, not to your love alone, but to the eternal constraint of an indissoluble bond. Like you, I believe there is no dignity but in freedom. But you have said, that, for this great and holy love, you demand a religious consecration; and if you reject vows, that you cannot make without folly and perjury, are there then others, which your reason and your heart approve?—Who will pronounce the required blessing? To whom must these vows be spoken?”

“In a few days, my love, I believe I shall be able to tell you all. Every evening, after your departure, I have no other thought. I wish to find the means of uniting yourself and me—in the eyes of God, not of the law—without offending the habits and prejudices of a world, in which it may suit us hereafter to live. Yes, my friend! when you know whose are the noble hands, that are to join ours together, who is to bless and glorify God in our union—a sacred union, that will leave us worthy and free—you will say, I am sure, that never purer hands could have been laid upon us. Forgive me, friend! all this is in earnest—yes, earnest as our love, earnest as our happiness. If my words seem to you strange, my thoughts unreasonable, tell it me, love! We will seek and find some better means, to reconcile that we owe to heaven, with what we owe to the world and to ourselves. It is said, that lovers are beside themselves,” added the young lady, with a smile, “but I think that no creatures are more reasonable.”

“When I hear you speak thus of our happiness,” said Djalma, deeply moved, “with so much calm and earnest tenderness, I think I see a mother occupied with the future prospects of her darling child—trying to surround him with all that can make him strong, valiant, and generous—trying to remove far from him all that is ignoble and unworthy. You ask me to tell you if your thoughts seem strange

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to me, Adrienne. You forget, that what makes my faith in our love, is my feeling exactly as you do. What offends you, offends me also; what disgusts you, disgusts me. Just now, when you cited to me the laws of this country, which respect in a woman not even a mother's right—I thought with pride of our barbarous countries, where woman, though a slave, is made free when she becomes a mother. No, no; such laws are not made either for you or me. Is it not to prove your sacred respect for our love, to wish to raise it above the shameful servitude that would degrade it? You see, Adrienne, I have often heard said by the priests of my country, that there were beings inferior to the gods, but superior to every other creature. I did not believe those priests; but now I do." These last words were uttered, not in the tone of flattery, but with an accent of sincere conviction, and with that sort of passionate veneration and almost timid fervor, which mark the believer talking of his faith; but what is impossible to describe, is the ineffable harmony of these almost religious words, with the mild, deep tone of the young Oriental's voice—as well as the ardent expression of amorous melancholy, which gave an irresistible charm to his enchanting features.

Adrienne had listened to Djalma with an indescribable mixture of joy, gratitude, and pride. Laying her hand on her bosom, as if to keep down its violent pulsations, she resumed, as she looked at the prince with delight: "Behold him, ever the same!—just, good, great!—Oh, my heart! my heart! how proudly it beats. Blessed be God, who created me for this adored lover! He must mean to astonish the world, by the prodigies of tenderness and charity, that such a love may produce. They do not yet know the sovereign might of free, happy, ardent love. Yes, Djalma! on the day when our hands are joined together, what hymns of gratitude will ascend to heaven!—Ah! they do not know the immense, the insatiable longing for joy and delight, which possesses two hearts like ours; they do not know what rays of happiness stream from the celestial halo of such a flame!—Oh, yes! I feel it. Many tears will be dried, many cold hearts warmed, at the divine fire of our love. And it will be by the benedictions of those we serve, that they will learn the intoxication of our rapture!"

To the dazzled eyes of Djalma, Adrienne appeared more and more an ideal being—partaking of the Divinity by her goodness, of the animal nature by passion—for, yielding to the intensity of excitement, Adrienne fixed upon Djalma looks that sparkled with love.

'Then, almost beside himself, the Asiatic fell prostrate at the feet of the maiden, and exclaimed, in a supplicating voice: "Mercy! my courage fails me. Have pity on me! do not talk thus. Oh, that day! what years of my life would I not give to hasten it!"

"Silence! no blasphemy. Do not your years belong to me?"

"Adrienne! you love me!"



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The young lady did not answer; but her half-veiled, burning glance, dealt the last blow to reason. Seizing her hands in his own, he exclaimed, with a tremulous voice: "That day, in which we shall mount to heaven, in which we shall be gods in happiness—why postpone it any longer?"

"Because our love must be consecrated by the benediction of heaven."

"Are we not free?"

"Yes, yes, my love; we are free. Let us be worthy of our liberty!"

"Adrienne! mercy!"

"I ask you also to have mercy—to have mercy on the sacredness of our love. Do not profane it in its very flower. Believe my heart! believe my presentiments! to profane it would be to kill. Courage, my adored lover! a few days longer—and then happiness—without regret, and without remorse!"

"And, until then, hell! tortures without a name! You do not, cannot know what I suffer when I leave your presence. Your image follows me, your breath burns me up; I cannot sleep, but call on you every night with sighs and tears—just as I called on, you, when I thought you did not love me—and yet I know you love me, I know you are mine. But to see you every day more beautiful, more adored—and every day to quit you more impassioned—oh! you cannot tell—"

Djalma was unable to proceed. What he said of his devouring tortures, Adrienne had felt, perhaps even more intensely. Electrified by the passionate words of Djalma, so beautiful in his excitement, her courage failed, and she perceived that an irresistible languor was creeping over her. By a last chaste effort of the will, she rose abruptly, and hastening to the door, which communicated with Mother Bunch's chamber, she exclaimed: "My, sister! help me!"

In another moment, Mdlle. de Cardoville, her face bathed in tears, clasped the young sempstress in her arms; while Djalma knelt respectfully on the threshold he did not dare to pass.

CHAPTER LXI.

Ambition.

A few days after the interview of Djalma and Adrienne, just described, Rodin was alone in his bed-chamber, in the house in the Rue de Vaugirard, walking up and down the room where he had so valiantly undergone the moxas of Dr. Baleinier. With his hands thrust into the hind-pockets of his greatcoat, and his head bowed upon his breast, the



Jesuit seemed to be reflecting profoundly, and his varying walk, now slow, now quick, betrayed the agitation of his mind.

“On the side of Rome,” said Rodin to himself, “I am tranquil. All is going well. The abdication is as good as settled, and if I can pay them the price agreed, the Prince Cardinal can secure me a majority of nine voices in the conclave. Our General is with me; the doubts of Cardinal Malipieri are at an end, or have found no echo. Yet I am not quite easy, with regard to the reported correspondence between Father d’Aigrigny and Malipieri. I have not been able to intercept any of it. No matter; that soldier’s business is settled. A little patience and he will be wiped out.”



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Here the pale lips were contracted by one of those frightful smiles, which gave to Rodin's countenance so diabolical an expression.

After a pause, he resumed: "The funeral of the freethinker, the philanthropist, the workman's friend, took place yesterday at St. Herem. Francis Hardy went off in a fit of ecstatic delirium. I had his donation, it is true; but this is more certain. Everything may be disputed in this world; the dead dispute nothing."

Rodin remained in thought for some moments; then he added, in a grave tone: "There remain this red-haired wench and her mulatto. This is the twenty-seventh of May; the first of June approaches, and these turtle doves still seem invulnerable. The princess thought she had hit upon a good plan, and I should have thought so too. It was a good idea to mention the discovery of Agricola Baudoin in the madcap's room, for it made the Indian tiger roar with savage jealousy. Yes: but then the dove began to coo, and hold out her pretty beak, and the foolish tiger sheathed his claws, and rolled on the ground before her. It's a pity, for there was some sense in the scheme."

The walk of Rodin became more and more agitated. "Nothing is more extraordinary," continued he, "than the generative succession of ideas. In comparing this red-haired jade to a dove (colombe), I could not help thinking of that infamous old woman, Sainte-Colombe, whom that big rascal Jacques Dumoulin pays his court to, and whom the Abbe Corbinet will finish, I hope, by turning to good account. I have often remarked, that, as a poet may find an excellent rhyme by mere chance, so the germ of the best ideas is sometimes found in a word, or in some absurd resemblance like the present. That abominable hag, Sainte-Colombo, and the pretty Adrienne de Cardioville, go as well together, as a ring would suit a cat, or a necklace a fish. Well, there is nothing in it."

Hardly had Rodin pronounced these words, than he started suddenly, and his face shone with a fatal joy. Then it assumed an expression of meditative astonishment, as happens when chance reveals some unexpected discovery to the surprised and charmed inquirer after knowledge.

Soon, with raised head and sparkling eye, his hollow cheeks swelling with joy and pride, Rodin folded his arms in triumph on his breast, and exclaimed: "Oh! how admirable and marvellous are these mysterious evolutions of the mind; how incomprehensible is the chain of human thought, which, starting from an absurd jingle of words, arrives at a splendid or luminous idea! Is it weakness? or is it strength? Strange—very strange! I compare the red-haired girl to a dove—a colombe. That makes me think of the hag, who traded in the bodies and souls of so many creatures. Vulgar proverbs occur to me, about a ring and a cat, a fish and a necklace—and suddenly, at the word *necklace*, a new light dawns upon me. Yes: that one word *necklace* shall be to me a golden key, to open the portals of my brain, so long foolishly closed."



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And, after again walking hastily up and down, Rodin continued: "Yes, it is worth attempting. The more I reflect upon it, the more feasible it appears. Only how to get at that wretch, Saint-Colombe? Well, there is Jacques Dumoulin, and the other—where to find her? That is the stumbling-block. I must not shout before I am out of the wood."

Rodin began again to walk, biting his nails with an air of deep thought. For some moments, such was the tension of his mind, large drops of sweat stood on his yellow brow. He walked up and down, stopped, stamped with his foot, now raised his eyes as if in search of an inspiration, and now scratched his head violently with his left hand, whilst he continued to gnaw the nails of the right. Finally, from time to time, he uttered exclamations of rage, despondency, or hope, as by turns they took possession of his mind. If the cause of this monster's agitation had not been horrible, it would have been a curious and interesting spectacle to watch the labors of that powerful brain—to follow, as it were, on that shifting countenance, the progress and development of the project, on which he was now concentrating all the resources of his strong intellect. At length, the work appeared to be near completion, for Rodin resumed: "Yes, yes! it is bold, hazardous—but then it is prompt, and the consequences may be incalculable. Who can foresee the effects of the explosion of a mine?"

Then, yielding to a movement of enthusiasm, which was hardly natural to him, the Jesuit exclaimed, with rapture: "Oh, the passions! the passions! what a magical instrument do they form, if you do but touch the keys with a light, skillful, and vigorous hand! How beautiful too is the power of thought! Talk of the acorn that becomes an oak, the seed that grows up to the corn—the seed takes months, the acorn centuries, to unfold its splendors—but here is a little word in eight letters, necklace and this word, falling into my brain but a few minutes ago, has grown and grown till it has become larger than any oak. Yes, that word is the germ of an idea, that, like the oak, lifts itself up towards heaven, for the greater glory of the Lord—such as they call Him, and such as I would assert Him to be, should I attain—and I shall attain—for these miserable Renneponts will pass away like a shadow. And what matters it, after all, to the moral order I am reserved to guide, whether these people live or die? What do such lives weigh in the balance of the great destinies of the world? while this inheritance which I shall boldly fling into the scale, will lift me to a sphere, from which one commands many kings, many nations—let them say and make what noise they will. The idiots—the stupid idiots! or rather, the kind, blessed, adorable idiots! They think they have crushed us, when they say to us men of the church: 'You take the spiritual, but we will keep the temporal!'—Oh, their conscience or their modesty inspires them well,

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when it bids them not meddle with spiritual things! They abandon the spiritual! they despise it, they will have nothing to do with it—oh, the venerable asses! they do not see, that, even as they go straight to the mill, it is by the spiritual that we go straight to the temporal. As if the mind did not govern the body! They leave us the spiritual—that is, command of the conscience, soul, heart, and judgment—the spiritual—that is, the distribution of heaven’s rewards, and punishments, and pardons—without check, without control, in the secrecy of the confessional—and that dolt, the temporal, has nothing but brute matter for his portion, and yet rubs his paunch for joy. Only, from time to time, he perceives, too late, that, if he has the body, we have the soul, and that the soul governs the body, and so the body ends by coming with us also—to the great surprise of Master Temporal, who stands staring with his hands on his paunch, and says: ‘Dear me! is it possible?’”

Then, with a laugh of savage contempt, Rodin began to walk with great strides, and thus continued: “Oh! let me reach it—let me but reach the place of *Sixtus V.*—and the world shall see (one day, when it awakes) what it is to have the spiritual power in hands like mine—in the hands of a priest, who, for fifty years, has lived hardly, frugally, chastely, and who, were he pope, would continue to live hardly, frugally, chastely!”

Rodin became terrible, as he spoke thus. All the sanguinary, sacrilegious, execrable ambition of the worst popes seemed written in fiery characters on the brow of this son of Ignatius. A morbid desire of rule seemed to stir up the Jesuit’s impure blood; he was bathed in a burning sweat, and a kind of nauseous vapor spread itself round about him. Suddenly, the noise of a travelling-carriage, which entered the courtyard of the house, attracted his attention. Regretting his momentary excitement, he drew from his pocket his dirty white and red cotton handkerchief, and dipping it in a glass of water, he applied it to his cheeks and temples, while he approached the window, to look through the half-open blinds at the traveller who had just arrived. The projection of a portico, over the door at which the carriage had stopped, intercepted Rodin’s view.

“No matter,” said he, recovering his coolness: “I shall know presently who is there. I must write at once to Jacques Dumoulin, to come hither immediately. He served me well, with regard to that little slut in the Rue Clovis, who made my hair stand on end with her infernal Beranger. This time, Dumoulin may serve me again. I have him in my clutches, and he will obey me.”

Rodin sat down to his desk and wrote. A few seconds later, some one knocked at the door, which was double-locked, quite contrary to the rules of the order. But, sure of his own influence and importance, Rodin, who had obtained from the general permission to be rid for a time of the inconvenient company of a socius, often took upon himself to break through a number of the rules. A servant entered and delivered a letter to Rodin. Before opening it the latter said to the man: “What carriage is that which just arrived?”



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“It comes from Rome, father,” answered the servant, bowing.

“From Rome!” said Rodin, hastily; and in spite of himself, a vague uneasiness was expressed in his countenance. But, still holding the letter in his hands, he added: “Who comes in the carriage.”

“A reverend father of our blessed Company.”

Notwithstanding his ardent curiosity, for he knew that a reverend father, travelling post, is always charged with some important mission, Rodin asked no more questions on the subject, but said, as he pointed to the paper in his hand: “Whence comes this letter?”

“From our house at St. Herem, father.”

Rodin looked more attentively at the writing, and recognized the hand of Father d’Aigrigny, who had been commissioned to attend M. Hardy in his last moments. The letter ran as follows:

“I send a despatch to inform your reverence of a fact which is, perhaps, more singular than important. After the funeral of M. Francis Hardy, the coffin, which contained his remains, had been provisionally deposited in a vault beneath our chapel, until it could be removed to the cemetery of the neighboring town. This morning, when our people went down into the vault, to make the necessary preparations for the removal of the body—the coffin had disappeared.

“That is strange indeed,” said Rodin with a start. Then, he continued to read:

“All search has hitherto been vain, to discover the authors of the sacrilegious deed. The chapel being, as you know, at a distance from the house, they were able to effect an entry without disturbing us. We have found traces of a four-wheeled carriage on the damp ground in the neighborhood; but, at some little distance from the chapel, these marks are lost in the sand, and it has been impossible to follow them any farther.”

“Who can have carried away this body?” said Rodin, with a thoughtful air. “Who could have any interest in doing so?”

He continued to read:

“Luckily, the certificate of death is quite correct. I sent for a doctor from Etampes, to prove the disease, and no question can be raised on that point. The donation is therefore good and valid in every respect, but I think it best to inform your reverence of what has happened, that you may take measures accordingly, *etc.*, *etc.*”



After a moment's reflection, Rodin said to himself: "D'Aigrigny is right in his remark; it is more singular than important. Still, it makes one think. We must have an eye to this affair."

Turning towards the servant, who had brought him the letter, Rodin gave him the note he had just written to Ninny Moulin, and said to him: "Let this letter be taken instantly to its address, and let the bearer wait for an answer."

"Yes, father."

At the moment the servant left the room, a reverend father entered, and said to Rodin, "Father Caboccini of Rome has just arrived, with a mission from our general to your reverence."



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At these words, Rodin's blood ran cold, but he maintained his immovable calmness, and said simply: "Where is Father Caboccini?"

"In the next room, father."

"Beg him to walk in, and leave us," said the other.

A second after, Father Caboccini of Rome entered the room and was left alone with Rodin.

CHAPTER LXII.

To A socius, A socius and A half.

The Reverend Father Caboccini, the Roman Jesuit who now came to visit Rodin, was a short man of about thirty years of age, plump, in good condition, and with an abdomen that swelled out his black cassock. The good little father was blind with one eye, but his remaining organ of vision sparkled with vivacity. His rosy countenance was gay, smiling, joyous, splendidly crowned with thick chestnut hair, which curled like a wax doll's. His address was cordial to familiarity, and his expansive and petulant manners harmonized well with his general appearance. In a second, Rodin had taken his measure of the Italian emissary; and as he knew the practice of his Company, and the ways of Rome, he felt by no means comfortable at sight of this jolly little father, with such affable manners. He would have less feared some tall, bony priest, with austere and sepulchral countenance, for he knew that the Company loves to deceive by the outward appearance of its agents; and if Rodin guessed rightly, the cordial address of this personage would rather tend to show that he was charged with some fatal mission.

Suspicious, attentive, with eye and mind on the watch, like an old wolf, expecting an attack, Rodin advanced as usual, slowly and tortuously towards the little man, so as to have time to examine him thoroughly, and penetrate beneath his jovial outside. But the Roman left him no space for that purpose. In his impetuous affection he threw himself right on the neck of Rodin, pressed him in his arms with an effusion of tenderness, and kissed him over and over again upon both cheeks, so loudly and plentifully that the echo resounded through the apartment. In his life Rodin had never been so treated. More and more uneasy at the treachery which must needs lurk under such warm embraces, and irritated by his own evil presentiments, the French Jesuit did, all he could to extricate himself from the Roman's exaggerated tokens of tenderness. But the latter kept his hold; his arms, though short, were vigorous, and Rodin was kissed over and over again, till the little one-eyed man was quite out of breath. It is hardly necessary to state that these embraces were accompanied by the most friendly, affectionate, and fraternal exclamations—all in tolerably good French, but with a strong Italian accent, which we must beg the reader to supply for himself, after we have given a single



specimen. It will perhaps be remembered that, fully aware of the danger he might possibly incur by his ambitious machinations, and knowing from history that the use of poison had often been considered at Rome as a state necessity, Rodin, on being suddenly attacked with the cholera, had exclaimed, with a furious glance at Cardinal Malipieri, "I am poisoned!"



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The same apprehensions occurred involuntarily to the Jesuit's mind as he tried, by useless efforts, to escape from the embraces of the Italian emissary; and he could not help muttering to himself, "This one-eyed fellow is a great deal too fond. I hope there is no poison under his Judas-kisses." At last, little Father Caboccini, being quite out of breath, was obliged to relinquish his hold on Rodin's neck, who, readjusting his dirty collar, and his old cravat and waistcoat, somewhat in disorder in consequence of this hurricane of caresses, said in a gruff tone, "Your humble servant, father, but you need not kiss quite so hard."

Without making any answer to this reproach, the little father riveted his one eye upon Rodin with an expression of enthusiasm, and exclaimed, whilst he accompanied his words with petulant gestures, "At lazt I zee te zuperb light of our zacred Company, and can zalute him from my heart—vonse more, vonse more."

As the little father had already recovered his breath, and was about to rush once again into Rodin's arms, the latter stepped back hastily, and held out his arm to keep him off, saying, in allusion to the illogical metaphor employed by Father Caboccini, "First of all, father, one does not embrace a light—and then I am not a light—I am a humble and obscure laborer in the Lord's vineyard."

The Roman replied with enthusiasm (we shall henceforth translate his gibberish), "You are right, father, we cannot embrace a light, but we can prostrate ourselves before it, and admire its dazzling brightness."

So saying, Caboccini was about to suit the action to the word, and to prostrate himself before Rodin, had not the latter prevented this mode of adulation by seizing the Roman by the arm and exclaiming, "This is mere idolatry, father. Pass over my qualities, and tell me what is the object of your journey."

"The object, my dear father, fills me with joy and happiness. I have endeavored to show you my affection by my caresses, for my heart is overflowing. I have hardly been able to restrain myself during my journey hither, for my heart rushed to meet you. The object transports, delights, enchants me—"

"But what enchants you?" cried Rodin, exasperated by these Italian exaggerations. "What is the object?"

"This rescript of our very reverend and excellent General will inform you, my clear father."

Caboccini drew from his pocket-book a folded paper, with three seals, which he kissed respectfully, and delivered to Rodin, who himself kissed it in his turn, and opened it with visible anxiety. While he read it the countenance of the Jesuit remained impassible, but the pulsation of the arteries on his temples announced his internal agitation. Yet he put

the letter coolly into his pocket, and looking at the Roman, said to him, "Be it as our excellent General has commanded!"



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“Then, father,” cried Caboccini, with a new effusion of tenderness and admiration, “I shall be the shadow of your light, and, in fact, your second self. I shall have the happiness of being always with you, day and night, and of acting as your socius, since, after having allowed you to be without one for some time, according to your wish, and for the interest of our blessed Company, our excellent General now thinks fit to send me from Rome, to fill that post about your person—an unexpected, an immense favor, which fills me with gratitude to our General, and with love to you, my dear, my excellent father!”

“It is well played,” thought Rodin; “but I am not so soft, and ’tis only among the blind that your Cyclops are kings!”

The evening of the day in which this scene took place between the Jesuit and his new socius, Ninny Moulin, after receiving in presence of Caboccini the instructions of Rodin, went straight to Madame de la Sainte-Colombe’s.

This woman had made her fortune, at the time of the allies taking Paris, by keeping one of those “pretty milliner’s shops,” whose “pink bonnets” have run into a proverb not extinct in these days when bonnets are not known. Ninny Moulin had no better well to draw inspiration from when, as now, he had to find out, as per Rodin’s order, a girl of an age and appearance which, singularly enough, were closely resembling those of Mdlle. de Cardoville.

No doubt of Ninny Moulin’s success in this mission, for the next morning Rodin, whose countenance wore a triumphant expression, put with his own hand a letter into the post.

This letter was addressed:

“To M. Agricola Baudoin,
“No. 2, Rue Brise-Miche,
“Paris.”

CHAPTER LXIII.

Faringhea’s affection.

It will, perhaps, be remembered that Djalma, when he heard for the first time that he was beloved by Adrienne, had, in the fulness of his joy, spoken thus to Faringhea, whose treachery he had just discovered, “You leagued with my enemies, and I had done you no harm. You are wicked, because you are no doubt unhappy. I will strive to make you happy, so that you may be good. Would you have gold?—you shall have it. Would you have a friend?—though you are a slave, a king’s son offers you his friendship.”



Faringhea had refused the gold, and appeared to accept the friendship of the son of Kadja-sing. Endowed with remarkable intelligence, and extraordinary power of dissimulation the half-breed had easily persuaded the prince of the sincerity of his repentance, and obtained credit for his gratitude and attachment from so confiding and generous a character. Besides, what motives could Djalma have to suspect the slave, now become his friend? Certain of the love of Mdlle. de Cardoville, with whom he passed a portion of every day, her salutary influence would have guarded him against any dangerous counsels or calumnies of



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the half-caste, a faithful and secret instrument of Rodin, and attached by him to the Company. But Faringhea, whose tact was amazing, did not act so lightly; he never spoke to the prince of Mdlle. de Cardoville, and waited unobtrusively for the confidential communications into which Djalma was sometimes hurried by his excessive joy. A few days after the interview last described between Adrienne and Djalma, and on the morrow of the day when Rodin, certain of the success of Ninny Moulin's mission to Sainte Colombe, had himself put a letter in the post to the address of Agricola Baudoin, the half-caste, who for some time had appeared oppressed with a violent grief, seemed to get so much worse, that the prince, struck with the desponding air of the man, asked him kindly and repeatedly the cause of his sorrow. But Faringhea, while he gratefully thanked the prince for the interest he took in him, maintained the most absolute silence and reserve on the subject of his grief.

These preliminaries will enable the reader to understand the following scene, which took place about noon in the house in the Rue de Clichy occupied by the Hindoo. Contrary to his habit, Djalma had not passed that morning with Adrienne. He had been informed the evening before, by the young lady, that she must ask of him the sacrifice of this whole day, to take the necessary measures to make their marriage sacred and acceptable in the eyes of the world, and yet free from the restrictions which she and Djalma disapproved. As for the means to be employed by Mdlle. de Cardoville to attain this end, and the name of the pure and honorable person who was to consecrate their union, these were secrets which, not belonging exclusively to the young lady, could not yet be communicated to Djalma. To the Indian, so long accustomed to devote every instant to Adrienne, this day seemed interminable. By turns a prey to the most burning agitation, and to a kind of stupor, in which he plunged himself to escape from the thoughts that caused his tortures, Djalma lay stretched upon a divan, with his face buried in his hands, as if to shut out the view of a too enchanting vision. Suddenly, without knocking at the door, as usual, Faringhea entered the prince's apartment.

At the noise the half-caste made in entering Djalma started, raised his head, and looked round him with surprise; but, on seeing the pale agitated countenance of the slave, he rose hastily, and advancing towards him, exclaimed, "What is the matter, Faringhea!"

After a moment's silence, and as if struggling with a painful feeling of hesitation, Faringhea threw himself at the feet of Djalma, and murmured in a weak, despairing, almost supplicating voice: "I am very miserable. Pity me, my good lord!"

The tone was so touching, the grief under which the half-breed suffered seemed to give to his features, generally fixed and hard as bronze, such a heart-rending expression, that Djalma was deeply affected, and, bending to raise him from the ground, said to him, in a kindly voice: "Speak to me! Confidence appeases the torments of the heart. Trust



me, friend—for my angel herself said to me, that happy love cannot bear to see tears about him.”



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“But unhappy love, miserable love, betrayed love—weeps tears of blood,” replied Faringhea, with painful dejection.

“Of what love dost thou speak?” asked Djalma, in surprise.

“I speak of my love,” answered the half-caste, with a gloomy air.

“Of your love?” said Djalma, more and more astonished; not that the half caste, still young, and with a countenance of sombre beauty, appeared to him incapable of inspiring or feeling the tender passion, but that, until now, he had never imagined him capable of conceiving so deep a sorrow.

“My lord,” resumed the half-caste, “you told me, that misfortune had made me wicked, and that happiness would make me good. In those words, I saw a presentiment, and a noble love entered my heart, at the moment when hatred and treachery departed from it. I, the half-savage, found a woman, beautiful and young, to respond to my passion. At least I thought so. But I had betrayed you, my lord, and there is no happiness for a traitor, even though he repent. In my turn, I have been shamefully betrayed.”

Then, seeing the surprise of the prince, the half-caste added, as if overwhelmed with confusion: “Do not mock me, my lord! The most frightful tortures would not have wrung this confession from me; but you, the son of a king, deigned to call the poor slave your friend!”

“And your friend thanks you for the confidence,” answered Djalma. “Far from mocking, he will console you. Mock you! do you think it possible?”

“Betrayed love merits contempt and insult,” said Faringhea, bitterly. “Even cowards may point at one with scorn—for, in this country, the sight of the man deceived in what is dearest to his soul, the very life blood of his life, only makes people shrug their shoulders and laugh.”

“But are you certain of this treachery?” said Djalma, mildly. Then he added, with visible hesitation, that proved the goodness of his heart: “Listen to me, and forgive me for speaking of the past! It will only be another proof, that I cherish no evil memories, and that I fully believe in your repentance and affection. Remember, that I also once thought, that she, who is the angel of my life, did not love me—and yet it was false. Who tells you, that you are not, like me, deceived by false appearances?”

“Alas, my lord! could I only believe so! But I dare not hope it. My brain wanders uncertain, I cannot come to any resolution, and therefore I have recourse to you.”

“But what causes your suspicions?”



“Her coldness, which sometimes succeeds to apparent tenderness. The refusals she gives me in the name of duty. Yes,” added the half-caste, after a moment’s silence, “she reasons about her love—a proof, that she has never loved me, or that she loves me no more.”

“On the contrary, she perhaps loves you all the more, that she takes into consideration the interest and the dignity of her love.”



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“That is what they all say,” replied the half-caste, with bitter irony, as he fixed a penetrating look on Djalma; “thus speak all those who love weakly, coldly; but those who love valiantly, never show these insulting suspicions. For them, a word from the man they adore is a command; they do not haggle and bargain, for the cruel pleasure of exciting the passion of their lover to madness, and so ruling him more surely. No, what their lover asks of them, were it to cost life and honor, they would grant it without hesitation—because, with them, the will of the man they love is above every other consideration, divine and human. But those crafty women, whose pride it is to tame and conquer man—who take delight in irritating his passion, and sometimes appear on the point of yielding to it—are demons, who rejoice in the tears and torments of the wretch, that loves them with the miserable weakness of a child. While we expire with love at their feet, the perfidious creatures are calculating the effects of their refusals, and seeing how far they can go, without quite driving their victim to despair. Oh! how cold and cowardly are they, compared to the valiant, true-hearted women, who say to the men of their choice: ‘Let me be thine to-day-and to-morrow, come shame, despair, and death—it matters little! Be happy! my life is not worth one tear of thine!’”

Djalma’s brow had darkened, as he listened. Having kept inviolable the secret of the various incidents of his passion for Mdlle. de Cardoville, he could not but see in these words a quite involuntary allusion to the delays and refusals of Adrienne. And yet Djalma suffered a moment in his pride, at the thought of considerations and duties, that a woman holds dearer than her love. But this bitter and painful thought was soon effaced from the oriental’s mind, thanks to the beneficent influence of the remembrance of Adrienne. His brow again cleared, and he answered the half-caste, who was watching him attentively with a sidelong glance: “You are deluded by grief. If you have no other reason to doubt her you love, than these refusals and vague suspicions, be satisfied! You are perhaps loved better than you can imagine.”

“Alas! would it were so, my lord!” replied the half-caste, dejectedly, as if he had been deeply touched by the words of Djalma. “Yet I say to myself: There is for this woman something stronger than her love—delicacy, dignity, honor, what you will—but she does not love me enough to sacrifice for me this something!”

“Friend, you are deceived,” answered Djalma, mildly, though the words affected him with a painful impression. “The greater the love of a woman, the more it should be chaste and noble. It is love itself that awakens this delicacy and these scruples. He rules, instead of being ruled.”

“That is true,” replied the half-caste, with bitter irony, “Love so rules me, that this woman bids me love in her own fashion, and I have only to submit.”



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Pausing suddenly, Faringhea hid his face in his hands, and heaved a deep drawn sigh. His features expressed a mixture of hate, rage, and despair, at once so terrible and so painful, that Djalma, more and more affected, exclaimed, as he seized the other's hand: "Calm this fury, and listen to the voice of friendship! It will disperse this evil influence. Speak to me!"

"No, no! it is too dreadful!"

"Speak, I bid thee."

"No! leave the wretch to his despair!"

"Do you think me capable of that?" said Djalma, with a mixture of mildness and dignity, which seemed to make an impression on the half caste.

"Alas!" replied he, hesitating; "do you wish to hear more, my lord?"

"I wish to hear all."

"Well, then! I have not told you all—for, at the moment of making this confession, shame and the fear of ridicule kept me back. You asked me what reason I had to believe myself betrayed. I spoke to you of vague suspicions, refusals, coldness. That is not all—this evening—"

"Go on!"

"This evening—she made an appointment—with a man that she prefers to me."

"Who told you so?"

"A stranger who pitied my blindness."

"And suppose the man deceived you—or deceives himself?"

"He has offered me proofs of what he advances."

"What proofs?"

"He will enable me this evening to witness the interview. 'It may be,' said he, 'that this appointment may have no guilt in it, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary. Judge for yourself, have courage, and your cruel indecision will be at an end.'"

"And what did you answer?"

"Nothing, my lord. My head wandered as it does now and I came to you for advice."



Then, making a gesture of despair, he proceeded with a savage laugh: "Advice? It is from the blade of my kand-jjar that I should ask counsel! It would answer: 'Blood! blood!'"

Faringhea grasped convulsively the long dagger attached to his girdle. There is a sort of contagion in certain forms of passion. At sight of Faringhea's countenance, agitated by jealous fury, Djalma shuddered—for he remembered the fit of insane rage, with which he had been possessed, when the Princess de Saint-Dizier had defied Adrienne to contradict her, as to the discovery of Agricola Baudoin in her bed-chamber. But then, reassured by the lady's proud and noble bearing, Djalma had soon learned to despise the horrible calumny, which Adrienne had not even thought worthy of an answer. Still, two or three times, as the lightning will flash suddenly across the clearest sky, the remembrance of that shameful accusation had crossed the prince's mind, like a streak of fire, but had almost instantly vanished, in the serenity and happiness of his ineffable confidence in Adrienne's heart. These memories, however, whilst they saddened the mind of Djalma, only made him more compassionate with regard to Faringhea, than he might have been without this strange coincidence between the position of the half-caste and his own. Knowing, by his own experience, to what madness a blind fury may be carried, and wishing to tame the half-caste by affectionate kindness, Djalma said to him in a grave and mild tone: "I offered you my friendship. I will now act towards you a friend."



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But Faringhea, seemingly a prey to a dull and mute frenzy, stood with fixed and haggard eyes, as though he did not hear Djalma.

The latter laid his hand on his shoulder, and resumed: "Faringhea, listen to me!"

"My lord," said the half-caste, starting abruptly, as from a dream, "forgive me—but—"

"In the anguish occasioned by these cruel suspicions, it is not of your kandjjar that you must take counsel—but of your friend."

"My lord—"

"To this interview, which will prove the innocence or the treachery of your beloved, you will do well to go."

"Oh, yes!" said the half-caste, in a hollow voice, and with a bitter smile: "I shall be there."

"But you must not go alone."

"What do you mean, my lord?" cried the half-caste. "Who will accompany me?"

"I will."

"You, my lord?"

"Yes—perhaps, to save you from a crime—for I know how blind and unjust is the earliest outburst of rage."

"But that transport gives us revenge!" cried the half-caste, with a cruel smile.

"Faringhea, this day is all my own. I shall not leave you," said the prince, resolutely. "Either you shall not go to this interview, or I will accompany you."

The half-caste appeared conquered by this generous perseverance. He fell at the feet of Djalma, pressed the prince's hand respectfully to his forehead and to his lips, and said: "My lord, be generous to the end! forgive me!"

"For what should I forgive you?"

"Before I spoke to you, I had the audacity to think of asking for what you have just freely offered. Not knowing to what extent my fury might carry me, I had thought of asking you this favor, which you would not perhaps grant to an equal, but I did not dare to do it. I shrunk even from the avowal of the treachery I have cause to fear, and I came only to tell you of my misery—because to you alone in all the world I could tell it."



It is impossible to describe the almost candid simplicity, with which the half-breed pronounced these words, and the soft tones, mingled with tears, which had succeeded his savage fury. Deeply affected, Djalma raised him from the ground, and said: "You were entitled to ask of me a mark of friendship. I am happy in having forestalled you. Courage! be of good cheer! I will accompany you to this interview, and if my hopes do not deceive me, you will find you have been deluded by false appearances."

When the night was come, the half-breed and Djalma, wrapped in their cloaks, got into a hackney-coach. Faringhea ordered the coachman to drive to the house inhabited by Sainte-Colombe.

CHAPTER LXIV.

An evening at Sainte-Colombe's.



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Leaving Djalma and Faringhea in the coach, on their way, a few words are indispensable before continuing this scene. Ninny Moulin, ignorant of the real object of the step he took at the instigation of Rodin, had, on the evening before, according to orders received from the latter, offered a considerable sum to Sainte-Colombe, to obtain from that creature (still singularly rapacious) the use of her apartments for whole day. Sainte-Colombe, having accepted this proposition, too advantageous to be refused, had set out that morning with her servants, to whom she wished, she said, in return for their good services, to give a day's pleasure in the country. Master of the house, Rodin, in a black wig, blue spectacles, and a cloak, and with his mouth and chin buried in a worsted comforter—in a word, perfectly disguised—had gone that morning to take a look at the apartments, and to give his instructions to the half-caste. The latter, in two hours from the departure of the Jesuit, had, thanks to his address and intelligence, completed the most important preparation and returned in haste to Djalma, to play with detestable hypocrisy the scene at which we have just been present.

During the ride from the Rue de Clichy to the Rue de Richelieu, Faringhea appeared plunged in a mournful reverie. Suddenly, he said to Djalma to a quick tone: "My lord, if I am betrayed, I must have vengeance."

"Contempt is a terrible revenge," answered Djalma.

"No, no," replied the half-caste, with an accent of repressed rage. "It is not enough. The nearer the moment approaches, the more I feel I must have blood."

"Listen to me—"

"My lord, have pity on me! I was a coward to draw back from my revenge. Let me leave you, my lord! I will go alone to this interview."

So saying, Faringhea made a movement, as if he would spring from the carriage.

Djalma held him by the arm, and said: "Remain! I wilt not leave you. If you are betrayed, you shall not shed blood. Contempt will avenge and friendship will console you."

"No, no, my lord; I am resolved. When I have killed—then I will kill myself," cried the half-caste, with savage excitement. "This kandjar for the false ones!" added he, laying his hand on his dagger. "The poison in the hilt for me."

"Faringhea—"

"If I resist you, my lord, forgive me! My destiny must be accomplished."

Time pressed, and Djalma, despairing to calm the other's ferocious rage, resolved to have recourse to a stratagem.



After some minutes' silence, he said to Faringhea: "I will not leave you. I will do all I can to save you from a crime. If I do not succeed, the blood you shed be on your own head. This hand shall never again be locked in yours."



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These words appeared to make a deep impression on Faringhea. He breathed a long sigh, and, bowing his head upon his breast, remained silent and full of thought. Djalma prepared, by the faint light of the lamps, reflected in the interior of the coach, to throw himself suddenly on the half-caste, and disarm him. But the latter, who saw at a glance the intention of the prince, drew his kandjiar abruptly from his girdle, and holding it still in its sheath, said to the prince in a half-solemn, half-savage tone: "This dagger, in a strong hand, is terrible; and in this phial is one of the most subtle poisons of our country."

He touched a spring, and the knob at the top of the hilt rose like a lid, discovering the mouth of a small crystal phial concealed in this murderous weapon.

"Two or three drops of this poison upon the lips," resumed the half caste, "and death comes slowly and peacefully, in a few hours, and without pain. Only, for the first symptom, the nails turn blue. But he who emptied this phial at a draught would fall dead, as if struck by lightning."

"Yes," replied Djalma; "I know that our country produces such mysterious poisons. But why lay such stress on the murderous properties of this weapon?"

"To show you, my lord, that this kandjiar would ensure the success and impunity of my vengeance. With the blade I could destroy, and by the poison escape from human justice. Well, my lord! this kandjiar—take it—I give it up to you—I renounce my vengeance—rather than render myself unworthy to clasp again your hand!"

He presented the dagger to the prince, who, as pleased as surprised at this unexpected determination, hastily secured the terrible weapon beneath his own girdle; whilst the half-breed continued, in a voice of emotion: "Deep this kandjiar, my lord—and when you have seen and heard all that we go to hear and see—you shall either give me the dagger to strike a wretch—or the poison, to die without striking. You shall command; I will obey."

Djalma was about to reply, when the coach stopped at the house inhabited by Sainte-Colombe. The prince and the half-caste, well enveloped in their mantles, entered a dark porch, and the door was closed after them. Faringhea exchanged a few words with the porter, and the latter gave him a key. The two Orientals soon arrived at Sainte-Colombe's apartments, which had two doors opening upon the landing-place, besides a private entrance from the courtyard. As he put the key into the lock, Faringhea said to Djalma, in an agitated voice: "Pity my weakness, my lord—but, at this terrible moment, I tremble and hesitate. It were perhaps better to doubt—or to forget!"

Then, as the prince was about to answer, the half-caste exclaimed: "No! we must have no cowardice!" and, opening the door precipitately, he entered, followed by Djalma.



When the door was again closed, the prince and the half-caste found themselves in a dark and narrow passage. “Your hand, my lord—let me guide you—walk lightly,” said Faringhea, in a low whisper.



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He extended his hand to the prince, who took hold of it, and they both advanced silently through the darkness. After leading Djalma some distance, and opening and closing several doors, the half-caste stopped abruptly, and abandoning the hand which he had hitherto held, said to the prince: "My lord, the decisive moment approaches; let us wait here for a few seconds."

A profound silence followed these words of the half-caste. The darkness was so complete, that Djalma could distinguish nothing. In about a minute, he heard Faringhea moving away from him; and then a door was suddenly opened, and as abruptly closed and locked. This circumstance made Djalma somewhat uneasy. By a mechanical movement, he laid his hand upon his dagger, and advanced cautiously towards the side, where he supposed the door to be.

Suddenly, the half-caste's voice struck upon his ear, though it was impossible to guess whence it came. "My lord," it said, "you told me, you were my friend. I act as a friend. If I have employed stratagem to bring you hither, it is because the blindness of your fatal passion would otherwise have prevented your accompanying me. The Princess de Saint Dizier named to you Agricola Baudoin, the lover of Adrienne de Cardoville. Listen—look—judge!"

The voice ceased. It appeared to have issued from one corner of the room. Djalma, still in darkness, perceived too late into what a snare he had fallen, and trembled with rage—almost with alarm.

"Faringhea!" he exclaimed; "where am I? where are you? Open the door on your life! I would leave this place instantly."

Extending his arms, the prince advanced hastily several steps, but he only touched a tapestried wall; he followed it, hoping to find the door, and he at length found it; but it was locked, and resisted all his efforts. He continued his researches, and came to a fireplace with no fire in it, and to a second door, equally fast. In a few moments, he had thus made the circle of the room, and found himself again at the fireplace. The anxiety of the prince increased more and more. He called Faringhea, in a voice trembling with passion. There was no answer. Profound silence reigned without, and complete darkness within. Ere long, a perfumed vapor, of indescribable sweetness, but very subtle and penetrating, spread itself insensibly through the little room in which Djalma was. It might be, that the orifice of a tube, passing through one of the doors of the room, introduced this balmy current. At the height of angry and terrible thoughts, Djalma paid no attention to this odor—but soon the arteries of his temples began to beat violently, a burning heat seemed to circulate rapidly through his veins, he felt a sensation of pleasure, his resentment died gradually away, and a mild, ineffable torpor crept over him, without his being fully conscious of the mental transformation that was taking place. Yet, by a last effort of the wavering will, Djalma advanced once more to try and open one of the doors; he found it indeed, but at this place the vapor was so strong,

that its action redoubled, and, unable to move a step further, Djalma was obliged to support himself by leaning against the wall.[43]



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Then a strange thing happened. A faint light spread itself gradually through an adjoining apartment, and Djalma now perceived, for the first time, the existence of a little round window, in the wall of the room in which he was. On the side of the prince, this opening was protected by a slight but strong railing, which hardly intercepted the view. On the other side a thick piece of plate-glass was fixed at the distance of two or three inches from the railing in question. The room, which Djalma saw through this window, and through which the faint light was now gradually spreading, was richly furnished. Between two windows, hung with crimson silk curtains, stood a kind of wardrobe, with a looking-glass front; opposite the fireplace in which glowed the burning coals, was a long, wide divan, furnished with cushions.

In another second a woman entered this apartment. Her face and figure were invisible, being wrapped in a long, hooded mantle, of peculiar form, and a dark color. The sight of this mantle made Djalma start. To the pleasure he at first felt succeeded a feverish anxiety, like the growing fumes of intoxication. There was that strange buzzing in his ears which we experience when we plunge into deep waters. It was in a kind of delirium that Djalma looked on at what was passing in the next room. The woman who had just appeared entered with caution, almost with fear. Drawing aside one of the window curtains, she glanced through the closed blinds into the street. Then she returned slowly to the fireplace, where she stood for a moment pensive, still carefully enveloped in her mantle. Completely yielding to the influence of the vapor, which deprived him of his presence of mind—forgetting Faringhea, and all the circumstances that had accompanied his arrival at this house—Djalma concentrated all the powers of his attention on the spectacle before him, at which he seemed to be present as in a dream.

Suddenly Djalma saw the woman leave the fireplace and advance towards the looking-glass. Turning her face toward it, she allowed the mantle to glide down to her feet. Djalma was thunderstruck. He saw the face of Adrienne de Cardoville. Yes, Adrienne, as he had seen her the night before, attired as during her interview with the Princess de Saint Dizier—the light green dress, the rose-colored ribbons, the white head ornaments. A network of white beads concealed her back hair, and harmonized admirably with the shining gold of her ringlets. Finally, as far as the Hindoo could judge through the railing and the thick glass, and in the faint light, it was the figure of Adrienne, with her marble shoulders and swan-like neck, so proud and so graceful. In a word, he could not, he did not doubt that it was Adrienne de Cardoville. Djalma was bathed in a burning dew, his dizzy excitement increased, and, with bloodshot eye and heaving bosom, he remained motionless, gazing almost without the power of thought. The young lady, with her back still turned towards Djalma, arranged her hair with graceful art, took off the network which formed her head-dress, placed it on the chimney-piece, and began to unfasten her gown; then, withdrawing from the looking-glass, she disappeared for an instant from Djalma's view.



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“She is expecting Agricola Baudoin, her lover,” said a voice, which seemed to proceed from the wall of the dark room in which Djalma was.

Notwithstanding his bewilderment, these terrible words, “She is expecting Agricola Baudoin, her lover,” passed like a stream of fire through the brain and heart of the prince. A cloud of blood came over his eyes, he uttered a hollow moan, which the thickness of the glass prevented from being heard in the next room, and broke his nails in attempting to tear down the iron railing before the window.

Having reached this paroxysm of delirious rage, Djalma saw the uncertain light grow still fainter, as if it had been discreetly obscured, and, through the vapory shadow that hung before him, he perceived the young lady returning, clad in a long white dressing-gown, and with her golden curls floating over her naked arms and shoulders. She advanced cautiously in the direction of a door which was hid from Djalma’s view. At this moment, one of the doors of the apartment in which the prince was concealed was gently opened by an invisible hand. Djalma noticed it by the click of the lock, and by the current of fresh air which streamed upon his face, for he could see nothing. This door, left open for Djalma, like that in the next room, to which the young lady had drawn near, led to a sort of ante-chamber communicating with the stairs, which some one now rapidly ascended, and, stopping short, knocked twice at the outer door.

“Here comes Agricola Baudoin. Look and listen!” said the same voice that the prince had already heard.

Mad, intoxicated, but with the fixed idea and reckless determination of a madman or a drunkard, Djalma drew the dagger which Faringhea had left in his possession, and stood in motionless expectation. Hardly were the two knocks heard before the young lady quitted the apartment, from which streamed a faint ray of light, ran to the door of the staircase, so that some faint glimmer reached the place where Djalma stood watching, his dagger in his hand. He saw the young lady pass across the ante-chamber, and approach the door of the staircase, where she said in a whisper: “Who is there?”

“It is I—Agricola Baudoin,” answered, from, without, a manly voice.

What followed was rapid as lightning, and must be conceived rather than described. Hardly had the young lady drawn the bolt of the door, hardly had Agricola Baudoin stepped across the threshold, than Djalma, with the bound of a tiger, stabbed as it were at once, so rapid were the strokes, both the young lady, who fell dead on the floor, and Agricola, who sank, dangerously wounded, by the side of the unfortunate victim. This scene of murder, rapid as thought, took place in the midst of a half obscurity. Suddenly the faint light from the chamber was completely extinguished, and a second after, Djalma felt his arm seized in the darkness by an iron grasp, and the voice of Faringhea whispered: “You are avenged. Come; we can secure our retreat.” Inert, stupefied at

what he had done, Djalma offered no resistance, and let himself be dragged by the half-caste into the inner apartment, from which there was another way out.



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When Rodin had exclaimed, in his admiration of the generative power of thought, that the word *necklace* had been the germ of the infernal project he then contemplated, it was, that chance had brought to his mind the remembrance of the too famous affair of the diamond necklace, in which a woman, thanks to her vague resemblance to Queen Marie Antoinette, being dressed like that princess, and favored by the uncertainty of a twilight, had played so skillfully the part of her unfortunate sovereign, as to make the Cardinal Prince de Rohan, though familiar with the court, the complete dupe of the illusion. Having once determined on his execrable design, Rodin had sent Jacques Dumoulin to Sainte-Colombe, without telling him the real object of his mission, to ask this experienced woman to procure a fine young girl, tall, and with red hair. Once found, a costume exactly resembling that worn by Adrienne, and of which the Princess de Saint-Dizier gave the description to Rodin (though herself ignorant of this new plot), was to complete the deception. The rest is known, or may be guessed. The unfortunate girl, who acted as Adrienne's double, believed she was only aiding in a jest. As for Agricola, he had received a letter, in which he was invited to a meeting that might be of the greatest importance to Mdlle. de Cardoville.

[43] See the strange effect of hasheesh. To the effect of this is attributed the kind of hallucination which seized on those unhappy persons, whom the Prince of the Assassins (the Old Man of the Mountain) used as the instruments of his vengeance.

CHAPTER LXV.

The nuptial bed.

The mild light of a circular lamp of oriental alabaster, suspended from the ceiling by three silver chains, spreads a faint lustre through the bed-chamber of Adrienne de Cardoville.

The large ivory bedstead, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, is not at present occupied, and almost disappears beneath snowy curtains of lace and muslin, transparent and vapory as clouds. On the white marble mantelpiece, from beneath which the fire throws ruddy beams on the ermine carpet, is the usual basket filled with a bush of red camellias, in the midst of their shining green leaves. A pleasant aromatic odor, rising from a warm and perfumed bath in the next room, penetrates every corner of the bed-chamber. All without is calm and silent. It is hardly eleven o'clock. The ivory door, opposite to that which leads to the bath-room, opens slowly. Djalma appears. Two hours have elapsed since he committed a double murder, and believed that he had killed Adrienne in a fit of jealous fury.



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The servants of Mdlle. de Cardoville, accustomed to Djalma's daily visits, no longer announced his arrival, and admitted him without difficulty, having received no orders to the contrary from their mistress. He had never before entered the bed-chamber, but, knowing that the apartment the lady occupied was on the first floor of the house, he had easily found it. As he entered that virgin sanctuary, his countenance was pretty calm, so well did he control his feelings, only a slight paleness tarnished the brilliant amber of his complexion. He wore that day a robe of purple cashmere, striped with silver—a color which did not show the stains of blood upon it. Djalma closed the door after him, and tore off his white turban, for it seemed to him as if a band of hot iron encircled his brow. His dark hair streamed around his handsome face. He crossed his arms upon his bosom, and looked slowly about him. When his eyes rested on Adrienne's bed, he started suddenly, and his cheek grew purple. Then he drew his hand across his brow, hung down his head, and remained standing for some moments in a dream, motionless as a statue.

After a mournful silence of a few seconds' duration, Djalma fell upon his knees, and raised his eyes to heaven. The Asiatic's countenance was bathed in tears, and no longer expressed any violent passion. On his features was no longer the stamp of hate, or despair, or the ferocious joy of vengeance gratified. It was rather the expression of grief at once simple and immense. For several minutes he was almost choked with sobs, and tears ran freely down his cheeks.

"Dead! dead!" he murmured, in a half-stifled voice. "She, who this morning slept so peacefully in this chamber! And I have killed her. Now that she is dead, what is her treachery to me? I should not have killed her for that. She had betrayed me; she loved the man whom I slew—she loved him! Alas! I could not hope to gain the preference," added he, with a touching mixture of resignation and remorse; "I, poor, untaught youth—how could I merit her love? It was my fault that she did not love me; but, always generous, she concealed from me her indifference, that she might not make me too unhappy—and for that I killed her. What was her crime? Did she not meet me freely? Did she not open to me her dwelling? Did she not allow me to pass whole days with her? No doubt she tried to love me, and could not. I loved her with all the faculties of my soul, but my love was not such as she required. For that, I should not have killed her. But a fatal delusion seized me and, after it was done, I woke as from a dream. Alas! it was not a dream: I have killed her. And yet—until this evening—what happiness I owed to her—what hope—what joy! She made my heart better, nobler, more generous. All came from her," added the Indian, with a new burst of grief. "That remained with me—no one could take from me that treasure of the past—that ought to have consoled me. But why think of it? I struck them both—her and the man—without a struggle. It was a cowardly murder—the ferocity of the tiger that tears its innocent prey!"



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Djalma buried his face in his hands. Then, drying his tears, he resumed, "I know, clearly, that I mean to die also. But my death will not restore her to life!"

He rose from the ground, and drew from his girdle Faringhea's bloody dagger; then, taking the little phial from the hilt, he threw the blood stained blade upon the ermine carpet, the immaculate whiteness of which was thus slightly stained with red.

"Yes," resumed Djalma, holding the phial with a convulsive grasp, "I know well that I am about to die. It is right. Blood for blood; my life for hers. How happens it that my steel did not turn aside? How could I kill her?—but it is done—and my heart is full of remorse, and sorrow, an inexpressible tenderness—and I have come here—to die!"

"Here, in this chamber," he continued, "the heaven of my burning visions!" And then he added, with a heartrending accent, as he again buried his face in his hands, "Dead! dead!"

"Well! I too shall soon be dead," he resumed, in a firmer voice. "But, no! I will die slowly, gradually. A few drops of the poison will suffice; and, when I am quite certain of dying, my remorse will perhaps be less terrible. Yesterday, she pressed my hand when we parted. Who could have foretold me this?" The Indian raised the phial resolutely to his lips. He drank a few drops of the liquor it contained, and replaced it on a little ivory table close to Adrienne's bed.

"This liquor is sharp and hot," said he. "Now I am certain to die. Oh! that I may still have time to feast on the sight and perfume of this chamber—to lay my dying head on the couch where she has reposed."

Djalma fell on his knees beside the bed, and leaned against it his burning brow. At this moment, the ivory door, which communicated with the bath-room, rolled gently on its hinges, and Adrienne entered. The young lady had just sent away her woman, who had assisted to undress her. She wore a long muslin wrapper of lustrous whiteness. Her golden hair, neatly arranged in little plaits, formed two bands, which gave to her sweet face an extremely juvenile air. Her snowy complexion was slightly tinged with rose-color, from the warmth of the perfumed bath, which she used for a few seconds every evening. When she opened the ivory door, and placed her little naked foot, in its white satin slipper, upon the ermine carpet, Adrienne was dazzlingly beautiful. Happiness sparkled in her eyes, and adorned her brow. All the difficulties relative to her union with Djalma had now been removed. In two days she would be his. The sight of the nuptial chamber oppressed her with a vague and ineffable languor. The ivory door had been opened so gently, the lady's first steps were so soft upon the fur carpet, that Djalma, still leaning against the bed, had heard nothing. But suddenly a cry of surprise and alarm struck upon his ear. He turned round abruptly. Adrienne stood before him.

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With an impulse of modesty, Adrienne closed her nightdress over her bosom, and hastily drew back, still more afflicted than angry at what she considered a guilty attempt on the part of Djalma. Cruelly hurt and offended, she was about to reproach him with his conduct, when she perceived the dagger, which he had thrown down upon the ermine carpet. At sight of this weapon, and the expression of fear and stupor which petrified the features of Djalma, who remained kneeling, motionless, with his body thrown back, hands stretched out, his eyes fixed and wildly staring Adrienne, no longer dreading an amorous surprise, was seized with an indescribable terror, and, instead of flying from the prince, advanced several steps towards him, and said, in an agitated voice, whilst she pointed to the kandjar, "My friend, why are you here? what ails you? why this dagger?"

Djalma made no answer. At first, the presence of Adrienne seemed to him a vision, which he attributed to the excitement of his brain, already (it might be) under the influence of the poison. But when the soft voice sounded in his ears—when his heart bounded with the species of electric shock, which he always felt when he met the gaze of that woman so ardently beloved—when he had contemplated for an instant that adorable face, so fresh and fair, in spite of its expression of deep uneasiness—Djalma understood that he was not the sport of a dream, but that Mdlle. de Cardoville was really before his eyes.

Then, as he began fully to grasp the thought that Adrienne was not dead, though he could not at all explain the prodigy of her resurrection, the Hindoo's countenance was transfigured, the pale gold of his complexion became warm and red, his eyes (tarnished by tears of remorse) shone with new radiance, and his features, so lately contracted with terror and despair, expressed all the phases of the most ecstatic joy. Advancing, still on his knees, towards Adrienne, he lifted up to her his trembling hands, and, too deeply affected to pronounce a word, he gazed on her with so much amazement, love, adoration, gratitude, that the young lady, fascinated by those inexplicable looks, remained mute also, motionless also, and felt, by the precipitate beating of her heart, and by the shudder which ran through her frame, that there was here some dreadful mystery to be unfolded.

At last, Djalma, clasping his hands together, exclaimed with an accent impossible to describe, "Thou art not dead!"

"Dead!" repeated the young lady, in amazement.

"It was not thou, really not thou, whom I killed? God is kind and just!"

And as he pronounced these words with intense joy, the unfortunate youth forgot the victim whom he had sacrificed in error.



More and more alarmed, and again glancing at the dagger in which she now perceived marks of blood—a terrible evidence, in confirmation of the words of Djalma—Mlle. de Cardoville exclaimed, “You have killed some one, Djalma! Oh! what does he say? It is dreadful!”



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“You are alive—I see you—you are here,” said Djalma, in a voice trembling with rapture. “You are here—beautiful! pure! for it was not you! Oh, no! had it been you, the steel would have turned back upon myself.”

“You have killed some one?” cried the young lady, beside her with this unforeseen revelation, and clasping her hands in horror. “Why? whom did you kill?”

“I do not know. A woman that was like you—a man that I thought your lover—it was an illusion, a frightful dream—you are alive—you are here!”

And the oriental wept for joy.

“A dream? but no, it is not a dream. There is blood upon that dagger!” cried the young lady, as she pointed wildly to the kandjia. “I tell you there is blood upon it!”

“Yes. I threw it down just now, when I took the poison from it, thinking that I had killed you.”

“The poison!” exclaimed Adrienne, and her teeth chattered convulsively. “What poison?”

“I thought I had killed you, and I came here to die.”

“To die? Oh! wherefore? who is to die?” cried the young lady, almost in delirium.

“I,” replied Djalma, with inexpressible tenderness, “I thought I had killed you—and I took poison.”

“You!” exclaimed Adrienne, becoming pale as death. “You!”

“Yes.”

“Oh! it is not true!” said the young lady, shaking her head.

“Look!” said the Asiatic. Mechanically, he turned towards the bed—towards the little ivory table, on which sparkled the crystal phial.

With a sudden movement, swifter than thought, swifter, it may be, than the will, Adrienne rushed to the table, seized the phial, and applied it eagerly to her lips.

Djalma had hitherto remained on his knees; but he now uttered a terrible cry, made one spring to the drinker’s side, and dragged away the phial, which seemed almost glued to her mouth.



“No matter! I have swallowed as much as you,” said Adrienne, with an air of gloomy triumph.

For an instant, there followed an awful silence. Adrienne and Djalma gazed upon each other, mute, motionless, horror-struck. The young lady was the first to break this mournful silence, and said in a tone which she tried to make calm and steady, “Well! what is there extraordinary in this? You have killed, and death most expiate your crime. It is just. I will not survive you. That also is natural enough. Why look at me thus? This poison has a sharp taste—does it act quickly! Tell me, my Djalma!”

The prince did not answer. Shuddering through all his frame, he looked down upon his hands. Faringhea had told the truth; a slight violet tint appeared already beneath the nails. Death was approaching, slowly, almost insensibly, but not the less certain. Overwhelmed with despair at the thought that Adrienne, too, was about to die, Djalma felt his courage fail him. He uttered a long groan, and hid his face in his hands. His knees shook under him, and he fell down upon the bed, near which he was standing.



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“Already?” cried the young lady in horror, as she threw herself on her knees at Djalma’s feet. “Death already? Do you hide your face from me?”

In her fright, she pulled his hands from before his face. That face was bathed in tears.

“No, not yet,” murmured he, through his sobs. “The poison is slow.”

“Really!” cried Adrienne, with ineffable joy. Then, kissing the hands of Djalma, she added tenderly, “If the poison is slow, why do you weep?”

“For you! for you!” said the Indian, in a heart-rending tone.

“Think not of me,” replied Adrienne, resolutely. “You have killed, and we must expiate the crime. I know not what has taken place; but I swear by our love that you did not do evil for evil’s sake. There is some horrible mystery in all this.”

“On a pretence which I felt bound to believe,” replied Djalma, speaking quickly, and panting for breath, “Faringhea led me to a certain house. Once there, he told me that you had betrayed me. I did not believe him, but I know not what strange dizziness seized upon me—and then, through a half-obscurity, I saw you—”

“Me!”

“No—not you—but a woman resembling you, dressed like you, so that I believed the illusion—and then there came a man—and you flew to meet him—and I—mad with rage—stabbed her, stabbed him, saw them fall—and so came here to die. And now I find you only to cause your death. Oh, misery! misery! that you should die through me!”

And Djalma, this man of formidable energy, began again to weep with the weakness of a child. At sight of this deep, touching, passionate despair, Adrienne, with that admirable courage which women alone possess in love, thought only of consoling Djalma. By an effort of superhuman passion, as the prince revealed to her this infernal plot, the lady’s countenance became so splendid with an expression of love and happiness, that the East Indian looked at her in amazement, fearing for an instant that he must have lost his reason.

“No more tears, my adored!” cried the young lady, exultingly. “No more tears—but only smiles of joy and love! Our cruel enemies shall not triumph!”

“What do you say?”

“They wished to make us miserable. We pity them. Our felicity shall be the envy of the world!”

“Adrienne—bethink you—”



“Oh! I have all my senses about me. Listen to me, my adored! I now understand it all. Falling into a snare, which these wretches spread for you, you have committed murder. Now, in this country, murder leads to infamy, or the scaffold—and to-morrow—to-night, perhaps—you would be thrown into prison. But our enemies have said: ‘A man like Prince Djalma does not wait for infamy—he kills himself. A woman like Adrienne de Cardoville does not survive the disgrace or death of her lover—she prefers to die.’”

“Therefore a frightful death awaits them both,” said the black-robed men; “and that immense inheritance, which we covet—”



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“And for you—so young, so beautiful so innocent—death is frightful, and these monsters triumph!” cried Djalma. “They have spoken the truth!”

“They have lied!” answered Adrienne. “Our death shall be celestial. This poison is slow—and I adore you, my Djalma!”

She spoke those words in a low voice, trembling with passionate love, and, leaning upon Djalma’s knees, approached so near, that he felt her warm breath upon his cheek. As he felt that breath, and saw the humid flame that darted from the large, swimming eyes of Adrienne, whose half opened lips were becoming of a still deeper and brighter hue, the Indian started—his young blood boiled in his veins—he forgot everything—his despair, and the approach of death, which as yet (as with Adrienne), only showed itself in a kind of feverish ardor. His face, like the young girl’s, became once more splendidly beautiful.

“Oh, my lover! my husband! how beautiful you are!” said Adrienne, with idolatry. “Those eyes—that brow—those lips—how I love them!—How many times has the remembrance of your grace and beauty, coupled with your love, unsettled my reason, and shaken my resolves—even to this moment, when I am wholly yours!—Yes, heaven wills that we should be united. Only this morning, I gave to the apostolic man, that was to bless our union, in thy name and mine, a royal gift—a gift, that will bring joy and peace to the heart of many an unfortunate creature. Then what have we to regret, my beloved? Our immortal souls will pass away in a kiss, and ascend, full of love, to that God who is all love!”

“Adrienne!”

“Djalma!”

The light, transparent curtains fell like a cloud over that nuptial and funereal couch. Yes, funereal; for, two hours after, Adrienne and Djalma breathed their last sigh in a voluptuous agony.

CHAPTER LXVI.

A duel to the death.

Adrienne and Djalma died on the 30th of May. The following scene took place on the 31st, the eve of the day appointed for the last convocation of the heirs of Marius de Rennepont. The reader will no doubt remember the room occupied by M. Hardy, in the “house of retreat,” in the Rue de Vaugirard—a gloomy and retired apartment, opening on a dreary little garden, planted with yew-trees, and surrounded by high walls. To reach this chamber, it was necessary to cross two vast rooms, the doors of which, once shut, intercepted all noise and communication from without. Bearing this in mind, we

may go on with our narrative. For the last three or four days, Father d'Aigrigny occupied this apartment. He had not chosen it, but had been induced to accept it, under most plausible pretexts, given him at the instigation of Rodin. It was about noon. Seated in an arm-chair, by the window opening on the little garden, Father d'Aigrigny held in his hand a newspaper, in which he read as follows, under the head of "Paris:"



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“Eleven p.m.—A most horrible and tragical event has just excited the greatest consternation in the quarter of the Rue de Richelieu. A double murder has been committed, on the person of a young man and woman. The girl was killed on the spot, by the stroke of a dagger; hopes are entertained of saving the life of the young man. The crime is attributed to jealousy. The officers of justice are investigating the matter. We shall give full particulars tomorrow.”

When he had read these lines, Father d’Aigrigny threw down the paper and remained in deep thought.

“It is incredible,” said he, with bitter envy, in allusion to Rodin. “He has attained his end. Hardly one of his anticipations has been defeated. This family is annihilated, by the mere play of the passions, good and evil that he has known how to set in motion. He said it would be so. Oh! I must confess,” added Father d’Aigrigny, with a jealous and hateful smile, “that Rodin is a man of rare dissimulation, patience, energy, obstinacy and intelligence. Who would have told a few months ago, when he wrote under my orders, a discreet and humble socius, that he had already conceived the most audacious ambition, and dared to lift his eyes to the Holy See itself? that, thanks to intrigues and corruption, pursued with wondrous ability, these views were not so unreasonable? Nay, that this infernal ambition would soon be realized, were it not that the secret proceedings of this dangerous man have long been as secretly watched?—Ah!” sneered Father d’Aigrigny, with a smile of irony and triumph, “you wish to be a second Sixtus V., do you? And, not content with this audacious pretension, you mean, if successful, to absorb our Company in the Papacy, even as the Sultan has absorbed the Janissaries. Ah! You would make us your stepping-stone to power! And you have thought to humiliate and crush me with your insolent disdain! But patience, patience: the day of retribution approaches. I alone am the depository of our General’s will. Father Caboccini himself does not know that. The fate of Rodin is in my hands. Oh! it will not be what he expects. In this Rennepont affair (which, I must needs confess, he has managed admirably), he thinks to outwit us all, and to work only for himself. But tomorrow—”

Father d’Aigrigny was suddenly disturbed in these agreeable reflections. He heard the door of the next room open, and, as he turned round to see who was coming, the door of the apartment in which he was turned upon its hinges. Father d’Aigrigny started with surprise, and became almost purple. Marshal Simon stood before him. And, behind the marshal, in the shadow of the door, Father d’Aigrigny perceived the cadaverous face of Rodin. The latter cast on him one glance of diabolical delight, and instantly disappeared. The door was again closed, and Father d’Aigrigny and Marshal Simon were left alone together. The father of Rose and Blanche was hardly recognizable. His gray hair had become



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completely white. His pale, thin face had not been shaved for some days. His hollow eyes were bloodshot and restless, and had in them something wild and haggard. He was wrapped in a large cloak, and his black cravat was tied loosely about his neck. In withdrawing from the apartment, Rodin had (as if by inadvertence) double-locked the door on the outside. When he was alone with the Jesuit, the marshal threw back his cloak from his shoulders, and Father d'Aigrigny could see two naked swords, stuck through a silk handkerchief which served him as a belt.

Father d'Aigrigny understood it all. He remembered how, a few days before, Rodin had obstinately pressed him to say what he would do if the marshal were to strike him in the face. There could be no doubt that he, who thought to have held the fate of Rodin in his hands, had been brought by the latter into a fearful peril; for he knew that, the two outer rooms being closed, there was no possibility of making himself heard, and that the high walls of the garden only bordered upon some vacant lots. The first thought which occurred to him, one by no means destitute of probability, was that Rodin, either by his agents at Rome, or by his own incredible penetration, had learned that his fate depended on Father d'Aigrigny, and hoped therefore to get rid of him, by delivering him over to the inexorable vengeance of the father of Rose and Blanche. Without speaking a word, the marshal unbound the handkerchief from his waist, laid the two swords upon the table, and, folding his arms upon his breast, advanced slowly towards Father d'Aigrigny. Thus these two men, who through life had pursued each other with implacable hatred, at length met face to face—they, who had fought in hostile armies, and measured swords in single combat, and one of whom now came to seek vengeance for the death of his children. As the marshal approached, Father d'Aigrigny rose from his seat. He wore that day a black cassock, which rendered still more visible the pale hue, which had now succeeded to the sudden flush on his cheek. For a few seconds, the two men stood face to face without speaking. The marshal was terrific in his paternal despair. His calmness, inexorable as fate, was more impressive than the most furious burst of anger.

“My children are dead,” said he at last, in a slow and hollow tone. “I come to kill you.”

“Sir,” cried Father d'Aigrigny, “listen to me. Do not believe—”

“I must kill you,” resumed the marshal, interrupting the Jesuit; “your hate followed my wife into exile, where she perished. You and your accomplices sent my children to certain death. For twenty years you have been my evil genius. I must have your life, and I will have it.”

“My life belongs, first, to God,” answered Father d'Aigrigny, piously, “and then to who likes to take it.”

“We will fight to the death in this room,” said the marshal; “and, as I have to avenge my wife and children, I am tranquil as to the result.”



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“Sir,” answered Father d’Aigrigny, coldly, “you forget that my profession forbids me to fight. Once I accepted your challenge—but my position is changed since then.”

“Ah!” said the marshal, with a bitter smile; “you refuse to fight because you are a priest?”

“Yes, sir—because I am a priest.”

“So that, because he is a priest, a wretch like you may commit any crime, any baseness, under shelter of his black gown?”

“I do not understand a word of your accusations. In any case, the law is open,” said Father d’Aigrigny, biting his pale lips, for he felt deeply the insult offered by the marshal; “if you have anything to complain of, appeal to that law, before which all are equal.”

Marshal Simon shrugged his shoulders in angry disdain. “Your crimes escape the law—and, could it even reach you, that would not satisfy my vengeance, after all the evil you have done me, after all you have taken from me,” said the marshal; and, at the memory of his children, his voice slightly trembled; but he soon proceeded, with terrible calmness: “You must feel that I now only live for vengeance. And I must have such revenge as is worth the seeking—I must have your coward’s heart palpitating on the point of my sword. Our last duel was play; this will be earnest—oh! you shall see.”

The marshal walked up to the table, where he had laid the two swords. Father d’Aigrigny needed all his resolution to restrain himself. The implacable hate which he had always felt for Marshal Simon, added to these insults, filled him with savage ardor. Yet he answered, in a tone that was still calm: “For the last time, sir, I repeat to you, that my profession forbids me to fight.”

“Then you refuse?” said the marshal, turning abruptly towards him.

“I refuse.”

“Positively?”

“Positively. Nothing on earth should force me to it.”

“Nothing.”

“No, sir; nothing.”

“We shall see,” said the marshal, as his hand fell with its full force on the cheek of Father d’Aigrigny.



The Jesuit uttered a cry of fury; all his blood rushed to his face, so roughly handled; the courage of the man (for he was brave), his ancient military ardor, carried him away; his eyes sparkled, and, with teeth firmly set, and clenched fists, he advanced towards the marshal, exclaiming: "The swords! the swords!"

But suddenly, remembering the appearance of Rodin, and the interest which the latter had in bringing about this encounter, he determined to avoid the diabolical snare laid by his former socius, and so gathered sufficient resolution to restrain his terrible resentment.

To his passing fury succeeded a calm, full of contrition; and, wishing to play his part out to the end, he knelt down, and bowing his head and beating his bosom, repeated: "Forgive me, Lord, for yielding to a movement of rage! and, above all, forgive him who has injured me!"



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In spite of his apparent resignation, the Jesuit's voice was neatly agitated. He seemed to feel a hot iron upon his cheek, for never before in his life, whether as a soldier or a priest, had he suffered such an insult. He had thrown himself upon his knees, partly from religious mummery, and partly to avoid the gaze of the marshal, fearing that, were he to meet his eye, he should not be able to answer for himself, but give way to his impetuous feelings. On seeing the Jesuit kneel down, and on hearing his hypocritical invocation, the marshal, whose sword was in his hand, shook with indignation.

"Stand up, scoundrel!" he said, "stand up, wretch!" And he spurned the Jesuit with his boot.

At this new insult, Father d'Aigrigny leaped up, as if he had been moved by steel springs. It was too much; he could bear no more. Blinded with rage, he rushed to the able, caught up the other sword, and exclaimed, grinding his teeth together: "Ah! you will have blood. Well then! it shall be yours—if possible!"

And the Jesuit, still in all the vigor of manhood, his face purple, his large gray eyes sparkling with hate, fell upon his guard with the ease and skill of a finished swordsman.

"At last!" cried the marshal, as their blades were about to cross.

But once more reflection came to damp the fire of the Jesuit. He remembered how this hazardous duel would gratify the wishes of Rodin, whose fate was in his hands, and whom he hated perhaps even more than the marshal. Therefore, in spite of the fury which possessed him, in spite of his secret hope to conquer in this combat, so strong and healthy did he feel himself, and so fatal had been the effects of grief on the constitution of Marshal Simon, he succeeded in mastering his rage, and, to the amazement of the marshal, dropped the point of his sword, exclaiming: "I am a minister of the Lord, and must not shed blood. Forgive me, heaven! and, oh! forgive my brother also."

Then placing the blade beneath his heel, he drew the hilt suddenly towards him, and broke the weapon into two pieces. The duel was no longer possible. Father d'Aigrigny had put it out of his own power to yield to a new burst of violence, of which he saw the imminent danger. Marshal Simon remained for an instant mute and motionless with surprise and indignation, for he also saw that the duel was now impossible. But, suddenly, imitating the Jesuit, the marshal placed his blade also under his heel, broke it in half, and picking up the pointed end, about eighteen inches in length tore off his black silk cravat, rolled it round the broken part so as to form a handle, and said to Father d'Aigrigny: "Then we will fight with daggers."

Struck with this mixture of coolness and ferocity, the Jesuit exclaimed: "Is this then a demon of hell?"



“No; it is a father, whose children have been murdered,” said the marshal, in a hollow voice, whilst he fitted the blade to his hand, and a tear stood in the eye, that instantly after became fierce and ardent.



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The Jesuit saw that tear. There was in this mixture of vindictive rage and paternal grief something so awful, and yet so sacred, that for the first time in his life Father d'Aigrigny felt fear—cowardly, ignoble fear—fear for his own safety. While a combat with swords was in question, in which skill, agility, and experience are such powerful auxiliaries to courage, his only difficulty had been to repress the ardor of his hate—but when he thought of the combat proposed, body to body, face to face, heart to heart, he trembled, grew pale, and exclaimed: “A butchery with knives?—never!”

His countenance and the accent betrayed his alarm, so that the marshal himself was struck with it, and fearing to lose his revenge, he cried: “After all, he is a coward! The wretch had only the courage or the vanity of a fencer. This pitiful renegade—this traitor to his country—whom I have cuffed, kicked—yes, kicked, most noble marquis!—shame of your ancient house—disgrace to the rank of gentleman, old or new—ah! it is not hypocrisy, it is not calculation, as I at first thought—it is fear! You need the noise of war, and the eyes of spectators to give you courage—”

“Sir—have a care!” said Father d'Aigrigny, stammering through his clenched teeth, for rage and hate now made him forget his fear.—“Must I then spit on you, to make the little blood you have left rise to your face?” cried the exasperated marshal.

“Oh! this is too much! too much!” said the Jesuit, seizing the pointed piece of the blade that lay at his feet.

“It is not enough!” said the marshal, panting for breath. “There, Judas!” and he spat in his face.

“If you will not fight now,” added the marshal, “I will beat you like a dog, base child-murderer!”

On receiving the uttermost insult which can be offered to an already insulted man, Father d'Aigrigny lost all his presence of mind, forgot his interests, his resolutions, his fears, forgot even Rodin—felt only the frenzied ardor of revenge—and, recovering his courage, rejoiced in the prospect of a close struggle, in which his superior strength promised success over the enfeebled frame of the marshal for, in this kind of brutal and savage combat, physical strength offers an immense advantage. In an instant, Father d'Aigrigny had rolled his handkerchief round the broken blade, and rushed upon Marshal Simon, who received the shock with intrepidity. For the short time that this unequal struggle lasted—unequal, for the marshal had since some days been a prey to a devouring fever, which had undermined his strength—the two combatants, mute in their fury, uttered not a word or a cry. Had any one been present at this horrible scene, it would have been impossible for him to tell how they dealt their blows. He would have seen two heads—frightful, livid, convulsed—rising, falling, now here, now there—arms, now stiff as bars of iron, and now twisting like serpents—and, in the midst of the undulation of the blue coat of



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the marshal and the black cassock of the Jesuit, from time to time the sudden gleam of the steel. He would have heard only a dull stamping, and now and then a deep breath. In about two minutes at most, the two adversaries fell, and rolled one over the other. One of them—it was Father d'Aigrigny—contrived to disengage himself with a violent effort, and to rise upon his knees. His arms fell powerless by his side; and then the dying voice of the marshal murmured: "My children! Dagobert!"

"I have killed him," said Father d'Aigrigny, in a weak voice; "but I feel—that I am wounded—to death."

Leaning with one hand on the ground, the Jesuit pressed the other to his bosom. His black cassock was pierced through and through, but the blades, which had served for the combat, being triangular and very sharp, the blood instead of issuing from the wounds, was flowing inwards.

"Oh! I die—I choke," said Father d'Aigrigny, whose features were already changing with the approach of death.

At this moment, the key turned twice in the door, Rodin appeared on the threshold, and, thrusting in his head, he said in a humble and discreet voice: "May I come in?"

At this dreadful irony, Father d'Aigrigny strove to rise, and rush upon Rodin; but he fell back exhausted; the blood was choking him.

"Monster of hell!" he muttered, casting on Rodin a terrible glance of rage and agony. "Thou art the cause of my death."

"I always told you, my dear father, that your old military habits would be fatal to you," answered Rodin with a frightful smile. "Only a few days ago, I gave you warning, and advised you take a blow patiently from this old swordsman—who seems to have done with that work forever, which is well—for the Scripture says: 'All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.' And then this Marshal Simon might have had some claim on his daughter's inheritance. And, between ourselves, my dear father, what was I to do? It was necessary to sacrifice you for the common interest; the rather, that I well knew what you had in pickle for me to-morrow. But I am not so easily caught napping."

"Before I die," said Father d'Aigrigny, in a failing voice, "I will unmask you."

"Oh, no, you will not," said Rodin, shaking his head with a knowing air; "I alone, if you please, will receive your last confession."



“Oh! this is horrible,” moaned Father d’Aigrigny, whose eyes were closing. “May God have mercy on me, if it is not too late!—Alas! at this awful moment, I feel that I have been a great sinner—”

“And, above all, a great fool,” said Rodin, shrugging his shoulders, and watching with cold disdain the dying moments of his accomplice.

Father d’Aigrigny had now but a few minutes more to live. Rodin perceived it, and said: “It is time to call for help.” And the Jesuit ran, with an air of alarm and consternation, into the courtyard of the house.



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Others came at his cries; but, as he had promised, Rodin had only quitted Father d'Aigrigny as the latter had breathed his last sigh.

That evening, alone in his chamber, by the glimmer of a little lamp, Rodin sat plunged in a sort of ecstatic contemplation, before the print representing Sixtus V. The great house-clock struck twelve. At the last stroke, Rodin drew himself up in all the savage majesty of his infernal triumph, and exclaimed: "This is the first of June. There are no more Renneponts!—Methinks, I hear the hour from the clock of St. Peter's at Rome striking!"

CHAPTER LXVII.

A message.

While Rodin sat plunged in ambitious reverie, contemplating the portrait of Sixtus V., good little Father Caboccini, whose warm embraces had so much irritated the first mentioned personage, went secretly to Faringhea, to deliver to him a fragment of an ivory crucifix, and said to him with his usual air of jovial good-nature: "His Excellency Cardinal Malipieri, on my departure from Rome, charged me to give you this only on the 31st of May."

The half-caste, who was seldom affected by anything, started abruptly, almost with an expression of pain. His face darkened, and bending upon the little father a piercing look, he said to him: "You were to add something."

"True," replied Father Caboccini; "the words I was to add are these: 'There is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.'"

"It is well," said the other. Heaving a deep sigh, he joined the fragment of the ivory crucifix to a piece already in his possession; it fitted exactly.

Father Caboccini looked at him with curiosity, for the cardinal had only told him to deliver the ivory fragment to Faringhea, and to repeat the above words. Being somewhat mystified with all this, the reverend father said to the half-caste: "What are you going to do with that crucifix?"

"Nothing," said Faringhea, still absorbed in painful thought.

"Nothing?" resumed the reverend father, in astonishment. "What, then, was the use of bringing it so far?"

Without satisfying his curiosity, Faringhea replied: "At what hour to morrow does Father Rodin go to the Rue Saint Francois?"

"Very early."



“Before leaving home, he will go to say prayers in the chapel?”

“Yes, according to the habit of our reverend fathers.”

“You sleep near him?”

“Being his socius, I occupy the room next to his.”

“It is possible,” said Faringhea, after a moment’s silence, “that the reverend father, full of the great interests which occupy his mind, might forget to go to the chapel. In that case, pray remind him of this pious duty.”

“I shall not fail.”

“Pray do not fail,” repeated Faringhea, anxiously.

“Be satisfied,” said the good little father; “I see that you take great interest in his salvation.”



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“Great interest.”

“It is very praiseworthy in you. Continue as you have begun, and you may one day belong, completely to our Company,” said Father Caboccini, affectionately.

“I am as yet but a poor auxiliary member,” said Faringhea, humbly; “but no one is more devoted to the Society, body and soul. Bowanee is nothing to it.”

“Bowanee! who is that, my good friend?”

“Bowanee makes corpses which rot in the ground. The Society makes corpses which walk about.”

“Ah, yes! Perinde ac cadaver—they were the last words of our great saint, Ignatius de Loyola. But who is this Bowanee?”

“Bowanee is to the Society what a child is to a man,” replied the Asiatic, with growing excitement. “Glory to the Company—glory! Were my father its enemy, I would kill my father. The man whose genius inspires me most with admiration, respect, and terror—were he its enemy, I would kill, in spite of all,” said the half-caste, with an effort. Then, after a moment’s silence, he looked full in Caboccini’s face, and added: “I say this, that you may report my words to Cardinal Malipieri, and beg him to mention them to—”

Faringhea stopped short. “To whom should the cardinal mention your words?” asked Caboccini.

“He knows,” replied the half-caste, abruptly. “Good night!”

“Good-night, my friend! I can only approve of your excellent sentiments with regard to our Company. Alas! it is in want of energetic defenders, for there are said to be traitors in its bosom.”

“For those,” said Faringhea, “we must have no pity.”

“Certainly,” said the good little father; “we understand one another.”

“Perhaps,” said the half-caste. “Do not, at all events, forget to remind Father Rodin to go to chapel to-morrow morning.”

“I will take care of that,” said Father Caboccini.

The two men parted. On his return to the house, Caboccini learned that a courier, only arrived that night from Rome, had brought despatches to Rodin.



CHAPTER LXVIII.

The first of June.

The chapel belonging to the house of the reverend fathers in the Rue de Vaugirard, was gay and elegant. Large panes of stained glass admitted a mysterious light; the altar shone with gold and silver; and at the entrance of this little church, in an obscure corner beneath the organ loft, was a font for holy water in sculptured marble. It was close to this font, in a dark nook where he could hardly be seen, that Faringhea knelt down, early on the 1st of June, as soon indeed as the chapel doors were opened. The half-caste was exceedingly sad. From time to time he started and sighed, as if agitated by a violent internal struggle. This wild, untamable being, possessed with the monomania of evil and destruction, felt, as may be imagined, a profound admiration for



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Rodin, who exercised over him a kind of magnetic fascination. The half-caste, almost a wild beast in human form, saw something supernatural in the infernal genius of Rodin. And the latter, too sagacious not to have discovered the savage devotion of this wretch, had made, as we have seen, good use of him, is bringing about the tragical termination of the loves of Adrienne and Djalma. But what excited to an incredible degree the admiration of Faringhea, was what he knew of the Society of Jesus. This immense, occult power, which undermined the world by its subterraneous ramifications, and reached its ends by diabolical means, had inspired the half-caste with a wild enthusiasm. And if anything in the world surpassed his fanatical admiration for Rodin, it was his blind devotion to the Company of Ignatius de Loyola, which, as he said, could make corpses that walk about. Hid in the shadow of the organ-loft, Faringhea was reflecting deeply on these things, when footsteps were heard, and Rodin entered the chapel, accompanied by his socius, the little one-eyed father.

Whether from absence of mind, or that the shadow of the orange-loft completely concealed the half-caste, Rodin dipped his fingers into the font without perceiving Faringhea, who stood motionless as a statue, though a cold sweat streamed from his brow. The prayer of Rodin was, as may be supposed, short; he was in haste to get to the Rue Saint-Francois. After kneeling down with Father Caboccini for a few seconds, he rose, bowed respectfully to the altar, and returned towards the door, followed by his socius. At the moment Rodin approached the font he perceived the tall figure of the half-caste standing out from the midst of the dark shadow; advancing a little, Faringhea bowed respectfully to Rodin, who said to him, in a low voice; "Come to me at two o'clock."

So saying, Rodin stretched forth his hand to dip it into the holy water; but Faringhea spared him the trouble, by offering him the sprinkling brush, which generally stood in the font.

Pressing between his dirty fingers the damp hairs of the brush, which the half-caste held by the handle, Rodin wetted his thumb and forefinger, and, according to custom, traced the sign of the cross upon his forehead. Then, opening the door of the chapel, he went out, after again repeating to Faringhea: "Come to me at two o'clock."

Thinking he would also make use of the sprinkling-brush, which, Faringhea, still motionless, held with a trembling hand, Father Caboccini stretched out his fingers to reach it, when the half-breed, as if determined to confine his favors to Rodin, hastily withdrew the instrument. Deceived in his expectation, Father Caboccini lost no time in following Rodin, whom he was not to leave that day for a single moment, and, getting into a hackney-coach with him, set out for the Rue Saint-Francois. It is impossible to describe the look which the half breed fixed upon Rodin as the latter quitted the chapel. Left alone in



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the sacred edifice, Faringhea sank upon the stones, half kneeling, half crouching, with his face buried in his hands. As the coach drew near the quarter of the Marais, in which was situated the house of Marius de Rennepont, a feverish agitation, and the devouring impatience of triumph, were visible on the countenance of Rodin. Two or three times he opened his pocketbook, and read and arranged the different certificates of death of the various members of the Rennepont family; and from time to time he thrust his head anxiously from the coach-window, as if he had wished to hasten the slow progress of the vehicle.

The good little father, his socius, did not take his eye off Rodin, and his look had a strange and crafty expression. At last the coach entered the Rue Saint-Francois, and stopped before the iron-studded door of the old house, which had been closed for a century and a half. Rodin sprang from the coach with the agility of a young man, and knocked violently at the door, whilst Father Caboccini, less light of foot, descended more prudently to the ground. No answer was returned to the loud knocking of Rodin. Trembling with anxiety, he knocked again. This time, as he listened attentively, he heard slow steps approaching. They stopped at some distance from the door, which was not yet opened.

“It is keeping one upon red-hot coals,” said Rodin, for he felt as if there was a burning fire in his chest. He again shook the door violently, and began to gnaw his nails according to his custom.

Suddenly the door opened, and Samuel, the Jew guardian, appeared beneath the porch. The countenance of the old man expressed bitter grief. Upon his venerable cheeks were the traces of recent tears, which he strove to dry with his trembling hands, as he opened the door to Rodin.

“Who are you, gentlemen?” said Samuel.

“I am the bearer of a power of attorney from the Abbe Gabriel, the only living representative of the Rennepont family,” answered Rodin, hastily. “This gentleman is my secretary,” added he, pointing to Father Caboccini, who bowed.

After looking attentively at Rodin, Samuel resumed: “I recognize you, sir. Please to follow me.” And the old guardian advanced towards the house in the garden, making a sign to the two reverend fathers to follow.

“That confounded old man kept me so long at the door,” said Rodin to his socius, “that I think I have caught a cold in consequence. My lips and throat are dried up, like parchment baked at the fire.”



“Will you not take something, my dear, good father? Suppose you were to ask this man for a glass of water,” cried the little one-eyed priest, with tender solicitude.

“No, no,” answered Rodin; “it is nothing. I am devoured by impatience. That is all.”

Pale and desolate, Bathsheba, the wife of Samuel, was standing at the door of the apartment she occupied with her husband, in the building next the street. As the Jew passed before her, he said, in Hebrew: “The curtains of the Hall of Mourning?”



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“Are closed.”

“And the iron casket?”

“Is prepared,” answered Bathsheba, also in Hebrew.

After pronouncing these words, completely unintelligible to Rodin and Caboccini, Samuel and Bathsheba exchanged a bitter smile, notwithstanding the despair impressed on their countenances.

Ascending the steps, followed by the two reverend fathers, Samuel entered the vestibule of the house, in which a lamp was burning. Endowed with an excellent local memory, Rodin was about to take the direction of the Red Saloon, in which had been held the first convocation of the heirs, when Samuel stopped him, and said: “It is not that way.”

Then, taking the lamp, he advanced towards a dark staircase, for the windows of the house had not been un-bricked.

“But,” said Rodin, “the last time, we met in a saloon on the ground floor.”

“To-day, we must go higher,” answered Samuel, as he began slowly to ascend the stairs.

“Where to? higher!” said Rodin, following him.

“To the Hall of Mourning,” replied the Jew, and he continued to ascend.

“What is the Hall of Mourning?” resumed Rodin, in some surprise.

“A place of tears and death,” answered the Israelite; and he kept on ascending through the darkness, for the little lamp threw but a faint light around.

“But,” said Rodin, more and more astonished, and stopping short on the stairs, “why go to this place?”

“The money is there,” answered Samuel, and he went on,

“Oh? if the money is there, that alters the case,” replied Rodin; and he made haste to regain the few steps he had lost by stopping.

Samuel continued to ascend, and, at a turn of the staircase, the two Jesuits could see by the pale light of the little lamp, the profile of the old Israelite, in the space left between the iron balustrade and the wall, as he climbed on with difficulty above them. Rodin was struck with the expression of Samuel’s countenance. His black eyes,



generally so calm, sparkled with ardor. His features, usually impressed with a mixture of sorrow, intelligence, and goodness, seemed to grow harsh and stern, and his thin lips wore a strange smile.

“It is not so very high,” whispered Rodin to Caboccini. “and yet my legs ache, and I am quite out of breath. There is a strange throbbing too in my temples.”

In fact, Rodin breathed hard, and with difficulty. To this confidential communication, good little Father Caboccini, in general so full of tender care for his colleague, made no answer. He seemed to be in deep thought.

“Will we soon be there?” said Rodin, impatiently, to Samuel.

“We are there,” replied the Israelite.

“And a good thing too,” said Rodin.

“Very good,” said the Jew.

Stopping in the midst of a corridor, he pointed with the hand in which he held the lamp to a large door from which streamed a faint light. In spite of his growing surprise. Rodin entered resolutely, followed by Father Caboccini and Samuel. The apartment in which these three personage, now found themselves was very large. The daylight only entered from a belvedere in the roof, the four sides of which had been covered with leaden plates, each of which was pierced with seven holes, forming a cross, thus:

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Now, the light being only admitted through these holes, the obscurity would have been complete, had it not been for a lamp, which burned on a large massive slab of black marble, fixed against one of the walls. One would have taken it for a funeral chamber, for it was all hung with black curtains, fringed with white. There was no furniture, save the slab of black marble we have already mentioned. On this slab was an iron casket, of the manufacture of the seventeenth century, admirably adorned with open work, like lace made of metal.

Addressing Rodin, who was wiping his forehead with his dirty handkerchief, and looking round him with surprise, but not fear, Samuel said to him: “The will of the testator, however strange it may appear, is sacred with me, and must be accomplished in all things.”

“Certainly,” said Rodin; “but what are we to do here?”

“You will know presently, sir. You are the representative of the only remaining heir of the Rennepont family, the Abbe Gabriel de Rennepont?”

“Yes, sir, and here are my papers,” replied Rodin.

“To save time,” resumed Samuel, “I will, previous to the arrival of the magistrate, go through the inventory of the securities contained in this casket, which I withdrew yesterday from the custody of the Bank of France.”

“The securities are there?” cried Rodin, advancing eagerly towards the casket.

“Yes, sir,” replied Samuel, “as by the list. Your secretary will call them over, and I will produce each in turn. They can then be replaced in the casket, which I will deliver up to you in presence of the magistrate.”

“All this seems perfectly correct,” said Rodin.

Samuel delivered the list to Father Caboccini, and approaching the casket, touched a spring, which was not seen by Rodin. The heavy lid flew open, and, while Father Caboccini read the names of the different securities, Samuel showed them to Rodin, who returned them to the old Jew, after a careful examination. This verification did not last long, for this immense fortune was all comprised, as we already know, in eight government securities, five hundred thousand francs in bank-note, thirty five thousand francs in gold, and two hundred and fifty francs in silver—making in all an amount of two



hundred and twelve millions, one hundred and seventy-five thousand francs. When Rodin had counted the last of the five hundred bank-notes, of a thousand francs each, he said, as he returned them to Samuel: "It is quite right. Two hundred and twelve millions, one hundred and seventy-five thousand francs!"

He was no doubt almost choked with joy, for he breathed with difficulty, his eyes closed, and he was obliged to lean upon Father Caboccini's arm, as he said to him in an altered voice: "It is singular. I thought myself proof against all such emotions; but what I feel is extraordinary."

The natural paleness of the Jesuit increased so much, and he seemed so much agitated with convulsive movements, that Father Caboccini exclaimed: "My dear father, collect yourself; do not let success overcome you thus."



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Whilst the little one-eyed man was, attending to Rodin, Samuel carefully replaced the securities in the iron casket. Thanks to his unconquerable energy, and to the joy he felt at seeing himself so near the term of his labors, Rodin mastered this attack of weakness, and drawing himself up, calm and proud, he said to Caboccini: "It is nothing. I did not survive the cholera to die of joy on the first of June."

And, though still frightfully pale, the countenance of the Jesuit shone with audacious confidence. But now, when Rodin appeared to be quite recovered, Father Caboccini seemed suddenly transformed. Though short, fat, and one-eyed, his features assumed on the instant so firm, harsh, and commanding an expression, that Rodin recoiled a step as he looked at him. Then Father Caboccini, drawing a paper from his pocket, kissed it respectfully, glanced sternly at Rodin, and read as follows, in a severe and menacing tone:

"On receipt of the present rescript, the Reverend Father Rodin will deliver up all his powers to the Reverend Father Caboccini, who is alone commissioned, with the Reverend Father d'Aigrigny, to receive the inheritance of the Rennepont family, if, in His eternal justice, the Lord should restore this property, of which our Company has been wronged.

"Moreover, on receipt of the present rescript, the Reverend Father Rodin, in charge of a person to be named by the Reverend Father Caboccini, shall be conveyed to our house in the Town of Laval, to be kept in strict seclusion in his cell until further orders."

Then Father Caboccini handed the rescript to Rodin, that the latter might read the signature of the General of the Company. Samuel, greatly interested by this scene, drew a few steps nearer, leaving the casket half-open. Suddenly, Rodin burst into a loud laugh—a laugh of joy, contempt and triumph, impossible to describe. Father Caboccini looked at him with angry astonishment; when Rodin, growing still more imperious and haughty, and with an air of more sovereign disdain than ever, pushed aside the paper with the back of his dirty hand and said: "What is the date of that scribble?"

"The eleventh of May," answered Father Caboccini in amazement.

"Here is a brief, that I received last night from Rome, under date of the eighteenth. It informs me that I am appointed *general of the order*. Read!"

Father Caboccini took the paper, read it, and remained thunderstruck. Then, returning it humbly to Rodin, he respectfully bent his knee before him. Thus seemed the ambitious views of Rodin accomplished. In spite of the hatred and suspicion of that party, of which Cardinal Malipieri was the representative and the chief, Rodin, by address and craft, audacity and persuasion, and in consequence of the high esteem in which his partisans

at Rome held his rare capacity, had succeeded in deposing his General, and in procuring his own elevation to that eminent post. Now,



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according to his calculation, aided by the millions he was about to possess, it would be but one step from that post to the pontifical throne. A mute witness of this scene, Samuel smiled also with an air of triumph, as he closed the casket by means of the spring known only to himself. That metallic sound recalled Rodin from the heights of his mad ambition to the realities of life, and he said to Samuel in a sharp voice: "You have heard? These millions must be delivered to me alone."

He extended his hands eagerly and impatiently towards the casket, as if he would have taken possession of it, before the arrival of the magistrate. Then Samuel in his turn seemed transfigured, and, folding his arms upon his breast, and drawing up his aged form to its full height, he assumed a threatening and imposing air. His eyes flashed with indignation, and he said in a solemn tone: "This fortune—at first the humble remains of the inheritance of the most noble of men, whom the plots of the sons of Loyola drove to suicide—this fortune, which has since become royal in amount, thanks to the sacred probity of three generations of faithful servants—this fortune shall never be the reward of falsehood, hypocrisy and murder. No! the eternal justice of heaven will not allow it."

"On murder? what do you mean, sir?" asked Rodin, boldly.

Samuel made no answer. He stamped his foot, and extended his arm slowly towards the extremity of the apartment. Then Rodin and Father Caboccini beheld an awful spectacle. The draperies on the wall were drawn aside, as if by an invisible hand. Round a funeral vault, faintly illumined-by the bluish light of a silver lamp, six dead bodies were ranged upon black biers, dressed in long black robes. They were: Jacques Rennepont —Francois Hardy—Rose and Blanche Simon—Adrienne and Djalma. They appeared to be asleep. Their eyelids were closed, their hands crossed over their breasts. Father Caboccini, trembling in every limb, made the sign of the cross, and retreating to the opposite wall, buried his face in his hands. Rodin on the contrary, with agitated countenance, staring eyes, and hair standing on end, yielding to an invincible attraction, advanced towards those inanimate forms. One would have said that these last of the Renneponts had only just expired. They seemed to be in the first hour of the eternal sleep.[44]

"Behold those whom thou hast slain!" cried Samuel, in a voice broken with sobs. "Yea! your detestable plots caused their death—and, as they fell one by one, it was my pious care to obtain possession of their poor remains, that they may all repose in the same sepulchre. Oh!—cursed—cursed—cursed—be thou who has killed them! But their spoils shall escape thy murderous hands."

Rodin, still drawn forward in spite of himself, had approached the funeral couch of Djalma. Surmounting his first alarm, the Jesuit, to assure himself that he was not the

sport of frightful dream, ventured to touch the hands of the Asiatic—and found that they were damp and pliant, though cold as ice.

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The Jesuit drew back in horror. For some seconds, he trembled convulsively. But, his first amazement over, reflection returned, and, with reflection came that invincible energy, that infernal obstinacy of character, that gave him so much power. Steadying himself on his legs, drawing his hand across his brow, raising his head, moistening his lips two or three times before he spoke—for his throat and mouth grew ever drier and hotter, without his being able to explain the cause—he succeeded in giving to his features an imperious and ironical expression, and, turning towards Samuel, who wept in silence, he said to him, in a hoarse, guttural voice: “I need not show you the certificates of their death. There they are in person.” And he pointed with his bony hand to the six dead bodies.

At these words of his General, Father Caboccini again made the sign of the cross, as if he had seen a fiend.

“Oh, my God!” cried Samuel; “Thou hast quite abandoned this man. With what a calm look he contemplates his victims!”

“Come, sir!” said Rodin, with a horrid smile; “this is a natural waxwork exhibition, that is all. My calmness proves my innocence—and we had best come at once to business. I have an appointment at two o’clock. So let us carry down this casket.”

He advanced towards the marble slab. Seized with indignation and horror, Samuel threw himself before him, and, pressing with all his might on a knob in the lid of the casket—a knob which yielded to the pressure—he exclaimed: “Since your infernal soul is incapable of remorse, it may perhaps be shaken by disappointed avarice.”

“What does he say?” cried Rodin. “What is he doing?”

“Look!” said Samuel, in his turn assuming an air of savage triumph. “I told you, that the spoils of your victims should escape your murderous hands.”

Hardly had he uttered these words, before through the open-work of the iron casket rose a light cloud of smoke, and an odor as of burnt paper spread itself through the room. Rodin understood it instantly. “Fire!” he exclaimed, as he rushed forward to seize the casket. It had been made fast to the heavy marble slab.

“Yes, fire,” said Samuel. “In a few minutes, of that immense treasure there will remain nothing but ashes. And better so, than that it should belong to you or yours. This treasure is not mine, and it only remains for me to destroy it—since Gabriel de Rennepont will be faithful to the oath he has taken.”

“Help! water! water!” cried Rodin, as he covered the casket with his body, trying in vain to extinguish the flames, which, fanned by the current of air, now issued from the

thousand apertures in the lid; but soon the intensity of the fire diminished, a few threads of bluish smoke alone mounted upwards—and then, all was extinct.



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The work was done! Breathless and faint, Rodin leaned against the marble slab. For the first time in his life, he wept; large tears of rage rolled down his cadaverous cheeks. But suddenly, dreadful pains, at first dull, but gradually augmenting in intensity, seized on him with so much fury, though he employed all his energy to struggle against them, that he fell on his knees, and, pressing his two hands to his chest, murmured with an attempt to smile: "It is nothing. Do not be alarmed. A few spasms—that is all. The treasure is destroyed—but I remain General of the Order. Oh! I suffer. What a furnace!" he added, writhing in agony. "Since I entered this cursed house, I know not what ails me. If—I had not lived on roots—water—bread—which I go myself to buy—I should think—I was poisoned—for I triumph—and Cardinal Malipieri has long arms. Yes—I still triumph—for I will not die—this time no more than the other—I will not die!"

Then, as he stretched out his arms convulsively, he continued: "It is fire that devours my entrails. No doubt, they have tried to poison me. But when? but how?"

After another pause, Rodin again cried out, in a stifled voice: "Help! help me, you that stand looking on—like, spectres!—Help me, I say!"

Horror-struck at this dreadful agony, Samuel and Father Caboccini were unable to stir.

"Help!" repeated Rodin, in a tone of strangulation, "This poison is horrible.—But how—" Then, with a terrific cry of rage, as if a sudden idea had struck him, he exclaimed: "Ha! Faringhea—this morning—the holy water—he knows such subtle poisons. Yes—it is he—he had an interview with Malipieri. The demon!—Oh! it was well played. The Borgias are still the same. Oh! it is all over. I die. They will regret me, the fools!—Oh! hell! hell! The Church knows not its loss—but I burn—help!"

They came to his assistance. Quick steps were heard upon the stairs, and Dr. Baleinier, followed by the Princess de Saint-Dizier, appeared at the entrance of the Hall of Mourning. The princess had learned vaguely that morning the death of Father d'Aigrigny, and had come to question Rodin upon the subject. When this woman, entering the room, suddenly saw the frightful spectacle that offered itself to her view—when she saw Rodin writhing in horrible agony, and, further on, by the light of the sepulchral lamp, those six corpses—and, amongst them, her own niece, and the two orphans whom she had sent to meet their death—she stood petrified with horror, and her reason was unable to withstand the shock. She looked slowly round her, and then raised her arms on high, and burst into a wild fit of laughter. She had gone mad. Whilst Dr. Baleinier supported the head of Rodin, who expired in his arms, Faringhea appeared at the door; remaining in the shade, he cast a ferocious glance at the corpse of the Jesuit. "He would have made himself the chief of the Company of Jesus, to destroy it," said he; "with me, the Company of Jesus stands in the place of Bowanee. I have obeyed the cardinal!"



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[44] Should this appear incredible, we would remind the reader of the marvellous discoveries in the art of embalming—particularly Dr. Gannal's.

EPILOGUE.

CHAPTER I.

Four years after.

Four years had elapsed, since the events we have just related, when Gabriel de Rennepont wrote the following letter to Abbe Joseph Charpentier, curate of the Parish of Saint-Aubin, a hamlet of Sologne:

“Springwater Farm,
“June 2d, 1836.

“Intending to write to you yesterday, my dear Joseph, I seated myself at the little old black table, that you will remember well. My window looks, you know, upon the farmyard, and I can see all that takes place there. These are grave preliminaries, my friend, but I am coming to the point. I had just taken my seat at the table, when, looking from the window, this is what I saw. You, my dear Joseph, who can draw so well, should have been there to have sketched the charming scene. The sun was sinking, the sky serene, the air warm and balmy with the breath of the hawthorn, which, flowering by the side of a little rivulet, forms the edge which borders the yard. Under the large pear-tree, close to the wall of the barn, sat upon the stone bench my adopted father, Dagobert, that brave and honest soldier whom you love so much. He appeared thoughtful, his white head was bowed on his bosom; with absent mind, he patted old Spoil-sport, whose intelligent face was resting on his master's knees. By his side was his wife, my dear adopted mother, occupied with her sewing; and near them, on a stool, sat Angela, the wife of Agricola, nursing her last-born child, while the gentle Magdalen, with the eldest boy in her lap, was occupied in teaching him the letters of the alphabet. Agricola had just returned from the fields, and was beginning to unyoke his cattle, when, struck, like me, no doubt, with this picture, he stood gazing on it for a moment, with his hand still leaning on the yoke, beneath which bent submissive the broad foreheads of his two large black oxen. I cannot express to you, my friend, the enchanting repose of this picture, lighted by the last rays of the sun, here and there broken by the thick foliage. What various and touching types! The venerable face of the soldier—the good, loving countenance of my adopted mother—the fresh beauty of Angela, smiling on her little child—the soft melancholy of the hunchback, now and then pressing her lips to the fair, laughing cheek of Agricola's eldest son—and then Agricola himself, in his manly beauty, which seems to reflect so well the valor and honesty of his heart! Oh, my Friend! in contemplating this assemblage of good, devoted, noble, and loving beings, so



dear to each other, living retired in a little farm of our poor Sologne, my heart rose towards heaven with a feeling of ineffable gratitude. This peace of the family circle—this clear



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evening, with the perfume of the woods and wild flowers wafted on the breeze—this deep silence, only broken by the murmur of the neighboring rill—all affected me with one of these passing fits of vague and sweet emotion, which one feels but cannot express. You well know it, my friend, who, in your solitary walks, in the midst of your immense plains of flowering heath, surrounded by forests of fir trees, often feel your eyes grow moist, without being able to explain the cause of that sweet melancholy, which I, too, have often felt, during those glorious nights passed in the profound solitudes of America.

“But, alas! a painful incident disturbed the serenity of the picture. Suddenly I heard Dagobert’s wife say to him: ‘My dear—you are weeping!’

“At these words, Agricola, Angela, and Magdalen gathered round the soldier. Anxiety was visible upon every face. Then, as he raised his head abruptly, one could see two large tears trickle down his cheek to his white moustache. ‘It is nothing, my children,’ said he, in a voice of emotion ‘it is nothing. Only, to-day is the first of June—and this day four years—’ He could not complete the sentence; and, as he raised his hands to his eyes, to brush away the tears, we saw that he held between his fingers a little bronze chain, with a medal suspended to it. That is his dearest relic. Four years ago, almost dying with despair at the loss of the two angels, of whom I have so often spoken to you, my friend, he took from the neck of Marshal Simon, brought home dead from a fatal duel, this chain and medal which his children had so long worn. I went down instantly, as you may suppose, to endeavor to soothe the painful remembrances of this excellent man; gradually, he grew calmer, and the evening was passed in a pious and quiet sadness.

“You cannot imagine, my friend, when I returned to my chamber, what cruel thoughts came to my mind, as I recalled those past events, from which I generally turn away with fear and horror. Then I saw once more the victims of those terrible and mysterious plots, the awful depths of which have never been penetrated thanks to the death of Father d’A. and Father R., and the incurable madness of Madame de St.-D., the three authors or accomplices of the dreadful deeds. The calamities occasioned by them are irreparable; for those who were thus sacrificed to a criminal ambition, would have been the pride of humanity by the good they would have done. Ah, my friend! if you had known those noble hearts; if you had known the projects of splendid charity, formed by that young lady, whose heart was so generous, whose mind so elevated, whose soul so great! On the eve of her death, as a kind of prelude to her magnificent designs, after a conversation, the subject of which I must keep secret, even from you, she put into my hands a considerable sum, saying, with her usual grace and goodness: ‘I have been threatened with ruin, and it might perhaps come. What I now confide to you will



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at least be safe—safe—for those who suffer. Give much—give freely—make as many happy hearts as you can. My happiness shall have a royal inauguration!!' I do not know whether I ever told you, my friend, that, after those fatal events, seeing Dagobert and his wife reduced to misery, poor 'Mother Bunch' hardly able to earn a wretched subsistence, Agricola soon to become a father, and myself deprived of my curacy, and suspended by my bishop, for having given religious consolations to a Protestant, and offered up prayers at the tomb of an unfortunate suicide—I considered myself justified in employing a small portion of the sum intrusted to me by Mdlle. de Cardoville in the purchase of this farm in Dagobert's name.

"Yes, my friend, such is the origin of my fortune. The farmer to whom these few acres formerly belonged, gave us the rudiments of our agricultural education, and common sense, and the study of a few good practical books, completed it. From an excellent workman, Agricola has become an equally excellent husbandman; I have tried to imitate him, and have put my hand also to the plough there is no derogation in it, for the labor which provides food for man is thrice hallowed, and it is truly to serve and glorify God, to cultivate and enrich the earth He has created. Dagobert, when his first grief was a little appeased, seemed to gather new vigor from this healthy life of the fields; and, during his exile in Siberia, he had already learned to till the ground. Finally, my dear adopted mother and sister, and Agricola's good wife, have divided between them the household cares; and God has blessed this little colony of people, who, alas! have been sorely tried by misfortune, and who now only ask of toil and solitude, a quiet, laborious, innocent life, and oblivion of great sorrows. Sometimes, in our winter evenings, you have been able to appreciate the delicate and charming mind of the gentle "Mother Bunch," the rare poetical imagination of Agricola, the tenderness of his mother, the good sense of his father, the exquisite natural grace of Angela. Tell me, my friend, was it possible to unite more elements of domestic happiness? What long evenings have we passed round the fire of crackling wood, reading, or commenting on a few immortal works, which always warm the heart, and enlarge the soul! What sweet talk have we had, prolonged far into the night! And then Agricola's pastorals, and the timid literary confidences of Magdalen! And the fresh, clear voice of Angela, joined to the deep manly tones of Agricola, in songs of simple melody! And the old stories of Dagobert, so energetic and picturesque in their warlike spirit! And the adorable gayety of the children, in their sports with good old Spoil-sport, who rather lends himself to their play than takes part in it—for the faithful, intelligent creature seems always to be looking for somebody, as Dagobert says—and he is right. Yes, the dog also regrets those two angels, of whom he was the devoted guardian!



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“Do not think, my friend, that our happiness makes us forgetful. No, no; not a day passes without our repeating, with pious and tender respect, those names so dear to our heart. And these painful memories, hovering forever about us, give to our calm and happy existence that shade of mild seriousness which struck you so much. No doubt, my friend, this kind of life, bounded by the family circle, and not extending beyond, for the happiness or improvement of our brethren, may be set down as selfish; but, alas! we have not the means—and though the poor man always finds a place at our frugal table, and shelter beneath our roof, we must renounce all great projects of fraternal action. The little revenue of our farm just suffices to supply our wants. Alas! when I think over it, notwithstanding a momentary regret, I cannot blame my resolution to keep faithfully my sacred oath, and to renounce that great inheritance, which, alas! had become immense by the death of my kindred. Yes, I believe I performed a duty, when I begged the guardian of that treasure to reduce it to ashes, rather than let it fall into the hands of people, who would have made an execrable use of it, or to perjure myself by disputing a donation which I had granted freely, voluntarily, sincerely. And yet, when I picture to myself the realization of the magnificent views of—my ancestor—an admirable Utopia, only possible with immense resources—and which Mdlle. de Cardoville hoped to carry into execution, with the aid of M. Francois Hardy, of Prince Djalma, of Marshal Simon and his daughters, and of myself—when I think of the dazzling focus of living forces, which such an association would have been, and of the immense influence it might have had on the happiness of the whole human race—my indignation and horror, as an honest man and a Christian, are excited against that abominable Company, whose black plots nipped in their bud all those great hopes, which promised so much for futurity. What remains now of all these splendid projects? Seven tombs. For my grave also is dug in that mausoleum, which Samuel has erected on the site of the house in the Rue Neuve-Saint-Francois, and of which he remains the keeper—faithful to the end!

“I had written thus far, my friend, when I received your letter. So, after having forbidden you to see me, your bishop now orders that you shall cease to correspond with me. Your touching, painful regrets have deeply moved me, my friend. Often have we talked together of ecclesiastical discipline, and of the absolute power of the bishops over us, the poor working clergy, left to their mercy without remedy. It is painful, but it is the law of the church, my friend, and you have sworn to observe it. Submit as I have submitted. Every engagement is binding upon the man of honor! My poor, dear Joseph! would that you had the compensations which remained to me, after the rupture of ties that I so much value. But I know too well what you must feel—I cannot go on I find it impossible to continue this letter, I might be bitter against those whose orders we are bound to respect. Since it must be so, this letter shall be my last. Farewell, my friend! farewell forever. My heart is almost broken.



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“Gabriel de Rennepont.”

CHAPTER II.

The redemption.

Day was about to dawn. A rosy light, almost imperceptible, began to glimmer in the east; but the stars still shone, sparkling with radiance, upon the azure of the zenith. The birds awoke beneath the fresh foliage of the great woods; and, with isolated warblings, sang the prelude of their morning-concert. A light mist rose from the high grass, bathed in nocturnal dew, while the calm and limpid waters of a vast lake reflected the whitening dawn in their deep, blue mirror. Everything promised one of those warm and joyous days, that belong to the opening of summer.

Half-way up the slope of a hill, facing the east, a tuft of old, moss grown willows, whose rugged bark disappeared beneath the climbing branches of wild honeysuckle and harebells, formed a natural harbor; and on their gnarled and enormous roots, covered with thick moss, were seated a man and a woman, whose white hair, deep wrinkles, and bending figures, announced extreme old age. And yet this woman had only lately been young and beautiful, with long black hair overshadowing her pale forehead. And yet this man had, a short time ago, been still in the vigor of his age. From the spot where this man and woman were reposing, could be seen the valley, the lake, the woods, and, soaring above the woods, the blue summit of a high mountain, from behind which the sun was about to rise. This picture, half veiled by the pale transparency of the morning twilight, was pleasing, melancholy, and solemn.

“Oh, my sister!” said the old man to the woman, who was reposing with him beneath the rustic arbor formed by the tuft of willow-trees; “oh, my sister! how many times during the centuries in which the hand of the Lord carried us onward, and, separated from each other, we traversed the world from pole to pole—how many times we have witnessed this awakening of nature with a sentiment of incurable grief!—Alas! it was but another day of wandering—another useless day added to our life, since it brought death no nearer!”

“But now what happiness, oh, my brother! since the Lord has had mercy on us, and, with us, as with all other creatures, every returning day is a step nearer to the grave. Glory to Him! yes, glory!”

“Glory to Him, my sister! for since yesterday, when we again met, I feel that indescribable languor which announces the approach of death.”



“Like you, my brother, I feel my strength, already shaken, passing away in a sweet exhaustion. Doubtless, the term of our life approaches. The wrath of the Lord is satisfied.”

“Alas, my sister! doubtless also, the last of my doomed race, will, at the same time, complete our redemption by his death; for the will of heaven is manifest, that I can only be pardoned, when the last of my family shall have disappeared from the face of the earth. To him, holiest amongst the holiest—was reserved the favor of accomplishing this end he who has done so much for the salvation of his brethren!”



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“Oh, yes, my brother! he who has suffered so much, and without complaining, drunk to the dregs the bitter cup of woe—he, the minister of the Lord, who has been his Master’s image upon earth—he was fitted for the last instrument of this redemption!”

“Yes, for I feel, my sister, that, at this hour, the last of my race, touching victim of slow persecution, is on the point of resigning his angelic soul to God. Thus, even to the end, have I been fatal to my doomed family. Lord, if Thy mercy is great, Thy anger is great likewise!”

“Courage and hope, my brother! Think how after the expiration cometh pardon, and pardon is followed by a blessing. The Lord punished, in you and your posterity, the artisan rendered wicked by misfortune and injustice. He said to you: ‘Go on! without truce or rest—and your labor shall be vain—and every evening, throwing yourself on the hard ground, you shall be no nearer to the end of your eternal course!’—And so, for centuries, men without pity have said to the artisan: ‘Work! work! work! without truce or rest—and your labor shall be fruitful for all others, but fruitless for yourself—and every evening, throwing yourself on the hard ground, you shall be no nearer to happiness and repose; and your wages shall only suffice to keep you alive in pain, privation, and poverty!’”

“Alas! alas! will it be always thus?”

“No, no, my brother! and instead of weeping over your lost race, rejoice for them—since their death was needed for your redemption, and in redeeming you, heaven will redeem the artisan, cursed and feared by those—who have laid on him the iron yoke. Yes, my brother! the time draweth nigh—heaven’s mercy will not stop with us alone. Yes, I tell you; in us will be rescued both the *woman* and the *slave* of these modern ages. The trial has been hard, brother; it has lasted throughout eighteen centuries; but it will last no longer. Look, my brother! see that rosy light, there in the east, gradually spreading over the firmament! Thus will rise the sun of the new emancipation—peaceful, holy, great, salutary, fruitful, filling the world with light and vivifying heat, like the day-star that will soon appear in heaven!”

“Yes, yes, my sister! I feel it. Your words are prophetic. We shall close our heavy eyes just as we see the aurora of the day of deliverance—a fair, a splendid day, like that which is about to dawn. Henceforth I will only shed tears of pride and glory for those of my race, who have died the martyrs of humanity, sacrificed by humanity’s eternal enemies—for the true ancestors of the sacrilegious wretches, who blaspheme the name of Jesus by giving it to their Company, were the false Scribes and Pharisees, whom the Saviour cursed!—Yes! glory to the descendants of my family, who have been the last martyrs offered up by the accomplices of all slavery and all despotism, the pitiless enemies of those who wish to think, and



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not to suffer in silence—of those that would feign enjoy, as children of heaven, the gifts which the Creator has bestowed upon all the human family. Yes, the day approaches—the end of the reign of our modern Pharisees—the false priests, who lend their sacrilegious aid to the merciless selfishness of the strong against the weak, by daring to maintain in the face of the exhaustless treasures of the creation, that God has made man for tears, and sorrow, and suffering—the false priests, who are the agents of all oppression, and would bow to the earth, in brutish and hopeless humiliation, the brow of every creature. No, no! let man lift his head proudly! God made him to be noble and intelligent free and happy.”

“Oh, my brother! your words also are prophetic. Yes, yes! the dawn of that bright day approaches, even as the dawn of the natural day which, by the mercy of God, will be our last on earth.”

“The last, my sister; for a strange weakness creeps over me, all matter seems dissolving in me, and my soul aspires to mount to heaven.”

“Mine eyes are growing dim, brother; I can scarcely see that light in the east, which lately appeared so red.”

“Sister! it is through a confused vapor that I now see the valley—the lake—the woods. My strength fails me.”

“Blessed be God, brother! the moment of eternal rest is at hand.”

“Yes, it comes, my sister! the sweetness of the everlasting sleep takes possession of my senses.”

“Oh, happiness! I am dying—”

“These eyes are closing, sister!”

“We are then forgiven!”

“Forgiven!”

“Oh, my brother! may this Divine redemption extend to all those who suffer upon the earth!”

“Die in peace, my sister! The great day has dawned—the sun is rising—behold!”

“Blessed be God!”



“Blessed be God!”

And at the moment when those two voices ceased forever, the sun rose radiant and dazzling, and deluged the valley with its beams.

To M. C—P—.

To you, my friend, I dedicated this book. To inscribe it with your name, was to assume an engagement that, in the absence of talent, it should be at least conscientious, sincere, and of a salutary influence, however limited. My object is attained. Some select hearts, like yours, my friend, have put into practice the legitimate association of labor, capital, and intelligence, and have already granted to their workmen a proportionate share in the profits of their industry. Others have laid the foundations of Common Dwelling-houses, and one of the chief capitalists of Hamburg has favored me with his views respecting an establishment of this kind, on the most gigantic scale.

As for the dispersion of the members of the Company of Jesus, I have taken less part in it than other enemies of the detestable doctrines of Loyola, whose influence and authority were far greater than mine.

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Adieu, my friend. I could have wished this work more worthy of you; but you are indulgent, and will at least give me credit for the intentions which dictated it.

Believe me, Yours truly,

Eugene Sue.

Paris, 25th August, 1845. Paris, 25th August, 1845.