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The Wandering Jew -- Volume 03 by Eugène Sue

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The Wandering Jew -- Volume 03

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CHAPTER XXXVI.

A female Jesuit.

During the preceding scenes which occurred in the Pompadour rotunda, occupied by Miss de Cardoville, other events took place in the residence of the Princess Saint-Dizier. The elegance and sumptuousness of the former dwelling presented a strong contrast to the gloomy interior of the latter, the first floor of which was inhabited by the princess, for the plan of the ground floor rendered it only fit for giving parties; and, for a long time past, Madame de Saint-Dizier had renounced all worldly splendors. The gravity of her domestics, all aged and dressed in black; the profound silence which reigned in her abode, where everything was spoken, if it could be called speaking, in an undertone; and the almost monastic regularity and order of this immense mansion, communicated to everything around the princess a sad and chilling character. A man of the world, who joined great courage to rare independence of spirit, speaking of the princess (to whom Adrienne de Cardoville went, according to her expression, to fight a pitched battle), said of her as follows: "In order to avoid having Madame de Saint-Dizier for an enemy, I, who am neither bashful nor cowardly, have, for the first time in my life, been both a noodle and a coward." This man spoke sincerely. But Madame de Saint-Dizier had not all at once arrived at this high degree of importance.

Some words are necessary for the purpose of exhibiting distinctly some phases in the life of this dangerous and implacable woman who, by her affiliation with the Order of Jesuits, had acquired an occult and formidable power. For there is something even more menacing than a Jesuit: it is a Jesuits; and, when one has seen certain circles, it becomes evident that there exist, unhappily, many of those affiliated, who, more or less, uniformly dress (for the lay members of the Order call themselves "Jesuits of the short robe").

Madame de Saint-Dizier, once very beautiful, had been, during the last years of the Empire, and the early years of the Restoration, one of the most fashionable women of Paris, of a stirring, active, adventurous, and commanding spirit, of cold heart, but lively imagination. She was greatly given to amorous adventures, not from tenderness of heart, but from a passion for intrigue, which she loved as men love play---for the sake of the emotions it excites. Unhappily, such had always been the blindness or the carelessness of her husband, the Prince of Saint-Dizier (eldest brother of the Count of Rennepont and Duke of Cardoville, father of Adrienne), that during his life he had never said one word that could make it be thought that he suspected the actions of his wife. Attaching herself to Napoleon, to dig a mine under the feet of the Colossus, that design at least afforded emotions sufficient to gratify the humor of the most insatiable. During some time, all went well. The princess was beautiful and spirited, dexterous and false, perfidious and seductive. She was surrounded by fanatical adorers, upon whom she played off a kind of ferocious coquetry, to induce them to run their heads into grave conspiracies. They hoped to resuscitate the Fonder party, and carried on a very active secret correspondence with some influential personages abroad, well known for their hatred against the emperor and France. Hence arose her first epistolary relations with the Marquis d'Aigrigny, then colonel in the Russian service and aide-de-camp to General Moreau. But one day all these petty intrigues were discovered. Many knights of Madame de Saint-Dizier were sent to Vincennes; but the emperor, who might have punished her terribly, contented himself with exiling the princess to one of her estates near Dunkirk.

Upon the Restoration, the persecutions which Madame de Saint-Dizier had suffered for the Good Cause were entered to her credit, and she acquired even then very considerable influence, in spite of the lightness of her behavior. The Marquis d'Aigrigny, having entered the military service of France, remained there. He was handsome, and of fashionable manners and address. He had corresponded and conspired with the princess, without knowing her; and these circumstances necessarily led to a close connection between them.

Excessive self-love, a taste for exciting pleasures, aspirations of hatred, pride, and lordliness, a species of evil sympathy, the perfidious attraction of which brings together perverse natures without mingling them, had made of the princess and the Marquis accomplices rather than lovers. This connection, based upon selfish and bitter feelings, and upon the support which two characters of this dangerous temper could lend to each other against a world in which their spirit of intrigue, of gallantry, and of contempt had made them many enemies, this connection endured till the moment when, after his duel with General Simon, the Marquis entered a religious house, without any one understanding the cause of his unexpected and sudden resolution.

The princess, having not yet heard the hour of her conversion strike, continued to whirl round the vortex of the world with a greedy, jealous, and hateful ardor, for she saw that the last years of her beauty were dying out.

An estimate of the character of this woman may be formed from the following fact:

Still very agreeable, she wished to close her worldly and volatile career with some brilliant and final triumph, as a great actress knows the proper time to withdraw from the stage so as to leave regrets behind. Desirous of offering up this final incense to her own vanity, the princess skillfully selected her victims. She spied out in the world a young couple who idolized each other; and, by dint of cunning and address, she succeeded in taking away the lover from his mistress, a charming woman of eighteen, by whom he was adored. This triumph being achieved, Madame Saint-Dizier retired from the fashionable world in the full blaze of her exploit. After many long conversations with the Abbe Marquis d'Aigrigny, who had become a renowned preacher, she departed suddenly from Paris, and spent two years upon her estate near Dunkirk, to which she took only one of her female attendants, *viz.*, Mrs. Grivois.

When the princess afterwards returned to Paris, it was impossible to recognize the frivolous, intriguing, and dissipated woman she had formerly been. The metamorphosis was as complete as it was extraordinary and even startling. Saint-Dizier House, heretofore open to the banquets and festivals of every kind of pleasure, became gloomily silent and

austere. Instead of the world of elegance and fashion, the princess now received in her mansion only women of ostentatious piety, and men of consequence, who were remarkably exemplary by the extravagant rigor of their religious and monarchical principles. Above all, she drew around her several noted members of the higher orders of the clergy. She was appointed patroness of a body of religious females. She had her own confessor, chaplin, almoner, and even spiritual director; but this last performed his functions in partibus. The Marquis-Abbe d'Aigrigny continued in reality to be her spiritual guide; and it is almost unnecessary to say that for a long time past their mutual relations as to flirting had entirely ceased.

This sudden and complete conversion of a gay and distinguished woman, especially as it was loudly trumpeted forth, struck the greater number of persons with wonder and respect. Others, more discerning, only smiled.

A single anecdote, from amongst a thousand, will suffice to show the alarming influence and power which the princess had acquired since her affiliation with the Jesuits. This anecdote will also exhibit the deep, vindictive, and pitiless character of this woman, whom Adrienne de Cardoville had so imprudently made herself ready to brave.

Amongst the persons who smiled more or less at the conversion of Madame de Saint-Dizier were the young and charming couple whom she had so cruelly disunited before she quitted forever the scenes of revelry in which she had lived. The young couple became more impassioned and devoted to each other than ever; they were reconciled and married, after the passing storm which had hurled them asunder; and they indulged in no other vengeance against the author of their temporary infelicity than that of mildly jesting at the pious conversion of the woman who had done them so much injury.

Some time after, a terrible fatality overtook the loving pair. The husband, until then blindly unsuspecting, was suddenly inflamed by anonymous communications. A dreadful rupture ensued, and the young wife perished.

As for the husband, certain vague rumors, far from distinct, yet pregnant with secret meanings, perfidiously contrived, and a thousand times more detestable than formal accusations, which can, at least, be met and destroyed, were strewn about him with so much perseverance, with a skill so diabolical, and by means and ways so very various, that his best friends, by little and little, withdrew themselves from him, thus yielding to the slow, irresistible influence of that incessant whispering and buzzing, confused as indistinct, amounting to some such results as this-"Well! you know!" says one.

"No!" replies another.

"People say very vile things about him."

"Do they? really! What then?"

"I don't know! Bad reports! Rumors grievously affecting his honor!"

"The deuce! That's very serious. It accounts for the coldness with which he is now everywhere received!"

"I shall avoid him in future!"

"So will I," *etc.*

Such is the world, that very often nothing more than groundless surmises are necessary to brand a man whose very, happiness may have incurred envy. So it was with the gentleman of whom we speak. The unfortunate man, seeing the

void around him extending itself,--feeling (so to speak) the earth crumbling from beneath his feet, knew not where to find or grasp the impalpable enemy whose blows he felt; for not once had the idea occurred to him of suspecting the princess, whom he had not seen since his adventure with her. Anxiously desiring to learn why he was so much shunned and despised, he at length sought an explanation from an old friend; but he received only a disdainfully evasive answer; at which, being exasperated, he demanded satisfaction. His adversary replied---"If you can find two persons of our acquaintance, I will fight you!" The unhappy man could not find one!

Finally, forsaken by all, without having ever obtained an explanation of the reason for forsaking him---suffering keenly for the fate of the wife whom he had lost, he became mad with grief, rage, and despair, and killed himself.

On the day of his death, Madame de Saint-Dizier remarked that it was fit and necessary that one who had lived so shamefully should come to an equally shameful end, and that he who had so long jested at all laws, human and divine, could not seemly otherwise terminate his wretched life than by perpetrating a last crime---suicide! And the friends of Madame de Saint-Dizier hawked about and everywhere repeated these terrible words with a contrite air, as if beatified and convinced! But this was not all. Along with chastisements there were rewards.

Observant people remarked that the favorites of the religious clan of Madame de Saint-Dizier rose to high distinction with singular rapidity. The virtuous young men, such as were religiously attentive to tiresome sermons, were married to rich orphans of the Sacred Heart Convents, who were held in reserve for the purpose; poor young girls, who, learning too late what it is to have a pious husband selected and imposed upon them by a set of devotees, often expiated by very bitter tears the deceitful favor of thus being admitted into a world of hypocrisy and falsehood, in which they found themselves strangers without support, crushed by it if they dared to complain of the marriages to which they had been condemned.

In the parlor of Madame de Saint-Dizier were appointed prefects, colonels, treasurers, deputies, academicians, bishops and peers of the realm, from whom nothing more was required in return for the all-powerful support bestowed upon them, but to wear a pious gloss, sometimes publicly take the communion, swear furious war against everything impious or revolutionary,---and above all, correspond confidentially upon "different subjects of his choosing" with the Abbe d'Aigrigny,---an amusement, moreover, which was very agreeable; for the abbe was the most amiable man in the world, the most witty, and above all, the most obliging. The following is an historical fact, which requires the bitter and vengeful irony of Moliere or Pascal to do it justice.

During the last year of the Restoration, there was one of the mighty dignitaries of the court a firm and independent man, who did not make profession (as the holy fathers call it), that is, who did not communicate at the altar. The splendor amid which he moved was calculated to give the weight of a very injurious example to his indifference. The Abbe-Marquis d'Aigrigny was therefore despatched to him; and he knowing the honorable and elevated character of the non communicant, thought that if he could only bring him to profess by any means (whatever the means might be) the effect would be what was desired. Like a man of intellect, the abbe prized the dogma but cheaply himself. He only spoke of the suitability of the step, and of the highly salutary example which the resolution to adopt it would afford to the public.

"M. Abbe," replied the person sought to be influenced, "I have a greater respect for religion than you have. I should consider it an infamous mockery to go to the communion table without feeling the proper conviction."

"Nonsense! you inflexible man! you frowning Alcestes," said the Marquis Abbe, smiling slyly. "Your profits and your scruples will go together, believe me, by listening to me. In short, we shall manage to make it a *blank communion* for you; for after all, what is it that we ask?---only the *appearance*!"

Now, a *blank communion* means breaking an unconsecrated wafer!

The Abbe-Marquis retired with his offers, which were rejected with indignation;--but then, the refractory man was dismissed from his place at court. This was but a single isolated fact. Woe to all who found themselves opposed to the interest and principles of Madame de Saint Dizier or her friends! Sooner or later, directly or indirectly, they felt themselves cruelly stabbed, generally immediately--some in their dearest connections, others in their credit, some in their honor; others in their official functions; and all by secret action, noiseless, continuous, and latent, in time becoming a terrible and mysterious dissolvent, which invisibly undermined reputations, fortunes, positions the most solidly established, until the moment when all sunk forever into the abyss, amid the surprise and terror of the beholders.

It will now be conceived how under the Restoration the Princess de Saint Dizier had become singularly influential and formidable. At the time of the Revolution of July (1830) she had "rallied," and, strangely enough, by preserving some relation of family and of society with persons faithful to the worship of decayed monarchy, people still attributed to the princess much influence and power. Let us mention, at last, that the Prince of Saint-Dizier, having died many years since, his very large personal fortune had descended to his younger brother, the father of Adrienne de Cardoville; and he, having died eighteen months ago, that young lady found herself to be the last and only representative of that branch of the family of the Rennepons.

The Princess of Saint-Dizier awaited her niece in a very large room, rendered dismal by its gloomy green damask. The chairs, *etc.*, covered with similar stuff, were of carved ebony. Paintings of scriptural and other religious subjects, and an ivory crucifix thrown up from a background of black velvet, contributed to give the apartment a lugubrious and austere aspect.

Madame de Saint-Dizier, seated before a large desk, has just finished putting the seals on numerous letters; for she had a very extensive and very diversified correspondence. Though then aged about forty-five she was still fair. Advancing years had somewhat thickened her shape, which formerly of distinguished elegance, was still sufficiently handsome to be seen to advantage under the straight folds of her black dress. Her headdress, very simple, decorated with gray ribbons, allowed her fair sleek hair to be seen arranged in broad bands. At first look, people were struck with her dignified though unassuming appearance; and would have vainly tried to discover in her physiognomy, now marked with repentant calmness, any trace of the agitations of her past life. So naturally grave and reserved was she, that people could not believe her the heroine of so many intrigues and adventures and gallantry. Moreover, if by chance she ever heard any lightness of conversation, her countenance, since she had come to believe herself a kind of "mother in the Church," immediately expressed candid but grieved astonishment, which soon changed into an air of offended chastity and disdainful pity.

For the rest, her smile, when requisite, was still full of grace, and even of the seducing and resistless sweetness of seeming good-nature. Her large blue eyes, on fit occasions, became affectionate and caressing. But if any one dared to wound or ruffle her pride, gainsay her orders or harm her interests, her countenance, usually placid and serene, betrayed a cold but implacable malignity. Mrs. Grivois entered the cabinet, holding in her hand Florine's report of the manner in which Adrienne de Cardoville had spent the morning.

Mrs. Grivois had been about twenty years in the service of Madame de Saint-Dizier. She knew everything that a lady's-maid could or ought to have known of her mistress in the days of her sowing of wild (being a lady) flowers. Was it from choice that the princess had still retained about her person this so-well-informed witness of the numerous follies of her youth? The world was kept in ignorance of the motive; but one thing was evident, *viz.*, that Mrs. Grivois enjoyed great privileges under the princess, and was treated by her rather as a companion than as a tiring woman.

"Here are Florine's notes, madame," said Mrs. Grivois, giving the paper to the princess.

"I will examine them presently," said the princess; "but tell me, is my niece coming? Pending the conference at which she is to be present, you will conduct into her house a person who will soon be here, to inquire for you by my desire."

"Well, madame?"

"This man will make an exact inventory of everything contained in Adrienne's residence. You will take care that nothing is omitted; for that is of very great importance."

"Yes, madame. But should Georgette or Hebe make any opposition?"

"There is no fear; the man charged with taking the inventory is of such a stamp, that when they know him, they will not dare to oppose either his making the inventory, or his other steps. It will be necessary not to fail, as you go along with him, to be careful to obtain certain peculiarities destined to confirm the reports which you have spread for some time past."

"Do not have the slightest doubt, madame. The reports have all the consistency of truth."

"Very soon, then, this Adrienne, so insolent and so haughty, will be crushed and compelled to pray for pardon; and from me!"

An old footman opened both of the folding doors, and announced the Marquis-Abbe d'Aigrigny.

"If Miss de Cardoville present herself," said the princess to Mrs. Grivois, "you will request her to wait an instant."

"Yes, madame," said the duenna, going out with the servant.

Madame de Saint-Dizier and D'Aigrigny remained alone.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The plot.

The Abbe-Marquis d'Aigrigny, as the reader has easily divined, was the person already seen in the Rue du Milieu-des-Ursins; whence he had departed from Rome, in which city he had remained about three months. The marquis was dressed in deep mourning, but with his usual elegance. His was not a priestly robe; his black coat, and his waistcoat, tightly gathered in at the waist, set off to great advantage the elegance of his figure: his black cassimere pantaloons disguised his feet, exactly fitted with lace boots, brilliantly polished. And all traces of his tonsure disappeared in the midst of the slight baldness which whitened slightly the back part of his head. There was nothing in his entire costume, or aspect, that revealed the priest, except, perhaps, the entire absence of beard, the more remarkable upon so manly a countenance. His chin, newly shaved, rested on a large and elevated black cravat, tied with a military ostentation which reminded the beholder, that this abbe-marquis this celebrated preacher---now one of the most active and influential chiefs of his order, had commanded a regiment of hussars upon the Restoration, and had fought in aid of the Russians against France.

Returned to Paris only this morning, the marquis had not seen the princess since his mother, the Dowager Marchioness d'Aigrigny, had died near Dunkirk, upon an estate belonging to Madame de Saint-Dizier, while vainly calling for her son to alleviate her last moments; but the order to which M. d'Aigrigny had thought fit to sacrifice the most sacred feeling and duties of nature, having been suddenly transmitted to him from Rome, he had immediately set out for that city;

though not without hesitation, which was remarked and denounced by Rodin; for the love of M. d'Aigrigny for his mother had been the only pure feeling that had invariably distinguished his life.

When the servant had discreetly withdrawn with Mrs. Grivois, the marquis quickly approached the princess, held out his hand to her, and said with a voice of emotion:

"Herminia, have you not concealed something in your letters. In her last moments did not my mother curse me?"

"No, no, Frederick, compose yourself. She had anxiously desired your presence. Her ideas soon became confused. But in her delirium it was still for you that she called."

"Yes," said the marquis, bitterly; "her maternal instinct doubtless assured her that my presence could have saved her life."

"I entreat you to banish these sad recollections," said the princess, "this misfortune is irreparable."

"Tell me for the last time, truly, did not my absence cruelly affect my mother? Had she no suspicion that a more imperious duty called me elsewhere?"

"No, no, I assure you. Even when her reason was shaken, she believed that you had not yet had time to come to her. All the sad details which I wrote to you upon this painful subject are strictly true. Again, I beg of you to compose yourself."

"Yes, my conscience ought to be easy; for I have fulfilled my duty in sacrificing my mother. Yet I have never been able to arrive at that complete detachment from natural affection, which is commanded to us by those awful words: 'He who hates not his father and his mother, even with the soul, cannot be my disciple.'"[9]

"Doubtless, Frederick," said the princess, "these renunciations are painful. But, in return, what influence, what power!"

"It is true," said the marquis, after a moment's silence. "What ought not to be sacrificed in order to reign in secret over the all-powerful of the earth, who lord it in full day? This journey to Rome, from which I have just returned, has given me a new idea of our formidable power. For, Herminia, it is Rome which is the culminating point, overlooking the fairest and broadest quarters of the globe, made so by custom, by tradition, or by faith. Thence can our workings be embraced in their full extent. It is an uncommon view to see from its height the myriad tools, whose personality is continually absorbed into the immovable personality of our Order. What a might we possess! Verily, I am always swayed with admiration, aye, almost frightened, that man once thinks, wishes, believes, and acts as he alone lists, until, soon ours, he becomes but a human shell; its kernel of intelligence, mind, reason, conscience, and free will, shrivelled within him, dry and withered by the habit of mutely, fearingly bowing under mysterious tasks, which shatter and slay everything spontaneous in the human soul! Then do we infuse in such spiritless clay, speechless, cold, and motionless as corpses, the breath of our Order, and, lo! the dry bones stand up and walk, acting and executing, though only within the limits which are circled round them evermore. Thus do they become mere limbs of the gigantic trunk, whose impulses they mechanically carry out, while ignorant of the design, like the stonecutter who shapes out a stone, unaware if it be for cathedral or bagnio."

In so speaking, the marquis's features wore an incredible air of proud and domineering haughtiness.

"Oh, yes! this power is great, most great," observed the princess; "and the more formidable because it moves in a mysterious way over minds and consciences."

"Aye, Herminia," said the marquis: "I have had under my command a magnificent regiment. Very often have I experienced the energetic and exquisite enjoyment of command! At my word my squadrons put themselves in action; bugles blared, my officers, glittering in golden embroidery, galloped everywhere to repeat my orders: all my brave soldiers, burning with courage, and cicatrized by battles, obeyed my signal; and I felt proud and strong, holding as I did (so to speak) in my hands, the force and valor of each and all combined into one being of resistless strength and invincible intrepidity,---of all of which I was as much the master, as I mastered the rage and fire of my war-horse! Aye! that was greatness. But now, in spite of the misfortunes which have befallen our Order, I feel myself a thousand times more ready for action, more authoritative, more strong and more daring, at the head of our mute and black-robed militia, who only think and wish, or move and obey, mechanically, according to my will. On a sign they scatter over the surface of the globe, gliding stealthily into households under the guise of confessing the wife or teaching the children, into family affairs by hearing the dying avowals,---up to the throne through the quaking conscience of a credulous crowned coward;---aye, even to the chair of the Pope himself, living manifesto of the Godhead though he is, by the services rendered him or imposed by him. Is not this secret rule, made to kindle or glut the wildest ambition, as it reaches from the cradle to the grave, from the laborer's hovel to the royal palace, from palace to the papal chair? What career in all the world presents such splendid openings? what unutterable scorn ought I not feel for the bright butterfly life of early days, when we made so many envy us? Don't you remember, Herminia?" he added, with a bitter smile.

"You are right, perfectly right, Frederick!" replied the princess quickly. "How little soever we may reflect, with what contempt do we not think upon the past! I, like you, often compare it with the present; and then what satisfaction I feel at having followed your counsels! For, indeed, without you, I should have played the miserable and ridiculous part which a woman always plays in her decline from having been beautiful and surrounded by admirers. What could I have done at this hour? I should have vainly striven to retain around me a selfish and ungrateful world of gross and shameful men, who court women only that they may turn them to the service of their passions, or to the gratification of their vanity. It is true that there would have remained to me the resource of what is called keeping an agreeable house for all others,---yes, in order to entertain them, be visited by a crowd of the indifferent, to afford opportunities of meeting to amorous young couples, who, following each other from parlor to parlor, come not to your house but for the purpose of being together; a very pretty pleasure, truly, that of harboring those blooming, laughing, amorous youths, who look upon the luxury and brilliancy with which one surrounds them, as if they were their due upon bonds to minister to their pleasure, and to their impudent amours!"

Her words were so stinging, and such hateful envy sat upon her face, that she betrayed the intense bitterness of her regrets in spite of herself.

"No, no; thanks to you, Frederick," she continued, "After a last and brilliant triumph, I broke forever with the world, which would soon have abandoned me, though I was so long its idol and its queen. And I have only changed my queendom. Instead of the dissipated men whom I ruled with a frivolity superior to their own, I now find myself surrounded by men of high consideration, of redoubtable character, and all-powerful, many of whom have governed the state; to them I have devoted myself, as they have devoted themselves to me! It is now only that I really enjoy that happiness, of which I ever dreamt. I have taken an active part and have exercised a powerful influence over the greatest interests of the world; I have been initiated into the most important secrets; I have been able to strike, surely, whosoever scoffed at or hated me; and I have been able to elevate beyond their hopes those who have served or respected and obeyed me."

"There are some madmen, and some so blind, that they imagine that we are struck down, because we ourselves have had to struggle against some misfortunes," said M. d'Aigrigny, disdainfully, "as if we were not, above all others, securely founded, organized for every struggle, and drew not from our very struggles a new and more vigorous activity. Doubtless the times are bad. But they will become better; and, as you know, it is nearly certain that in a few days (the 13th of February), we shall have at our disposal a means of action sufficiently powerful for re establishing our influence

which has been temporarily shaken."

"Yes, doubtless this affair of the medals is most important," said the princess.

"I should not have made so much haste to return hither," resumed the abbe, "were it not to act in what will be, perhaps, for us, a very great event."

"But you are aware of the fatality which has once again overthrown projects the most laboriously conceived and matured?"

"Yes; immediately on arriving I saw Rodin."

"And he told you--?"

"The inconceivable arrival of the Indian, and of General Simon's daughters at Cardoville Castle, after a double shipwreck, which threw them upon the coast of Picardy; though it was deemed certain that the young girls were at Leipsic, and the Indian in Java. Precautions were so well taken, indeed," added the marquis in vexation, "that one would think an invisible power protects this family."

"Happily, Rodin is a man of resources and activity," resumed the princess. "He came here last night, and we had a long conversation."

"And the result of your consultation is excellent," added the marquis: "the old soldier is to be kept out of the way for two days; and his wife's confessor has been posted; the rest will proceed of itself. To morrow, the girls need no longer be feared; and the Indian remains at Cardoville, wounded dangerously. We have plenty of time for action."

"But that is not all," continued the princess: "there are still, without reckoning my niece, two persons, who, for our interests, ought not to be found in Paris on the 13th of February."

"Yes, M. Hardy: but his most dear and intimate friend has betrayed him; for, by means of that friend, we have drawn M. Hardy into the South, whence it is impossible for him to return before a month. As for that miserable vagabond workman, surnamed 'Sleepinbuff!'"

"Fie!" exclaimed the princess, with an expression of outraged modesty.

"That man," resumed the marquis, "is no longer an object of inquietude. Lastly, Gabriel, upon whom our vast and certain hope reposes, will not be left by himself for a single minute until the great day. Everything seems, you see, to promise success; indeed, more so than ever; and it is necessary to obtain this success at any price. It is for us a question of life or death; for, in returning, I stopped at Forli, and there saw the Duke d'Orbano. His influence over the mind of the king is all powerful---indeed, absolute; and he has completely prepossessed the royal mind. It is with the duke alone, then, that it is possible to treat."

"Well?"

"D'Orbano has gained strength; and he can, I know it, assure to us a legal existence, highly protected, in the dominions of his master, with full charge of popular education. Thanks to such advantages, after two or three years in that country we shall become so deeply rooted, that this very Duke d'Orbano, in his turn, will have to solicit support and protection from us. But at present he has everything in his power; and he puts an absolute condition upon his services."

"What is the condition?"

"Five millions down; and an annual pension of a hundred thousand francs."

"It is very much."

"Nay, but little if it be considered that our foot once planted in that country, we shall promptly repossess ourselves of that sum, which, after all, is scarcely an eighth part of what the affair of the medals, if happily brought to an issue, ought to assure to the Order."

"Yes, nearly forty millions," said the princess, thoughtfully.

"And again: these five millions that Orbano demands will be but an advance. They will be returned to us in voluntary gifts, by reason even of the increase of influence that we shall acquire from the education of children; through whom we have their families. And yet, the fools hesitate! those who govern see not, that in doing our own business, we do theirs also;---that in abandoning education to us (which is what we wish for above all things) we mold the people into that mute and quiet obedience, that servile and brutal submission, which assures the repose of states by the immobility of the mind. They don't reflect that most of the upper and middle classes fear and hate us; don't understand that (when we have persuaded the mass that their wretchedness is an eternal law, that sufferers must give up hope of relief, that it is a crime to sigh for welfare in this world, since the crown of glory on high is the only reward for misery here), then the stupefied people will resignedly wallow in the mire, all their impatient aspirations for better days smothered, and the volcano-blasts blown aside, which made the future of rulers so horrid and so dark? They see not, in truth, that this blind and passive faith which we demand from the mass, furnishes their rulers with a bridle with which both to conduct and curb them; whilst we ask from the happy of the world only some appearances which ought, if they had only the knowledge of their own corruption, to give an increased stimulant to their pleasures.

"It signifies not," resumed the princess; "since, as you say, a great day is at hand, bringing nearly forty millions, of which the Order can become possessed by the happy success of the affair of the medals. We certainly can attempt very great things. Like a lever in your hands, such a means of action would be of incalculable power, in times during which all men buy and sell one another."

"And then," resumed M. d'Aigrigny, with a thoughtful air, "here the reaction continues: the example of France is everything. In Austria and Holland we can rarely maintain ourselves; while the resources of the Order diminish from day to day. We have arrived at a crisis; but it can be made to prolong itself. Thus, thanks to the immense resource of the affair of the medals, we can not only brave all eventualities, but we can again powerfully establish ourselves, thanks to the offer of the Duke d'Orbano, which we accept; and then, from that inassailable centre, our radiations will be incalculable. Ah! the 13th of February!" added M. d'Aigrigny, after a moment of silence, and shaking his head: "the 13th of February, a date perhaps fortunate and famous for our power as that of the council which gave to us (so to say) a new life!"

"And nothing must be spared." resumed the princess, "in order to succeed at any price. Of the six persons whom we have to fear, five are or will be out of any condition to hurt us. There remains then only my niece; and you know that I have waited but for your arrival in order to take my last resolution. All my preparations are completed; and this very morning we will begin to act."

"Have your suspicions increased since your last letter?"

"Yes, I am certain that she is more instructed than she wishes to appear; and if so, we shall not have a more dangerous enemy."

"Such has always been my opinion. Thus it is six months: since I advised you to take in all cases the measures which you have adopted, in order to provoke, on her part, that demand of emancipation, the consequences of which now render quite easy that which would have been impossible without it."

"At last," said the princess, with an expression of joy, hateful and bitter, "this indomitable spirit will be broken. I am at length about to be avenged of the many insolent sarcasms which I have been compelled to swallow, lest I should awaken her suspicions. I! I to have borne so much till now! for this Adrienne has made it her business (imprudent as she is!) to irritate me against herself!"

"Whosoever offends you, offends me; you know it," said D'Aigrigny, "my hatreds are yours."

"And you yourself!" said the princess, "how many times have you been the butt of her poignant irony!"

"My instincts seldom deceive me. I am certain that this young girl may become a dangerous enemy for us," said the marquis, with a voice painfully broken into short monosyllables.

"And, therefore, it is necessary that she may be rendered incapable of exciting further fear," responded Madame de Saint-Dizier, fixedly regarding the marquis.

"Have you seen Dr. Baleinier, and the sub-guardian, M. Tripeaud?" asked he.

"They will be here this morning. I have informed them of everything."

"Did you find them well disposed to act against her?"

"Perfectly so---and the best is, Adrienne does not at all suspect the doctor, who has known how, up to a certain point, to preserve her confidence. Moreover, a circumstance which appears to me inexplicable has come to our aid."

"What do you allude to?"

"This morning, Mrs. Grivois went, according to my orders, to remind Adrienne that I expected her at noon, upon important business. As she approached the pavilion, Mrs. Grivois saw, or thought she saw, Adrienne come in by the little garden-gate."

"What do you tell me? Is it possible? Is there any positive proof of it?" cried the marquis.

"Till now, there is no other proof than the spontaneous declaration of Mrs. Grivois: but whilst I think of it," said the Princess, taking up a paper that lay before her, "here is the report, which, every day, one of Adrienne's women makes to me."

"The one that Rodin succeeded in introducing into your niece's service?"

"The same; as this creature is entirely in Rodin's hands, she has hitherto answered our purpose very well. In this report, we shall perhaps find the confirmation of what Mrs. Grivois affirms she saw."

Hardly had the Princess glanced at the note, than she exclaimed almost in terror: "What do I see? Why, Adrienne is a very demon!"

"What now?"

"The bailiff at Cardoville, having written to my niece to ask her recommendation, informed her at the same time of the stay of the Indian prince at the castle. She knows that he is her relation, and has just written to her old drawing-master, Norval, to set out post with Eastern dresses, and bring Prince Djalma hither---the man that must be kept away from Paris at any cost."

The marquis grew pale, and said to *Mme.* de Saint-Dizier: "If this be not merely one of her whims, the eagerness she displays in sending for this relation hither, proves that she knows more than you even suspected. She is 'posted' on the affair of the medals. Have a care---she may ruin all."

"In that case," said the princess, resolutely, "there is no room to hesitate. We must carry things further than we thought, and make an end this very morning."

"Yes, though it is almost impossible."

"Nay, all is possible. The doctor and M. Tripeaud are ours," said the princess, hastily.

"Though I am as sure as you are of the doctor, or of M. Tripeaud, under present circumstances, we must not touch on the question of acting---which will be sure to frighten them at first---until after our interview with your niece. It will be easy, notwithstanding her cleverness, to find out her armor's defect. If our suspicions should be realized---if she is really informed of what it would be so dangerous for her to know---then we must have no scruples, and above all no delay. This very day must see all set at rest. The time for wavering is past."

"Have you been able to send for the person agreed on?" asked the princess, after a moment's silence.

"He was to be here at noon. He cannot be long."

"I thought this room would do very well for our purpose. It is separated from the smaller parlor by a curtain only behind which your man may be stationed."

"Capital!"

"Is he a man to be depended on?"

"Quite so---we have often employed him in similar matters. He is as skillful as discreet."

At this moment a low knock was heard at the door.

"Come in," said the princess.

"Dr. Baleinier wishes to know if her Highness the Princess can receive him," asked the valet-de-chambre.

"Certainly. Beg him to walk in."

"There is also a gentleman that M. l'Abbe appointed to be here at noon, by whose orders I have left him waiting in the oratory."

"'Tis the person in question," said the marquis to the princess. "We must have him in first. 'Twould be useless for Dr. Baleinier to see him at present."

"Show this person in first," said the princess; "next when I ring the bell, you will beg Dr. Baleinier to walk this way: and, if Baron Tripeaud should call, you will bring him here also. After that, I am at home to no one, except Mdlle. Adrienne." The servant went out.

[9] With regard to this text, a commentary upon it will be found in the Constitutions of the Jesuits, as follows: "In order that the habit of language may come to the help of the sentiments, it is wise not to say, 'I have parents, or I have brothers;' but to say, 'I had parents; I had brothers.'---General Examination, p. 29; Constitutions.---Paulin; 1843. Paris.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Adrienne's enemies.

The Princess de Saint-Dizier's valet soon returned, showing in a little, pale man, dressed in black, and wearing spectacles. He carried under his left arm a long black morocco writing-case.

The princess said to this man: "M. l'Abbe, I suppose, has already informed you of what is to be done?"

"Yes, your highness," said the man in a faint, shrill, piping voice, making at the same time a low bow.

"Shall you be conveniently placed in this room?" asked the princess, conducting him to the adjoining apartment, which was only separated from the other by a curtain hung before a doorway.

"I shall do nicely here, your highness," answered the man in spectacles, with a second and still lower bow.

"In that case, sir, please to step in here; I will let you know when it is time."

"I shall wait your highness's order."

"And pray remember my instructions," added the marquis, as he unfastened the loops of the curtain.

"You may be perfectly tranquil, M. l'Abbe." The heavy drapery, as it fell, completely concealed the man in spectacles.

The princess touched the bell; some moments after, the door opened, and the servant announced a very important personage in this work.

Dr. Baleinier was about fifty years of age, middling size, rather plump, with a full shining, ruddy countenance. His gray hair, very smooth and rather long, parted by a straight line in the middle, fell flat over his temples. He had retained the fashion of wearing short, black silk breeches, perhaps because he had a well-formed leg; his garters were fastened with small, golden buckles, as were his shoes of polished morocco leather; his coat, waistcoat, and cravat were black, which gave him rather a clerical appearance; his sleek, white hand was half hidden beneath a cambric ruffle, very closely plaited; on the whole, the gravity of his costume did not seem to exclude a shade of foppery.

His face was acute and smiling; his small gray eye announced rare penetration and sagacity. A man of the world and a man of pleasure, a delicate epicure, witty in conversation, polite to obsequiousness, supple, adroit, insinuating, Baleinier was one of the oldest favorites of the congregational set of the Princess de Saint-Dizier. Thanks to this powerful support, its cause unknown, the doctor, who had been long neglected, in spite of real skill and incontestable merit, found himself, under the Restoration, suddenly provided with two medical sinecures most valuable, and soon after with numerous patients. We must add, that, once under the patronage of the princess, the doctor began scrupulously to observe his religious duties; he communicated once a week, with great publicity, at the high mass in Saint Thomas Aquinas Church.

At the year's end, a certain class of patients, led by the example and enthusiasm of Madame de Saint-Dizier's followers, would have no other physician than Doctor Baleinier, and his practice was now increased to an extraordinary degree. It may be conceived how important it was for the order, to have amongst its "plain clothes members" one of the most popular practitioners of Paris.

A doctor has in some sort a priesthood of his own. Admitted at all hours to the most secret intimacy of families, he knows, guesses, and is able to effect much. Like the priest, in short, he has the ear of the sick and the dying. Now, when he who cares for the health of the body, and he who takes charge of the health of the soul, understands each other, and render mutual aid for the advancement of a common interest, there is nothing (with certain exceptions), which they may not extract from the weakness and fears of a sick man at the last gasp---not for themselves (the laws forbid it)---but for third parties belonging more or less to the very convenient class of men of straw. Doctor Baleinier was therefore one of the most active and valuable assistant members of the Paris Jesuits.

When he entered the room, he hastened to kiss the princess's hand with the most finished gallantry.

"Always punctual, my dear M. Baleinier."

"Always eager and happy to attend to your highness's orders." Then turning towards the marquis, whose hand he pressed cordially, he added: "Here we have you then at last. Do you know, that three months' absence appears very long to your friends?"

"The time is as long to the absent as to those who remain, my dear doctor. Well! here is the great day. Mdlle. de Cardoville is coming."

"I am not quite easy," said the princess; "suppose she had any suspicion?"

"That's impossible," said M. Baleinier; "we are the best friends in the world. You know, that Mdlle. Adrienne has always had great confidence in me. The day before yesterday, we laughed a good deal, and as I made some observations to her, as usual, on her eccentric mode of life, and on the singular state of excitement in which I sometimes found her---"

"M. Baleinier never fails to insist on these circumstances, in appearance so insignificant," said Madame de Saint-Dizier to the marquis with a meaning look.

"They are indeed very essential," replied the other.

"Mdlle. Adrienne answered my observations," resumed the doctor, "by laughing at me in the gayest and most witty manner; for I must confess, that this young lady has one of the aptest and most accomplished minds I know."

"Doctor, doctor!" said Madame de Saint-Dizier, "no weakness!"

Instead of answering immediately, M. Baleinier drew his gold snuff-box from his waistcoat pocket, opened it, and took slowly a pinch of snuff, looking all the time at the princess with so significant an air, that she appeared quite reassured. "Weakness, madame?" observed he at last, brushing some grains of snuff from his shirt-front with his plump white hand; "did I not have the honor of volunteering to extricate you from this embarrassment?"

"And you are the only person in the world that could render us this important service," said D'Aigrigny.

"Your highness sees, therefore," resumed the doctor, "that I am not likely to show any weakness. I perfectly understand the responsibility of what I undertake; but such immense interests, you told me, were at stake---"

"Yes," said D'Aigrigny, "interests of the first consequence."

"Therefore I did not hesitate," proceeded M. Baleinier; "and you need not be at all uneasy. As a man of taste, accustomed to good society, allow me to render homage to the charming qualities of Mdlle. Adrienne; when the time for action comes, you will find me quite as willing to do my work."

"Perhaps, that moment may be nearer than we thought," said Madame de Saint-Dizier, exchanging a glance with D'Aigrigny.

"I am, and will be, always ready," said the doctor. "I answer for everything that concerns myself. I wish I could be as tranquil on every other point."

"Is not your asylum still as fashionable---as an asylum can well be?" asked Madame de Saint-Dizier, with a half smile.

"On the contrary. I might almost complain of having too many boarders. It is not that. But, whilst we are waiting for Mdlle. Adrienne, I will mention another subject, which only relates to her indirectly, for it concerns the person who, bought Cardoville Manor, one Madame de la Sainte-Colombe, who has taken me for a doctor, thanks to Rodin's able management."

"True," said D'Aigrigny; "Rodin wrote to me on the subject---but without entering into details."

"These are the facts," resumed the doctor. "This Madame de la Sainte Colombe, who was at first considered easy enough to lead, has shown herself very refractory on the head of her conversion. Two spiritual directors have already renounced the task of saving her soul. In despair, Rodin unslipped little Philippon on her. He is adroit, tenacious, and above all patient in the extreme---the very man that was wanted. When I got Madame de la Sainte-Colombe for a patient, Philippon asked my aid, which he was naturally entitled to. We agreed upon our plan. I was not to appear to know him the least in the world; and he was to keep me informed of the variations in the moral state of his penitent, so that I might be able, by the use of very inoffensive medicines---for there was nothing dangerous in the illness---to keep my patient in alternate states of improvement or the reverse, according as her director had reason to be satisfied or displeased---so that he might say to her: 'You see, madame, you are in the good way! Spiritual grace acts upon your bodily health, and you are already better. If, on the contrary, you fall back into evil courses, you feel immediately some physical ail, which is a certain proof of the powerful influence of faith, not only on the soul, but on the body also?'"

"It is doubtless painful," said D'Aigrigny, with perfect coolness, "to be obliged to have recourse to such means, to rescue perverse souls from perdition---but we must needs proportion our modes of action to the intelligence and the character of the individual."

"By-the-bye, the princess knows," resumed the doctor, "that I have often pursued this plan at St. Mary's Convent, to the great advantage of the soul's peace and health of some of our patients, being extremely innocent. These alternations never exceed the difference between 'pretty well,' and 'not quite so well.' Yet small as are the variations, they act most efficaciously on certain minds. It was thus with Madame de la Sainte-Colombe. She was in such a fair way of recovery, both moral and physical, that Rodin thought he might get Philippon to advise the country for his penitent, fearing that Paris air might occasion a relapse. This advice, added to the desire the woman had to play 'lady of the parish,' induced her to buy Cardoville Manor, a good investment in any respect. But yesterday, unfortunate Philippon came to tell me, that Madame de la Sainte-Colombe was about to have an awful relapse---moral, of course---for her physical health is now desperately good. The said relapse appears to have been occasioned by an interview she has had with one Jacques Dumoulin, whom they tell me you know, my dear abbe; he has introduced himself to her, nobody can guess how."

"This Jacques Dumoulin," said the marquis, with disgust, "is one of those men, that we employ while we despise. He is a writer full of gall, envy, and hate, qualities that give him a certain unmercifully cutting eloquence. We pay him largely to attack our enemies, though it is often painful to see principles we respect defended by such a pen. For this wretch lives like a vagabond---is constantly in taverns---almost always intoxicated---but, I must own, his power of abuse is inexhaustible, and he is well versed in the most abstruse theological controversies, so that he is sometimes very useful to us."

"Well! though Madame de la Sainte-Colombe is hard upon sixty, it appears that Dumoulin has matrimonial views on her large fortune. You will do well to inform Rodin, so that he may be on his guard against the dark designs of this rascal. I really beg a thousand pardons for having so long occupied you with such a paltry affair---but, talking of St. Mary's Convent," added the doctor, addressing the princess, "may I take the liberty of asking if your highness has been there lately?"

The princess exchanged a rapid glance with D'Aigrigny, and answered: "Oh, let me see! Yes, I was there about a week ago."

"You will find great changes then. The wall that was next to my asylum has been taken down, for they are going to build anew wing and a chapel, the old one being too small. I must say in praise of Mdlle. Adrienne" continued the doctor with a singular smile aside, "that she promised me a copy of one of Raphael's Madonnas for this chapel."

"Really? very appropriate!" said the princess. "But here it is almost noon, and M. Tripeaud has not come."

"He is the deputy-guardian of Mdlle. de Cardoville, whose property he has managed, as former agent of the count-duke," said the marquis, with evident anxiety, "and his presence here is absolutely indispensable. It is greatly to be desired that his coming should precede that of Mdlle. de Cardoville, who may be here at any moment."

"It is unlucky that his portrait will not do as well," said the doctor, smiling maliciously, and drawing a small pamphlet from his pocket.

"What is that, doctor?" asked the princess.

"One of those anonymous sheets, which are published from time to time. It is called the 'Scourge,' and Baron Tripeaud's portrait is drawn with such faithfulness, that it ceases to be satire. It is really quite life like; you have only to listen. The sketch is entitled: '*Type of the Lynx species.*'"

"The Baron Tripeaud.---This man, who is as basely humble towards his social superiors, as he is insolent and coarse to those who depend upon him---is the living, frightful incarnation of the worst pardon of the moneyed and commercial

aristocracy---one of the rich and cynical speculators, without heart, faith or conscience, who would speculate for a rise or fall on the death of his mother, if the death of his mother could influence the price of stocks.

"Such persons have all the odious vices of men suddenly elevated, not like those whom honest and patient labor has nobly enriched, but like those who owe their wealth to some blind caprice of fortune, or some lucky cast of the net in the miry waters of stock-jobbing.

"Once up in the world, they hate the people---because the people remind them of a mushroom origin of which they are ashamed. Without pity for the dreadful misery of the masses, they ascribe it wholly to idleness or debauchery because this calumny forms an excuse for their barbarous selfishness.

"And this is not all. On the strength of his well-filled safe, mounted on his right of the candidate, Baron Tripeaud insults the poverty and political disfranchisement-- of the officer, who, after forty years of wars and hard service, is just able to live on a scanty pension-- Of the magistrate, who has consumed his strength in the discharge of stern and sad duties, and who is not better remunerated in his latter days-- Of the learned man who has made his country illustrious by useful labors; or the professor who has initiated entire generations in the various branches of human knowledge-- Of the modest and virtuous country curate, the pure representative of the gospel, in its charitable, fraternal, and democratic tendencies, *etc.*

"In such a state of things, how should our shoddy baron of in-dust-ry not feel the most sovereign contempt for all that stupid mob of honest folk, who, having given to their country their youth, their mature age, their blood, their intelligence, their learning, see themselves deprived of the rights which he enjoys, because he has gained a million by unfair and illegal transactions?

"It is true, that your optimists say to these pariahs of civilization, whose proud and noble poverty cannot be too much revered and honored: "Buy an estate and you too may be electors and candidates!"

"But to come to the biography of our worthy baron---Andrew Tripeaud, the son of an ostler, at a roadside inn"

At this instant the folding-doors were thrown open, and the valet announced: "The Baron Tripeaud!"

Dr. Baleinier put his pamphlet into his pocket, made the most cordial bow to the financier, and even rose to give him his hand. The baron entered the room, overwhelming every one with salutations. "I have the honor to attend the orders of your highness the princess. She knows that she may always count upon me."

"I do indeed rely upon you, M. Tripeaud, and particularly under present circumstances."

"If the intentions of your highness the princess are still the same with regard to Mdlle. de Cardoville---"

"They are still the same, M. Tripeaud, and we meet to-day on that subject."

"Your highness may be assured of my concurrence, as, indeed, I have already promised. I think that the greatest severity must at length be employed, and that even if it were necessary."

"That is also our opinion," said the marquis, hastily making a sign to the princess, and glancing at the place where the man in spectacles was hidden; "we are all perfectly in harmony. Still, we must not leave any point doubtful, for the sake of the young lady herself, whose interests alone guides us in this affair. We must draw out her sincerity by every possible means."

"Mademoiselle has just arrived from the summer-house and wishes to see your highness," said the valet, again entering, after having knocked at the door.

"Say that I wait for her," answered the princess; "and now I am at home to no one---without exception. You understand me; absolutely to no one."

Thereupon, approaching the curtain behind which the man was concealed, *Mme.* de Saint-Dizier gave him the cue---after which she returned to her seat.

It is singular, but during the short space which preceded Adrienne's arrival, the different actors in this scene appeared uneasy and embarrassed, as if they had a vague fear of her coming. In about a minute, *Mdlle.* de Cardoville entered the presence of her aunt.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The skirmish.

On entering, *Mdlle.* de Cardoville threw down upon a chair the gray beaver hat she had worn to cross the garden, and displayed her fine golden hair, falling on either side of her face in long, light ringlets, and twisted in a broad knot behind her head. She presented herself without boldness, but with perfect ease: her countenance was gay and smiling; her large black eyes appeared even more brilliant than usual. When she perceived *Abbe d'Aigrigny*, she started in surprise, and her rosy lips were just touched with a mocking smile.

After nodding graciously to the doctor, she passed *Baron Tripeaud* by without looking at him, and saluted the princess with stately obeisance, in the most fashionable style.

Though the walk and bearing of *Mdlle.* de Cardoville were extremely elegant, and full of propriety and truly feminine grace, there was about her an air of resolution and independence by no means common in women, and particularly in girls of her age. Her movements, without being abrupt, bore no traces of restraint, stiffness, or formality. They were frank and free as her character, full of life, youth, and freshness; and one could easily divine that so buoyant, straightforward, and decided a nature had never been able to conform itself to the rules of an affected rigor.

Strangely enough, though he was a man of the world, a man of great talent, a churchman distinguished for his eloquence, and, above all, a person of influence and authority. *Marquis d'Aigrigny* experienced an involuntary, incredible, almost painful uneasiness, in presence of *Adrienne de Cardoville*. He---generally so much the master of himself, so accustomed to exercise great power---who (in the name of his Order) had often treated with crowned heads on the footing of an equal, felt himself abashed and lowered in the presence of this girl, as remarkable for her frankness as for her biting irony. Now, as men who are accustomed to impose their will upon others generally hate those who, far from submitting to their influence, hamper it and make sport of them, it was no great degree of affection that the marquis bore towards the *Princess de Saint-Dizier's* niece.

For a long time past, contrary to his usual habit, he had ceased to try upon *Adrienne* that fascinating address to which he had often owed an irresistible charm; towards her he had become dry, curt, serious, taking refuge in that icy sphere of haughty dignity and rigid austerity which completely hid all those amiable qualities with which he was endowed and of which, in general, he made such efficient use. *Adrienne* was much amused at all this, and thereby showed her imprudence---for the most vulgar motives often engender the most implacable hatreds.

From these preliminary observations, the reader will understand the divers sentiments and interests which animated the different actors in the following scene.

Madame de Saint-Dizier was seated in a large arm-chair by one side of the hearth. Marquis d'Aigrigny was standing before the fire. Dr. Baleinier seated near a bureau, was again turning over the leaves of Baron Tripeaud's biography, whilst the baron appeared to be very attentively examining one of the pictures of sacred subjects suspended from the wall.

"You sent for me, aunt, to talk upon matters of importance?" said Adrienne, breaking the silence which had reigned in the reception-room since her entrance.

"Yes, madame," answered the princess, with a cold and severe mien; "upon matters of the gravest importance."

"I am at your service, aunt. Perhaps we had better walk into your library?"

"It is not necessary. We can talk here." Then, addressing the marquis, the doctor, and the baron, she said to them, "Pray, be seated, gentlemen," and they all took their places round the table.

"How can the subject of our interview interest these gentlemen, aunt?" asked Mdlle. de Cardoville, with surprise.

"These gentlemen are old family friends; all that concerns you must interest them, and their advice ought to be heard and accepted by you with respect."

"I have no doubt, aunt, of the bosom friendship of M. d'Aigrigny for our family: I have still less of the profound and disinterested devotion of M. Tripeaud; M. Baleinier is one of my old friends; still, before accepting these gentlemen as spectators, or, if you will, as confidants of our interview, I wish to know what we are going to talk of before them."

"I thought that, among your many singular pretensions, you had at least those of frankness and courage."

"Really, aunt," said Adrienne, smiling with mock humility, "I have no more pretensions to frankness and courage than you have to sincerity and goodness. Let us admit, once for all, that we are---without pretension."

"Be it so," said Madame de Saint-Dizier, in a dry tone; "I have long been accustomed to the freaks of your independent spirit. I suppose, then, that, courageous and frank as you say you are, you will not be afraid to speak before such grave and respectable persons as these gentlemen what you would speak to me alone?"

"Is it a formal examination that I am to submit to? if so, upon what subject?"

"It is not an examination: but, as I have a right to watch over you, and as you take advantage of my weak compliance with your caprices, I mean to put an end to what has lasted too long, and tell you my irrevocable resolutions for the future, in presence of friends of the family. And, first, you have hitherto had a very false and imperfect notion of my power over you."

"I assure you, aunt, that I have never had any notion, true or false, on the subject---for I have never even dreamt about it."

"That is my own fault; for, instead of yielding to your fancies, I should have made you sooner feel my authority; but the moment has come to submit yourself; the severe censures of my friends have enlightened me in time. Your character is

self-willed, independent, stubborn; it must change---either by fair means or by force, understand me, it shall change."

At these words, pronounced harshly before strangers, with a severity which did not seem at all justified by circumstances, Adrienne tossed her head proudly; but, restraining herself, she answered with a smile: "You say, aunt, that I shall change. I should not be astonished at it. We hear of such odd conversions."

The princess bit her lips.

"A sincere conversion can never be called odd, as you term it, madame," said Abbe d'Aigrigny, coldly. "It is, on the contrary, meritorious, and forms an excellent example."

"Excellent?" answered Adrienne: "that depends! For instance, what if one converts defects into vices?"

"What do you mean, madame?" cried the princess.

"I am speaking of myself, aunt; you reproach me of being independent and resolute---suppose I were to become hypocritical and wicked? In truth, I prefer keeping my dear little faults, which I love like spoiled children. I know what I am; I do not know what I might be."

"But you must acknowledge, Mdlle. Adrienne," said Baron Tripeaud, with a self-conceited and sententious air, "that a conversion---"

"I believe," said Adrienne, disdainfully, "that M. Tripeaud is well versed in the conversion of all sorts of property into all sorts of profit, by all sorts of means---but he knows nothing of this matter."

"But, madame," resumed the financier, gathering courage from a glance of the princess, "you forget that I have the honor to be your deputy guardian, and that---"

"It is true that M. Tripeaud has that honor," said Adrienne, with still more haughtiness, and not even looking at the baron; "I could never tell exactly why. But as it is not now the time to guess enigmas, I wish to know, aunt, the object and the end of this meeting?"

"You shall be satisfied, madame. I will explain myself in a very clear and precise manner. You shall know the plan of conduct that you will have henceforth to pursue; and if you refuse to submit thereto, with the obedience and respect that is due to my orders, I shall at once see what course to take."

It is impossible to give an idea of the imperious tone and stern look of the princess, as she pronounced these words which were calculated to startle a girl, until now accustomed to live in a great measure as she pleased: yet, contrary perhaps to the expectation of Madame de Saint Dizier, instead of answering impetuously, Adrienne looked her full in the face, and said, laughing: "This is a perfect declaration of war. It's becoming very amusing."

"We are not talking of declarations of war," said the Abbe d'Aigrigny, harshly, as if offended by the expressions of Mdlle. de Cardoville.

"Now, M. l'Abbe!" returned Adrienne, "for an old colonel, you are really too severe upon a jest!--you are so much indebted to 'war,' which gave you a French regiment after fighting so long against France---in order to learn, of course, the strength and the weakness of her enemies."

On these words, which recalled painful remembrances, the marquis colored; he was going to answer, but the princess exclaimed: "Really, madame, your behavior is quite intolerable!"

"Well, aunt, I acknowledge I was wrong. I ought not to have said this is very amusing---for it is not so, at all; but it is at least very curious---and perhaps," added the young girl, after a moment's silence, "perhaps very audacious and audacity pleases me. As we are upon this subject, and you talk of a plan of conduct to which I must conform myself, under pain of (interrupting herself)---under pain of what, I should like to know, aunt?"

"You shall know. Proceed."

"I will, in the presence of these gentlemen, also declare, in a very plain and precise manner, the determination that I have come to. As it required some time to prepare for its execution, I have not spoken of it sooner, for you know I am not in the habit of saying, 'I will do so and so!' but I do it."

"Certainly; and it is just this habit of culpable independence of which you must break yourself."

"Well, I had intended only to inform you of my determination at a later period; but I cannot resist the pleasure of doing so to-day, you seem so well disposed to hear and receive it. Still, I would beg of you to speak first: it may just so happen, that our views are precisely the same."

"I like better to see you thus," said the princess. "I acknowledge at least the courage of your pride, and your defiance of all authority. You speak of audacity---yours is indeed great."

"I am at least decided to do that which others in their weakness dare not---but which I dare. This, I hope, is clear and precise."

"Very clear, very precise," said the princess, exchanging a glance of satisfaction with the other actors in this scene. "The positions being thus established, matters will be much simplified. I have only to give you notice, in your own interest, that this is a very serious affair---much more so than you imagine---and that the only way to dispose me to indulgence, is to substitute, for the habitual arrogance and irony of your language, the modesty and respect becoming a young lady."

Adrienne smiled, but made no reply. Some moments of silence, and some rapid glances exchanged between the princess and her three friends, showed that these encounters, more or less brilliant in themselves, were to be followed by a serious combat.

Mdlle. de Cardoville had too much penetration and sagacity, not to remark, that the Princess de Saint-Dizier attached the greatest importance to this decisive interview. But she could not understand how her aunt could hope to impose her absolute will upon her: the threat of coercive measures appearing with reason a mere ridiculous menace. Yet, knowing the vindictive character of her aunt, the secret power at her disposal, and the terrible vengeance she had sometimes exacted ---reflecting, moreover, that men in the position of the marquis and the doctor would not have come to attend this interview without some weighty motive---the young lady paused for a moment before she plunged into the strife.

But soon, the very presentiment of some vague danger, far from weakening her, gave her new courage to brave the worst, to exaggerate, if that were possible, the independence of her ideas, and uphold, come what might, the determination that she was about to signify to the Princess de Saint Dizier.

CHAPTER XL.

The revolt.

"Madame," said the princess to Adrienne de Cardoville, in a cold, severe tone, "I owe it to myself, as well as to these gentlemen, to recapitulate, in a few words, the events that have taken place for some time past. Six months ago, at the end of the mourning for your father, you, being eighteen years old, asked for the management of your fortune, and for emancipation from control. Unfortunately, I had the weakness to consent. You quitted the house, and established yourself in the extension, far from all superintendence. Then began a train of expenditures, each one more extravagant than the last. Instead of being satisfied with one or two waiting-women, taken from that class from which they are generally selected, you chose governesses for lady-companions, whom you dressed in the most ridiculous and costly fashion. It is true, that, in the solitude of your pavilion, you yourself chose to wear, one after another, costumes of different ages. Your foolish fancies and unreasonable whims have been without end and without limit: not only have you never fulfilled your religious duties, but you have actually had the audacity to profane one of your rooms, by rearing in the centre of it a species of pagan altar, on which is a group in marble representing a youth and a girl"---the princess uttered these words as if they would burn her lips---"a work of art, if you will, but a work in the highest degree unsuitable to a person of your age. You pass whole days entirely secluded in your pavilion, refusing to see any one; and Dr. Baleinier, the only one of my friends in whom you seem to have retained some confidence, having succeeded by much persuasion in gaining admittance, has frequently found you in so very excited a state, that he has felt seriously uneasy with regard to your health. You have always insisted on going out alone, without rendering any account of your actions to any one. You have taken delight in opposing, in every possible way, your will to my authority. Is all this true?"

"The picture of my past is not much flattered," said Adrienne; smiling, "but it is not altogether unlike."

"So you admit, madame," said Abbe d'Aigrigny, laying stress on his words, "that all the facts stated by your aunt are scrupulously true?"

Every eye was turned towards Adrienne, as if her answer would be of extreme importance.

"Yes, M. l'Abbe," said she; "I live openly enough to render this question superfluous."

"These facts are therefore admitted," said Abbe d'Aigrigny, turning towards the doctor and the baron.

"These facts are completely established," said M. Tripeaud, in a pompous voice.

"Will you tell me, aunt," asked Adrienne, "what is the good of this long preamble?"

"This long preamble, madame," resumed the princess with dignity, "exposes the past in order to justify the future."

"Really, aunt, such mysterious proceedings are a little in the style of the answers of the Cumaean Sybil. They must be intended to cover something formidable."

"Perhaps, mademoiselle---for to certain characters nothing is so formidable as duty and obedience. Your character is one of those inclined to revolt---"

"I freely acknowledge it, aunt---and it will always be so, until duty and obedience come to me in a shape that I can respect and love."

"Whether you respect and love my orders or not, madame," said the princess, in a curt, harsh voice, "you will, from to-day, from this moment, learn to submit blindly and absolutely to my will. In one word, you will do nothing without my permission: it is necessary, I insist upon it, and so I am determined it shall be."

Adrienne looked at her aunt for a second, and then burst into so free and sonorous a laugh, that it rang for quite a time through the vast apartment. D'Aigrigny and Baron Tripeaud started in indignation. The princess looked angrily at her niece. The doctor raised his eyes to heaven, and clasped his hands over his waistcoat with a sanctimonious sigh.

"Madame," said Abbe d'Aigrigny, "such fits of laughter are highly unbecoming. Your aunt's words are serious, and deserve a different reception."

"Oh, sir!" said Adrienne, recovering herself, "it is not my fault if I laugh. How can I maintain my gravity, when I hear my aunt talking of blind submission to her orders? Is the swallow, accustomed to fly upwards and enjoy the sunshine, fledged to live with the mole in darkness?"

At this answer, D'Aigrigny affected to stare at the other members of this kind of family council with blank astonishment.

"A swallow? what does she mean?" asked the abbe of the baron making a sign, which the latter understood.

"I do not know," answered Tripeaud, staring in his turn at the doctor. "She spoke too of a mole. It is quite unheard-of---incomprehensible."

"And so, madame," said the princess, appearing to share in the surprise of the others, "this is the reply that you make to me?"

"Certainly," answered Adrienne, astonished herself that they should pretend not to understand the simile of which she had made use, accustomed as she was to speak in figurative language.

"Come, come, madame," said Dr. Baleinier, smiling good-humoredly, "we must be indulgent. My dear Mdlle. Adrienne has naturally so uncommon and excitable a nature! She is really the most charming mad woman I know; I have told her so a hundred times, in my position of an old friend, which allows such freedom."

"I can conceive that your attachment makes you indulgent---but it is not the less true, doctor," said D'Aigrigny, as if reproaching him for taking the part of Mdlle. de Cardoville, "that such answers to serious questions are most extravagant."

"The evil is, that mademoiselle does not seem to comprehend the serious nature of this conference," said the princess, harshly. "She will perhaps understand it better when I have given her my orders."

"Let us hear these orders, aunt," replied Adrienne as, seated on the other side of the table, opposite to the princess, she leaned her small, dimpled chin in the hollow of her pretty hand, with an air of graceful mockery, charming to behold.

"From to-morrow forward," resumed the princess, "you will quit the summer-house which you at present inhabit, you will discharge your women, and come and occupy two rooms in this house, to which there will be no access except through my apartment. You will never go out alone. You will accompany me to the services of the church. Your emancipation terminates, in consequence of your prodigality duly proven. I will take charge of all your expenses, even to the ordering of your clothes, so that you may be properly and modestly dressed. Until your majority (which will be indefinitely postponed, by means of the intervention of a family-council), you will have no money at your own disposal.

Such is my resolution."

"And certainly your resolution can only be applauded, madame," said Baron Tripeaud; "we can but encourage you to show the greatest firmness, for such disorders must have an end."

"It is more than time to put a stop to such scandal," added the abbe.

"Eccentricity and exaltation of temperament---may excuse many things," ventured to observe the smooth-tongued doctor.

"No doubt," replied the princess dryly to Baleinier, who played his part to perfection; "but then, doctor, the requisite measures must be taken with such characters."

Madame de Saint-Dizier had expressed herself in a firm and precise manner; she appeared convinced of the possibility of putting her threats into execution. M. Tripeaud and D'Aigrigny had just now given their full consent to the words of the princess. Adrienne began to perceive that something very serious was in contemplation, and her gayety was at once replaced by an air of bitter irony and offended independence.

She rose abruptly, and colored a little; her rosy nostrils dilated, her eyes flashed fire, and, as she raised her head, she gently shook the fine, wavy golden hair, with a movement of pride that was natural to her. After a moment's silence, she said to her aunt in a cutting tone: "You have spoken of the past, madame; I also will speak a few words concerning it, since you force me to do so, though I may regret the necessity. I quitted your dwelling, because it was impossible for me to live longer in this atmosphere of dark hypocrisy and black treachery."

"Madame," said D'Aigrigny, "such words are as violent as they are unreasonable."

"Since you interrupt me, sir," said Adrienne, hastily, as she fixed her eyes on the abbe, "tell me what examples did I meet with in my aunt's house?"

"Excellent, examples, madame."

"Excellent, sir? Was it because I saw there, every day, her conversion keep pace with your own?"

"Madame, you forget yourself!" cried the princess, becoming pale with rage.

"Madame, I do not forget---I remember, like other people; that is all. I had no relation of whom I could ask an asylum. I wished to live alone. I wished to enjoy my revenues---because I chose rather to spend them myself, than to see them wasted by M. Tripeaud."

"Madame," cried the baron, "I cannot imagine how you can presume---"

"Sir!" said Adrienne, reducing him to silence by a gesture of overwhelming lordliness, "I speak of you---not to you. I wished to spend my income," she continued, "according to my own tastes. I embellished the retreat that I had chosen. Instead of ugly, ill-taught servants, I selected girls, pretty and well brought up, though poor. Their education forbade their being subjected to any humiliating servitude, though I have endeavored to make their situation easy and agreeable. They do not serve me, but render me service---I pay them, but I am obliged to them---nice distinctions that your highness will not understand, I know. Instead of seeing them badly or ungracefully dressed, I have given them clothes that suit their charming faces well, because I like whatever is young and fair. Whether I dress myself one way or the

other, concerns only my looking-glass. I go out alone, because I like to follow my fancy. I do not go to mass---but, if I had still a mother, I would explain to her my devotions, and she would kiss me none the less tenderly. It is true, that I have raised a pagan altar to youth and beauty, because I adore God in all that He has made fair and good, noble and grand---because, morn and evening, my heart repeats the fervent and sincere prayer: "Thanks, my Creator! thanks!"---Your highness says that M. Baleinier has often found me in my solitude, a prey to a strange excitement: yes, it is true; for it is then that, escaping in thought from all that renders the present odious and painful to me, I find refuge in the future---it is then that magical horizons spread far before me---it is then that such splendid visions appear to me, as make me feel myself rapt in a sublime and heavenly ecstasy, as if I no longer appertained to earth!"

As Adrienne pronounced these last words with enthusiasm, her countenance appeared transfigured, so resplendent did it become. In that moment, she had lost sight of all that surrounded her.

"It is then," she resumed, with spirit soaring higher and higher, "that I breathe a pure air, reviving and free---yes, free---above all, free---and so salubrious, so grateful to the soul!---Yes, instead of seeing my sisters painfully submit to a selfish, humiliating, brutal dominion, which entails upon them the seductive vices of slavery, the graceful fraud, the enchanting perfidy, the caressing falsehood, the contemptuous resignation, the hateful obedience---I behold them, my noble sisters! worthy and sincere because they are free, faithful and devoted because they have liberty to choose---neither imperious nor base, because they have no master to govern or to flatter---cherished and respected, because they can withdraw from a disloyal hand their hand, loyally bestowed. Oh, my sisters! my sisters! I feel it. These are not merely consoling visions---they are sacred hopes."

Carried away, in spite of herself, by the excitement of her feelings, Adrienne paused for a moment, in order to return to earth; she did not perceive that the other actors in this scene were looking at each other with an air of delight.

"What she says there is excellent," murmured the doctor in the princess's ear, next to whom he was seated; "were she in league with us, she would not speak differently."

"It is only by excessive harshness," added D'Aigrigny, "that we shall bring her to the desired point."

But it seemed as if the vexed emotion of Adrienne had been dissipated by the contact of the generous sentiments she had just uttered. Addressing Baleinier with a smile, she said: "I must own, doctor, that there is nothing more ridiculous, than to yield to the current of certain thoughts, in the presence of persons incapable of understanding them. This would give you a fine opportunity to make game of that exaltation of mind for which you sometimes reproach me. To let myself be carried away by transports at so serious a moment!---for, verily, the matter in hand seems to be serious. But you see, good M. Baleinier, when an idea comes into my head, I can no more help following it out, than I could refrain from running after butterflies when I was a little girl."

"And heaven only knows whither these brilliant butterflies of all colors," said M. Baleinier, smiling with an air of paternal indulgence, "that are passing through your brain, are likely to lead you. Oh, madcap, when will she be as reasonable as she is charming?"

"This very instant, my good doctor," replied Adrienne. "I am about to cast off my reveries for realities, and speak plain and positive language, as you shall hear."

Upon which, addressing her aunt, she continued: "You have imparted to me your resolution, madame; I will now tell you mine. Within a week, I shall quit the pavilion that I inhabit, for a house which I have arranged to my taste, where I shall live after my own fashion. I have neither father nor mother, and I owe no account of my actions to any but myself."

"Upon my word, mademoiselle," said the princess, shrugging her shoulders, "you talk nonsense. You forget that society has inalienable moral rights, which we are bound to enforce. And we shall not neglect them, depend upon it."

"So madame, it is you, and M. d'Aigrigny, and M. Tripeaud, that represent the morality of society! This appears to me very fine. Is it because M. Tripeaud has considered (I must acknowledge it) my fortune as his own? Is it because---"

"Now, really, madame," began Tripeaud.

"In good time, madame," said Adrienne to her aunt, without noticing the baron, "as the occasion offers, I shall have to ask you for explanations with regard to certain interests, which have hitherto, I think, been concealed from me."

These words of Adrienne made D'Aigrigny and the princess start, and then rapidly exchange a glance of uneasiness and anxiety. Adrienne did not seem to perceive it, but thus continued: "To have done with your demands, madame, here is my final resolve. I shall live where and how I please. I think that, if I were a man, no one would impose on me, at my age, the harsh and humiliating guardianship you have in view, for living as I have lived till now---honestly, freely, and generously, in the sight of all."

"This idea is absurd! is madness!" cried the princess. "To wish to live thus alone, is to carry immorality and immodesty to their utmost limits."

"If so, madame," said Adrienne, "what opinion must you entertain of so many poor girls, orphans like myself, who live alone and free, as I wish to live? They have not received, as I have, a refined education, calculated to raise the soul, and purify the heart. They have not wealth, as I have, to protect them from the evil temptations of misery; and yet they live honestly and proudly in their distress."

"Vice and virtue do not exist for such tag-rag vermin!" cried Baron Tripeaud, with an expression of anger and hideous disdain.

"Madame, you would turn away a lackey, that would venture to speak thus before you," said Adrienne to her aunt, unable to conceal her disgust, "and yet you oblige me to listen to such speeches!"

The Marquis d'Aigrigny touched M. Tripeaud with his knee under the table, to remind him that he must not express himself in the princess's parlors in the same manner as he would in the lobbies of the Exchange. To repair the baron's coarseness, the abbe thus continued: "There is no comparison, mademoiselle, between people of the class you name, and a young lady of your rank."

"For a Catholic priest, M. l'Abbe, that distinction is not very Christian," replied Adrienne.

"I know the purport of my words, madame," answered the abbe, dryly; "besides the independent life that you wish to lead, in opposition to all reason, may tend to very serious consequences for you. Your family may one day wish to see you married---"

"I will spare my family that trouble, sir, if I marry at all, I will choose for myself, which also appears to me reasonable enough. But, in truth, I am very little tempted by that heavy chain, which selfishness and brutality rivet for ever about our necks."

"It is indecent, madame," said the princess, to speak so lightly of such an institution."

"Before you, especially, madame, I beg pardon for having shocked your highness! You fear that my independent planner of living will frighten away all wooers; but that is another reason for persisting in my independence, for I detest wooers. I only hope that they may have the very worst opinion of me, and there is no better means of effecting that object, than to appear to live as they live themselves. I rely upon my whims, my follies, my sweet faults, to preserve me from the annoyance of any matrimonial hunting."

"You will be quite satisfied on that head," resumed Madame de Saint Dizier, "if unfortunately the report should gain credit, that you have carried the forgetfulness of all duty and decency, to such a height, as to return home at eight o'clock in the morning. So I am told is the case but I cannot bring myself to believe such an enormity."

"You are wrong, madame, for it is quite true."

"So you confess it?" cried the princess.

"I confess all that I do, madame. I came home this morning at eight o'clock."

"You hear Gentlemen?" ejaculated the princess.

"Oh!" said M. d'Aigrigny, in a bass voice.

"Ah!" said the baron, in a treble key.

"Oh!" muttered the doctor, with a deep sigh.

On hearing these lamentable exclamations, Adrienne seemed about to speak, perhaps to justify herself; but her lip speedily assumed a curl of contempt, which showed that she disdained to stoop to any explanation.

"So it is true," said the princess. "Oh, wretched girl, you had accustomed me to be astonished at nothing; but, nevertheless, I doubted the possibility of such conduct. It required your impudent and audacious reply to convince the of the fact."

"Madame, lying has always appeared to be more impudent than to speak the truth."

"And where had you been, madame? and for what?"

"Madame," said Adrienne, interrupting her aunt, "I never speak false---but neither do I speak more than I choose; and then again, it were cowardice to defend myself from a revolting accusation. Let us say no more about it: your importunities on this head will be altogether vain. To resume: you wish to impose upon me a harsh and humiliating restraint; I wish to quit the house I inhabit, to go and live where I please, at my own fancy. Which of us two will yield, remains to be seen. Now for another matter: this mansion belongs to me! As I am about to leave it, I am indifferent whether you continue to live here or not; but the ground floor is uninhabited. It contains, besides the reception-rooms, two complete sets of apartments; I have let them for some time."

"Indeed!" said the princess, looking at D'Aigrigny with intense surprise. "And to whom," she added ironically, "have you disposed of them?"

"To three members of my family."

"What does all this mean?" said *Mme.* de Saint-Dizier, more and more astonished.

"It means, madame, that I wish to offer a generous hospitality to a young Indian prince, my kinsman on my mother's side. He will arrive in two or three days, and I wish to have the rooms ready to receive him."

"You hear, gentlemen?" said D'Aigrigny to the doctor and Tripeaud, with an affectation of profound stupor.

"It surpasses all one could imagine!" exclaimed the baron.

"Alas!" observed the doctor, benignantly, "the impulse is generous in itself---but the mad little head crops out?"

"Excellent!" said the princes. "I cannot prevent you madame, from announcing the most extravagant designs but it is presumable that you will not stop short in so fair a path. Is that all?"

"Not quite, your highness. I learned this morning, that two of my female relations, also on my mother's side---poor children of fifteen---orphan daughters of Marshal Simon arrived yesterday from a long journey, and are now with the wife of the brave soldier who brought them to France from the depths of Siberia."

At these words from Adrienne, D'Aigrigny and the princess could not help starting suddenly, and staring at each other with affright, so far were they from expecting that *Mlle.* de Cardoville was informed of the coming of Marshal Simon's daughters. This discovery was like a thunder-clap to them.

"You are no doubt astonished at seeing me so well informed," said Adrienne; "fortunately, before I have done, I hope to astonish you still more. But to return to these daughters of Marshal Simon: your highness will understand, that it is impossible for me to leave them in charge of the good people who have afforded them a temporary asylum. Though this family is honest, and hard-working, it is not the place for them. I shall go and fetch them hither, and lodge them in apartments on the ground-floor, along with the soldier's wife, who will do very well to take care of them."

Upon these words, D'Aigrigny and the baron looked at each other, and the baron exclaimed: "Decidedly, she's out of her head."

Without a word to Tripeaud, Adrienne continued: "Marshal Simon cannot fail to arrive at Paris shortly. Your highness perceives how pleasant it will be, to be able to present his daughters to him, and prove that they have been treated as they deserve. To-morrow morning I shall send for milliners and mantua makers, so that they may want for nothing. I desire their surprised father, on his return, to find them every way beautiful. They are pretty, I am told, as angels---but I will endeavor to make little Cupids of them."

"At last, madame, you must have finished?" said the princess, in a sardonic and deeply irritated tone, whilst D'Aigrigny, calm and cold in appearance, could hardly dissemble his mental anguish.

"Try again!" continued the princess, addressing Adrienne. "Are there no more relations that you wish to add to this interesting family-group? Really a queen could not act with more magnificence."

"Right! I wish to give my family a royal reception---such as is due to the son of a king, and the daughters of the Duke de Ligny. It is well to unite other luxuries of life with the luxury of the hospitable heart."

"The maxim is assuredly generous," said the princess, becoming more and more agitated; "it is only a pity that you do not possess the mines of El Dorado to make it practicable."

"It was on the subject of a mine, said to be a rich one, that I also wished to speak to your highness. Could I find a better opportunity? Though my fortune is already considerable, it is nothing to what may come to our family at any moment. You will perhaps excuse, therefore, what you are pleased to call my royal prodigalities."

D'Aigrigny's dilemma became momentarily more and more thorny. The affair of the medals was so important, that he had concealed it even from Dr. Baleinier, though he had called in his services to forward immense interests. Neither had Tripeaud been informed of it, for the princess believed that she had destroyed every vestige of those papers of Adrienne's father, which might have put him on the scent of this discovery. The abbe, therefore was not only greatly alarmed that Mdlle. de Cardoville might be informed of this secret, but he trembled lest she should divulge it.

The princess, sharing the alarms of D'Aigrigny, interrupted her niece by exclaiming: "Madame, there are certain family affairs which ought to be kept secret, and, without exactly understanding to what you allude, I must request you to change the subject."

"What, madame! are we not here a family party? Is that not sufficiently evident by the somewhat ungracious things that have been here said?"

"No matter, madame! when affairs of interest are concerned, which are more or less disputable, it is perfectly useless to speak of them without the documents laid before every one."

"And of what have we been speaking this hour, madame, if not of affairs of interest? I really do not understand your surprise and embarrassment."

"I am neither surprised nor embarrassed, madame; but for the last two hours, you have obliged me to listen to so many new and extravagant things, that a little amaze is very permissible."

"I beg your highness's pardon, but you are very much embarrassed," said Adrienne, looking fixedly at her aunt, "and M. d'Aigrigny also---which confirms certain suspicions that I have not had the time to clear up. Have I then guessed rightly?" she added, after a pause. "We will see---"

"Madame, I command you to be silent," cried the princess, no longer mistress of herself.

"Oh, madame!" said Adrienne, "for a person who has in general so much command of her feelings, you compromise yourself strangely."

Providence (as some will have it) came to the aid of the princess and the Abbe d'Aigrigny at this critical juncture. A valet entered the room; his countenance bore such marks of fright and agitation, that the princess exclaimed as soon as she saw him: "Why, Dubois! what is the matter?"

"I have to beg pardon, your highness, for interrupting you against your express orders, but a police inspector demands to speak with you instantly. He is below stairs, and the yard is full of policemen and soldiers."

Notwithstanding the profound surprise which this new incident occasioned her, the princess, determining to profit by the opportunity thus afforded, to concert prompt measures with D'Aigrigny on the subject of Adrienne's threatened revelations, rose, and said to the abbe: "Will you be so obliging as to accompany me, M. d'Aigrigny, for I do not know what the presence of this commissary of police may signify."

D'Aigrigny followed the speaker into the next room.

CHAPTER XLI.

Treachery.

The Princess de Saint-Dizier, accompanied by D'Aigrigny, and followed by the servants, stopped short in the next room to that in which had remained Adrienne, Tripeaud and the doctor.

"Where is the commissary?" asked the princess of the servant, who had just before announced to her the arrival of that magistrate."

"In the blue saloon, madame."

"My compliments, and beg him to wait for me a few moments."

The man bowed and withdrew. As soon as he was gone Madame de Saint Dizier approached hastily M. d'Aigrigny, whose countenance, usually firm and haughty, was now pale and agitated.

"You see," cried the princess in a hurried voice, "Adrienne knows all. What shall we do?---what?"

"I cannot tell," said the abbe, with a fixed and absent look. "This disclosure is a terrible blow to us."

"Is all, then, lost?"

"There is only one means of safety," said M. d'Aigrigny;---"the doctor."

"But how?" cried the princess. "So, sudden? this very day?"

"Two hours hence, it will be too late; ere then, this infernal girl will have seen Marshal Simon's daughters."

"But---Frederick!---it is impossible! M. Baleinier will never consent. I ought to have been prepared before hand as we intended, after to-day's examination."

"No matter," replied the abbe, quickly; "the doctor must try at any hazard."

"But under what pretext?"

"I will try and find one."

"Suppose you were to find a pretext, Frederick, and we could act immediately---nothing would be ready down there."

"Be satisfied: they are always ready there, by habitual foresight."

"How instruct the doctor on the instant?" resumed the princess.

"To send for him would be to rouse the suspicions of your niece," said M. d'Aigrigny, thoughtfully; "and we must avoid that before everything."

"Of course," answered the princess; "her confidence in the doctor is one of our greatest resources."

"There is a way," said the abbe quickly; "I will write a few words in haste to Baleinier: one of your people can take the note to him, as if it came from without--from a patient dangerously ill."

"An excellent idea!" cried the princess. "You are right. Here--upon this table--there is everything necessary for writing. Quick! quick--But will the doctor succeed?"

"In truth, I scarcely dare to hope it," said the marquis, sitting down at the table with repressed rage. "Thanks to this examination, going beyond our hopes, which our man, hidden behind the curtain, has faithfully taken down in shorthand--thanks to the violent scenes, which would necessarily have occurred to-morrow and the day after--the doctor, by fencing himself round with all sorts of clever precautions, would have been able to act with the most complete certainty. But to ask this of him to-day, on the instant!--Herminia--it is folly to think of!"--The marquis threw down the pen which he held in his hand; then he added, in a tone of bitter and profound irritation: "At the very moment of success--to see all our hopes destroyed!--Oh, the consequences of all this are incalculable. Your niece will be the cause of the greatest mischief--oh! the greatest injury to us."

It is impossible to describe the expression of deep rage and implacable hatred with which D'Aigrigny uttered these last words.

"Frederick," cried the princess with anxiety, as she clasped her hands strongly around the abbe's, "I conjure you, do not despair!--The doctor is fertile in resources, and he is so devoted to us. Let us at least, make the attempt."

"Well--it is at least a chance," said the abbe, taking up the pen again.

"Should it come to the worst," said the princess, "and Adrienne go this evening to fetch General Simon's daughters, she may perhaps no longer find them.

"We cannot hope for that. It is impossible that Rodin's orders should have been so quickly executed. We should have been informed of it."

"It is true. Write then to the doctor; I will send you Dubois, to carry your letter. Courage, Frederick! we shall yet be too much for that ungovernable girl." Madame de Saint-Dizier added, with concentrated rage: "Oh, Adrienne! Adrienne! you shall pay dearly for your insolent sarcasms, and the anxiety you have caused us."

As she went out, the princess turned towards M. d'Aigrigny, and said to him: "Wait for me here. I will tell you the meaning of this visit of the police, and we will go in together."

The princess disappeared. D'Aigrigny dashed off a few words, with a trembling hand.

CHAPTER XLII.

The snare.

After the departure of Madame de Saint-Dizier and the marquis, Adrienne had remained in her aunt's apartment with M. Baleinier and Baron Tripeaud.

On hearing of the commissary's arrival, Mdlle. de Cardoville had felt considerable uneasiness; for there could be no doubt that, as Agricola had apprehended, this magistrate was come to search the hotel and extension, in order to find the smith, whom he believed to be concealed there.

Though she looked upon Agricola's hiding-place as a very safe one, Adrienne was not quite tranquil on his account; so in the event of any unfortunate accident, she thought it a good opportunity to recommend the refugee to the doctor, an intimate friend, as we have said, of one of the most influential ministers of the day. So, drawing near to the physician, who was conversing in a low voice with the baron, she said to him in her softest and most coaxing manner: "My good M. Baleinier, I wish to speak a few words with you." She pointed to the deep recess of one of the windows.

"I am at your orders, madame," answered the doctor, as he rose to follow Adrienne to the recess.

M. Tripeaud, who, no longer sustained by the abbe's presence, dreaded the young lady as he did fire, was not sorry for this diversion. To keep up appearances, he stationed himself before one of the sacred pictures, and began again to contemplate it, as if there were no bounds to his admiration.

When Mdlle. de Cardoville was far enough from the baron, not to be overheard by him, she said to the physician, who, all smiles and benevolence, waited for her to explain: "My good doctor, you are my friend, as you were my father's. Just now, notwithstanding the difficulty of your position, you had the courage to show yourself my only partisan."

"Not at all, madame; do not go and say such things!" cried the doctor, affecting a pleasant kind of anger. "Plague on't! you would get me into a pretty scrape; so pray be silent on that subject. *Vade retro Satanas!*---which means: Get thee behind me, charming little demon that you are!"

"Do not be afraid," answered Adrienne, with a smile; "I will not compromise you. Only allow me to remind you, that you have often made me offers of service, and spoken to me of your devotion."

"Put me to the test---and you will see if I do not keep my promises."

"Well, then! give me a proof on the instant," said Adrienne, quickly.

"Capital! this is how I like to be taken at my word. What can I do for you?"

"Are you still very intimate with your friend the minister?"

"Yes; I am just treating him for a loss of voice, which he always has, the day they put questions to him in the house. He likes it better."

"I want you to obtain from him something very important for me."

"For you? pray, what is it?"

At this instant, the valet entered the room, delivered a letter to M. Baleinier, and said to him: "A footman has just brought this letter for you, sir; it is very pressing."

The physician took the letter, and the servant went out.

"This is one of the inconveniences of merit," said Adrienne, smiling; "they do not leave you a moment's rest, my poor doctor."

"Do not speak of it, madame," said the physician, who could not conceal a start of amazement, as he recognized the writing of D'Aigrigny; "these patients think we are made of iron, and have monopolized the health which they so much

need. They have really no mercy. With your permission, madame," added M. Baleinier, looking at Adrienne before he unsealed the letter.

Mdlle. de Cardoville answered by a graceful nod. Marquis d'Aigrigny's letter was not long; the doctor read it at a single glance, and, notwithstanding his habitual prudence, he shrugged his shoulders, and said hastily: "Today! why, it's impossible. He is mad."

"You speak no doubt of some poor patient, who has placed all his hopes in you--who waits and calls for you at this moment. Come, my dear M. Baleinier, do not reject his prayer. It is so sweet to justify the confidence we inspire."

There was at once so much analogy, and such contradiction, between the object of this letter, written just before by Adrienne's most implacable enemy, and these words of commiseration which she spoke in a touching voice, that Dr. Baleinier himself could not help being struck with it. He looked at Mdlle. de Cardoville with an almost embarrassed air, as he replied: "I am indeed speaking of one of my patients, who counts much upon me--a great deal too much--for he asks me to do an impossibility. But why do you feel so interested in an unknown person?"

"If he is unfortunate, I know enough to interest me. The person for whom I ask your assistance with the minister, was quite as little known to me; and now I take the deepest interest in him. I must tell you, that he is the son of the worthy soldier who brought Marshal Simon's daughters from the heart of Siberia."

"What! he is--"

"An honest workman, the support of his family; but I must tell you all about it--this is how the affair took place."

The confidential communication which Adrienne was going to make to the doctor, was cut short by Madame Saint-Dizier, who, followed by M. d'Aigrigny, opened abruptly the door. An expression of infernal joy, hardly concealed beneath a semblance of extreme indignation, was visible in her countenance.

M. d'Aigrigny threw rapidly, as he entered the apartment, an inquiring and anxious glance at M. Baleinier. The doctor answered by a shake of the head. The abbe bit his lips with silent rage; he had built his last hopes upon the doctor, and his projects seemed now forever annihilated, notwithstanding the new blow which the princess had in reserve for Adrienne.

"Gentlemen," said Madame de Saint-Dizier, in a sharp, hurried voice, for she was nearly choking with wicked pleasure, "gentlemen, pray be seated! I have some new and curious things to tell you, on the subject of this young lady." She pointed to her niece, with a look of ineffable hatred and disdain.

"My poor child, what is the matter now?" said M. Baleinier, in a soft, wheedling tone, before he left the window where he was standing with Adrienne. "Whatever happens, count upon me!"--And the physician went to seat himself between M. d'Aigrigny and M. Tripeaud.

At her aunt's insolent address, Mdlle. de Cardoville had proudly lined her head. The blood rushed to her face, and irritated at the new attacks with which she was menaced, she advanced to the table where the princess was seated, and said in an agitated voice to M. Baleinier: "I shall expect you to call on me as soon as possible, my dear doctor. You know that I wish particularly to speak with you."

Adrienne made one step towards the arm-chair, on which she had left her hat. The princess rose abruptly, and exclaimed: "What are you doing, madame?"

"I am about to retire. Your highness has expressed to me your will, and I have told you mine. It is enough."

She took her hat. Madame de Saint-Dizier, seeing her prey about to escape, hastened towards her niece, and, in defiance of all propriety, seized her violently by the arm with a convulsive grasp, and bade her, "Remain!"

"Fie, madame!" exclaimed Adrienne, with an accent of painful contempt, "have we sunk so low?"

"You wish to escape---you are afraid!" resumed Madame de Saint-Dizier, looking at her disdainfully from head to foot.

With these words "you are afraid," you could have made Adrienne de Cardoville walk into a fiery furnace. Disengaging her arm from her aunt's grasp, with a gesture full of nobleness and pride, she threw down the hat upon the chair, and returning to the table, said imperiously to the princess: "There is something even stronger than the disgust with which all this inspires me---the fear of being accused of cowardice. Go on, madame! I am listening!"

With her head raised, her color somewhat heightened, her glance half veiled by a tear of indignation, her arms folded over her bosom, which heaved in spite of herself with deep emotion, and her little foot beating convulsively on the carpet, Adrienne looked steadily at her aunt. The princess wished to infuse drop by drop, the poison with which she was swelling, and make her victim suffer as long as possible, feeling certain that she could not escape. "Gentlemen," said Madame de Saint-Dizier, in a forced voice, "this has occurred: I was told that the commissary of police wished to speak with me: I went to receive this magistrate; he excused himself, with a troubled air, for the nature of the duty he had to perform. A man, against whom a warrant was out, had been seen to enter the garden-house."

Adrienne started, there could be no doubt that Agricola was meant. But she recovered her tranquillity, when she thought of the security of the hiding-place she had given him.

"The magistrate," continued the princess, "asked my consent to search the hotel and extension, to discover this man. It was his right. I begged him to commence with the garden-house, and accompanied him. Notwithstanding the improper conduct of Mademoiselle, it never, I confess, entered my head for a moment, that she was in any way mixed up with this police business. I was deceived."

"What do you mean, madame?" cried Adrienne.

"You shall know all, madame," said the princess, with a triumphant air, "in good time. You were in rather too great a hurry just now, to show yourself so proud and satirical. Well! I accompanied the commissary in his search; we came to the summer-house; I leave you to imagine the stupor and astonishment of the magistrate, on seeing three creatures dressed up like actresses. At my request, the fact was noted in the official report; for it is well to reveal such extravagances to all whom it may concern."

"The princess acted very wisely," said Tripeaud, bowing; "it is well that the authorities should be informed of such matters."

Adrienne, too much interested in the fate of the workman to think of answering Tripeaud or the princess, listened in silence, and strove to conceal her uneasiness.

"The magistrate," resumed Madame de Saint-Dizier, "began by a severe examination of these young girls; to learn if any man had, with their knowledge, been introduced into the house; with incredible effrontery, they answered that they had seen nobody enter."

"The true-hearted, honest girls!" thought Mademoiselle de Cardoville, full of joy; "the poor workman is safe! the protection of Dr. Baleinier will do the rest."

"Fortunately," continued the princess, "one of my women, Mrs. Grivois, had accompanied me. This excellent person, remembering to have seen Mademoiselle return home at eight o'clock in the morning, remarked with much simplicity to the magistrate, that the man, whom they sought, might probably have entered by the little garden gate, left open, accidentally, by Mademoiselle."

"It would have been well, madame," said Tripeaud, "to have caused to be noted also in the report, that Mademoiselle had returned home at eight o'clock in the morning."

"I do not see the necessity for this," said the doctor, faithful to his part: "it would have been quite foreign to the search carried on by the commissary."

"But, doctor," said Tripeaud.

"But, baron," resumed M. Baleinier, in a firm voice, "that is my opinion."

"It was not mine, doctor," said the princess; "like M. Tripeaud, I considered it important to establish the fact by an entry in the report, and I saw, by the confused and troubled countenance of the magistrate, how painful it was to register the scandalous conduct of a young person placed in so high a position in society."

"Certainly, madame," said Adrienne, losing patience, "I believe your modesty to be about equal to that of this candid commissary of police; but it seems to me, that your mutual innocence was alarmed a little too soon. You might, and ought to have reflected, that there was nothing extraordinary in my coming home at eight o'clock, if I had gone out at six."

"The excuse, though somewhat tardy, is at least cunning," said the princess, spitefully.

"I do not excuse myself, madame," said Adrienne; "but as M. Baleinier has been kind enough to speak a word in my favor, I give the possible interpretation of a fact, which it would not become me to explain in your presence."

"The fact will stand, however, in the report," said Tripeaud, "until the explanation is given."

Abbe d'Aigrigny, his forehead resting on his hand, remained as if a stranger to this scene; he was too much occupied with his fears at the consequences of the approaching interview between Mdlle. de Cardoville and Marshal Simon's daughters---for there seemed no possibility of using force to prevent Adrienne from going out that evening.

Madame de Saint-Dizier went on: "The fact which so greatly scandalized the commissary is nothing compared to what I yet have to tell you, gentlemen. We had searched all parts of the pavilion without finding any one, and were just about to quit the bed-chamber, for we had taken this room the last, when Mrs. Grivois pointed out to us that one of the golden mouldings of a panel did not appear to come quite home to the wall. We drew the attention of the magistrate to this circumstance; his men examined, touched, felt---the panel flew open!---and then---can you guess what we discovered? But, no! it is too odious, too revolting; I dare not even---"

"Then I dare, madame," said Adrienne, resolutely, though she saw with the utmost grief the retreat of Agricola was discovered; "I will spare your highness's candor the recital of this new scandal, and yet what I am about to say is in nowise intended as a justification."

"It requires one, however," said Madame de Saint-Dizier, with a disdainful smile; "a man concealed by you in your own bedroom."

"A man concealed in her bedroom!" cried the Marquis d'Aigrigny, raising his head with apparent indignation, which only covered a cruel joy.

"A man! in the bedroom of Mademoiselle!" added Baron Tripeaud. "I hope this also was inserted in the report."

"Yes, yes, baron," said the princess with a triumphant air.

"But this man," said the doctor, in a hypocritical tone, "must have been a robber? Any other supposition would be in the highest degree improbable. This explains itself."

"Your indulgence deceives you, M. Baleinier," answered the princess, dryly.

"We knew the sort of thieves," said Tripeaud; "they are generally young men, handsome, and very rich."

"You are wrong, sir," resumed Madame de Saint-Dizier. "Mademoiselle does not raise her views so high. She proves that a dereliction from duty may be ignoble as well as criminal. I am no longer astonished at the sympathy which was just now professed for the lower orders. It is the more touching and affecting, as the man concealed by her was dressed in a blouse."

"A blouse!" cried the baron, with an air of extreme disgust; "then he is one of the common people? It really makes one's hair stand on end."

"The man is a working smith---he confessed it," said the princess; "but not to be unjust---he is really a good-looking fellow. It was doubtless that singular worship which Mademoiselle pays to the beautiful---"

"Enough, madame, enough!" said Adrienne suddenly, for, hitherto disdainful to answer, she had listened to her aunt with growing and painful indignation; "I was just now on the point of defending myself against one of your odious insinuations---but I will not a second time descend to any such weakness. One word only, madame; has this honest and worthy artisan been arrested?"

"To be sure, he has been arrested and taken to prison, under a strong escort. Does not that pierce your heart?" sneered the princess, with a triumphant air. "Your tender pity for this interesting smith must indeed be very great, since it deprives you of your sarcastic assurance."

"Yes, madame; for I have something better to do than to satirize that which is utterly odious and ridiculous," replied Adrienne, whose eyes grew dim with tears at the thought of the cruel hurt to Agricola's family. Then, putting her hat on, and tying the strings, she said to the doctor: "M. Baleinier, I asked you just now for your interest with the minister."

"Yes, madame; and it will give me great pleasure to act on your behalf."

"Is your carriage below?"

"Yes, madame," said the doctor, much surprised.

"You will be good enough to accompany me immediately to the minister's. Introduced by you, he will not refuse me the favor, or rather the act of justice, that I have to solicit."

"What, mademoiselle," said the princess; "do you dare take such a course, without my orders, after what has just passed? It is really quite unheard-of."

"It confounds one," added Tripeaud; "but we must not be surprised at anything."

The moment Adrienne asked the doctor if his carriage was below, D'Aigrigny started. A look of intense satisfaction flashed across his countenance, and he could hardly repress the violence of his delight, when, darting, a rapid and significant glance at the doctor, he saw the latter respond to it by trace closing his eyelids in token of comprehension and assent.

When therefore the princess resumed, in an angry tone, addressing herself to Adrienne: "Madame, I forbid you leaving the house!"---D'Aigrigny said to the speaker, with a peculiar inflection of the voice: "I think, your highness, we may trust the lady to the doctor's care."

The marquis pronounced these words in so significant a manner, that the princess, having looked by turns at the physician and D'Aigrigny, understood it all, and her countenance grew radiant with joy.

Not only did this pass with extreme rapidity, but the night was already almost come, so that Adrienne, absorbed in painful thoughts with regard to Agricola, did not perceive the different signals exchanged between the princess, the doctor, and the abbe. Even had she done so, they would have been incomprehensible to her.

Not wishing to have the appearance of yielding too readily, to the suggestion of the marquis, Madame de Saint-Dizier resumed: "Though the doctor seems to me to be far too indulgent to mademoiselle, I might not see any great objection to trusting her with him; but that I do not wish to establish such a precedent, for hence forward she must have no will but mine."

"Madame," said the physician gravely, feigning to be somewhat shocked by the words of the Princess de Saint-Dizier, "I do not think I have been too indulgent to mademoiselle---but only just. I am at her orders, to take her to the minister if she wishes it. I do not know what she intends to solicit, but I believe her incapable of abusing the confidence I repose in her, or making me support a recommendation undeserved."

Adrienne, much moved, extended her hand cordially to the doctor, and said to him: "Rest assured, my excellent friend, that you will thank me for the step I am taking, for you will assist in a noble action."

Tripeaud, who was not in the secret of the new plans of the doctor and the abbe in a low voice faltered to the latter, with a stupefied air, "What! will you let her go?"

"Yes, yes," answered D'Aigrigny abruptly, making a sign that he should listen to the princess, who was about to speak. Advancing towards her niece, she said to her in a slow and measured tone, laying a peculiar emphasis on every word: "One moment more, mademoiselle---one last word in presence of these gentlemen. Answer me! Notwithstanding the heavy charges impending over you, are you still determined to resist my formal commands?"

"Yes, madame."

"Notwithstanding the scandalous exposure which has just taken place, you still persist in withdrawing yourself from my authority?"

"Yes, madame."

"You refuse positively to submit to the regular and decent mode of life which I would impose upon you?"

"I have already told you, madame, that I am about to quit this dwelling in order to live alone and after my own fashion."

"Is that your final decision?"

"It is my last word."

"Reflect! the matter is serious. Beware!"

"I have given your highness my last word, and I never speak it twice."

"Gentlemen, you hear all this?" resumed the princess; "I have tried in vain all that was possible to conciliate. Mademoiselle will have only herself to thank for the measures to which this audacious revolt will oblige me to have recourse."

"Be it so, madame," replied Adrienne. Then, addressing M. Baleinier, she said quickly to him: "Come, my dear doctor; I am dying with impatience. Let us set out immediately. Every minute lost may occasion bitter tears to an honest family."

So saying, Adrienne left the room precipitately with the physician. One of the servants called for M. Baleinier's carriage. Assisted by the doctor, Adrienne mounted the step, without perceiving that he said something in a low whisper to the footman that opened the coach-door.

When, however, he was seated by the side of Mdlle. de Cardoville, and the door was closed upon them, he waited for about a second, and then called out in a loud voice to the coachman: "To the house of the minister, by the private entrance!" The horses started at a gallop.

CHAPTER XLIII.

A false friend.

Night had set in dark and cold. The sky, which had been clear till the sun went down, was now covered with gray and lurid clouds; a strong wind raised here and there, in circling eddies, the snow that was beginning to fall thick and fast.

The lamps threw a dubious light into the interior of Dr. Baleinier's carriage, in which he was seated alone with Adrienne de Cardoville. The charming countenance of the latter, faintly illumined by the lamps beneath the shade of her little gray hat, looked doubly white and pure in contrast with the dark lining of the carriage, which was now filled with that, sweet, delicious, and almost voluptuous perfume which hangs about the garments of young women of taste. The attitude of the girl, seated next to the doctor, was full of grace. Her slight and elegant figure, imprisoned in her high-necked dress of blue cloth, imprinted its wavy outline on the soft cushion against which she leaned; her little feet, crossed one upon the other, and stretched rather forward, rested upon a thick bear-skin, which carpeted the bottom of the carriage. In her hand, which was ungloved and dazzlingly white, she held a magnificently embroidered handkerchief, with which, to the great astonishment of M. Baleinier, she dried her eyes, now filled with tears.

Yes; Adrienne wept, for she now felt the reaction from the painful scenes through which she had passed at Saint-Dizier House; to the feverish and nervous excitement, which had till then sustained her, had succeeded a sorrowful dejection. Resolute in her independence, proud in her disdain, implacable in her irony, audacious in her resistance to unjust oppression, Adrienne was yet endowed with the most acute sensibility, which she always dissembled, however, in the presence of her aunt and those who surrounded her.

Notwithstanding her courage, no one could have been less masculine, less of a virago, than Mdlle. Cardoville. She was essentially womanly, but as a woman, she knew how to exercise great empire over herself, the moment that the least mark of weakness on her part would have rejoiced or emboldened her enemies.

The carriage had rolled onwards for some minutes; but Adrienne, drying her tears in silence, to the doctor's great astonishment, had not yet uttered a word.

"What, my dear Mdlle. Adrienne?" said M. Baleinier, truly surprised at her emotion; "what! you, that were just now so courageous, weeping?"

"Yes," answered Adrienne, in an agitated voice; "I weep in presence of a friend; but, before my aunt---oh! never."

"And yet, in that long interview, your stinging replies---"

"Ah me! do you think that I resigned myself with pleasure to that war of sarcasm? Nothing is more painful to me than such combats of bitter irony, to which I am forced by the necessity of defending myself from this woman and her friends. You speak of my courage: it does not consist, I assure you, in the display of wicked feelings---but in the power to repress and hide all that I suffer, when I hear myself treated so grossly---in the presence, too, of people that I hate and despise---when, after all, I have never done them any harm, and have only asked to be allowed to live alone, freely and quietly, and see those about me happy."

"That's where it is: they envy your happiness, and that which you bestow upon others."

"And it is my aunt," cried Adrienne, with indignation, "my aunt, whose whole life has been one long scandal that accuses me in this revolting manner!---as if she did not know me proud and honest enough never to make a choice of which I should be ashamed! Oh! if I ever love, I shall proclaim it, I shall be proud of it: for love, as I understand it, is the most glorious feeling in the world. But, alas!" continued Adrienne, with redoubled bitterness, "of what use are truth and honor, if they do not secure you from suspicions, which are as absurd as they are odious?" So saying, she again pressed her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Come, my dear Mdlle. Adrienne," said M. Baleinier, in a voice full of the softest unction, "becalm---it is all over now. You have in me a devoted friend." As he pronounced these last words, he blushed in spite of his diabolical craft.

"I know you are my friend," said Adrienne: "I shall never forget that, by taking my part to-day, you exposed yourself to the resentment of my aunt---for I am not ignorant of her power, which is very great, alas! for evil."

"As for that," said the doctor, affecting a profound indifference, "we medical men are pretty safe from personal enmities."

"Nay, my dear M. Baleinier! *Mme.* de Saint-Dizier and her friends never forgive," said the young girl, with a shudder. "It needed all my invincible aversion, my innate horror for all that is base, cowardly, and perfidious, to induce me to break so openly with her. But if death itself were the penalty, I could not hesitate and yet," she added, with one of those

graceful smiles which gave such a charm to her beautiful countenance, "yet I am fond of life: if I have to reproach myself with anything, it is that I would have it too bright, too fair, too harmonious; but then, you know, I am resigned to my faults."

"Well, come, I am more tranquil," said the doctor, gayly; "for you smile---that is a good sign."

"It is often the wisest course; and yet, ought I smile, after the threats that my aunt has held out to me? Still, what can she do? what is the meaning of this kind of family council? Did she seriously think that the advice of a M. D'Aigrigny or a M. Tripeaud could have influenced me? And then she talked of rigorous measures. What measures can she take; do you know?"

"I think, between ourselves, that the princess only wished to frighten you, and hopes to succeed by persuasion. She has the misfortune to fancy herself a mother of the Church, and dreams of your conversion," said the doctor, maliciously, for he now wished to tranquillize Adrienne at any cost; "but let us think no more about it. Your fire eyes must shine with all their lustre, to fascinate the minister that we are going to see."

"You are right, dear doctor; we ought always avoid grief, for it has the disadvantage of making us forget the sorrows of others. But here am I, availing myself of your kindness, without even telling you what I require."

"Luckily, we shall have plenty of time to talk over it, for our statesman lives at some distance."

"In two words, here's the mystery," answered Adrienne. "I told you what reasons I had to interest myself in that honest workman. This morning he came to me in great grief, to inform me that he was compromised by some songs he had written (for he is a poet), and that, though innocent, he was threatened with an arrest; and if they put him into prison, his family, whose sole support he is, would die of hunger. Therefore he came to beg me to procure bail for him, so that he might be left at liberty to work: I promised immediately, thinking of your interest with the minister; for, as they were already in pursuit of the poor lad, I chose to conceal him in my residence, and you know how my aunt has twisted that action. Now tell me, do you think, that, by means of your recommendation, the minister will grant me the freedom of this workman, bail being given for the same?"

"No doubt of it. There will not be the shadow of a difficulty---especially when you have explained the facts to him, with that eloquence of the heart which you possess in perfection."

"Do you know, my dear Dr. Baleinier, why I have taken the resolution (which is perhaps a strange one) to ask you to accompany me to the minister's?"

"Why, doubtless, to recommend your friend in a more effective manner."

"Yes---but also to put an end, by a decisive step, to the calumnies which my aunt will be sure to spread with regard to me, and which she has already, you know, had inserted in the report of the commissary of police. I have preferred to address myself at once, frankly and openly, to a man placed in a high social position. I will explain all to him, who will believe me, because truth has an accent of its own."

"All this, my dear Mdlle. Adrienne, is wisely planned. You will, as the saw says, kill two birds with one stone---or rather, you will obtain by one act of kindness two acts of justice; you will destroy a dangerous calumny, and restore a worthy youth to liberty."

"Come," said Adrienne, laughing, "thanks to this pleasing prospect, my light heart has returned."

"How true that in life," said the doctor, philosophically, "everything depends on the point of view."

Adrienne was so completely ignorant of the forms of a constitutional government, and had so blind a confidence in the doctor, that she did not doubt for an instant what he told her. She therefore resumed with joy: "What happiness it will be! when I go to fetch the daughters of Marshal Simon, to be able to console this workman's mother, who is now perhaps in a state of cruel anxiety, at not seeing her son return home!"

"Yes, you will have this pleasure," said M. Baleinier, with a smile; "for we will solicit and intrigue to such purpose, that the good, mother may learn from you the release of her son before she even knows that he has been arrested."

"How kind, how obliging you are!" said Adrienne. "Really, if the motive were not so serious, I should be ashamed of making you lose so much precious time, my dear M. Baleinier. But I know your heart."

"I have no other wish, than to prove to you my profound devotion, my sincere attachment," said the doctor inhaling a pinch of snuff. But at the same time, he cast an uneasy glance through the window, for the carriage was just crossing the Place de l'Odeon, and in spite of the snow, he could see the front of the Odeon theatre brilliantly illuminated. Now Adrienne, who had just turned her head towards that side, might perhaps be astonished at the singular road they were taking.

In order to draw off her attention by a skillful diversion, the doctor exclaimed suddenly: "Bless me! I had almost forgotten."

"What is the matter, M. Baleinier?" said Adrienne, turning hastily towards him.

"I had forgotten a thing of the highest importance, in regard to the success of our petition."

"What is it, please?" asked the young girl, anxiously.

M. Baleinier gave a cunning smile. "Every man," said he, "has his weakness---ministers even more than others. The one we are going to visit has the folly to attach the utmost importance to his title, and the first impression would be unfavorable, if you did not lay great stress on the Minister."

"Is that all, my dear M. Baleinier?" said Adrienne, smiling in her turn. "I will even go so far as Your Excellency, which is, I believe, one of his adopted titles."

"Not now---but that is no matter; if you could even slide in a My Lord or two, our business would be done at once."

"Be satisfied! since there are upstart ministers as well as City-turned gentlemen, I will remember Moliere's M. Jourdain, and feed full the gluttonous vanity of your friend."

"I give him up to you, for I know he will be in good hands," replied the physician, who rejoiced to see that the carriage had now entered those dark streets which lead from the Place de l'Odeon to the Pantheon district; "I do not wish to find fault with the minister for being proud, since his pride may be of service to us on this occasion."

"These petty devices are innocent enough," said Mdlle. de Cardoville, "and I confess that I do not scruple to have recourse to them." Then, leaning towards the door-sash, she added: "Gracious! how sad and dark are these streets. What wind! what snow! In which quarter are we?"

"What! are you so ungrateful, that you do not recognize by the absence of shops, your dear quarter of the Faubourg Saint Germain?"

"I imagine we had quitted it long ago."

"I thought so too," said the physician, leaning forward as if to ascertain where they were, "but we are still there. My poor coachman, blinded by the snow, which is beating against his face, must have gone wrong just now---but we are all right again. Yes, I perceive we are in the Rue Saint Guillaume---not the gayest of streets by the way---but, in ten minutes, we shall arrive at the minister's private entrance, for intimate friends like myself enjoy the privilege of escaping the honors of a grand reception."

Mdlle. de Cardoville, like most carriage-people, was so little acquainted with certain streets of Paris, as well as with the customs of men in office, that she did not doubt for a moment the statements of Baleinier, in whom she reposed the utmost confidence.

When they left the Saint-Dizier House, the doctor had upon his lips a question which he hesitated to put, for fear of endangering himself in the eyes of Adrienne. The latter had spoken of important interests, the existence of which had been concealed from her. The doctor, who was an acute and skillful observer, had quite clearly remarked the embarrassment and anxiety of the princess and D'Aigrigny. He no longer doubted, that the plot directed against Adrienne---one in which he was the blind agent, in submission to the will of the Order---related to interests which had been concealed from him, and which, for that very reason, he burned to discover; for every member of the dark conspiracy to which he belonged had necessarily acquired the odious vices inherent to spies and informers---envy, suspicion, and jealous curiosity.

It is easy to understand, therefore, that Dr. Baleinier, though quite determined to serve the projects of D'Aigrigny, was yet very anxious to learn what had been kept from him. Conquering his irresolution, and finding the opportunity favorable, and no time to be lost, he said to Adrienne, after a moment's silence: "I am going perhaps to ask you a very indiscreet question. If you think it such, pray do not answer."

"Nay---go on, I entreat you."

"Just now---a few minutes before the arrival of the commissary of police was announced to your aunt---you spoke, I think, of some great interests, which had hitherto been concealed from you."

"Yes, I did so."

"These words," continued M. Baleinier, speaking slowly and emphatically, "appeared to make a deep impression on the princess."

"An impression so deep," said Adrienne, "that sundry suspicions of mine were changed to certainty."

"I need not tell you, my charming friend," resumed M. Baleinier, in a bland tone, "that if I remind you of this circumstance, it is only to offer you my services, in case they should be required. If not---and there is the shadow of impropriety in letting me know more---forget that I have said a word."

Adrienne became serious and pensive, and, after a silence of some moments, she thus answered Dr. Baleinier: "On this subject, there are some things that I do not know---others that I may tell you---others again that I must keep from you: but you are so kind to-day, that I am happy to be able to give you a new mark of confidence."

"Then I wish to know nothing," said the doctor, with an air of humble deprecation, "for I should have the appearance of accepting a kind of reward; whilst I am paid a thousand times over, by the pleasure I feel in serving you."

"Listen," said Adrienne, without attending to the delicate scruples of Dr. Baleinier; "I have powerful reasons for believing that an immense inheritance must, at no very distant period, be divided between the members of my family, all of whom I do not know---for, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, those from whom we are descended were dispersed in foreign countries, and experienced a great variety of fortunes."

"Really!" cried the doctor, becoming extremely interested. "Where is this inheritance, in whose hands?"

"I do not know."

"Now how will you assert your rights?"

"That I shall learn soon."

"Who will inform you of it?"

"That I may not tell you."

"But how did you find out the existence of this inheritance?"

"That also I may not tell you," returned Adrienne, in a soft and melancholy tone, which remarkably contrasted with the habitual vivacity of her conversation. "It is a secret---a strange secret---and in those moments of excitement, in which you have sometimes surprised me, I have been thinking of extraordinary circumstances connected with this secret, which awakened within me lofty and magnificent ideas."

Adrienne paused and was silent, absorbed in her own reflections. Baleinier did not seek to disturb her. In the first place, Mdlle. de Cardoville did not perceive the direction the coach was taking; secondly, the doctor was not sorry to ponder over what he had just heard. With his usual perspicuity, he saw that the Abbe d'Aigrigny was concerned in this inheritance, and he resolved instantly to make a secret report on the subject; either M. d'Aigrigny was acting under the instructions of the Order, or by his own impulse; in the one event, the report of the doctor would confirm a fact; in the other, it would reveal one.

For some time, therefore, the lady and Dr. Baleinier remained perfectly silent, no longer even disturbed by the noise of the wheels, for the carriage now rolled over a thick carpet of snow, and the streets had become more and more deserted. Notwithstanding his crafty treachery, notwithstanding his audacity and the blindness of his dupe, the doctor was not quite tranquil as to the result of his machinations. The critical moment approached, and the least suspicion roused in the mind of Adrienne by any inadvertence on his part, might ruin all his projects.

Adrienne, already fatigued by the painful emotions of the day, shuddered from time to time, as the cold became more and more piercing; in her haste to accompany Dr. Baleinier, she had neglected to take either shawl or mantle.

For some minutes the coach had followed the line of a very high wall, which, seen through the snow, looked white against a black sky. The silence was deep and mournful. Suddenly the carriage stopped, and the footman went to knock at a large gateway; he first gave two rapid knocks, and then one other at a long interval. Adrienne did not notice the circumstance, for the noise was not loud, and the doctor had immediately begun to speak, to drown with his voice this species of signal.

"Here we are at last," said he gayly to Adrienne; "you must be very winning---that is, you must be yourself."

"Be sure I will do my best," replied Adrienne, with a smile; then she added, shivering in spite of herself: "How dreadfully cold it is! I must confess, my dear Dr. Baleinier, that when I have been to fetch my poor little relations from the house of our workman's mother, I shall be truly glad to find myself once more in the warmth and light of my own cheerful rooms, for you know my aversion to cold and darkness."

"It is quite natural," said the doctor, gallantly; "the most charming flowers require the most light and heat."

Whilst the doctor and Mdlle. de Cardoville exchanged these few words, a heavy gate had turned creaking upon its hinges, and the carriage had entered a court-yard. The physician got down first, to offer his arm to Adrienne.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The minister's cabinet.

The carriage had stopped before some steps covered with snow, which led to a vestibule lighted by a lamp. The better to ascend the steps, which were somewhat slippery, Adrienne leaned upon the doctor's arm.

"Dear me! how you tremble," said he.

"Yes," replied she, shuddering, "I feel deadly cold. In my haste, I came out without a shawl. But how gloomy this house appears," she added, pointing to the entrance.

"It is what you call the minister's private house, the sanctum sanctorum, whither our statesman retires far from the sound of the profane," said Dr. Baleinier, with a smile. "Pray come in!" and he pushed open the door of a large hall, completely empty.

"They are right in saying," resumed Dr. Baleinier, who covered his secret agitation with an appearance of gayety, "that a minister's house is like nobody else's. Not a footman---not a page, I should say---to be found in the antechamber. Luckily," added he, opening the door of a room which communicated with the vestibule,

"In this seraglio reared, I know the secret ways."

Mdlle. de Cardoville was now introduced into an apartment hung with green embossed paper, and very simply furnished with mahogany chairs, covered with yellow velvet; the floor was carefully polished, and a globe lamp, which gave at most a third of its proper light, was suspended (at a much greater height than usual) from the ceiling. Finding the appearance of this habitation singularly plain for the dwelling of a minister, Adrienne, though she had no suspicion, could not suppress a movement of surprise and paused a moment on the threshold of the door. M. Baleinier, by whose arm she held, guessed the cause of her astonishment, and said to her with a smile:

"This place appears to you very paltry for 'his excellency,' does it not? If you knew what a thing constitutional economy is!---Moreover, you will see a 'my lord,' who has almost as little pretension as his furniture. But please to wait for me an instant. I will go and inform the minister you are here, and return immediately."

Gently disengaging himself from the grasp of Adrienne, who had involuntarily pressed close to him, the physician opened a small side door, by which he instantly disappeared. Adrienne de Cardoville was left alone.

Though she could not have explained the cause of her impression, there was something awe-inspiring to the young lady in this large, cold, naked, curtainless room; and as, by degrees, she noticed certain peculiarities in the furniture, which she had not at first perceived, she was seized with an indefinable feeling of uneasiness.

Approaching the cheerless hearth, she perceived with surprise that an iron grating completely enclosed the opening of the chimney, and that the tongs and shovel were fastened with iron chains. Already astonished by this singularity, she was about mechanically to draw towards her an armchair placed against the wall, when she found that it remained motionless. She then discovered that the back of this piece of furniture, as well as that of all the other chairs, was fastened to the wainscoting by iron clamps. Unable to repress a smile, she exclaimed: "Have they so little confidence in the statesman in whose house I am, that they are obliged to fasten the furniture to the walls?"

Adrienne had recourse to this somewhat forced pleasantry as a kind of effort to resist the painful feeling of apprehension that was gradually creeping over her; for the most profound and mournful silence reigned in this habitation, where nothing indicated the life, the movement and the activity, which usually surround a great centre of business. Only, from time to time, the young lady heard the violent gusts of wind from without.

More than a quarter of an hour had elapsed, and M. Baleinier did not return. In her impatient anxiety, Adrienne wished to call some one to inquire about the doctor and the minister. She raised her eyes to look for a bell-rope by the side of the chimney-glass; she found none, but she perceived, that what she had hitherto taken for a glass, thanks to the half obscurity of the room, was in reality a large sheet of shining tin. Drawing nearer to it, she accidentally touched a bronzed candlestick; and this, as well as a clock, was fixed to the marble of the chimney-piece.

In certain dispositions of mind, the most insignificant circumstances often assume terrific proportions. This immovable candlestick, this furniture fastened to the wainscot, this glass replaced by a tin sheet, this profound silence, and the prolonged absence of M. Baleinier, had such an effect upon Adrienne, that she was struck with a vague terror. Yet such was her implicit confidence in the doctor, that she reproached herself with her own fears, persuading herself that the causes of them were after all of no real importance, and that it was unreasonable to feel uneasy at such trifles.

Still, though she thus strove to regain courage, her anxiety induced her to do what otherwise she would never have attempted. She approached the little door by which the doctor had disappeared, and applied her ear to it. She held her breath, and listened, but heard nothing.

Suddenly, a dull, heavy sound, like that of a falling body, was audible just above her head; she thought she could even distinguish a stifled moaning. Raising her eyes, hastily, she saw some particles of the plaster fall from the ceiling, loosened, no doubt, by the shaking of the floor above.

No longer able to resist the feeling of terror, Adrienne ran to the door by which she had entered with the doctor, in order to call some one. To her great surprise, she found it was fastened on the outside. Yet, since her arrival, she had heard no sound of a key turning in the lock.

More and more alarmed, the young girl flew to the little door by which the physician had disappeared, and at which she had just been listening. This door also was fastened on the outside.

Still, wishing to struggle with the terror which was gaining invincibly upon her, Adrienne called to her aid all the firmness of her character, and tried to argue away her fears.

"I must have been deceived," she said; "it was only a fall that I heard. The moaning had no existence, except in my imagination. There are a thousand reasons for believing that it was not a person who fell down. But, then, these locked

doors? They, perhaps, do not know that I am here; they may have thought that there was nobody in this room."

As she uttered these words, Adrienne looked round with anxiety; then she added, in a firm voice: "No weakness! it is useless to try to blind myself to my real situation. On the contrary, I must look it well in the face. It is evident that I am not here at a minister's house; no end of reasons prove it beyond a doubt; M. Baleinier has therefore deceived me. But for what end? Why has he brought me hither? Where am I?"

The last two questions appeared to Adrienne both equally insoluble. It only remained clear, that she was the victim of M. Baleinier's perfidy. But this certainly seemed so horrible to the young girl's truthful and generous soul, that she still tried to combat the idea by the recollection of the confiding friendship which she had always shown this man. She said to herself with bitterness: "See how weakness and fear may lead one to unjust and odious suspicions! Yes; for until the last extremity, it is not justifiable to believe in so infernal a deception---and then only upon the clearest evidence. I will call some one: it is the only way of completely satisfying these doubts." Then, remembering that there was no bell, she added: "No matter; I will knock, and some one will doubtless answer." With her little, delicate hand, Adrienne struck the door several times.

The dull, heavy sound which came from the door showed that it was very thick. No answer was returned to the young girl. She ran to the other door. There was the same appeal on her part, the same profound silence without---only interrupted from time to time by the howling of the wind.

"I am not more timid than other people," said Adrienne, shuddering; "I do not know if it is the excessive cold, but I tremble in spite of myself. I endeavor to guard against all weakness; yet I think that any one in my position would find all this very strange and frightful."

At this instant, loud cries, or rather savage and dreadful howls, burst furiously from the room just above, and soon after a sort of stamping of feet, like the noise of a violent struggle, shook the ceiling of the apartment. Struck with consternation, Adrienne uttered a loud cry of terror became deadly pale, stood for a moment motionless with affright, and then rushed to one of the windows, and abruptly threw it open.

A violent gust of wind, mixed with melted snow, beat against Adrienne's face, swept roughly into the room, and soon extinguished the flickering and smoky light of the lamp. Thus, plunged in profound darkness, with her hands clinging to the bars that were placed across the window, Mdlle. de Cardoville yielded at length to the full influence of her fears, so long restrained, and was about to call aloud for help, when an unexpected apparition rendered her for some minutes absolutely mute with terror.

Another wing of the building, opposite to that in which she was, stood at no great distance. Through the midst of the black darkness, which filled the space between, one large, lighted window was distinctly visible. Through the curtainless panes, Adrienne perceived a white figure, gaunt and ghastly, dragging after it a sort of shroud, and passing and repassing continually before the window, with an abrupt and restless motion. Her eyes fixed upon this window, shining through the darkness, Adrienne remained as if fascinated by that fatal vision: and, as the spectacle filled up the measure of her fears, she called for help with all her might, without quitting the bars of the window to which she clung. After a few seconds, whilst she was thus crying out, two tall women entered the room in silence, unperceived by Mdlle. de Cardoville, who was still clinging to the window.

These women, of about forty to fifty years of age, robust and masculine, were negligently and shabbily dressed, like chambermaids of the lower sort; over their clothes they wore large aprons of blue cotton, cut sloping from their necks, and reaching down to their feet. One of them, who held a lamp in her hand, had a broad, red, shining face, a large pimpled nose, small green eyes, and tow hair, which straggled rough and shaggy from beneath her dirty white cap. The

other, sallow, withered, and bony, wore a mourning-cap over a parchment visage, pitted with the small-pox, and rendered still more repulsive by the thick black eyebrows, and some long gray hairs that overshadowed the upper lip. This woman carried, half unfolded in her hand, a garment of strange form, made of thick gray stuff.

They both entered silently by the little door, at the moment when Adrienne, in the excess of her terror, was grasping the bars of the window, and crying out: "Help! help!"

Pointing out the young lady to each other, one of them went to place the lamp on the chimney-piece, whilst the other (she who wore the mourning cap) approached the window, and laid her great bony hand upon Mdlle. de Cardoville's shoulder.

Turning round, Adrienne uttered a new cry of terror at the sight of this grim figure. Then, the first moment of stupor over, she began to feel less afraid; hideous as was this woman, it was at least some one to speak to; she exclaimed, therefore, in an agitated voice: "Where is M. Baleinier?"

The two women looked at each other, exchanged a leer of mutual intelligence, but did not answer.

"I ask you, madame," resumed Adrienne, "where is M. Baleinier, who brought me hither? I wish to see him instantly."

"He is gone," said the big woman.

"Gone!" cried Adrienne; "gone without me!--Gracious heaven! what can be the meaning of all this?" Then, after a moment's reflection, she resumed, "Please to fetch me a coach."

The two women looked at each other, and shrugged their shoulders. "I entreat you, madame," continued Adrienne, with forced calmness in her voice, "to fetch me a coach since M. Baleinier is gone without me. I wish to leave this place."

"Come, come, madame," said the tall woman, who was called "Tomboy," without appearing to listen to what Adrienne asked, "it is time for you to go to bed."

"To go to bed!" cried Mdlle. Cardoville, in alarm. "This is really enough to drive one mad." Then, addressing the two women, she added: "What is this house? where am I? answer!"

"You are in a house," said Tomboy, in a rough voice, "where you must not make a row from the window, as you did just now."

"And where you must not put out the lamp as you have done," added the other woman, who was called Gervaise, "or else we shall have a crow to pick with you."

Adrienne, unable to utter a word, and trembling with fear, looked in a kind of stupor from one to the other of these horrible women; her reason strove in vain to comprehend what was passing around her. Suddenly she thought she had guessed it, and exclaimed: "I see there is a mistake here. I do not understand how, but there is a mistake. You take me for some one else. Do you know who I am? My name is Adrienne de Cardoville You see, therefore, that I am at liberty to leave this house; no one in the world has the right to detain me. I command you, then, to fetch me a coach immediately. If there are none in this quarter, let me have some one to accompany me home to the Rue de Babylone, Saint-Dizier House. I will reward such a person liberally, and you also."

"Well, have you finished?" said Tomboy. "What is the use of telling us all this rubbish?"

"Take care," resumed Adrienne, who wished to try every means; "if you detain me here by force, it will be very serious. You do not know to what you expose yourselves."

"Will you come to bed; yes or no?" said Gervaise, in a tone of harsh impatience.

"Listen to me, madame," resumed Adrienne, precipitately, "let me out this place, and I will give each of you two thousand francs. It is not enough? I will give you ten---twenty---whatever you ask. I am rich---only let me out for heaven's sake, let me out!--I cannot remain here---I am afraid." As she said this, the tone of the poor girl's voice was heartrending.

"Twenty thousand francs!--that's the usual figure, ain't it, Tomboy?"

"Let be, Gervaise! they all sing the same song."

"Well, then? since reasons, prayers, and menaces are all in vain," said Adrienne gathering energy from her desperate position, "I declare to you that I will go out and that instantly. We will see if you are bold enough to employ force against me."

So saying, Adrienne advanced resolutely towards the door. But, at this moment, the wild hoarse cries, which had preceded the noise of the struggle that had so frightened her, again resounded; only, this time they were not accompanied by the movement of feet.

"Oh! what screams!" said Adrienne, stopping short, and in her terror drawing nigh to the two women. "Do you not hear those cries? What, then, is this house, in which one hears such things? And over there, too," added she almost beside herself, as she pointed to the other wing where the lighted windows shone through the darkness, and the white figure continued to pass and re-pass before it; "over there! do you see? What is it?"

"Oh! that 'un," said Tomboy; "one of the folks who, like you, have not behaved well."

"What do you say?" cried Mdlle. de Cardoville, clasping her hands in terror. "Heavens! what is this house? What do they do to them?"

"What will be done to you, if you are naughty, and refuse to come to bed," answered Gervaise.

"They put this on them," said Tomboy, showing the garment that she had held under her arm, "they clap 'em into the strait-waistcoat."

"Oh!" cried Adrienne, hiding her face in her hands with horror. A terrible discovery had flashed suddenly upon her. She understood it all.

Capping the violent emotions of the day, the effect of this last blow was dreadful. The young girl felt her strength give way. Her hands fell powerless, her face became fearfully pale, all her limbs trembled, and sinking upon her knees, and casting a terrified glance at the strait waistcoat she was just able to falter in a feeble voice, "Oh, no:---not that---for pity's sake, madame. I will do---whatever you wish." And, her strength quite failing, she would have fallen upon the ground if the two women had not run towards her, and received her fainting into their arms.

"A fainting fit," said Tomboy; "that's not dangerous. Let us carry her to bed. We can undress her, and this will be all nothing."

"Carry her, then," said Gervaise. "I will take the lamp."

The tall and robust Tomboy took up Mdlle. de Cardoville as if she had been a sleeping child, carried her in her arms, and followed her companion into the chamber through which M. Baleinier had made his exit.

This chamber, though perfectly clean, was cold and bare. A greenish paper covered the walls, and a low, little iron bedstead, the head of which formed a kind of shelf, stood in one corner; a stove, fixed in the chimney-place, was surrounded by an iron grating, which forbade a near approach; a table fastened to the wall, a chair placed before this table, and also clamped to the floor, a mahogany chest of drawers, and a rush bottomed armchair completed the scanty furniture. The curtainless window was furnished on the inside with an iron grating, which served to protect the panes from being broken.

It was into this gloomy retreat, which formed so painful a contrast with the charming little summer-house in the Rue de Babylone, that Adrienne was carried by Tomboy, who, with the assistance of Gervaise, placed the inanimate form on the bed. The lamp was deposited on the shelf at the head of the couch. Whilst one of the nurses held her up, the other unfastened and took off the cloth dress of the young girl, whose head drooped languidly on her bosom. Though in a swoon, large tears trickled slowly from her closed eyes, whose long black lashes threw their shadows on the transparent whiteness of her cheeks. Over her neck and breast of ivory flowed the golden waves of her magnificent hair, which had come down at the time of her fall. When, as they unlaced her satin corset, less soft, less fresh, less white than the virgin form beneath, which lay like a statue of alabaster in its covering of lace and lawn, one of the horrible hags felt the arms and shoulders of the young girl with her large, red, horny, and chapped hands. Though she did not completely recover the use of her senses, she started involuntarily from the rude and brutal touch.

"Hasn't she little feet?" said the nurse, who, kneeling down, was employed in drawing off Adrienne's stockings. "I could hold them both in the hollow of my hand." In fact, a small, rosy foot, smooth as a child's, here and there veined with azure, was soon exposed to view, as was also a leg with pink knee and ankle, of as pure and exquisite a form as that of Diana Huntress.

"And what hair!" said Tomboy; "so long and soft!--She might almost walk upon it. 'Twould be a pity to cut it off, to put ice upon her skull!" As she spoke, she gathered up Adrienne's magnificent hair, and twisted it as well as she could behind her head. Alas! it was no longer the fair, light hand of Georgette, Florine, or Hebe that arranged the beautiful locks of their mistress with so much love and pride!

And as she again felt the rude touch of the nurse's hand, the young girl was once more seized with the same nervous trembling, only more frequently and strongly than before. And soon, whether by a sort of instinctive repulsion, magnetically excited during her swoon, or from the effect of the cold night air, Adrienne again started and slowly came to herself.

It is impossible to describe her alarm, horror, and chaste indignation, as, thrusting aside with both her hands the numerous curls that covered her face, bathed in tears, she saw herself half-naked between these filthy hags. At first, she uttered a cry of shame and terror; then to escape from the looks of the women, by a movement, rapid as thought, she drew down the lamp placed on the shelf at the head of her bed, so that it was extinguished and broken to pieces on the floor. After which, in the midst of the darkness, the unfortunate girl, covering herself with the bed-clothes, burst into passionate sobs.

The nurses attributed Adrienne's cry and violent actions to a fit of furious madness. "Oh! you begin again to break the lamps---that's your partickler fancy, is it?" cried Tomboy, angrily, as she felt her way in the dark. "Well! I gave you fair warning. You shall have the strait waistcoat on this very night, like the mad gal upstairs."

"That's it," said the other; "hold her fast, Tommy, while I go and fetch a light. Between us, we'll soon master her."

"Make haste, for, in spite of her soft look, she must be a regular fury. We shall have to sit up all night with her, I suppose."

Sad and painful contrast! That morning, Adrienne had risen free, smiling, happy, in the midst of all the wonders of luxury and art, and surrounded by the delicate attentions of the three charming girls whom she had chosen to serve her. In her generous and fantastic mood, she had prepared a magnificent and fairy-like surprise for the young Indian prince, her relation; she had also taken a noble resolution with regard to the two orphans brought home by Dagobert; in her interview with *Mme.* de Saint-Dizier, she had shown herself by turns proud and sensitive, melancholy and gay, ironical and serious, loyal and courageous; finally, she had come to this accursed house to plead in favor of an honest and laborious artisan.

And now, in the evening delivered over by an atrocious piece of treachery to the ignoble hands of two coarse-minded muses in a madhouse---Mdlle. de Cardoville felt her delicate limbs imprisoned in that abominable garment, which is called a strait-waistcoat.

Mdlle. de Cardoville passed a horrible night in company with the two hags. The next morning, at nine o'clock, what was the young lady's stupor to see Dr. Baleinier enter the room, still smiling with an air at once benevolent and paternal.

"Well, my dear child?" said he, in a bland, affectionate voice; "how have we spent the night?"

CHAPTER XLV.

The visit.

The keepers, yielding to Mdlle. de Cardoville's prayers, and, above all, to her promises of good behavior, had only left on the canvas jacket a portion of the time. Towards morning, they had allowed her to rise and dress herself, without interfering.

Adrienne was seated on the edge of her bed. The alteration in her features, her dreadful paleness, the lurid fire of fever shining in her eyes, the convulsive trembling which ever and anon shook her frame, showed already the fatal effects of this terrible night upon a susceptible and high-strung organization. At sight of Dr. Baleinier, who, with a sign, made Gervaise and her mate leave the room, Adrienne remained petrified.

She felt a kind of giddiness at the thought of the audacity of the man, who dared to present himself to her! But when the physician repeated, in the softest tone of affectionate interest: "Well, my poor child! how have we spent the night?" she pressed her hands to her burning forehead, as if in doubt whether she was awake or sleeping. Then, staring at the doctor, she half opened her lips; but they trembled so much that it was impossible for her to utter a word. Anger, indignation, contempt, and, above all, the bitter and acutely painful feeling of a generous heart, whose confidence has been basely betrayed, so overpowered Adrienne that she was unable to break the silence.

"Come, come! I see how it is," said the doctor, shaking his head sorrowfully; "you are very much displeased with me---is it not so? Well! I expected it, my dear child."

These words, pronounced with the most hypocritical effrontery, made Adrienne start up. Her pale cheek flushed, her large eyes sparkled, she lifted proudly her beautiful head, whilst her upper lip curled slightly with a smile of disdainful bitterness; then, passing in angry silence before M. Baleinier, who retained his seat, she directed her swift and firm steps

towards the door. This door, in which was a little wicket, was fastened on the outside. Adrienne turned towards the doctor, and said to him, with an imperious gesture; "Open that door for me!"

"Come, my dear Mdlle. Adrienne," said the physician, "be calm. Let us talk like good friends---for you know I am your friend." And he inhaled slowly a pinch of snuff.

"It appears, sir," said Adrienne, in a voice trembling with indignation, "I am not to leave this place to-day?"

"Alas! no. In such a state of excitement---if you knew how inflamed your face is, and your eyes so feverish, your pulse must be at least eighty to the minute---I conjure you, my dear child, not to aggravate your symptoms by this fatal agitation."

After looking fixedly at the doctor, Adrienne returned with a slow step, and again took her seat on the edge of the bed. "That is right," resumed M. Baleinier: only be reasonable; and, as I said before, let us talk together like good friends."

"You say well, sir," replied Adrienne, in a collected and perfectly calm voice; "let us talk like friends. You wish to make me pass for mad---is it not so?"

"I wish, my dear child, that one day you may feel towards me as much gratitude as you now do aversion. The latter I had fully foreseen---but, however painful may be the performance of certain duties, we must resign ourselves to it."

M. Baleinier sighed, as he said this, with such a natural air of conviction, that for a moment Adrienne could not repress a movement of surprise; then, while her lip curled with a bitter laugh, she answered: "Oh, it's very clear, you have done all this for my good?"

"Really, my dear young lady---have I ever had any other design than to be useful to you?"

"I do not know, sir, if your impudence be not still more odious than your cowardly treachery!"

"Treachery!" said M. Baleinier, shrugging his shoulders with a grieved air; "treachery, indeed! Only reflect, my poor child---do you think, if I were not acting with good faith, conscientiously, in your interest, I should return this morning to meet your indignation, for which I was fully prepared? I am the head physician of this asylum, which belongs to me---but I have two of my pupils here, doctors, like myself---and might have left them to take care of you but, no---I could not consent to it---I knew your character, your nature, your previous history, and (leaving out of the question the interest I feel for you) I can treat your case better than any one."

Adrienne had heard M. Baleinier without interrupting him; she now looked at him fixedly, and said: "Pray, sir, how much do they pay you to make me pass for mad?"

"Madame!" cried M. Baleinier, who felt stung in spite of, himself.

"You know I am rich," continued Adrienne, with overwhelming disdain; "I will double the sum that they give you. Come, sir---in the name of friendship, as you call it, let me have the pleasure of outbidding them."

"Your keepers," said M. Baleinier, recovering all his coolness, "have informed me, in their report of the night's proceedings, that you made similar propositions to them."

"Pardon me, sir; I offered them what might be acceptable to poor women, without education, whom misfortune has forced to undertake a painful employment---but to you, sir a man of the world, a man of science, a man of great abilities---that is quite different---the pay must be a great deal higher. There is treachery at all prices; so do not found your refusal on the smallness of my offer to those wretched women. Tell me---how much do you want?"

"Your keepers, in their report of the night, have also spoken of threats," resumed M. Baleinier, with the same coolness; "have you any of those likewise to address me? Believe me, my poor child, you will do well to exhaust at once your attempts at corruption, and your vain threats of vengeance. We shall then come to the true state of the case."

"So you deem my threats vain!" cried Mdlle. de Cardoville, at length giving way to the full tide of her indignation, till then restrained. "Do you think, sir, that when I leave this place---for this outrage must have an end---that I will not proclaim aloud your infamous treachery? Do you think that I will not denounce to the contempt and horror of all, your base conspiracy with Madame de Saint-Dizier? Oh! do you think that I will conceal the frightful treatment I have received! But, mad as I may be, I know that there are laws in this country, by which I will demand a full reparation for myself, and shame, disgrace, and punishment, for you, and for those who have employed you! Henceforth, between you and me will be hate and war to the death; and all my strength, all my intelligence---"

"Permit me to interrupt you, my dear Mdlle. Adrienne," said the doctor, still perfectly calm and affectionate: "nothing can be more unfavorable to your cure, than to cherish idle hopes: they will only tend to keep up a state of deplorable excitement: it is best to put the facts fairly before you, that you may understand clearly your position."

"1. It is impossible for you to leave this house. 2. You can have no communication with any one beyond its walls. 3. No one enters here that I cannot perfectly depend upon. 4. I am completely indifferent to your threats of vengeance because law and reason are both in my favor."

"What! have you the right to shut me up here?"

"We should never have come to that determination, without a number of reasons of the most serious kind."

"Oh! there are reasons for it, it seems."

"Unfortunately, too many."

"You will perhaps inform me of them?"

"Alas! they are only too conclusive; and if you should ever apply to the protection of the laws, as you threatened me just now, we should be obliged to state them. The fantastical eccentricity of your manner of living, your whimsical mode of dressing up your maids, your extravagant expenditure, the story of the Indian prince, to whom you offered a royal hospitality, your unprecedented resolution of going to live by yourself, like a young bachelor, the adventure of the man found concealed in your bed-chamber; finally, the report of your yesterday's conversation, which was faithfully taken down in shorthand, by a person employed for that purpose."

"Yesterday?" cried Adrienne, with as much indignation as surprise.

"Oh, yes! to be prepared for every event, in case you should misinterpret the interest we take in you, we had all your answers reported by a man who was concealed behind a curtain in the next room; and really, one day, in a calmer state of mind, when you come to read over quietly the particulars of what took place, you will no longer be astonished at the resolution we have been forced to adopt."

"Go on, sir," said Adrienne, with contempt.

"The facts I have cited being thus confirmed and acknowledged, you will understand, my dear Mdlle. Adrienne, that your friends are perfectly free from responsibility. It was their duty to endeavor to cure this derangement of mind, which at present only shows itself in idle whims, but which, were it to increase, might seriously compromise the happiness of your future life. Now, in my opinion, we may hope to see a radical cure, by means of a treatment at once physical and moral; but the first condition of this attempt was to remove you from the scenes which so dangerously excited your imagination; whilst a calm retreat, the repose of a simple and solitary life combined with my anxious, I may say, paternal care, will gradually bring about a complete recovery---"

"So, sir," said Adrienne, with a bitter laugh, "the love of a noble independence, generosity, the worship of the beautiful, detestation of what is base and odious, such are the maladies of which you wish to cure me; I fear that my case is desperate, for my aunt has long ago tried to effect that benevolent purpose."

"Well, we may perhaps not succeed; but at least we will attempt it. You see, then, there is a mass of serious facts, quite enough to justify the determination come to by the family-council, which puts me completely at my ease with regard to your menaces. It is to that I wish to return; a man of my age and condition never acts lightly---in such circumstances, and you can readily understand what I was saying to you just now. In a word, do not hope to leave this place before your complete recovery, and rest assured, that I am and shall ever be safe from your resentment. This being once admitted, let us talk of your actual state with all the interest that you naturally inspire."

"I think, sir, that, considering I am mad, you speak to me very reasonably."

"Mad! no, thank heaven, my poor child, you are not mad yet---and I hope that, by my care, you will never be so. It is to prevent your becoming mad, that one must take it in time; and believe me, it is full time. You look at me with such an air of surprise---now tell me, what interest can I have in talking to you thus? Is it the hatred of your aunt that I wish to favor? To what end, I would ask? What can she do for me or against me? I think of her at this moment neither more nor less than I thought yesterday. Is it a new language that I hold to yourself? Did I not speak to you yesterday many times, of the dangerous excitement of mind in which you were, and of your singular whims and fancies? It is true, I made use of stratagem to bring you hither. No doubt, I did so. I hastened to avail myself of the opportunity, which you yourself offered, my poor, dear child; for you would never have come hither with your own good will. One day or the other, we must have found some pretext to get you here: and I said to myself; 'Her interest before all! Do your duty, let whatever will betide!'---"

Whilst M. Baleinier was speaking, Adrienne's countenance, which had hitherto expressed alternately indignation and disdain, assumed an indefinable look of anguish and horror. On hearing this man talk in such a natural manner, and with such an appearance of sincerity, justice and reason, she felt herself more alarmed than ever. An atrocious deception, clothed in such forms, frightened her a hundred times more than the avowed hatred of Madame de Saint-Dizier. This audacious hypocrisy seemed to her so monstrous, that she believed it almost impossible.

Adrienne had so little the art of hiding her emotions, that the doctor, a skillful and profound physiognomist, instantly perceived the impression he had produced. "Come," said he to himself, "that is a great step. Fright has succeeded to disdain and anger. Doubt will come next. I shall not leave this place, till she has said to me: 'Return soon, my good M. Baleinier!'" With a voice of sorrowful emotion, which seemed to come from the very depths of his heart, the doctor thus continued: "I see, you are still suspicious of me. All I can say to you is falsehood, fraud, hypocrisy, hate---is it not so?---Hate you? why, in heaven's name, should I hate you? What have you done to me? or rather---you will perhaps attach more value to this reason from a man of my sort," added M. Baleinier, bitterly, "or rather, what interest have I to hate you?---You, that have only been reduced to the state in which you are by an over abundance of the most generous

instincts---you, that are suffering, as it were, from an excess of good qualities---you can bring yourself coolly and deliberately to accuse an honest man, who has never given you any but marks of affection, of the basest, the blackest, the most abominable crime, of which a human being could be guilty. Yes, I call it a crime; because the audacious deception of which you accuse me would not deserve any other name. Really, my poor child, it is hard---very hard---and I now see, that an independent spirit may sometimes exhibit as much injustice and intolerance as the most narrow mind. It does not incense me---no---it only pains me: yes, I assure you---it pains me cruelly." And the doctor drew his hand across his moist eyes.

It is impossible to give the accent, the look, the gesture of M. Baleinier, as he thus expressed himself. The most able and practiced lawyer, or the greatest actor in the world, could not have played this scene with more effect than the doctor---or rather, no one could have played it so well---M. Baleinier, carried away by the influence of the situations, was himself half convinced of what he said.

In few words, he felt all the horror of his own perfidy but he felt also that Adrienne could not believe it; for there are combinations of such nefarious character, that pure and upright minds are unable to comprehend them as possible. If a lofty spirit looks down into the abyss of evil, beyond a certain depth it is seized with giddiness, and no longer able to distinguish one object from the other.

And then the most perverse of men have a day, an hour, a moment, in which the good instincts, planted in the heart of every creature, appear in spite of themselves. Adrienne was too interesting, was in too cruel a position, for the doctor not to feel some pity for her in his heart; the tone of sympathy, which for some time past he had been obliged to assume towards her, and the sweet confidence of the young girl in return, had become for this man habitual and necessary ratifications. But sympathy and habit were now to yield to implacable necessity.

Thus the Marquis d'Aigrigny had idolized his mother; dying, she called him to her---and he turned away from the last prayer of a parent in the agony of death. After such an example, how could M. Baleinier hesitate to sacrifice Adrienne? The members of the Order, of which he formed a part, were bound to him---but he was perhaps still more strongly bound to them, for a long partnership in evil creates terrible and indissoluble ties.

The moment M. Baleinier finished his fervid address to Mdlle. de Cardoville, the slide of the wicket in the door was softly pushed back, and a pair of eyes peered attentively into the chamber, unperceived by the doctor.

Adrienne could not withdraw her gaze from the physician's, which seemed to fascinate her. Mute, overpowered, seized with a vague terror, unable to penetrate the dark depths of this man's soul, moved in spite of herself by the accent of sorrow, half feigned and half real---the young lady had a momentary feeling of doubt. For the first time, it came into her mind, that M. Baleinier might perhaps be committing a frightful error---committing it in good faith.

Besides, the anguish of the past night, the dangers of her position, her feverish agitation, all concurred to fill her mind with trouble and indecision. She looked at the physician with ever increasing surprise, and making a violent effort not to yield to a weakness, of which she partly foresaw the dreadful consequences, she exclaimed: "No, no, sir; I will not, I cannot believe it. You have too much skill, too much experience, to commit such an error."

"An error!" said M. Baleinier, in a grave and sorrowful tone. "Let me speak to you in the name of that skill and experience, which you are pleased to ascribe to me. Hear me but for a moment, my dear child; and then I will appeal to yourself."

"To me!" replied the young girl, in a kind of stupor; "you wish to persuade me, that---" Then, interrupting herself, she added, with a convulsive laugh: "This only is wanting to your triumph---to bring me to confess that I am mad---that my

proper place is here---that I owe you---"

"Gratitude. Yes, you do owe it me, even as I told you at the commencement of this conversation. Listen to me then; my words may be cruel, but there are wounds which can only be cured with steel and fire. I conjure you, my dear child---reflect---throw back one impartial glance at your past life---weigh your own thoughts---and you will be afraid of yourself. Remember those moments of strange excitement, during which, as you have told me, you seemed to soar above the earth---and, above all, while it is yet time---while you preserve enough clearness of mind to compare and judge---compare, I entreat, your manner of living with that of other ladies of your age? Is there a single one who acts as you act? who thinks as you think? unless, indeed, you imagine yourself so superior to other women, that, in virtue of that supremacy, you can justify a life and habits that have no parallel in the world."

"I have never had such stupid pride, you know it well," said Adrienne, looking at the doctor with growing terror.

"Then, my dear child, to what are we to attribute your strange and inexplicable mode of life? Can you even persuade yourself that it is founded on reason? Oh, my child! take care?---As yet, you only indulge in charming originalities of conduct, poetical eccentricities, sweet and vague reveries---but the tendency is fatal, the downward course irresistible. Take care, take care!---the healthful, graceful, spiritual portion of your intelligence has yet the upper hand, and imprints its stamp upon all your extravagances; but you do not know, believe me, with what frightful force the insane portion of the mind, at a given moment, develops itself and strangles up the rest. Then we have no longer graceful eccentricities, like yours, but ridiculous, sordid, hideous delusions."

"Oh! you frighten me," said the unfortunate girl, as she passed her trembling hands across her burning brow.

"Then," continued M. Baleinier, in an agitated voice, "then the last rays of intelligence are extinguished; then madness---for we must pronounce the dreaded word---gets the upper hand, and displays itself in furious and savage transports."

"Like the woman upstairs," murmured Adrienne, as, with fixed and eager look, she raised her finger towards the ceiling.

"Sometimes," continued the doctor, alarmed himself at the terrible consequences of his own words, but yielding to the inexorable fatality of his situation, "sometimes madness takes a stupid and brutal form; the unfortunate creature, who is attacked by it, preserves nothing human but the shape---has only the instincts of the lower animals---eats with voracity, and moves ever backwards and forwards in the cell, in which such a being is obliged to be confined. That is all its life---all."

"Like the woman yonder." cried Adrienne, with a still wilder look, as she slowly raised her arm towards the window that was visible on the other side of the building.

"Why---yes," said M. Baleinier. "Like you, unhappy child, those women were young, fair, and sensible, but like you, alas! they had in them the fatal germ of insanity, which, not having been destroyed in time, grew, and grew, larger and ever larger, until it overspread and destroyed their reason."

"Oh, mercy!" cried Mdlle. de Cardoville, whose head was getting confused with terror; "mercy! do not tell me such things!---I am afraid. Take me from this place---oh! take me from this place!" she added, with a heartrending accent; "for, if I remain here, I shall end by going mad! No," added she, struggling with the terrible agony which assailed her, "no, do not hope it! I shall not become mad. I have all my reason. I am not blind enough to believe what you tell me. Doubtless, I live differently from others; think differently from others; am shocked by things that do not offend others; but what does all this prove? Only that I am different from others. Have I a bad heart? Am I envious or selfish? My

ideas are singular, I knew---yes, I confess it---but then, M. Baleinier, is not their tendency good, generous, noble!---Oh!" cried Adrienne's supplicating voice, while her tears flowed abundantly, "I have never in my life done one malicious action; my worst errors have arisen from excess of generosity. Is it madness to wish to see everybody about one too happy? And again, if you are mad, you must feel it yourself---and I do not feel it---and yet---I scarcely know---you tell me such terrible things of those two women! You ought to know these things better than I. But then," added Mdlle, de Cardoville, with an accent of the deepest despair, "something ought to have been done. Why, if you felt an interest for me, did you wait so long? Why did you not take pity on me sooner? But the most frightful fact is, that I do not know whether I ought to believe you---for all this may be a snare---but no, no! you weep---it is true, then!---you weep!" She looked anxiously at M. Baleinier, who, notwithstanding his cynical philosophy, could not restrain his tears at the sight of these nameless tortures.

"You weep over me," she continued; "so it is true! But (good heaven!) must there not be something done? I will do all that you wish---all---so that I may not be like those women. But if it should be too late? no, it is not too late---say it is not too late, my good M. Baleinier! Oh, now I ask your pardon for what I said when you came in---but then I did not know, you see---I did not know!"

To these few broken words, interrupted by sobs, and rushing forth in a sort of feverish excitement, succeeded a silence of some minutes, during which the deeply affected physician dried his tears. His resolution had almost failed him. Adrienne hid her face in her hands. Suddenly she again lifted her head; her countenance was calmer than before, though agitated by a nervous trembling.

"M. Baleinier," she resumed, with touching dignity, "I hardly know what I said to you just now. Terror, I think, made me wander; I have again collected myself. Hear me! I know that I am in your power; I know that nothing can deliver me from it. Are you an implacable enemy? or are you a friend? I am not able to determine. Do you really apprehend, as you assure me, that what is now eccentricity will hereafter become madness---or are you rather the accomplice in some infernal machination? You alone can answer. In spite of my boasted courage, I confess myself conquered. Whatever is required of me---you understand, whatever it may be, I will subscribe to, I give you my word and you know that I hold it sacred---you have therefore no longer any interest to keep me here. If, on the contrary, you really think my reason in danger---and I own that you have awakened in my mind vague, but frightful doubts---tell it me, and I will believe you. I am alone, at your mercy, without friends, without counsel. I trust myself blindly to you. I know not whether I address myself to a deliverer or a destroyer---but I say to you---here is my happiness---here is my life---take it---I have no strength to dispute it with you!"

These touching words, full of mournful resignation and almost hopeless reliance, gave the finishing stroke to the indecision of M. Baleinier. Already deeply moved by this scene, and without reflecting on the consequences of what he was about to do, he determined at all events to dissipate the terrible and unjust fears with which he had inspired Adrienne. Sentiments of remorse and pity, which now animated the physician, were visible in his countenance.

Alas! they were too visible. The moment he approached to take the hand of Mdlle. de Cardoville, a low but sharp voice exclaimed from behind the wicket: "M. Baleinier!"

"Rodin!" muttered the startled doctor to himself; "he's been spying on me!"

"Who calls you?" asked the lady of the physician.

"A person that I promised to meet here this morning." replied he, with the utmost depression, "to go with him to St. Mary's Convent, which is close at hand."

"And what answer have you to give me?" said Adrienne with mortal anguish.

After a moment's solemn silence, during which he turned his face towards the wicket, the doctor replied, in a voice of deep emotion: "I am---what I have always been---a friend incapable of deceiving you."

Adrienne became deadly pale. Then, extending her hand to M. Baleinier, she said to him in a voice that she endeavored to render calm: "Thank you---I will have courage---but will it be very long?"

"Perhaps a month. Solitude, reflection, a proper regimen, my attentive care, may do much. You will be allowed everything that is compatible with your situation. Every attention will be paid you. If this room displeases you, I will see you have another."

"No---this or another---it is of little consequence," answered Adrienne, with an air of the deepest dejection.

"Come, come! be of good courage. There is no reason to despair."

"Perhaps you flatter me," said Adrienne with the shadow of a smile. "Return soon," she added, "my dear M. Baleinier! my only hope rests in you now."

Her head fell upon her bosom, her hands upon her knees and she remained sitting on the edge of the bed, pale, motionless, overwhelmed with woe.

"Mad!" she said when M. Baleinier had disappeared. "Perhaps mad!"

We have enlarged upon this episode much less romantic than it may appear. Many times have motives of interest or vengeance or perfidious machination led to the abuse of the imprudent facility with which inmates are received in certain private lunatic asylums from the hands of their families or friends.

We shall subsequently explain our views, as to the establishment of a system of inspection, by the crown or the civil magistrates, for the periodical survey of these institutions, and others of no less importance, at present placed beyond the reach of all superintendence. These latter are the nunneries of which we will presently have an example.

CHAPTER XLVI.

Presentiments.

Whilst the preceding events took place in Dr. Baleinier's asylum, other scenes were passing about the same hour, at Frances Baudoin's, in the Rue Brise-Miche.

Seven o'clock in the morning had just struck at St. Mary church; the day was dark and gloomy, and the sleet rattled against the windows of the joyless chamber of Dagobert's wife.

As yet ignorant of her son's arrest, Frances had waited for him the whole of the preceding evening, and a good part of the night, with the most anxious uneasiness; yielding at length to fatigue and sleep, about three o'clock in the morning, she had thrown herself on a mattress beside the bed of Rose and Blanche. But she rose with the first dawn of day, to ascend to Agricola's garret, in the very faint hope that he might have returned home some hours before.

Rose and Blanche had just risen, and dressed themselves. They were alone in the sad, chilly apartment. Spoil-sport, whom Dagobert had left in Paris, was stretched at full length near the cold stove; with his long muzzle resting on his forepaws, he kept his eye fixed on the sisters.

Having slept but little during the night, they had perceived the agitation and anguish of Dagobert's wife. They had seen her walk up and down, now talking to herself, now listening to the least noise that came up the staircase, and now kneeling before the crucifix placed at one extremity of the room. The orphans were not aware, that, whilst she brayed with fervor on behalf of her son, this excellent woman was praying for them also. For the state of their souls filled her with anxiety and alarm.

The day before, when Dagobert had set out for Chartres, Frances, having assisted Rose and Blanche to rise, had invited them to say their morning prayer: they answered with the utmost simplicity, that they did not know any, and that they never more than addressed their mother, who was in heaven. When Frances, struck with painful surprise, spoke to them of catechism, confirmation, communion, the sisters opened widely their large eyes with astonishment, understanding nothing of such talk.

According to her simple faith, terrified at the ignorance of the young girls in matters of religion, Dagobert's wife believed their souls to be in the greatest peril, the more so as, having asked them if they had ever been baptized (at the same time explaining to them the nature of that sacrament), the orphans answered they did not think they had, since there was neither church nor priest in the village where they were born, during their mother's exile in Siberia.

Placing one's self in the position of Frances, you understand how much she was grieved and alarmed; for, in her eyes, these young girls, whom she already loved tenderly, so charmed was she with their sweet disposition, were nothing but poor heathens, innocently doomed to eternal damnation. So, unable to restrain her tears, or conceal her horrors, she had clasped them in her arms, promising immediately to attend to their salvation, and regretting that Dagobert had not thought of having them baptized by the way. Now, it must be confessed, that this notion had never once occurred to the ex-grenadier.

When she went to her usual Sunday devotions, Frances had not dared to take Rose and Blanche with her, as their complete ignorance of sacred things would have rendered their presence at church, if not useless, scandalous; but, in her own fervent prayers she implored celestial mercy for these orphans, who did not themselves know the desperate position of their souls.

Rose and Blanche were now left alone, in the absence of Dagobert's wife. They were still dressed in mourning, their charming faces seeming even more pensive than usual. Though they were accustomed to a life of misfortune, they had been struck, since their arrival in the Rue Brise Mîche, with the painful contrast between the poor dwelling which they had come to inhabit, and the wonders which their young imagination had conceived of Paris, that golden city of their dreams. But, soon this natural astonishment was replaced by thoughts of singular gravity for their age. The contemplation of such honest and laborious poverty made the orphans have reflections no longer those of children, but of young women. Assisted by their admirable spirit of justice and of sympathy for all that is good, by their noble heart, by a character at once delicate and courageous, they had observed and meditated much during the last twenty-four hours.

"Sister," said Rose to Blanche, when Frances had quitted the room, "Dagobert's poor wife is very uneasy. Did you remark in the night, how agitated she was? how she wept and prayed?"

"I was grieved to see it, sister, and wondered what could be the cause."

"I am almost afraid to guess. Perhaps we may be the cause of her uneasiness?"

"Why so, sister? Because we cannot say prayers, nor tell if we have ever been baptized?"

"That seemed to give her a good deal of pain, it is true. I was quite touched by it, for it proves that she loves us tenderly. But I could not understand how we ran such terrible danger as she said we did."

"Nor I either, sister. We have always tried not to displease our mother, who sees and hears us."

"We love those who love us; we are resigned to whatever may happen to us. So, who can reproach us with any harm?"

"No one. But, perhaps, we may do some without meaning it."

"We?"

"Yes, and therefore I thought: We may perhaps be the cause of her uneasiness."

"How so?"

"Listen, sister! yesterday Madame Baudoin tried to work at those sacks of coarse cloth there on the table."

"Yes; but in about an half-hour, she told us sorrowfully, that she could not go on, because her eyes failed her, and she could not see clearly."

"So that she is not able to earn her living."

"No---but her son, M. Agricola, works for her. He looks so good, so gay, so frank, and so happy to devote himself for his mother. Oh, indeed! he is the worthy brother of our angel Gabriel!"

"You will see my reason for speaking of this. Our good old Dagobert told us, that, when we arrived here, he had only a few pieces of money left."

"That is true."

"Now both he and his wife are unable to earn their living; what can a poor old soldier like him do?"

"You are right; he only knows how to love us, and take care of us, like his children."

"It must then be M. Agricola who will have to support his father; for Gabriel is a poor priest, who possesses nothing, and can render no assistance to those who have brought him up. So M. Agricola will have to support the whole family by himself."

"Doubtless---he owes it to father and mother---it is his duty, and he will do it with a good will."

"Yes, sister---but he owes us nothing."

"What do you say, Blanche?"

"He is obliged to work for us also, as we possess nothing in the world."

"I had not thought of that. True."

"It is all very well, sister, for our father to be Duke and Marshal of France, as Dagobert tells us, it is all very well for us to hope great things from this medal, but as long as father is not here, and our hopes are not realized, we shall be merely poor orphans, obliged to remain a burden to this honest family, to whom we already owe so much, and who find it so hard to live, that---"

"Why do you pause, sister?"

"What I am about to say would make other people laugh; but you will understand it. Yesterday, when Dagobert's wife saw poor Spoil-sport at his dinner, she said, sorrowfully: 'Alas! he eats as much as a man!'---so that I could almost have cried to hear her. They must be very poor, and yet we have come to increase their poverty."

The sisters looked sadly at each other, while Spoil-sport pretended not to know they were talking of his voracity.

"Sister, I understand," said Rose, after a moment's silence. "Well, we must not be at the charge of any one. We are young, and have courage. Till our fate is decided, let us fancy ourselves daughters of workmen. After all, is not our grandfather a workman? Let us find some employment, and earn our own living. It must be so proud and happy to earn one's living!"

"Good little sister," said Blanche, kissing Rose. "What happiness! You have forestalled my thought; kiss me!"

"How so?"

"Your project is mine exactly. Yesterday, when I heard Dagobert's wife complain so sadly that she had lost her sight. I looked into your large eyes, which reminded me of my own, and said to myself: 'Well! this poor old woman may have lost her sight, but Rose and Blanche Simon can see pretty clearly'---which is a compensation," added Blanche, with a smile.

"And, after all," resumed Rose, smiling in her turn, "the young ladies in question are not so very awkward, as not to be able to sew up great sacks of coarse cloth---though it may chafe their fingers a little."

"So we had both the same thought, as usual; only I wished to surprise you, and waited till we were alone, to tell you my plan."

"Yes, but there is something teases me."

"What is that?"

"First of all, Dagobert and his wife will be sure to say to us: 'Young ladies, you are not fitted for such work. What, daughters of a Marshal of France sewing up great ugly bags!' And then, if we insist upon it, they will add: 'Well, we have no work to give you. If you want any, you must hunt for it.' What would Misses Simon do then?"

"The fact is, that when Dagobert has made up his mind to anything---"

"Oh! even then, if we coax him well---"

"Yes, in certain things; but in others he is immovable. It is just as when upon the journey, we wished to prevent his doing so much for us."

"Sister, an idea strikes me," cried Rose, "an excellent idea!"

"What is it? quick!"

"You know the young woman they call Mother Bunch, who appears to be so serviceable and persevering?"

"Oh yes! and so timid and discreet. She seems always to be afraid of giving offence, even if she looks at one. Yesterday, she did not perceive that I saw her; but her eyes were fixed on you with so good and sweet an expression, that tears came into mine at the very sight of it."

"Well, we must ask her how she gets work, for certainly she lives by her labor."

"You are right. She will tell us all about it; and when we know, Dagobert may scold us, or try to make great ladies of us, but we will be as obstinate as he is."

"That is it; we must show some spirit! We will prove to him, as he says himself, that we have soldier's blood in our veins."

"We will say to him: 'Suppose, as you say, we should one day be rich, my good Dagobert, we shall only remember this time with the more pleasure.'"

"It is agreed then, is it not, Rose? The first time we are alone with Mother Bunch, we must make her our confidant, and ask her for information. She is so good a person, that she will not refuse us."

"And when father comes home, he will be pleased, I am sure, with our courage."

"And will approve our wish to support ourselves, as if we were alone in the world."

On these words of her sister, Rose started. A cloud of sadness, almost of alarm, passed over her charming countenance, as she exclaimed: "Oh, sister, what a horrible idea!"

"What is the matter? your look frightens me."

"At the moment I heard you say, that our father would approve our wish to support ourselves, as if we were alone in the world--a frightful thought struck me--I know not why--but feel how my heart beats--just as if some misfortune were about to happen us."

"It is true; your poor heart beats violently. But what was this thought? You alarm me."

"When we were prisoners, they did not at least separate us, and, besides, the prison was a kind of shelter--"

"A sad one, though shared with you."

"But if, when arrived here, any accident had parted us from Dagobert--if we had been left alone, without help, in this great town?"

"Oh, sister! do not speak of that. It would indeed be terrible. What would become of us, kind heaven?"

This cruel thought made the girls remain for a moment speechless with emotion. Their sweet faces, which had just before glowed with a noble hope, grew pale and sad. After a pretty long silence, Rose uplifted her eyes, now filled with tears, "Why does this thought," she said, trembling, "affect us so deeply, sister? My heart sinks within me, as if it were really to happen to us."

"I feel as frightened as you yourself. Alas! were we both to be lost in this immense city, what would become of us?"

"Do not let us give way to such ideas, Blanche! Are we not here in Dagobert's house, in the midst of good people?"

"And yet, sister," said Rose, with a pensive air, "it is perhaps good for us to have had this thought."

"Why so?"

"Because we shall now find this poor lodging all the better, as it affords a shelter from all our fears. And when, thanks to our labor, we are no longer a burden to any one, what more can we need until the arrival of our father?"

"We shall want for nothing---there you are right---but still, why did this thought occur to us, and why does it weigh so heavily on our minds?"

"Yes, indeed---why? Are we not here in the midst of friends that love us? How could we suppose that we should ever be left alone in Paris? It is impossible that such a misfortune should happen to us---is it not, my dear sister?"

"Impossible!" said Rose, shuddering. "If the day before we reached that village in Germany, where poor Jovial was killed, any one had said to us: 'To-morrow, you will be in prison'---we should have answered as now: 'It is impossible. Is not Dagobert here to protect us; what have we to fear?' And yet, sister, the day after we were in prison at Leipsic."

"Oh! do not speak thus, my dear sister! It frightens me."

By a sympathetic impulse, the orphans took one another by the hand, while they pressed close together, and looked around with involuntary fear. The sensation they felt was in fact deep, strange, inexplicable, and yet lowering---one of those dark presentiments which come over us, in spite of ourselves---those fatal gleams of prescience, which throw a lurid light on the mysterious profundities of the future.

Unaccountable glimpses of divination! often no sooner perceived than forgotten---but, when justified by the event, appearing with all the attributes of an awful fatality!

The daughters of Marshal Simon were still absorbed in the mournful reverie which these singular thoughts had awakened, when Dagobert's wife, returning from her son's chamber, entered the room with a painfully agitated countenance.

CHAPTER XLVII.

The letter.

Frances' agitation was so perceptible that Rose could not help exclaiming: "Good gracious, what is the matter?"

"Alas, my dear young ladies! I can no longer conceal it from you," said Frances, bursting into tears. "Since yesterday I have not seen him. I expected my son to supper as usual, and he never came; but I would not let you see how much I suffered. I continued to expect him, minute after minute; for ten years he has never gone up to bed without coming to kiss me; so I spent a good part of the night close to the door, listening if I could hear his step. But he did not come; and, at last, about three o'clock in the morning, I threw myself down upon the mattress. I have just been to see (for I still had a faint hope), if my son had come in this morning---"

"Well, madame!"

"There is no sign of him!" said the poor mother, drying her eyes.

Rose and Blanche looked at each other with emotion; the same thought filled the minds of both; if Agricola should not return, how would this family live? would they not, in such an event, become doubly burdensome?

"But, perhaps, madame," said Blanche, "M. Agricola remained too late at his work to return home last night."

"Oh! no, no! he would have returned in the middle of the night, because he knew what uneasiness he would cause me by stopping out. Alas! some misfortune must have happened to him! Perhaps he has been injured at the forge, he is so persevering at his work. Oh, my poor boy! and, as if I did not feel enough anxiety about him, I am also uneasy about the poor young woman who lives upstairs."

"Why so, madame?"

"When I left my son's room, I went into hers, to tell her my grief, for she is almost a daughter to me; but I did not find her in the little closet where she lives, and the bed had not even been slept in. Where can she have gone so early---she, that never goes out?"

Rose and Blanche looked at each other with fresh uneasiness, for they counted much upon Mother Bunch to help them in the resolution they had taken. Fortunately, both they and Frances were soon to be satisfied on this head, for they heard two low knocks at the door, and the sempstress's voice, saying: "Can I come in, Mrs. Baudoin?"

By a spontaneous impulse, Rose and Blanche ran to the door, and opened it to the young girl. Sleet and snow had been falling incessantly since the evening before; the gingham dress of the young sempstress, her scanty cotton shawl, and the black net cap, which, leaving uncovered two thick bands of chestnut hair, encircled her pale and interesting countenance, were all dripping wet; the cold had given a livid appearance to her thin, white hands; it was only in the fire of her blue eyes, generally so soft and timid, that one perceived the extraordinary energy which this frail and fearful creature had gathered from the emergency of the occasion.

"Dear me! where do you come from, my good Mother Bunch?" said Frances. "Just now, in going to see if my son had returned, I opened your door, and was quite astonished to find you gone out so early."

"I bring you news of Agricola."

"Of my son!" cried Frances, trembling all over. "What has happened to him? Did you see him?---Did you speak to him?---Where is he?"

"I did not see him, but I know where he is." Then, perceiving that Frances grew very pale, the girl added: "He is well; he is in no danger."

"Blessed be God, who has pity on a poor sinner!---who yesterday restored me my husband, and to-day, after a night of cruel anguish, assures me of the safety of my child!" So saying, Frances knelt down upon the floor, and crossed herself with fervor.

During the moment of silence, caused by this pious action, Rose and Blanche approached Mother Bunch, and said to her in a low voice, with an expression of touching interest: "How wet you are! you must be very cold. Take care you do not get ill. We did not venture to ask Madame Frances to light the fire in the stove, but now we will do so."

Surprised and affected by the kindness of Marshal Simon's daughters, the hunchback, who was more sensible than others to the least mark of kindness, answered them with a look of ineffable gratitude: "I am much obliged to you, young ladies; but I am accustomed to the cold, and am moreover so anxious that I do not feel it."

"And my son?" said Frances, rising after she had remained some moments on her knees; "why did he stay out all night? And could you tell me where to find him, my good girl? Will he soon come? why is he so long?"

"I assure you, Agricola is well; but I must inform you, that for some time---"

"Well?"

"You must have courage, mother."

"Oh! the blood runs cold in my veins. What has happened? why shall I not see him?"

"Alas, he is arrested."

"Arrested!" cried Rose and Blanche, with affright.

"Father! Thy will be done!" said Frances; "but it is a great misfortune. Arrested! for what? He is so good and honest, that there must be some mistake."

"The day before yesterday," resumed Mother Bunch, "I received an anonymous letter, by which I was informed that Agricola might be arrested at any moment, on account of his song. We agreed together that he should go to the rich young lady in the Rue de Babylone, who had offered him her services, and ask her to procure bail for him; to prevent his going to prison. Yesterday morning he set out to go to the young lady's."

"And neither of you told me anything of all this---why did you hide it from me?"

"That we might not make you uneasy, mother; for, counting on the generosity of that young lady, I expected Agricola back every moment. When he did not come yesterday evening. I said to myself: 'Perhaps the necessary formalities with regard to the bail have detained him.' But the time passed on, and he did not make his appearance. So, I watched all night, expecting him."

"So you did not go to bed either, my good girl?"

"No, I was too uneasy. This morning, not being able to conquer my fears, I went out before dawn. I remembered the address of the young lady in the Rue de Babylone, and I ran thither."

"Oh, well!" said Frances, with anxiety; "you were in the right. According to what my son told us, that young lady appeared very good and generous."

Mother Bunch shook her head sorrowfully; a tear glittered in her eyes, as she continued: "It was still dark when I arrived at the Rue de Babylone; I waited till daylight was come."

"Poor child! you, who are so weak and timid," said Frances, with deep feeling, "to go so far, and in this dreadful weather!--Oh, you have been a real daughter to me!"

"Has not Agricola been like a brother to me!" said Mother Bunch, softly, with a slight blush.

"When it was daylight," she resumed: "I ventured to ring at the door of the little summer-house; a charming young girl, but with a sad, pale countenance, opened the door to me. 'I come in the name of an unfortunate mother in despair,' said I to her immediately, for I was so poorly dressed that I feared to be sent away as a beggar; but seeing, on the contrary, that the young girl listened to me with kindness, I asked her if, the day before, a young workman had not come to solicit a great favor of her mistress. 'Alas! yes,' answered the young girl; 'my mistress was going to interest herself for him, and, hearing that he was in danger of being arrested, she concealed him here; unfortunately, his retreat was discovered, and yesterday afternoon, at four o'clock, he was arrested and taken to prison.'"

Though the orphans took no part in this melancholy conversation, the sorrow and anxiety depicted in their countenances, showed how much they felt for the sufferings of Dagobert's wife.

"But the young lady?" cried Frances. "You should have tried to see her, my good Mother Bunch, and begged her not to abandon my son. She is so rich that she must have influence, and her protection might save us from great calamities."

"Alas!" said Mother Bunch, with bitter grief, "we must renounce this last hope."

"Why?" said Frances. "If this young lady is so good, she will have pity upon us, when she knows that my son is the only support of a whole family, and that for him to go to prison is worse than for another, because it will reduce us all to the greatest misery."

"But this young lady," replied the girl, "according to what I learned from her weeping maid, was taken last evening to a lunatic asylum: it appears she is mad."

"Mad! Oh! it is horrible for her, and for us also---for now there is no hope. What will become of us without my son? Oh, merciful heaven!" The unfortunate woman hid her face in her hands.

A profound silence followed this heart-rending outburst. Rose and Blanche exchanged mournful glances, for they perceived that their presence augmented the weighty embarrassments of this family. Mother Bunch, worn out with fatigue, a prey to painful emotions, and trembling with cold in her wet clothes, sank exhausted on a chair, and reflected on their desperate position.

That position was indeed a cruel one!

Often, in times of political disturbances, or of agitation amongst the laboring classes, caused by want of work, or by the unjust reduction of wages (the result of the powerful coalition of the capitalists)---often are whole families reduced, by a measure of preventive imprisonment, to as deplorable a position as that of Dagobert's household by Agricola's arrest---an arrest, which, as will afterwards appear, was entirely owing to Rodin's arts.

Now, with regard to this "precautionary imprisonment," of which the victims are almost always honest and industrious mechanics, driven to the necessity of combining together by the In organization of Labor and the Insufficiency of Wages, it is painful to see the law, which ought to be equal for all, refuse to strikers what it grants to masters---because the latter can dispose of a certain sum of money. Thus, under many circumstances, the rich man, by giving bail, can escape the annoyance and inconveniences of a preventive incarceration; he deposits a sum of money, pledges his word to appear on a certain day, and goes back to his pleasures, his occupations, and the sweet delights of his family. Nothing can be better; an accused person is innocent till he is proved guilty; we cannot be too much impressed with that indulgent maxim. It is well for the rich man that he can avail himself of the mercy of the law. But how is it with the poor?

Not only has he no bail to give, for his whole capital consists of his daily labor; but it is upon him chiefly that the rigors of preventive measures must fall with a terrible and fatal force.

For the rich man, imprisonment is merely the privation of ease and comfort, tedious hours, and the pain of separation from his family---distresses not unworthy of interest, for all suffering deserves pity, and the tears of the rich man separated from his children are as bitter as those of the poor. But the absence of the rich man does not condemn his family to hunger and cold, and the incurable maladies caused by exhaustion and misery.

For the workman, on the contrary, imprisonment means want, misery, sometimes death, to those most dear to him. Possessing nothing, he is unable to find bail, and he goes to prison. But if he have, as it often happens, an old, infirm father or mother, a sick wife, or children in the cradle? What will become of this unfortunate family? They could hardly manage to live from day to day upon the wages of this man, wages almost always insufficient, and suddenly this only resource will be wanting for three or four months together.

What will this family do? To whom will they have recourse?

What will become of these infirm old men, these sickly wives, these little children, unable to gain their daily bread? If they chance to have a little linen and a few spare clothes, these will be carried to the pawnbroker's, and thus they will exist for a week or so---but afterwards?

And if winter adds the rigors of the season to this frightful and inevitable misery?

Then will the imprisoned artisan see in his mind's eyes, during the long and sleepless nights, those who are dear to him, wan, gaunt, haggard, exhausted, stretched almost naked upon filthy straw, or huddled close together to warm their frozen limbs. And, should he afterwards be acquitted, it is ruin and desolation that he finds on his return to his poor dwelling.

And then, after that long cessation from labor, he will find it difficult to return to his old employers. How many days will be lost in seeking for work! and a day without employment is a day without bread!

Let us repeat our opinion, that if, under various circumstances, the law did not afford to the rich the facility of giving bail, we could only lament over all such victims of individual and inevitable misfortune. But since the law does provide the means of setting provisionally at liberty those who possess a certain sum of money, why should it deprive of this advantage those very persons, for whom liberty is indeed indispensable, as it involves the existence of themselves and families?

Is there any remedy for this deplorable state of things? We believe there is.

The law has fixed the minimum of bail at five hundred francs. Now five hundred francs represent, upon the average, six months' labor of an industrious workman.

If he have a wife and two children (which is also about the average), it is evidently quite impossible for him to have saved any such sum.

So, to ask of such a man five hundred francs, to enable him to continue to support his family, is in fact to put him beyond the pale of the law, though, more than any one else, he requires its protection, because of the disastrous consequences which his imprisonment entails upon others.

Would it not be equitable and humane, a noble and salutary example, to accept, in every case where bail is allowed (and where the good character of the accused could be honorably established), moral guarantees, in the absence of material ones, from those who have no capital but their labor and their integrity---to accept the word of an honest man to appear upon the day of trial? Would it not be great and moral, in these days to raise the value of the lighted word, and exalt man in his own eyes, by showing him that his promise was held to be sufficient security?

Will you so degrade the dignity of man, as to treat this proposition as an impossible and Utopian dream? We ask, how many prisoners of war have ever broken their parole, and if officers and soldiers are not brothers of the workingman?

Without exaggerating the virtue of promise-keeping in the honest and laborious poor, we feel certain, that an engagement taken by the accused to appear on the day of trial would be always fulfilled, not only with fidelity, but with the warmest gratitude---for his family would not have suffered by his absence, thanks to the indulgence of the law.

There is also another fact, of which France may well be proud. It is, that her magistrates (although miserably paid as the army itself) are generally wise, upright, humane, and independent; they have the true feeling of their own useful and sacred mission; they know how to appreciate the wants and distresses of the working classes, with whom they are so often brought in contact; to them might be safely granted the power of fixing those cases in which a moral security, the only one that can be given by the honest and necessitous man, should be received as sufficient.[10]

Finally, if those who make the laws have so low an opinion of the people as to reject with disdain the suggestions we have ventured to throw out, let them at least so reduce the minimum of bail, as to render it available for those who have most need to escape the fruitless rigors of imprisonment. Let them take as their lowest limit, the month's wages of an artisan---say eighty francs.

This sum would still be exorbitant; but, with the aid of friends, the pawnbroker's, and some little advances, eighty francs might perhaps be found---not always, it is true---but still sometimes---and, at all events, many families would be rescued from frightful misery.

Having made these observations, let us return to Dagobert's family, who, in consequence of the preventive arrest of Agricola, were now reduced to an almost hopeless state.

The anguish of Dagobert's wife increased, the more she reflected on her situation, for, including the marshal's daughters, four persons were left absolutely without resource. It must be confessed, however, that the excellent mother thought less of herself, than of the grief which her son must feel in thinking over her deplorable position.

At this moment there was a knock at the door.

"Who is there?" said Frances.

"It is me---Father Lorient."

"Come in," said Dagobert's wife.

The dyer, who also performed the functions of a porter, appeared at the door of the room. This time, his arms were no longer of a bright apple green, but of a magnificent violet.

"Mrs. Baudoin," said Father Lorient, "here is a letter that the giver of holy water at Saint Merely's has just brought from Abbe Dubois, with a request that I would bring it up to you immediately, as it is very pressing."

"A letter from my confessor?" said Frances, in astonishment; and, as she took it, added: "Thank you, Father Lorient."

"You do not want anything?"

"No, Father Lorient."

"My respects to the ladies!" and the dyer went out.

"Mother Bunch, will you read this letter for me?" said Frances, anxious to learn the contents of the missive in question.

"Yes, mother,"---and the young girl read as follows:

"*My dear madame Baudoin*,---I am in the habit of hearing you Tuesday and Saturday, but I shall not be at liberty either to-morrow or the last day of the week; you must then come to me this morning, unless you wish to remain a whole week without approaching the tribunal of penance."

"Good heavens! a week!" cried Dagobert's wife. "Alas! I am only too conscious of the necessity of going there today, notwithstanding the trouble and grief in which I am plunged."

Then, addressing herself to the orphans, she continued: "Heaven has heard the prayers that I made for you, my dear young ladies; this very day I shall be able to consult a good and holy man with regard to the great dangers to which you are exposed. Poor dear souls, that are so innocent, and yet so guilty, without any fault of your own! Heaven is my witness, that my heart bleeds for you as much as for my son."

Rose and Blanche looked at each other in confusion; they could not understand the fears with which the state of their souls inspired the wife of Dagobert. The latter soon resumed, addressing the young sempstress:

"My good girl, will you render me yet another service?"

"Certainly."

"My husband took Agricola's week's wages with him to pay his journey to Chartres. It was all the money I had in the house; I am sure that my poor child had none about him, and in prison he will perhaps want some. Therefore take my silver cup, fork, and spoon, the two pair of sheets that remain over, and my wadded silk shawl, that Agricola gave me on my birthday, and carry them all to the pawnbroker's. I will try and find out in which prison my son is confined, and will send him half of the little sum we get upon the things; the rest will serve us till my husband comes home. And then, what shall we do? What a blow for him---and only more misery in prospect---since my son is in prison, and I have lost my sight. Almighty Father!" cried the unfortunate mother, with an expression of impatient and bitter grief, "why am I thus afflicted? Have I not done enough to deserve some pity, if not for myself, at least for those belonging to me?" But immediately reproaching herself for this outburst, she added, "No, no! I ought to accept with thankfulness all that Thou

sandiest me. Forgive me for these complaints, or punish only myself!"

"Be of good courage, mother!" said Mother Bunch. "Agricola is innocent, and will not remain long in prison."

"But now I think of it," resumed Dagobert's wife, "to go to the pawnbroker's will make you lose much time, my poor girl."

"I can make up that in the night, Madame Frances; I could not sleep, knowing you in such trouble. Work will amuse me."

"Yes, but the candles---"

"Never mind, I am a little beforehand with my work," said the poor girl, telling a falsehood.

"Kiss me, at least," said Frances, with moist eyes, "for you are the very best creature in the world." So saying, she hastened out of the room.

Rose and Blanche were left alone with Mother Bunch; at length had arrived the moment for which they had waited with so much impatience. Dagobert's wife proceeded to St. Merely Church, where her confessor was expecting to see her.

CHAPTER XLVIII:

THE CONFESSIONAL

Nothing could be more gloomy than the appearance of St. Merely Church, on this dark and snowy winter's day. Frances stopped a moment beneath the porch, to behold a lugubrious spectacle.

While a priest was mumbling some words in a low voice, two or three dirty choristers, in soiled surplices, were chanting the prayers for the dead, with an absent and sullen air, round a plain deal coffin, followed only by a sobbing old man and a child, miserably clad. The beadle and the sacristan, very much displeased at being disturbed for so wretched a funeral, had not deigned to put on their liveries, but, yawning with impatience, waited for the end of the ceremony, so useless to the interests of the establishment. At length, a few drops of holy water being sprinkled on the coffin, the priest handed the brush to the beadle, and retired.

Then took place one of those shameful scenes, the necessary consequence of an ignoble and sacrilegious traffic, so frequent with regard to the burials of the poor, who cannot afford to pay for tapers, high mass, or violins---for now St. Thomas Aquinas' Church has violins even for the dead.

The old man stretched forth his hand to the sacristan to receive the brush. "Come, look sharp!" said that official, blowing on his fingers.

The emotion of the old man was profound, and his weakness extreme; he remained for a moment without stirring, while the brush was clasped tightly in his trembling hand. In that coffin was his daughter, the mother of the ragged child who wept by his side---his heart was breaking at the thought of that last farewell; he stood motionless, and his bosom heaved with convulsive sobs.

"Now, will you make haste?" said the brutal beadle. "Do you think we are going to sleep here?"

The old man quickened his movements. He made the sign of the cross over the corpse, and, stooping down, was about to place the brush in the hand of his grandson, when the sacristan, thinking the affair had lasted long enough, snatched the sprinkling-brush from the child, and made a sign to the bearers to carry away the coffin---which was immediately done.

"Wasn't that old beggar a slow coach?" said the beadle to his companion, as they went back to the sacristy. "We shall hardly have time to get breakfast, and to dress ourselves for the bang-up funeral of this morning. That will be something like a dead man, that's worth the trouble. I shall shoulder my halberd in style!"

"And mount your colonel's epaulets, to throw dust in the eyes of the women that let out the chairs---eh, you old rascal!" said the other, with a sly look.

"What can I do, Capillare? When one has a fine figure, it must be seen," answered the beadle, with a triumphant air. "I cannot blind the women to prevent their losing their hearts!"

Thus conversing; the two men reached the sacristy. The sight of the funeral had only increased the gloom of Frances. When she entered the church, seven or eight persons, scattered about upon chairs, alone occupied the damp and icy building. One of the distributors of holy water, an old fellow with a rubicund, joyous, wine-bibbing face, seeing Frances approach the little font, said to her in a low voice: "Abbe Dubois is not yet in his box. Be quick, and you will have the first wag of his beard."

Though shocked at this pleasantry, Frances thanked the irreverent speaker, made devoutly the sign of the cross, advanced some steps into the church, and knelt down upon the stones to repeat the prayer, which she always offered up before approaching the tribunal of penance. Having said this prayer, she went towards a dark corner of the church, in which was an oaken confessional, with a black curtain drawn across the grated door. The places on each side were vacant; so Frances knelt down in that upon the right hand, and remained there for some time absorbed in bitter reflections.

In a few minutes, a priest of tall stature, with gray hair and a stern countenance, clad in a long black cassock, stalked slowly along one of the aisles of the church. A short, old, misshapen man, badly dressed, leaning upon an umbrella, accompanied him, and from time to time whispered in his ear, when the priest would stop to listen with a profound and respectful deference.

As they approached the confessional, the short old man, perceiving Frances on her knees, looked at the priest with an air of interrogation. "It is she," said the clergyman.

"Well, in two or three hours, they will expect the two girls at St. Mary's Convent. I count upon it," said the old man.

"I hope so, for the sake of their souls," answered the priest; and, bowing gravely, he entered the confessional. The short old man quitted the church.

This old man was Rodin. It was on leaving Saint Merely's that he went to the lunatic asylum, to assure himself that Dr. Baleinier had faithfully executed his instructions with regard to Adrienne de Cardoville.

Frances was still kneeling in the interior of the confessional. One of the slides opened, and a voice began to speak. It was that of the priest, who, for the last twenty years had been the confessor of Dagobert's wife, and exercised over her an irresistible and all-powerful influence.

"You received my letter?" said the voice.

"Yes, father.

"Very well---I listen to you."

"Bless me, father---for I have sinned!" said Frances.

The voice pronounced the formula of the benediction. Dagobert's wife answered "amen," as was proper, said her confider to "It is my fault," gave an account of the manner in which she had performed her last penance, and then proceeded to the enumeration of the new sins, committed since she had received absolution.

For this excellent woman, a glorious martyr of industry and maternal love, always fancied herself sinning: her conscience was incessantly tormented by the fear that she had committed some incomprehensible offence. This mild and courageous creature, who, after a whole life of devotion, ought to have passed what time remained to her in calm serenity of soul, looked upon herself as a great sinner, and lived in continual anxiety, doubting much her ultimate salvation.

"Father," said Frances, in a trembling voice, "I accuse myself of omitting my evening prayer the day before yesterday. My husband, from whom I had been separated for many years, returned home. The joy and the agitation caused by his arrival, made me commit this great sin."

"What next?" said the voice, in a severe tone, which redoubled the poor woman's uneasiness.

"Father, I accuse myself of falling into the same sin yesterday evening. I was in a state of mortal anxiety, for my son did not come home as usual, and I waited for him minute after minute, till the hour had passed over."

"What next?" said the voice.

"Father, I accuse myself of having told a falsehood all this week to my son, by letting him think that on account of his reproaching me for neglecting my health, I had taken a little wine for my dinner---whereas I had left it for him, who has more need of it, because he works so much."

"Go on!" said the voice.

"Father, I accuse myself of a momentary want of resignation this morning, when I learned that my poor son was arrested; instead of submitting with respect and gratitude to this new trial which the Lord hath sent me---alas! I rebelled against it in my grief---and of this I accuse myself."

"A bad week," said the priest, in a tone of still greater severity, "a bad week---for you have always put the creature before the Creator. But proceed!"

"Alas, father!" resumed Frances, much dejected, "I know that I am a great sinner; and I fear that I am on the road to sins of a still graver kind."

"Speak!"

"My husband brought with him from Siberia two young orphans, daughters of Marshal Simon. Yesterday morning, I asked them to say their prayers, and I learned from them, with as much fright as sorrow, that they know none of the mysteries of our holy faith, though they are fifteen years old. They have never received the sacrament, nor are they even baptized, father---not even baptized!"

"They must be heathens!" cried the voice, in a tone of angry surprise.

"That is what so much grieves me, father; for, as I and my husband are in the room of parents to these young orphans, we should be guilty of the sins which they might commit---should we not, father?"

"Certainly,---since you take the place of those who ought to watch over their souls. The shepherd must answer for his flock," said the voice.

"And if they should happen to be in mortal sin, father, I and my husband would be in mortal sin?"

"Yes," said the voice; "you take the place of their parents; and fathers and mothers are guilty of all the sins which their children commit when those sins arise from the want of a Christian education."

"Alas, father! what am I to do? I address myself to you as I would to heaven itself. Every day, every hour, that these poor young girls remain heathens, may contribute to bring about their eternal damnation, may it not, father?" said Frances, in a tone of the deepest emotion.

"Yes," answered the voice; "and the weight of this terrible responsibility rests upon you and your husband; you have the charge of souls!"

"Lord, have mercy upon me!" said Frances weeping.

"You must not grieve yourself thus," answered the voice, in a softer tone; "happily for these unfortunates, they have met you upon the way. They, will have in you and your husband good and pious examples---for I suppose that your husband, though formerly an ungodly person, now practices his religious duties!"

"We must pray for him, father," said Frances, sorrowfully; "grace has not yet touched his heart. He is like my poor child, who has also not been called to holiness. Ah, father!" said Frances, drying her tears, "these thoughts are my heaviest cross."

"So neither your husband nor your son practises," resumed the voice, in a tone of reflection; "this is serious---very serious. The religious education of these two unfortunate girls has yet to begin. In your house, they will have ever before them the most deplorable examples. Take care! I have warned you. You have the charge of souls---your responsibility is immense!"

"Father, it is that which makes me wretched---I am at a loss what to do. Help me, and give me your counsels: for twenty years your voice has been to me as the voice of the Lord."

"Well! you must agree with your husband to send these unfortunate girls to some religious house where they may be instructed."

"We are too poor, father, to pay for their schooling, and unfortunately my son has just been put in prison for songs that he wrote."

"Behold the fruit of impiety," said the voice, severely; "look at Gabriel! he has followed my counsels, and is now the model of every Christian virtue."

"My son, Agricola, has had good qualities, father; he is so kind, so devoted!"

"Without religion," said the voice, with redoubled severity, "what you call good qualities are only vain appearances; at the least breath of the devil they will disappear---for the devil lurks in every soul that has no religion."

"Oh! my poor son!" said Frances, weeping; "I pray for him every day, that faith may enlighten him."

"I have always told you," resumed the voice, "that you have been too weak with him. God now punishes you for it. You should have parted from this irreligious son, and not sanctioned his impiety by loving him as you do. 'If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off,' saith the Scripture."

"Alas, father! you know it is the only time I have disobeyed you; but I could not bring myself to part from my son."

"Therefore is your salvation uncertain---but God is merciful. Do not fall into the same fault with regard to these young girls, whom Providence has sent you, that you might save them from eternal damnation. Do not plunge them into it by your own culpable indifference."

"Oh, father! I have wept and prayed for them."

"That is not sufficient. These unfortunate children cannot have any notion of good or evil. Their souls must be an abyss of scandal and impurity---brought up as they have been, by an impious mother, and a soldier devoid of religion."

"As for that, father," said Frances, with simplicity, "they are gentle as angels, and my husband, who has not quitted them since their birth, declares they have the best hearts in the world."

"Your husband has dwelt all his life in mortal sin," said the voice, harshly; "how can he judge of the state of souls? I repeat to you, that as you represent the parents of these unfortunates, it is not to-morrow, but it is today, and on the instant, that you must labor for their salvation, if you would not incur a terrible responsibility."

"It is true---I know it well, father---and I suffer as much from this fear as from grief at my son's arrest. But what is to be done? I could not instruct these young girls at home---for I have not the knowledge---I have only faith---and then my poor husband, in his blindness, makes game of sacred things, which my son, at least, respects in my presence, out of regard for me. Then, once more, father, come to my aid, I conjure you! Advise me: what is to be done?"

"We cannot abandon these two young souls to frightful perdition," said the voice, after a moment's silence: "there are not two ways of saving them: there is only one, and that is to place them in a religious house, where they may be surrounded by good and pious examples."

"Oh, father! if we were not so poor, or if I could still work, I would try to gain sufficient to pay for their board, and do for them as I did for Gabriel. Unfortunately, I have quite lost my sight; but you, father, know some charitable souls, and if you could get any of them to interest them, selves for these poor orphans---"

"Where is their father?"

"He was in India; but, my husband tells me, he will soon be in France. That, however, is uncertain. Besides, it would make my heart bleed to see those poor children share our misery---which will soon be extreme---for we only live by my son's labor."

"Have these girls no relation here?" asked the voice.

"I believe not, father."

"It was their mother who entrusted them to your husband, to bring them to France?"

"Yes, father; he was obliged to set out yesterday for Chartres, on some very pressing business, as he told me."

It will be remembered that Dagobert had not thought fit to inform his wife of the hopes which the daughters of Marshall Simon founded on the possession of the medal, and that he had particularly charged them not to mention these hopes, even to Frances.

"So," resumed the voice, after a pause of some moments' duration, "your husband is not in Paris."

"No, father; but he will doubtless return this evening or to-morrow morning."

"Listen to me," said the voice, after another pause. "Every minute lost for those two young girls is a new step on the road to perdition. At any moment the hand of God may smite them, for He alone knows the hour of our death; and were they to die in the state in which they now are, they would most probably be lost to all eternity. This very day, therefore, you must open their eyes to the divine light, and place them in a religious house. It is your duty---it should be your desire!"

"Oh, yes, father; but, unfortunately, I am too poor, as I have already told you."

"I know it---you do not want for zeal or faith---but even were you capable of directing these young girls, the impious examples of your husband and son would daily destroy your work. Others must do for these orphans, in the name of Christian charity, that which you cannot do, though you are answerable for them before heaven."

"Oh, father! if, thanks to you, this good work could be accomplished, how grateful I should be!"

"It is not impossible. I know the superior of a convent, where these young girls would be instructed as they ought. The charge for their board would be diminished in consideration of their poverty; but, however small, it must be paid and there would be also an outfit to furnish. All that would be too dear for you."

"Alas! yes, father."

"But, by taking a little from my poor-box, and by applying to one or two generous persons, I think I shall be able to complete the necessary sum, and so get the young girls received at the convent."

"Ah, father! you are my deliverer, and these children's."

"I wish to be so---but, in the interest of their salvation, and to make these measures really efficacious, I must attach some conditions to the support I offer you."

"Name them, father; they are accepted beforehand. Your commands shall be obeyed in everything."

"First of all, the children must be taken this very morning to the convent, by my housekeeper, to whom you must bring them almost immediately."

"Nay, father; that is impossible!" cried Frances.

"Impossible? why?"

"In the absence of my husband---"

"Well?"

"I dare not take a such a step without consulting him."

"Not only must you abstain from consulting him, but the thing must be done during his absence."

"What, father? should I not wait for his return?"

"No, for two reasons," answered the priest, sternly: "first, because his hardened impiety would certainly lead him to oppose your pious resolution; secondly, because it is indispensable that these young girls should break off all connection with your husband, who, therefore, must be left in ignorance of the place of their retreat."

"But, father," said Frances, a prey to cruel doubt and embarrassment, "it is to my husband that these children were entrusted---and to dispose of them without his consent would be---"

"Can you instruct these children at your house---yes or no?" interrupted the voice.

"No, father, I cannot."

"Are they exposed to fall into a state of final impenitence by remaining with you---yes or no?"

"Yes, father, they are so exposed."

"Are you responsible, as you take the place of their parents, for the mortal sins they may commit---yes or no?"

"Alas, father! I am responsible before God."

"Is it in the interest of their eternal salvation that I enjoin you to place them this very day in a convent?"

"It is for their salvation, father."

"Well, then, choose!"

"But tell me, I entreat you, father if I have the right to dispose of them without the consent of my husband?"

"The right! you have not only the right, but it is your sacred duty. Would you not be bound, I ask you, to rescue these unfortunate creatures from a fire, against the will of your husband, or during his absence? Well! you must now rescue them, not from a fire that will only consume the body, but from one in which their souls would burn to all eternity."

"Forgive me, I implore you, father," said the poor woman, whose indecision and anguish increased every minute; "satisfy my doubts!--How can I act thus, when I have sworn obedience to my husband?"

"Obedience for good---yes---but never for evil. You confess, that, were it left to him, the salvation of these orphans would be doubtful, and perhaps impossible."

"But, father," said Frances, trembling, "when my husband returns, he will ask me where are these children? Must I tell him a falsehood?"

"Silence is not falsehood; you will tell him that you cannot answer his question."

"My husband is the kindest of men; but such an answer will drive him almost mad. He has been a soldier, and his anger will be terrible, father," said Frances, shuddering at the thought.

"And were his anger a hundred times more terrible, you should be proud to brave it in so sacred a cause!" cried the voice, with indignation. "Do you think that salvation is to be so easily gained on earth? Since when does the sinner, that would walk in the way of the Lord, turn aside for the stones and briars that may bruise and tear him?"

"Pardon, father, pardon!" said Frances, with the resignation of despair. "Permit me to ask one more question, one only. Alas! if you do not guide me, how shall I find the way?"

"Speak!"

"When Marshal Simon arrives, he will ask his children of my husband. What answer can he then give to their father?"

"When Marshal Simon arrives, you will let me know immediately, and then--I will see what is to be done. The rights of a father are only sacred in so far as he make use of them for the salvation of his children. Before and above the father on earth, is the Father in heaven, whom we must first serve. Reflect upon all this. By accepting what I propose to you, these young girls will be saved from perdition; they will not be at your charge; they will not partake of your misery; they will be brought up in a sacred institution, as, after all, the daughters of a Marshal of France ought to be--and, when their father arrives at Paris, if he be found worthy of seeing them again, instead of finding poor, ignorant, half savage heathens, he will behold two girls, pious, modest, and well informed, who, being acceptable with the Almighty, may invoke His mercy for their father, who, it must be owned, has great need of it--being a man of violence, war, and battle. Now decide! Will you, on peril of your soul, sacrifice the welfare of these girls in this world and the next, because of an impious dread of your husband's anger?"

Though rude and fettered by intolerance, the confessor's language was (taking his view of the case) reasonable and just, because the honest priest was himself convinced of what he said; a blind instrument of Rodin, ignorant of the end in view, he believed firmly, that, in forcing Frances to place these young girls in a convent, he was performing a pious duty. Such was, and is, one of the most wonderful resources of the order to which Rodin belonged--to have for accomplices good and sincere people, who are ignorant of the nature of the plots in which they are the principal actors.

Frances, long accustomed to submit to the influence of her confessor, could find nothing to object to his last words. She resigned herself to follow his directions, though she trembled to think of the furious anger of Dagobert, when he should no longer find the children that a dying mother had confided to his care. But, according to the priest's opinion, the more terrible this anger might appear to her, the more she would show her pious humility by exposing herself to it.

"God's will be done, father!" said she, in reply to her confessor. "Whatever may happen, I wilt do my duty as a Christian--in obedience to your commands."

"And the Lord will reward you for what you may have to suffer in the accomplishment of this meritorious act. You promise then, before God, that you will not answer any of your husband's questions, when he asks you for the daughters of Marshal Simon?"

"Yes, father, I promise!" said Frances, with a shudder.

"And will preserve the same silence towards Marshal Simon himself, in case he should return, before his daughters appear to me sufficiently grounded in the faith to be restored to him?"

"Yes, father," said Frances, in a still fainter voice.

"You will come and give me an account of the scene that takes place between you and your husband, upon his return?"

"Yes, father; when must I bring the orphans to your house?"

"In an hour. I will write to the superior, and leave the letter with my housekeeper. She is a trusty person, and will conduct the young girls to the convent."

After she had listened to the exhortations of her confessor, and received absolution for her late sins, on condition of performing penance, Dagobert's wife left the confessional.

The church was no longer deserted. An immense crowd pressed into it, drawn thither by the pomp of the grand funeral of which the beadle had spoken to the sacristan two hours before. It was with the greatest difficulty that Frances could reach the door of the church, now hung with sumptuous drapery.

What a contrast to the poor and humble train, which had that morning so timidly presented themselves beneath the porch!

The numerous clergy of the parish, in full procession, advanced majestically to receive the coffin covered with a velvet pall; the watered silks and stuffs of their copes and stoles, their splendid silvered embroideries, sparkled in the light of a thousand tapers. The beadle strutted in all the glory of his brilliant uniform and flashing epaulets; on the opposite side walked in high glee the sacristan, carrying his whalebone staff with a magisterial air; the voice of the choristers, now clad in fresh, white surplices, rolled out in bursts of thunder; the trumpets' blare shook the windows; and upon the countenances of all those who were to have a share in the spoils of this rich corpse, this excellent corpse, this first-class corpse, a look of satisfaction was visible, intense and yet subdued, which suited admirably with the air and attitude of the two heirs, tall, vigorous fellows with florid complexions, who, without overstepping the limits of a charming modesty of enjoyment, seemed to cuddle and hug themselves most comfortably in their mourning cloaks.

Notwithstanding her simplicity and pious faith, Dagobert's wife was painfully impressed with this revolting difference between the reception of the rich and the poor man's coffin at the door of the house of God--for surely, if equality be ever real, it is in the presence of death and eternity!

The two sad spectacles she had witnessed, tended still further to depress the spirits of Frances. Having succeeded with no small trouble in making her way out of the church, she hastened to return to the Rue Brise-Miche, in order to fetch the orphans and conduct them to the housekeeper of her confessor, who was in her turn to take them to St. Mary's Convent. situated, as we know, next door to Dr. Baleinier's lunatic-asylum, in which--Adrienne de Cardoville was confined.

CHAPTER XLIX.

My lord and spoil-sport.

The wife of Dagobert, having quitted the church, arrived at the corner of the Rue Brise-Miche, when she was accosted by the distributor of holy water; he came running out of breath, to beg her to return to Saint Mery's, where the Abbe Dubois

had yet something of importance to say to her.

The moment Frances turned to go back, a hackney-coach stopped in front of the house she inhabited. The coachman quitted his box to open the door.

"Driver," said a stout woman dressed in black, who was seated in the carriage, and held a pug-dog upon her knees, "ask if Mrs. Frances Baudoin lives in this house."

"Yes, ma'am," said the coachman.

The reader will no doubt have recognized Mrs. Grivois, head waiting-woman to the Princess de Saint-Dizier, accompanied by My Lord, who exercised a real tyranny over his mistress. The dyer, whom we have already seen performing the duties of a porter, being questioned by the coachman as to the dwelling of Frances, came out of his workshop, and advanced gallantly to the coach-door, to inform Mrs. Grivois, that Frances Baudoin did in fact live in the house, but that she was at present from home.

The arms, hands, and part of the face of Father Loriot were now of a superb gold-color. The sight of this yellow personage singularly provoked My Lord, and at the moment the dyer rested his hand upon the edge of the coach-window, the cur began to yelp frightfully, and bit him in the wrist.

"Oh! gracious heaven!" cried Mrs. Grivois, in an agony, whilst Father Loriot, withdrew his hand with precipitation; "I hope there is nothing poisonous in the dye that you have about you---my dog is so delicate!"

So saying, she carefully wiped the pug-nose, spotted with yellow. Father Loriot, not at all satisfied with this speech, when he had expected to receive some apology from Mrs. Grivois on account of her dog's behavior, said to her, as with difficulty he restrained his anger: "If you did not belong to the fair sex, which obliges me to respect you in the person of that wretched animal I would have the pleasure of taking him by the tail, and making him in one minute a dog of the brightest orange color, by plunging him into my cauldron, which is already on the fire."

"Dye my pet yellow!" cried Mrs. Grivois, in great wrath, as she descended from the hackney-coach, clasping My Lord tenderly to her bosom, and surveying Father Loriot with a savage look.

"I told you, Mrs. Baudoin is not at home," said the dyer, as he saw the pug-dog's mistress advance in the direction of the dark staircase.

"Never mind; I will wait for her," said Mrs. Grivois tartly. "On which story does she live?"

"Up four pair!" answered Father Loriot, returning abruptly to his shop. And he added to himself, with a chuckle at the anticipation: "I hope Father Dagobert's big prowler will be in a bad humor, and give that villainous pug a shaking by the skin of his neck."

Mrs. Grivois mounted the steep staircase with some difficulty, stopping at every landing-place to take breath, and looking about her with profound disgust. At length she reached the fourth story, and paused an instant at the door of the humble chamber, in which the two sisters and Mother Bunch then were.

The young sempstress was occupied in collecting the different articles that she was about to carry to the pawnbroker's. Rose and Blanche seemed happier, and somewhat less uneasy about the future; for they had learned from Mother Bunch, that, when they knew how to sew, they might between them earn eight francs a week, which would at least afford some

assistance to the family.

The presence of Mrs. Grivois in Baudoin's dwelling was occasioned by a new resolution of Abbe d'Aigrigny and the Princess de Saint-Dizier; they had thought it more prudent to send Mrs. Grivois, on whom they could blindly depend, to fetch the young girls, and the confessor was charged to inform Frances that it was not to his housekeeper, but to a lady that would call on her with a note from him, that she was to deliver the orphans, to be taken to a religious establishment.

Having knocked at the door, the waiting-woman of the Princess de Saint Dizier entered the room, and asked for Frances Baudoin.

"She is not at home, madame," said Mother Bunch timidly, not a little astonished at so unexpected a visit, and casting down her eyes before the gaze of this woman.

"Then I will wait for her, as I have important affairs to speak of," answered Mrs. Grivois, examining with curiosity and attention the faces of the two orphans, who also cast down their eyes with an air of confusion.

So saying, Madame Grivois sat down, not without some repugnance, in the old arm-chair of Dagobert's wife, and believing that she might now leave her favorite at liberty, she laid him carefully on the floor. Immediately, a low growl, deep and hollow, sounding from behind the armchair, made Mrs. Grivois jump from her seat, and sent the pug-dog, yelping with affright, and trembling through his fat, to take refuge close to his mistress, with all the symptoms of angry alarm.

"What! is there a dog here?" cried Mrs. Grivois, stooping precipitately to catch up My Lord, whilst, as if he wished himself to answer the question, Spoil-sport rose leisurely from his place behind the arm-chair, and appeared suddenly, yawning and stretching himself.

At sight of this powerful animal, with his double row of formidable pointed fangs, which he seemed to take delight in displaying as he opened his large jaws, Mrs. Grivois could not help giving utterance to a cry of terror. The snappish pug had at first trembled in all his limbs at the Siberian's approach; but, finding himself in safety on the lap of his mistress, he began to growl insolently, and to throw the most provoking glances at Spoil-sport. These the worthy companion of the deceased Jovial answered disdainfully by gaping anew; after which he went smelling round Mrs. Grivois with a sort of uneasiness, turned his back upon My Lord, and stretched himself at the feet of Rose and Blanche, keeping his large, intelligent eyes fixed upon them, as if he foresaw that they were menaced with some danger.

"Turn out that beast," said Mrs. Grivois, imperiously; "he frightens my dog, and may do him some harm."

"Do not be afraid, madame," replied Rose, with a smile; "Spoil-sport will do no harm, if he is not attacked."

"Never mind!" cried Mrs. Grivois; "an accident soon happens. The very sight of that enormous dog, with his wolf's head and terrible teeth, is enough to make one tremble at the injuries he might do one. I tell you to turn him out."

Mrs. Grivois had pronounced these last words in a tone of irritation, which did not sound at all satisfactory in Spoil-sport's ears; so he growled and showed his teeth, turning his head in the direction of the stranger.

"Be quiet, Spoil-sport!" said Blanche sternly.

A new personage here entered the room, and put an end to this situation, which was embarrassing enough for the two young girls. It was a commissioner, with a letter in his hand.

"What is it, sir?" asked Mother Bunch.

"A very pressing letter from the good man of the house; the dyer below stairs told me to bring it up here."

"A letter from Dagobert!" cried Rose and Blanche, with a lively expression of pleasure. "He is returned then? where is he?"

"I do not know whether the good man is called Dagobert or not," said the porter; "but he is an old trooper, with a gray moustache, and may be found close by, at the office of the Chartres coaches."

"That is he!" cried Blanche. "Give me the letter."

The porter handed it to the young girl, who opened it in all haste.

Mrs. Grivois was struck dumb with dismay; she knew that Dagobert had been decoyed from Paris, that the Abbe Dubois might have an opportunity to act with safety upon Frances. Hitherto, all had succeeded; the good woman had consented to place the young girls in the hands of a religious community---and now arrives this soldier, who was thought to be absent from Paris for two or three days at least, and whose sudden return might easily ruin this laborious machination, at the moment when it seemed to promise success.

"Oh!" said Blanche, when she had read the letter. "What a misfortune!"

"What is it, then, sister?" cried Rose.

"Yesterday, half way to Chartres, Dagobert perceived that he had lost his purse. He was unable to continue his journey; he took a place upon credit, to return, and he asks his wife to send him some money to the office, to pay what he owes."

"That's it," said the porter; "for the good man told me to make haste, because he was there in pledge."

"And nothing in the house!" cried Blanche. "Dear me! what is to be done?"

At these words, Mrs. Grivois felt her hopes revive for a moment, they were soon, however, dispelled by Mother Bunch, who exclaimed, as she pointed to the parcel she had just made up: "Be satisfied, dear young ladies! here is a resource. The pawnbroker's, to which I am going, is not far off, and I will take the money direct to M. Dagobert: in half an hour, at latest, he will be here."

"Oh, my dear friend! you are right," said Rose. "How good you are! you think of everything."

"And here," said Blanche, "is the letter, with the address upon it. Take that with you."

"Thank you," answered Mother Bunch: then, addressing the porter, she added: "Return to the person who sent you, and tell him I shall be at the coach-office very shortly."

"Infernal hunchback!" thought Mrs. Grivois, with suppressed rage, "she thinks of everything. Without her, we should have escaped the plague of this man's return. What is to be done now? The girls would not go with me, before the arrival of the soldier's wife; to propose it to them would expose me to a refusal, and might compromise all. Once more, what is to be done?"

"Do not be uneasy, ladies," said the porter as he went out; "I will go and assure the good man, that he will not have to remain long in pledge."

Whilst Mother Bunch was occupied in tying her parcel, in which she had placed the silver cup, fork, and spoon, Mrs. Grivois seemed to reflect deeply. Suddenly she started. Her countenance, which had been for some moments expressive of anxiety and rage, brightened up on the instant. She rose, still holding My Lord in her arms, and said to the young girls: "As Mrs. Baudoin does not come in, I am going to pay a visit in the neighborhood, and will return immediately. Pray tell her so!"

With these words Mr. Grivois took her departure, a few minutes before Mother Bunch left.

CHAPTER L.

Appearances.

After she had again endeavored to cheer up the orphans, the sewing-girl descended the stairs, not without difficulty, for, in addition to the parcel, which was already heavy, she had fetched down from her own room the only blanket she possessed---thus leaving herself without protection from the cold of her icy garret.

The evening before, tortured with anxiety as to Agricola's fate, the girl had been unable to work; the miseries of expectation and hope delayed had prevented her from doing so; now another day would be lost, and yet it was necessary to live. Those overwhelming sorrows, which deprive the poor of the faculty of labor, are doubly dreaded; they paralyze the strength, and, with that forced cessation from toil, want and destitution are often added to grief.

But Mother Bunch, that complete incarnation of holiest duty, had yet strength enough to devote herself for the service of others. Some of the most frail and feeble creatures are endowed with extraordinary vigor of soul; it would seem as if, in these weak, infirm organizations, the spirit reigned absolutely over the body, and knew how to inspire it with a factitious energy.

Thus, for the last twenty-four hours, Mother Bunch had neither slept nor eaten; she had suffered from the cold, through the whole of a frosty night. In the morning she had endured great fatigue, in going, amid rain and snow, to the Rue de Babylone and back, twice crossing Paris and yet her strength was not exhausted---so immense is the power of the human heart!

She had just arrived at the corner of the Rue Saint Mery. Since the recent Rue des Prouvaires conspiracy, there were stationed in this populous quarter of the town a much larger number of police-officers than usual. Now the young sempstress, though bending beneath the weight of her parcel, had quickened her pace almost to a run, when, just as she passed in front of one of the police, two five-franc pieces fell on the ground behind her, thrown there by a stout woman in black, who followed her closely.

Immediately after the stout woman pointed out the two pieces to the policeman, and said something hastily to him with regard to Mother Bunch. Then she withdrew at all speed in the direction of the Rue Brise-Miche.

The policeman, struck with what Mrs. Grivois had said to him (for it was that person), picked up the money, and, running after the humpback, cried out to her: "Hi, there! young woman, I say---stop! stop!"

On this outcry, several persons turned round suddenly and, as always happens in those quarters of the town, a nucleus of five or six persons soon grew to a considerable crowd.

Not knowing that the policeman was calling to her, Mother Bunch only quickened her speed, wishing to get to the pawnbroker's as soon as possible, and trying to avoid touching any of the passers-by, so much did she dread the brutal and cruel railleries, to which her infirmity so often exposed her.

Suddenly, she heard many persons running after her, and at the same instant a hand was laid rudely on her shoulder. It was the policeman, followed by another officer, who had been drawn to the spot by the noise. Mother Bunch turned round, struck with as much surprise as fear.

She found herself in the centre of a crowd, composed chiefly of that hideous scum, idle and in rags, insolent and malicious, besotted with ignorance, brutalized by want, and always loafing about the corners. Workmen are scarcely ever met with in these mobs, for they are for the most part engaged in their daily labors.

"Come, can't you hear? you are deaf as Punch's dog," said the policeman, seizing Mother Bunch so rudely by the arm, that she let her parcel fall at her feet.

When the unfortunate girl, looking round in terror, saw herself exposed to all those insolent, mocking, malicious glances, when she beheld the cynical and coarse grimace on so many ignoble and filthy countenances, she trembled in all her limbs, and became fearfully pale. No doubt the policeman had spoken roughly to her; but how could he speak otherwise to a poor deformed girl, pale and trembling, with her features agitated by grief and fear---to a wretched creature, miserably clad, who wore in winter a thin cotton gown, soiled with mud, and wet with melted snow---for the poor sempstress had walked much and far that morning. So the policeman resumed, with great severity, following that supreme law of appearances which makes poverty always suspected: "Stop a bit, young woman! it seems you are in a mighty hurry, to let your money fall without picking it up."

"Was her blunt hid in her hump?" said the hoarse voice of a match-boy, a hideous and repulsive specimen of precocious depravity.

This sally was received with laughter, shouts, and hooting, which served to complete the sewing-girl's dismay and terror. She was hardly able to answer, in a feeble voice, as the policeman handed her the two pieces of silver: "This money, sir, is not mine."

"You lie," said the other officer, approaching; "a respectable lady saw it drop from your pocket."

"I assure you, sir, it is not so," answered Mother Bunch, trembling.

"I tell you that you lie," resumed the officer; "for the lady, struck with your guilty and frightened air, said to me: 'Look at yonder little hunchback, running away with that large parcel, and letting her money fall without even stopping to pick it up---it is not natural.'"

"Bobby," resumed the match-vendor in his hoarse voice, "be on your guard! Feel her hump, for that is her luggage-van. I'm sure that you'll find boots, and cloaks, and umbrellas, and clocks in it---for I just heard the hour strike in the bend of her back."

Then came fresh bursts of laughter and shouts and hooting, for this horrible mob has no pity for those who implore and suffer. The crowd increased more and more, and now they indulged in hoarse cries, piercing whistles, and all kinds of horse play.

"Let a fellow see her; it's free gratis."

"Don't push so; I've paid for my place!"

"Make her stand up on something, that all may have a look."

"My corns are being ground: it was not worth coming."

"Show her properly---or return the money."

"That's fair, ain't it?"

"Give it us in the 'garden' style."

"Trot her out in all her paces! Kim up!"

Fancy the feelings of this unfortunate creature, with her delicate mind, good heart, and lofty soul, and yet with so timid and nervous a character, as she stood alone with the two policemen in the thick of the crowd, and was forced to listen to all these coarse and savage insults.

But the young sempstress did not yet understand of what crime she was accused. She soon discovered it, however, for the policeman, seizing the parcel which she had picked up and now held in her trembling hands, said to her rudely: "What is there in that bundle?"

"Sir---it is---I am going---" The unfortunate girl hesitated---unable, in her terror, to find the word.

"If that's all you have to answer," said the policeman, "it's no great shakes. Come, make haste! turn your bundle inside out."

So saying, the policeman snatched the parcel from her, half opened it, and repeated, as he enumerated the divers articles it contained: "The devil!---sheets---a spoon and fork---a silver mug---a shawl---a blanket---you're a downy mot! it was not so bad a move. Dressed like a beggar, and with silver plate about you. Oh, yes! you're a deep 'un."

"Those articles do not belong to you," said the other officer.

"No, sir," replied Mother Bunch, whose strength was failing her; "but---"

"Oh, vile hunchback! you have stolen more than you are big!"

"Stolen!" cried Mother Bunch, clasping her hands in horror, for she now understood it all. "Stolen!"

"The guard! make way for the lobsters!" cried several persons at once.

"Oh, ho! here's the lobsters!"

"The fire-eaters!"

"The Arab devourers!"

"Come for their dromedary!"

In the midst of these noisy jests, two soldiers and a corporal advanced with much difficulty. Their bayonets and the barrels of their guns were alone visible above the heads of this hideous and compact crowd. Some officious person had been to inform the officer at the nearest guard house, that a considerable crowd obstructed the public way.

"Come, here is the guard---so march to the guard-house!" said the policeman, taking Mother Bunch by the arm.

"Sir," said the poor girl, in a voice stifled by sobs, clasping her hands in terror, and sinking upon her knees on the pavement; "sir,---have pity---let me explain---"

"You will explain at the guard-house; so come on!"

"But, sir---I am not a thief," cried Mother Bunch, in a heart-rending tone; "have pity upon me---do not take me away like a thief, before all this crowd. Oh! mercy! mercy!"

"I tell you, there will be time to explain at the guard-house. The street is blocked up; so come along!" Grasping the unfortunate creature by both her hands, he set her, as it were, on her feet again.

At this instant, the corporal and his two soldiers, having succeeded in making their way through the crowd, approached the policeman. "Corporal," said the latter, "take this girl to the guard-house. I am an officer of the police."

"Oh, gentlemen!" cried the girl, weeping hot tears, and wringing her hands, "do not take me away, before you let me explain myself. I am not a thief---indeed, indeed, I am not a thief! I will tell you---it was to render service to others---only let me tell you---"

"I tell you, you should give your explanations at the guard-house; if you will not walk, we must drag you along," said the policeman.

We must renounce the attempt to paint this scene, at once ignoble and terrible.

Weak, overpowered, filled with alarm, the unfortunate girl was dragged along by the soldiers, her knees sinking under her at every step. The two police-officers had each to lend an arm to support her, and mechanically she accepted their assistance. Then the vociferations and hootings burst forth with redoubled fury. Half-swooning between the two men, the hapless creature seemed to drain the cup of bitterness to the dregs.

Beneath that foggy sky, in that dirty street, under the shadow of the tall black houses, those hideous masses of people reminded one of the wildest fancies of Callot and of Goya: children in rags, drunken women, grim and blighted figures of men, rushed against each other, pushed, fought, struggled, to follow with howls and hisses an almost inanimate victim---the victim of a deplorable mistake.

Of a mistake! How one shudders to think, that such arrests may often take place, founded upon nothing but the suspicion caused by the appearance of misery, or by some inaccurate description. Can we forget the case of that young girl, who, wrongfully accused of participating in a shameful traffic, found means to escape from the persons who were leading her to prison, and, rushing up the stairs of a house, threw herself from a window, in her despair, and was crushed to death upon the paving-stones?

Meanwhile, after the abominable denunciation of which Mother Bunch was the victim, Mrs. Grivois had returned precipitately to the Rue Brise Miche. She ascended in haste to the fourth story, opened the door of Frances Baudoin's room, and saw---Dagobert in company with his wife and the two orphans!

CHAPTER LI.

The convent.

Let us explain in a few words the presence of Dagobert. His countenance was impressed with such an air of military frankness that the manager of the coach-office would have been satisfied with his promise to return and pay the money; but the soldier had obstinately insisted on remaining in pledge, as he called it, till his wife had answered his letter. When, however, on the return of the porter, he found that the money was coming, his scruples were satisfied, and he hastened to run home.

We may imagine the stupor of Mrs. Grivois, when, upon entering the chamber, she perceived Dagobert (whom she easily recognized by the description she had heard of him) seated beside his wife and the orphans. The anxiety of Frances at sight of Mrs. Grivois was equally striking. Rose and Blanche had told her of the visit of a lady, during her absence, upon important business; and, judging by the information received from her confessor, Frances had no doubt that this was the person charged to conduct the orphans to a religious establishment.

Her anxiety was terrible. Resolved to follow the counsels of Abbe Dubois, she dreaded lest a word from Mrs. Grivois should put Dagobert on the scent---in which case all would be lost, and the orphans would remain in their present state of ignorance and mortal sin, for which she believed herself responsible.

Dagobert, who held the hands of Rose and Blanche, left his seat as the Princess de Saint-Dizier's waiting-woman entered the room and cast an inquiring glance on Frances.

The moment was critical---nay, decisive; but Mrs. Grivois had profited by the example of the Princess de Saint-Dizier. So, taking her resolution at once, and turning to account the precipitation with which she had mounted the stairs, after the odious charge she had brought against poor Mother Bunch, and even the emotion caused by the unexpected sight of Dagobert, which gave to her features an expression of uneasiness and alarm---she exclaimed, in an agitated voice, after the moment's silence necessary to collect her thoughts: "Oh, madame! I have just been the spectator of a great misfortune. Excuse my agitation! but I am so excited---"

"Dear me! what is the matter?" said Frances, in a trembling voice, for she dreaded every moment some indiscretion on the part of Mrs. Grivois.

"I called just now," resumed the other, "to speak to you on some important business; whilst I was waiting for you, a poor young woman, rather deformed, put up sundry articles in a parcel---"

"Yes," said Frances; "it was Mother Bunch, an excellent, worthy creature."

"I thought as much, madame; well, you shall hear what has happened. As you did not come in, I resolved to pay a visit in the neighborhood. I go out, and get as far as the Rue St. Mery, when---Oh, madame!"

"Well?" said Dagobert, "what then?"

"I see a crowd---I inquire what is the matter---I learn that a policeman has just arrested a young girl as a thief, because she had been seen carrying a bundle, composed of different articles which did not appear to belong to her---I approached---what do I behold?---the same young woman that I had met just before in this room."

"Oh! the poor child!" exclaimed Frances, growing pale, and clasping her hands together. "What a dreadful thing!"

"Explain, then," said Dagobert to his wife. "What was in this bundle?"

"Well, my dear---to confess the truth---I was a little short, and I asked our poor friend to take some things for me to the pawnbroker's---"

"What! and they thought she had robbed us!" cried Dagobert; "she, the most honest girl in the world! it is dreadful---you ought to have interfered, madame; you ought to have said that you knew her."

"I tried to do so, sir; but, unfortunately, they would not hear me. The crowd increased every moment, till the guard came up, and carried her off."

"She might die of it, she is so sensitive and timid!" exclaimed Frances.

"Ah, good Mother Bunch! so gentle! so considerate!" said Blanche, turning with tearful eyes towards her sister.

"Not being able to help her," resumed Mrs. Grivois "I hastened hither to inform you of this misadventure---which may, indeed, easily be repaired---as it will only be necessary to go and claim the young girl as soon as possible."

At these words, Dagobert hastily seized his hat, and said abruptly to Mrs. Grivois: "Zounds, madame! you should have begun by telling us that. Where is the poor child? Do you know?"

"I do not, sir; but there are still so many excited people in the street that, if you will have the kindness to step out, you will be sure to learn."

"Why the devil do you talk of kindness? It is my duty, madame. Poor child!" repeated Dagobert. "Taken up as a thief!---it is really horrible. I will go to the guard-house, and to the commissary of police for this neighborhood, and, by hook or crook, I will find her, and have her out, and bring her home with me."

So saying, Dagobert hastily departed. Frances, now that she felt more tranquil as to the fate of Mother Bunch, thanked the Lord that this circumstance had obliged her husband to go out, for his presence at this juncture caused her a terrible embarrassment.

Mrs. Grivois had left My Lord in the coach below, for the moments were precious. Casting a significant glance at Frances she handed her Abbe Dubois' letter, and said to her, with strong emphasis on every word: "You will see by this letter, madame, what was the object of my visit, which I have not before been able to explain to you, but on which I truly congratulate myself, as it brings me into connection with these two charming young ladies." Rose and Blanche looked at each other in surprise. Frances took the letter with a trembling hand. It required all the pressing and threatening injunctions of her confessor to conquer the last scruples of the poor woman, for she shuddered at the thought of Dagobert's terrible indignation. Moreover, in her simplicity, she knew not how to announce to the young girls that they were to accompany this lady.

Mrs. Grivois guessed her embarrassment, made a sign to her to be at her ease, and said to Rose, whilst Frances was reading the letter of her confessor: "How happy your relation will be to see you, my dear young lady!"

"Our relation, madame?" said Rose, more and more astonished.

"Certainly. She knew of your arrival here, but, as she is still suffering from the effects of a long illness, she was not able to come herself to-day, and has sent me to fetch you to her. Unfortunately," added Mrs. Grivois, perceiving a movement

of uneasiness on the part of the two sisters, "it will not be in her power, as she tells Mrs. Baudoin in her letter, to see you for more than a very short time---so you may be back here in about an hour. But to-morrow or the next day after, she will be well enough to leave home, and then she will come and make arrangements with Mrs. Baudoin and her husband, to take you into her house---for she could not bear to leave you at the charge of the worthy people who have been so kind to you."

These last words of Mrs. Grivois made a favorable impression upon the two sisters, and banished their fears of becoming a heavy burden to Dagobert's family. If it had been proposed to them to quit altogether the house in the Rue Bris-Miche, without first asking the consent of their old friend, they would certainly have hesitated; but Mrs. Grivois had only spoken of an hour's visit. They felt no suspicion, therefore, and Rose said to Frances: "We may go and see our relation, I suppose, madame, without waiting for Dagobert's return?"

"Certainly," said Frances, in a feeble voice, "since you are to be back almost directly."

"Then, madame, I would beg these dear young ladies to come with me as soon as possible, as I should like to bring them back before noon.

"We are ready, madame," said Rose.

"Well then, young ladies, embrace your second mother, and come," said Mrs. Grivois, who was hardly able to control her uneasiness, for she trembled lest Dagobert should return from one moment to the other.

Rose and Blanche embraced Frances, who, clasping in her arms the two charming and innocent creatures that she was about to deliver up, could with difficulty restrain her tears, though she was fully convinced that she was acting for their salvation.

"Come, young ladies," said Mrs. Grivois, in the most affable tone, "let us make haste---you will excuse my impatience, I am sure---but it is in the name of your relation that I speak."

Having once more tenderly kissed the wife of Dagobert, the sisters quitted the room hand in hand, and descended the staircase close behind Mrs. Grivois, followed (without their being aware of it), by Spoil-sport. The intelligent animal cautiously watched their movements, for, in the absence of his master, he never let them out of his sight.

For greater security, no doubt, the waiting-woman of Madame de Saint Dizier had ordered the hackney-coach to wait for her at a little distance from the Rue Brise-Miche, in the cloister square. In a few seconds, the orphans and their conductress reached the carriage.

"Oh, missus!" said the coachman, opening the door; "no offence, I hope---but you have the most ill-tempered rascal of a dog! Since you put him into my coach, he has never ceased howling like a roasted cat, and looks as if he would eat us all up alive!" In fact, My Lord, who detested solitude, was yelling in the most deplorable manner.

"Be quiet, My Lord! here I am," said Mrs. Grivois; then addressing the two sisters, she added: "Pray, get in, my dear young ladies."

Rose and Blanche got into the coach. Before she followed them, Mrs. Grivois was giving to the coachman in a low voice the direction to St. Mary's Convent, and was adding other instructions, when suddenly the pug dog, who had growled savagely when the sisters took their seats in the coach, began to bark with fury. The cause of this anger was clear enough; Spoil-sport, until now unperceived, had with one bound entered the carriage.

The pug, exasperated by this boldness, forgetting his ordinary prudence, and excited to the utmost by rage and ugliness of temper, sprang at his muzzle, and bit him so cruelly, that, in his turn, the brave Siberian dog, maddened by the pain, threw himself upon the teaser, seized him by the throat, and fairly strangled him with two grips of his powerful jaws---as appeared by one stifled groan of the pug, previously half suffocated with fat.

All this took place in less time than is occupied by the description. Rose and Blanche had hardly opportunity to exclaim twice: "Here, Spoil sport! down!"

"Oh, good gracious!" said Mrs. Grivois, turning round at the noise. "There again is that monster of a dog---he will certainly hurt my love. Send him away, young ladies---make him get down---it is impossible to take him with us."

Ignorant of the degree of Spoil-sport's criminality, for his paltry foe was stretched lifeless under a seat, the young girls yet felt that it would be improper to take the dog with them, and they therefore said to him in an angry tone, at the same time slightly touching him with their feet: "Get down, Spoil-sport! go away!"

The faithful animal hesitated at first to obey this order. Sad and supplicatingly looked he at the orphans, and with an air of mild reproach, as if blaming them for sending away their only defender. But, upon the stern repetition of the command, he got down from the coach, with his tail between his legs, feeling perhaps that he had been somewhat over-hasty with regard to the pug.

Mrs. Grivois, who was in a great hurry to leave that quarter of the town, seated herself with precipitation in the carriage; the coachman closed the door, and mounted his box; and then the coach started at a rapid rate, whilst Mrs. Grivois prudently let down the blinds, for fear of meeting Dagobert by the way.

Having taken these indispensable precautions, she was able to turn her attention to her pet, whom she loved with all that deep, exaggerated affection, which people of a bad disposition sometimes entertain for animals, as if then concentrated and lavished upon them all those feelings in which they are deficient with regard to their fellow creatures. In a word. Mrs. Grivois was passionately attached to this peevish, cowardly, spiteful dog, partly perhaps from a secret sympathy with his vices. This attachment had lasted for six years, and only seemed to increase as My Lord advanced in age.

We have laid some stress on this apparently puerile detail, because the most trifling causes have often disastrous effects, and because we wish the reader to understand what must have been the despair, fury, and exasperation of this woman, when she discovered the death of her dog---a despair, a fury, and an exasperation, of which the orphans might yet feel the cruel consequences.

The hackney-coach had proceeded rapidly for some seconds, when Mrs. Grivois, who was seated with her back to the horses, called My Lord. The dog had very good reasons for not replying.

"Well, you sulky beauty!" said Mrs. Grivois, soothingly; "you have taken offence, have you? It was not my fault if that great ugly dog came into the coach, was it, young ladies? Come and kiss your mistress, and let us make peace, old obstinate!"

The same obstinate silence continued on the part of the canine noble. Rose and Blanche began to look anxiously at each other, for they knew that Spoil-sport was somewhat rough in his ways, though they were far from suspecting what had really happened. But Mrs. Grivois, rather surprised than uneasy at her pug-log's insensibility to her affectionate appeals, and believing him to be sullenly crouching beneath the seat, stooped clown to take him up, and feeling one of his paws, drew it impatiently towards her whilst she said to him in a half-jesting, half angry tone: "Come, naughty fellow! you will give a pretty notion of your temper to these young ladies."

So saying, she took up the dog, much astonished at his unresisting torpor; but what was her fright, when, having placed him upon her lap, she saw that he was quite motionless.

"An apoplexy!" cried she. "The dear creature ate too much---I was always afraid of it."

Turning round hastily, she exclaimed: "Stop, coachman! stop!" without reflecting that the coachman could not hear her. Then raising the cur's head, still thinking that he was only in a fit, she perceived with horror the bloody holes imprinted by five or six sharp fangs, which left no doubt of the cause of his deplorable end.

Her first impulse was one of grief and despair. "Dead!" she exclaimed; "dead! and already cold! Oh, goodness!" And this woman burst into tears.

The tears of the wicked are ominous. For a bad man to weep, he must have suffered much; and, with him, the reaction of suffering, instead of softening the soul, inflames it to a dangerous anger.

Thus, after yielding to that first painful emotion, the mistress of My Lord felt herself transported with rage and hate---yes, hate---violent hate for the young girls, who had been the involuntary cause of the dog's death. Her countenance so plainly betrayed her resentment, that Blanche and Rose were frightened at the expression of her face, which had now grown purple with fury, as with agitated voice and wrathful glance she exclaimed: "It was your dog that killed him!"

"Oh, madame!" said Rose; "we had nothing to do with it."

"It was your dog that bit Spoil-sport first," added Blanche, in a plaintive voice.

The look of terror impressed on the features of the orphans recalled Mrs. Grivois to herself. She saw the fatal consequences that might arise from yielding imprudently to her anger. For the very sake of vengeance, she had to restrain herself, in order not to awaken suspicion in the minds of Marshal Simon's daughters. But not to appear to recover too soon from her first impression, she continued for some minutes to cast irritated glances at the young girls; then, little by little, her anger seemed to give way to violent grief; she covered her face with her hands, heaved a long sigh, and appeared to weep bitterly.

"Poor lady!" whispered Rose to Blanche. "How she weeps!--No doubt, she loved her dog as much as we love Spoil-sport."

"Alas! yes," replied Blanche. "We also wept when our old Jovial was killed."

After a few minutes, Mrs. Grivois raised her head, dried her eyes definitively, and said in a gentle, and almost affectionate voice: "Forgive me, young ladies! I was unable to repress the first movement of irritation, or rather of deep sorrow---for I was tenderly attached to this poor dog he has never left me for six years."

"We are very sorry for this misfortune, madame," resumed Rose; "and we regret it the more, that it seems to be irreparable."

"I was just saying to my sister, that we can the better fancy your grief, as we have had to mourn the death of our old horse, that carried us all the way from Siberia."

"Well, my dear young ladies, let us think no more about it. It was my fault; I should not have brought him with me; but he was always so miserable, whenever I left him. You will make allowance for my weakness. A good heart feels for animals as well as people; so I must trust to your sensibility to excuse my hastiness."

"Do not think of it, madame; it is only your grief that afflicts us."

"I shall get over it, my dear young ladies--I shall get over it. The joy of the meeting between you and your relation will help to console me. She will be so happy. You are so charming! and then the singular circumstance of your exact likeness to each other adds to the interest you inspire."

"You are too kind to us, madame."

"Oh, no--I am sure you resemble each other as much in disposition as in face."

"That is quite natural, madame," said Rose, "for since our birth we have never left each other a minute, whether by night or day. It would be strange, if we were not like in character."

"Really, my dear young ladies! you have never left each other a minute?"

"Never, madame." The sisters joined hands with an expressive smile.

"Then, how unhappy you would be, and how much to be pitied, if ever you were separated."

"Oh, madame! it is impossible," said Blanche, smiling.

"How impossible?"

"Who would have the heart to separate us?"

"No doubt, my dear young ladies, it would be very cruel."

"Oh, madame," resumed Blanche, "even very wicked people would not think of separating us."

"So much the better, my dear young ladies--pray, why?"

"Because it would cause us too much grief."

"Because it would kill us."

"Poor little dears!"

"Three months ago, we were shut up in prison. Well when the governor of the prison saw us, though he looked a very stern man, he could not help saying: 'It would be killing these children to separate them;' and so we remained together, and were as happy as one can be in prison."

"It shows your excellent heart, and also that of the persons who knew how to appreciate it."

The carriage stopped, and they heard the coachman call out "Any one at the gate there?"

"Oh! here we are at your relation's," said Mrs. Grivois. Two wings of a gate flew open, and the carriage rolled over the gravel of a court-yard.

Mrs. Grivois having drawn up one of the blinds, they found themselves in a vast court, across the centre of which ran a high wall, with a kind of porch upon columns, under which was a little door. Behind this wall, they could see the upper part of a very large building in freestone. Compared with the house in the Rue Brise-Miche, this building appeared a palace; so Blanche said to Mrs. Grivois, with an expression of artless admiration: "Dear me, madame, what a fine residence!"

"That is nothing," replied Madame Grivois; "wait till you see the interior, which is much finer."

When the coachman opened the door of the carriage, what was the rage of Mrs. Grivois, and the surprise of the girls, to see Spoil-sport, who had been clever enough to follow the coach. Pricking up his ears, and wagging his tail, he seemed to have forgotten his late offences, and to expect to be praised for his intelligent fidelity.

"What!" cried Mrs. Grivois, whose sorrows were renewed at the sight; "has that abominable dog followed the coach?"

"A famous dog, mum," answered the coachman "he never once left the heels of my horses. He must have been trained to it. He's a powerful beast, and two men couldn't scare him. Look at the throat of him now!"

The mistress of the deceased pug, enraged at the somewhat unseasonable praises bestowed upon the Siberian, said to the orphans, "I will announce your arrival, wait for me an instant in the coach."

So saying, she went with a rapid step towards the porch, and rang the bell. A woman, clad in a monastic garb, appeared at the door, and bowed respectfully to Mrs. Grivois, who addressed her in these few words, "I have brought you the two young girls; the orders of Abbe d'Aigrigny and the princess are, that they be instantly separated, and kept apart in solitary cells---you understand, sister---and subjected to the rule for impenitents."

"I will go and inform the superior, and it will be done," said the portress, with another bend.

"Now, will you come, my dear young ladies?" resumed Mrs. Grivois, addressing the two girls, who had secretly bestowed a few caresses upon Spoil sport, so deeply were they touched by his instinctive attachment; "you will be introduced to your relation, and I will return and fetch you in half an hour. Coachman keep that dog back."

Rose and Blanche, in getting out of the coach, were so much occupied with Spoil-sport, that they did not perceive the portress, who was half hidden behind the little door. Neither did they remark, that the person who was to introduce them was dressed as a nun, till, taking them by the hand, she had led them across the threshold, when the door was immediately closed behind them.

As soon as Mrs. Grivois had seen the orphans safe into the convent, she told the coachman to leave the court-yard, and wait for her at the outer gate. The coachman obeyed; but Spoil-sport, who had seen Rose and Blanche enter by the little door, ran to it, and remained there.

Mrs. Grivois then called the porter of the main entrance, a tall, vigorous fellow and said to him: "Here are ten francs for you, Nicholas, if you will beat out the brains of that great dog, who is crouching under the porch."

Nicholas shook his head, as he observed Spoil-sport's size and strength. "Devil take me, madame!" said he; "'tis not so easy to tackle a dog of that build."

"I will give you twenty francs; only kill him before me."

"One ought to have a gun, and I have only an iron hammer."

"That will do; you can knock him down at a blow."

"Well, madame---I will try---but I have my doubts." And Nicholas went to fetch his mallet.

"Oh! if I had the strength!" said Mrs. Grivois.

The porter returned with his weapon, and advanced slowly and treacherously towards Spoil-sport, who was still crouching beneath the porch. "Here, old fellow! here, my good dog!" said Nicholas striking his left hand on his thigh, and keeping his right behind him, with the crowbar grasped in it.

Spoil-sport rose, examined Nicholas attentively, and no doubt perceiving by his manner that the porter meditated some evil design, bounded away from him, outflanked the enemy, saw clearly what was intended, and kept himself at a respectful distance.

"He smells a rat," said Nicholas; "the rascal's on his guard. He will not let me come near him. It's no go."

"You are an awkward fellow," said Mrs. Grivois in a passion, as she threw a five-franc piece to Nicholas: "at all events, drive him away."

"That will be easier than to kill him, madame," said the porter. Indeed, finding himself pursued, and conscious probably that it would be useless to attempt an open resistance, Spoil-sport fled from the court-yard into the street; but once there, he felt himself, as it were, upon neutral ground, and notwithstanding all the threats of Nicholas, refused to withdraw an inch further than just sufficient to keep out of reach of the sledge-hammer. So that when Mrs. Grivois, pale with rage, again stepped into her hackney-coach, in which were My Lord's lifeless remains, she saw with the utmost vexation that Spoil-sport was lying at a few steps from the gate, which Nicholas had just closed, having given up the chase in despair.

The Siberian dog, sure of finding his way back to the Rue Brise-Miche, had determined, with the sagacity peculiar to his race, to wait for the orphans on the spot where he then was.

Thus were the two sisters confined in St. Mary's Convent, which, as we have already said, was next door to the lunatic asylum in which Adrienne de Cardoville was immured.

We now conduct the reader to the dwelling of Dagobert's wife, who was waiting with dreadful anxiety for the return of her husband, knowing that he would call her to account for the disappearance of Marshal Simon's daughters.

CHAPTER LII.

The influence of A confessor.

Hardly had the orphans quitted Dagobert's wife, when the poor woman, kneeling down, began to pray with fervor. Her tears, long restrained, now flowed abundantly; notwithstanding her sincere conviction that she had performed a religious duty in delivering up the girl's she waited with extreme fear her husband's return. Though blinded by her pious zeal, she could not hide from herself, that Dagobert would have good reason to be angry; and then this poor mother had also, under these untoward circumstances, to tell him of Agricola's arrest.

Every noise upon the stairs made Frances start with trembling anxiety; after which, she would resume her fervent prayers, supplicating strength to support this new and arduous trial. At length, she heard a step upon the landing-place below, and, feeling sure this time that it was Dagobert, she hastily seated herself, dried her tears, and taking a sack of coarse cloth upon her lap, appeared to be occupied with sewing---though her aged hands trembled so much, that she could hardly hold the needle.

After some minutes the door opened, and Dagobert appeared. The soldier's rough countenance was stern and sad; as he entered, he flung his hat violently upon the table, so full of painful thought, that he did not at first perceive the absence of the orphans.

"Poor girl!" cried he. "It is really terrible!"

"Didst see Mother Bunch? didst claim her?" said Frances hastily, forgetting for a moment her own fears.

"Yes, I have seen her---but in what a state---twas enough to break one's heart. I claimed her, and pretty loud too, I can tell you; but they said to me, that the commissary must first come to our place in order---" here Dagobert paused, threw a glance of surprise round the room, and exclaimed abruptly: "Where are the children?"

Frances felt herself seized with an icy shudder. "My dear," she began in a feeble voice---but she was unable to continue.

"Where are Rose and Blanche! Answer me then! And Spoil-sport, who is not here either!"

"Do not be angry."

"Come," said Dagobert, abruptly, "I see you have let them go out with a neighbor---why not have accompanied them yourself, or let them wait for me, if they wished to take a walk; which is natural enough, this room being so dull. But I am astonished that they should have gone out before they had news of good Mother Bunch---they have such kind hearts. But how pale you are?" added the soldier looking nearer at Frances; "what is the matter, my poor wife? Are you ill?"

Dagobert took Frances's hand affectionately in his own but the latter, painfully agitated by these words, pronounced with touching goodness, bowed her head and wept as she kissed her husband's hand. The soldier, growing more and more uneasy as he felt the scalding tears of his wife, exclaimed: "You weep, you do not answer---tell me, then, the cause of your grief, poor wife! Is it because I spoke a little loud, in asking you how you could let the dear children go out with a neighbor? Remember their dying mother entrusted them to my care---'tis sacred, you see---and with them, I am like an old hen after her chickens," added he, laughing to enliven Frances.

"Yes, you are right in loving them!"

"Come, then---becalm---you know me of old. With my great, hoarse voice, I am not so bad a fellow at bottom. As you can trust to this neighbor, there is no great harm done; but, in future, my good Frances, do not take any step with regard to the children without consulting me. They asked, I suppose, to go out for a little stroll with Spoil-sport?"

"No, my dear!"

"No! Who is this neighbor, to whom you have entrusted them? Where has she taken them? What time will she bring them back?"

"I do not know," murmured Frances, in a failing voice.

"You do not know!" cried Dagobert, with indignation; but restraining himself, he added, in a tone of friendly reproach: "You do not know? You cannot even fix an hour, or, better still, not entrust them to any one? The children must have been very anxious to go out. They knew that I should return at any moment, so why not wait for me---eh, Frances? I ask you, why did they not wait for me? Answer me, will you!--Zounds! you would make a saint swear!" cried Dagobert, stamping his foot; "answer me, I say!"

The courage of Frances was fast failing. These pressing and reiterated questions, which might end by the discovery of the truth, made her endure a thousand slow and poignant tortures. She preferred coming at once to the point, and determined to bear the full weight of her husband's anger, like a humble and resigned victim, obstinately faithful to the promise she had sworn to her confessor.

Not having the strength to rise, she bowed her head, allowed her arms to fall on either side of the chair, and said to her husband in a tone of the deepest despondency: "Do with me what you will---but do not ask what is become of the children---I cannot answer you."

If a thunderbolt had fallen at the feet of the soldier, he would not have been more violently, more deeply moved; he became deadly pale; his bald forehead was covered with cold sweat; with fixed and staring look, he remained for some moments motionless, mute, and petrified. Then, as if roused with a start from this momentary torpor, and filled with a terrific energy, he seized his wife by the shoulders, lifted her like a feather, placed her on her feet before him, and, leaning over her, exclaimed in a tone of mingled fury and despair: "The children!"

"Mercy! mercy!" gasped Frances, in a faint voice.

"Where are the children?" repeated Dagobert, as he shook with his powerful hands that poor frail body, and added in a voice of thunder: "Will you answer? the children!"

"Kill me, or forgive me, I cannot answer you," replied the unhappy woman, with that inflexible, yet mild obstinacy, peculiar to timid characters, when they act from convictions of doing right.

"Wretch!" cried the soldier; wild with rage, grief, despair, he lifted up his wife as if he would have dashed her upon the floor---but he was too brave a man to commit such cowardly cruelty, and, after that first burst of involuntary fury, he let her go.

Overpowered, Frances sank upon her knees, clasped her hands, and, by the faint motion of her lips, it was clear that she was praying. Dagobert had then a moment of stunning giddiness; his thoughts wandered; what had just happened was so sudden, so incomprehensible that it required some minutes to convince himself that his wife (that angel of goodness, whose life had been one course of heroic self-devotion, and who knew what the daughters of Marshal Simon were to him) should say to him: "Do not ask me about them---I cannot answer you."

The firmest, the strongest mind would have been shaken by this inexplicable fact. But, when the soldier had a little recovered himself, he began to look coolly at the circumstances, and reasoned thus sensibly with himself: "My wife alone can explain to me this inconceivable mystery---I do not mean either to beat or kill her---let us try every possibly method, therefore, to induce her to speak, and above all, let me try to control myself."

He took a chair, handed another to his wife, who was still on her knees, and said to her: "Sit down." With an air of the utmost dejection, Frances obeyed.

"Listen to me, wife," resumed Dagobert in a broken voice, interrupted by involuntary starts, which betrayed the boiling impatience he could hardly restrain. "Understand me---this cannot pass over in this manner---you know. I will never use violence towards you---just now, I gave way to a first moment of hastiness---I am sorry for it. Be sure, I shall not do so again: but, after all, I must know what has become of these children. Their mother entrusted them to my care, and I did not bring them all the way from Siberia, for you to say to me: 'Do not ask me---I cannot tell you what I have done with them.' There is no reason in that. Suppose Marshal Simon were to arrive, and say to me, 'Dagobert, my children?' what answer am I to give him? See, I am calm---judge for yourself---I am calm---but just put yourself in my place, and tell me---what answer am I to give to the marshal? Well---what say you! Will you speak!"

"Alas! my dear---"

"It is of no use crying alas!" said the soldier wiping his forehead, on which the veins were swollen as if they would burst; "what am I to answer to the marshal?"

"Accuse me to him---I will bear it all---I will say---"

"What will you say?"

"That, on going out, you entrusted the two girls to me, and that not finding them on return you asked be about them---and that my answer was, that I could not tell you what had become of them."

"And you think the marshal will be satisfied with such reasons?" cried Dagobert, clinching his fists convulsively upon his knees.

"Unfortunately, I can give no other---either to him or you---no---not if I were to die for it."

Dagobert bounded from his chair at this answer, which was given with hopeless resignation. His patience was exhausted; but determined not to yield to new bursts of anger, or to spend his breath in useless menaces, he abruptly opened one of the windows, and exposed his burning forehead to the cool air. A little calmer, he walked up and down for a few moments, and then returned to seat himself beside his wife. She, with her eyes bathed in tears, fixed her gaze upon the crucifix, thinking that she also had to bear a heavy cross.

Dagobert resumed: "By the manner in which you speak, I see that no accident has happened, which might endanger the health of the children."

"No, oh no! thank God, they are quite well---that is all I can say to you."

"Did they go out alone?"

"I cannot answer you."

"Has any one taken them away?"

"Alas, my dear! why ask me these questions? I cannot answer you."

"Will they come back here?"

"I do not know."

Dagobert started up; his patience was once more exhausted. But, after taking a few turns in the room, he again seated himself as before.

"After all," said he to his wife, "you have no interest to conceal from me what is become of the children. Why refuse to let me know?"

"I cannot do otherwise."

"I think you will change your opinion, when you know something that I am now forced to tell you. Listen to me well!" added Dagobert, in an agitated voice; "if these children are not restored to me before the 13th of February---a day close at hand---I am in the position of a man that would rob the daughters of Marshal Simon---rob them, d'ye understand?" said the soldier, becoming more and more agitated. Then, with an accent of despair which pierced Frances's heart, he continued: "And yet I have done all that an honest man could do for those poor children---you cannot tell what I have had to suffer on the road---my cares, my anxieties---I, a soldier, with the charge of two girls. It was only by strength of heart, by devotion, that I could go through with it---and when, for my reward, I hoped to be able to say to their father: 'Here are your children!---' The soldier paused. To the violence of his first emotions had succeeded a mournful tenderness; he wept.

At sight of the tears rolling slowly down Dagobert's gray moustache, Frances felt for a moment her resolution give way; but, recalling the oath which she had made to her confessor, and reflecting that the eternal salvation of the orphans was at stake, she reproached herself inwardly with this evil temptation, which would no doubt be severely blamed by Abbe Dubois. She answered, therefore, in a trembling voice: "How can they accuse you of robbing these children?"

"Know," resumed Dagobert, drawing his hand across his eyes, "that if these young girls have braved so many dangers, to come hither, all the way from Siberia, it is that great interests are concerned---perhaps an immense fortune---and that, if they are not present on the 13th February---here, in Paris, Rue Saint Francois---all will be lost---and through my fault---for I am responsible for your actions."

"The 13th February? Rue Saint Francois?" cried Frances, looking at her husband with surprise. "Like Gabriel!"

"What do you say about Gabriel?"

"When I took him in (poor deserted child!), he wore a bronze medal about his neck."

"A bronze medal!" cried the soldier, struck with amazement; "a bronze medal with these words, 'At Paris you will be, the 13th of February, 1832, Rue Saint Francois?'"

"Yes---how do you know?"

"Gabriel, too!" said the soldier speaking to himself. Then he added hastily: "Does Gabriel know that this medal was found upon him?"

"I spoke to him of it at some time. He had also about him a portfolio, filled with papers in a foreign tongue. I gave them to Abbe Dubois, my confessor, to look over. He told me afterwards, that they were of little consequence; and, at a later period, when a charitable person named M. Rodin, undertook the education of Gabriel, and to get him into the seminary, Abbe Dubois handed both papers and medal to him. Since then, I have heard nothing of them."

When Frances spoke of her confessor a sudden light flashed across the mind of the soldier, though he was far from suspecting the machinations which had so long been at work with regard to Gabriel and the orphans. But he had a vague feeling that his wife was acting in obedience to some secret influence of the confessional---an influence of which he could not understand the aim or object, but which explained, in part at least, Frances's inconceivable obstinacy with regard to the disappearance of the orphans.

After a moment's reflection, he rose, and said sternly to his wife, looking fixedly at her: "There is a priest at the bottom of all this."

"What do you mean, my dear?"

"You have no interest to conceal these children. You are one of the best of women. You see that I suffer; if you only were concerned, you would have pity upon me."

"My dear---"

"I tell you, all this smacks of the confessional," resumed Dagobert. "You would sacrifice me and these children to your confessor; but take care---I shall find out where he lives---and a thousand thunders! I will go and ask him who is master in my house, he or I---and if he does not answer," added the soldier, with a threatening expression of countenance, "I shall know how to make him speak."

"Gracious heaven!" cried Frances, clasping her hands in horror at these sacrilegious words; "remember he is a priest!"

"A priest, who causes discord, treachery, and misfortune in my house, is as much of a wretch as any other; whom I have a right to call to account for the evil he does to me and mine. Therefore, tell me immediately where are the children---or else, I give you fair warning, I will go and demand them of the confessor. Some crime is here hatching, of which you are an accomplice without knowing it, unhappy woman! Well, I prefer having to do with another than you."

"My dear," said Frances, in a mild, firm voice, "you cannot think to impose by violence on a venerable man, who for twenty years has had the care of my soul. His age alone should be respected."

"No age shall prevent me!"

"Heavens! where are you going? You alarm me!"

"I am going to your church. They must know you there---I will ask for your confessor---and we shall see!"

"I entreat you, my dear," cried Frances, throwing herself in a fright before Dagobert, who was hastening towards the door; "only think, to what you will expose yourself! Heavens! insult a priest? Why, it is one of the reserved cases!"

These last words, which appeared most alarming to the simplicity of Dagobert's wife, did not make any impression upon the soldier. He disengaged himself from her grasp, and was going to rush out bareheaded, so high was his exasperation, when the door opened, and the commissary of police entered, followed by Mother Bunch and a policeman, carrying the bundle which he had taken from the young girl.

"The commissary!" cried Dagobert, who recognized him by his official scarf. "Ah! so much the better---he could not have come at a fitter moment."

CHAPTER LIII.

The examination.

"Mistress Frances Baudoin?" asked the magistrate.

"Yes, sir---it is I," said Frances. Then, perceiving the pale and trembling sewing-girl, who did not dare to come forward, she stretched out her arms to her. "Oh, my poor child!" she exclaimed, bursting into tears; "forgive---forgive us---since it is for our sake you have suffered this humiliation!"

When Dagobert's wife had tenderly embraced the young sempstress, the latter, turning towards the commissary, said to him with an expression of sad and touching dignity: "You see, sir, that I am not a thief."

"Madame," said the magistrate, addressing Frances, "am I to understand that the silver mug, the shawl, the sheets contained in this bundle---"

"Belong to me, sir. It was to render me a service that this dear girl, who is the best and most honest creature in the world, undertook to carry these articles to the pawnbroker's."

"Sir," said the magistrate sternly to the policeman, "you have committed a deplorable error. I shall take care to report you, and see that you are punished. You may go, sir." Then, addressing Mother Bunch, with an air of real regret, he added: "I can only express my sorrow for what has happened. Believe me, I deeply feel for the cruel position in which you have been placed."

"I believe it, sir," said Mother Bunch, "and I thank you." Overcome by so many emotions, she sank upon a chair.

The magistrate was about to retire, when Dagobert, who had been seriously reflecting for some minutes, said to him in a firm voice: "Please to hear me, Sir; I have a deposition to make."

"Speak, Sir."

"What I am about to say is very important; it is to you, in your quality of a magistrate, that I make this declaration."

"And as a magistrate I will hear you, sir."

"I arrived here two days ago, bringing with me from Russia two girls who had been entrusted to me by their mother---the wife of Marshal Simon."

"Of Marshal Simon, Duke de Ligny?" said the commissary, very much surprised.

"Yes, Sir. Well, I left them here, being obliged to get out on pressing business. This morning, during my absence, they disappeared---and I am certain I know the man who has been the cause of it."

"Now, my dear," said Frances, much alarmed.

"Sir," said the magistrate, "your declaration is a very serious one. Disappearance of persons---sequestration, perhaps. But are you quite sure?"

"These young ladies were here an hour ago; I repeat, sir, that during my absence, they have been taken away."

"I do not doubt the sincerity of your declaration, sir; but still it is difficult to explain so strange an abduction. Who tells you that these young girls will not return? Besides, whom do you suspect? One word, before you make your accusation. Remember, it is the magistrate who hears you. On leaving this place, the law will take its course in this affair."

"That is what I wish, Sir; I am responsible for those young ladies to their father. He may arrive at any moment, and I must be prepared to justify myself."

"I understand all these reasons, sir; but still have a care you are not deceived by unfounded suspicions. Your denunciation once made, I may have to act provisionally against the person accused. Now, if you should be under a mistake, the consequences would be very serious for you; and, without going further," said the magistrate, pointing to Mother Bunch, with emotion, "you see what are the results of a false accusation."

"You hear, my dear," cried Frances, terrified at the resolution of Dagobert to accuse Abbe Dubois; "do not say a word more, I entreat you."

But the more the soldier reflected, the more he felt convinced that nothing but the influence of her confessor could have induced Frances to act as she had done; so he resumed, with assurance: "I accuse my wife's confessor of being the principal or the accomplice in the abduction of Marshal Simon's daughters."

Frances uttered a deep groan, and hid her face in her hands; while Mother Bunch, who had drawn nigh, endeavored to console her. The magistrate had listened to Dagobert with extreme astonishment, and he now said to him with some severity: "Pray, sir, do not accuse unjustly a man whose position is in the highest degree respectable---a priest, sir?---yes, a priest? I warned you beforehand to reflect upon what you advanced. All this becomes very serious, and, at your age, any levity in such matters would be unpardonable."

"Bless me, sir!" said Dagobert, with impatience; "at my age, one has common sense. These are the facts. My wife is one of the best and most honorable of human creatures---ask any one in the neighborhood, and they will tell you so---but she is a devotee; and, for twenty years, she has always seen with her confessor's eyes. She adores her son, she loves me also; but she puts the confessor before us both."

"Sir," said the commissary, "these family details---"

"Are indispensable, as you shall see. I go out an hour ago, to look after this poor girl here. When I come back, the young ladies have disappeared. I ask my wife to whom she has entrusted them, and where they are; she falls at my feet weeping, and says: 'Do what you will with me, but do not ask me what has become of the children. I cannot answer you.'"

"Is thus true, madame?" cried the commissary, looking at Frances with surprise.

"Anger, threats, entreaties, had no effect," resumed Dagobert; "to everything she answered as mildly as a saint: 'I can tell you nothing!' Now, sir, I maintain that my wife has no interest to take away these children; she is under the absolute dominion of her confessor; she has acted by his orders and for his purposes; he is the guilty party."

Whilst Dagobert spoke, the commissary looked more and more attentively at Frances, who, supported by the hunchback, continued to weep bitterly. After a moment's reflection, the magistrate advanced towards Dagobert's wife, and said to

her: "Madame, you have heard what your husband has just declared."

"Yes, sir."

"What have you to say in your justification?"

"But, sir," cried Dagobert, "it is not my wife that I accuse---I do not mean that; it is her confessor."

"Sir, you have applied to a magistrate; and the magistrate must act as he thinks best for the discovery of the truth. Once more, madame," he resumed, addressing Frances, "what have you to say in your justification?"

"Alas! nothing, sir."

"Is it true that your husband left these young girls in your charge when he went out?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is it true that, on his return, they were no longer to be found?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is it true that, when he asked you where they were, you told him that you could give him no information on the subject?"

The commissary appeared to wait for Frances' reply with kind of anxious curiosity.

"Yes, sir," said she, with the utmost simplicity, "that was the answer I made my husband."

"What, madame!" said the magistrate, with an air of painful astonishment; "that was your only answer to all the prayers and commands of your husband? What! you refused to give him the least information? It is neither probable nor possible."

"It is the truth, sir."

"Well, but, after all, madame, what have you done with the young ladies that were entrusted to your care?"

"I can tell you nothing about it, sir. If I would not answer my poor husband, I certainly will not answer any one else."

"Well, sir," resumed Dagobert, "was I wrong? An honest, excellent woman like that, who was always full of good sense and affection, to talk in this way---is it natural? I repeat to you, sir that it is the work of her confessor; act against him promptly and decidedly, we shall soon know all, and my poor children will be restored to me."

"Madame," continued the commissary, without being able to repress a certain degree of emotion, "I am about to speak to you very severely. My duty obliges me to do so. This affair becomes so serious and complicated, that I must instantly commence judicial proceedings on the subject. You acknowledge that these young ladies have been left in your charge, and that you cannot produce them. Now, listen to me: if you refuse to give any explanation in the matter, it is you alone that will be accused of their disappearance. I shall be obliged, though with great regret, to take you into custody."

"Me!" cried Frances, with the utmost alarm.

"Her!" exclaimed Dagobert; "never! It is her confessor that I accuse, not my poor wife. Take her into custody, indeed!" He ran towards her, as if he would protect her.

"It is too late, sir," said the commissary. "You have made your charge for the abduction of these two young ladies. According to your wife's own declaration, she alone is compromised up to this point. I must take her before the Public Prosecutor, who will decide what course to pursue."

"And I say, sir," cried Dagobert, in a menacing tone, "that my wife shall not stir from this room."

"Sir," said the commissary coolly, "I can appreciate your feelings; but, in the interest of justice, I would beg you not to oppose a necessary measure---a measure which, moreover, in ten minutes it would be quite impossible for you to prevent."

These words, spoken with calmness, recalled the soldier to himself. "But, sir," said he, "I do not accuse my wife."

"Never mind, my dear---do not think of me!" said Frances, with the angelic resignation of a martyr. "The Lord is still pleased to try me sorely; but I am His unworthy servant, and must gratefully resign myself to His will. Let them arrest me, if they choose; I will say no more in prison than I have said already on the subject of those poor children."

"But, sir," cried Dagobert, "you see that my wife is out of her head. You cannot arrest her."

"There is no charge, proof, or indication against the other person whom you accuse, and whose character should be his protection. If I take your wife, she may perhaps be restored to you after a preliminary examination. I regret," added the commissary, in a tone of pity, "to have to execute such a mission, at the very moment when your son's arrest---"

"What!" cried Dagobert, looking with speechless astonishment at his wife and Mother Bunch; "what does he say? my son?"

"You were not then aware of it? Oh, sir, a thousand pardons!" said the magistrate, with painful emotion. "It is distressing to make you such a communication."

"My son!" repeated Dagobert, pressing his two hands to his forehead. "My son! arrested!"

"For a political offence of no great moment," said the commissary.

"Oh! this is too much. All comes on me at once!" cried the soldier, falling overpowered into a chair, and hiding his face with his hands.

After a touching farewell, during which, in spite of her terror, Frances remained faithful to the vow she had made to the Abbe Dubois---Dagobert, who had refused to give evidence against his wife, was left leaning upon a table, exhausted by contending emotions, and could not help explaining: "Yesterday, I had with me my wife, my son, my two poor orphans---and now---I am alone---alone!"

The moment he pronounced these words, in a despairing tone, a mild sad voice was heard close behind him, saying timidly: "M. Dagobert, I am here; if you will allow me, I will remain and wait upon you."

It was Mother Bunch!

Trusting that the reader's sympathy is with the old soldier thus left desolate, with Agricola in his prison, Adrienne in hers, the madhouse, and Rose and Blanche Simon in theirs, the nunnery; we hasten to assure him (or her, as the case may be), that not only will their future steps be traced, but the dark machinations of the Jesuits, and the thrilling scenes in which new characters will perform their varied parts, pervaded by the watching spirit of the Wandering Jew, will be revealed in Part Second of this work, entitled: *The chastisement*.