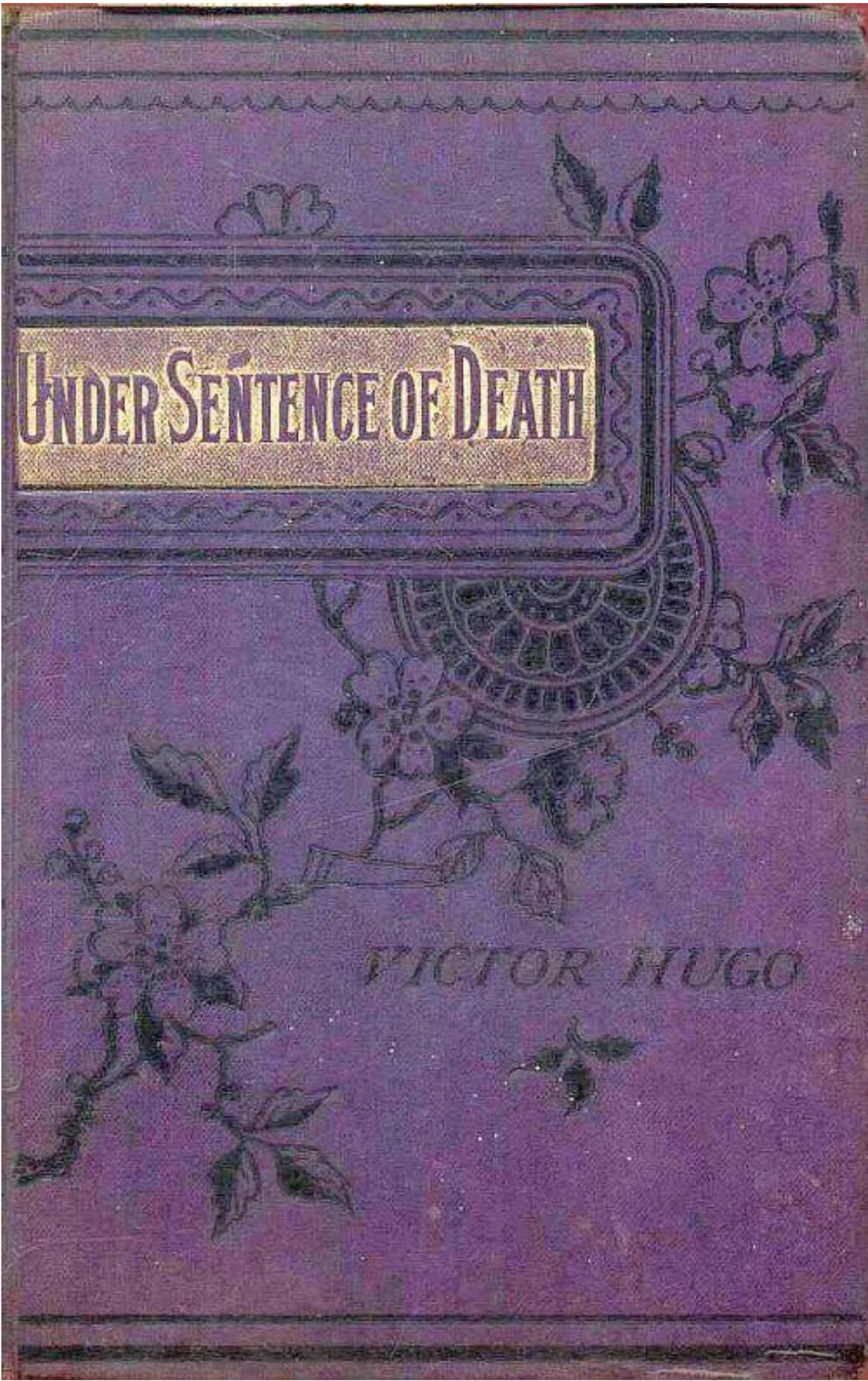
UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH
VICTOR HUGO

UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH;
OR,
A CRIMINAL’S LAST HOURS.
TOGETHER WITH
TOLD UNDER CANVAS,
AND
CLAUDE GUEUX.

BY

VICTOR HUGO,

Author of “Les Misérables,” “By the King’s Command,”

“The Hunchback of Notre Dame,” etc.

TRANSLATED BY SIR GILBERT CAMPBELL, BART.

LONDON:

CROOME & CO.,

12, ST. BRIDE STREET, LUDGATE CIRCUS, E.C.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH; OR, A CRIMINAL’S LAST HOURS	9
TOLD UNDER CANVAS:—BUG-JARGAL	99

UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH.

UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH.

CHAPTER I.

Sentenced to death!

For five whole weeks have I lived with this one thought, always alone with it, always frozen by its ghastly presence, always crushed beneath its overwhelming weight.

At first, years ago, as it seemed, not mere weeks as it really was, I was a man like any other. Every day, every hour, every minute was ruled by its own idea. My intellect, young and fresh, lost itself in a world of fantasy. I amused myself in mapping out a life without order, and without end, weaving into a thousand fantastic patterns the coarse and slender tissue of my existence. There were lovely girls, cardinals' copes, victories won, theatres full of life and light, and then again the young girls, and walks in the twilight under the spreading boughs of the chestnut trees. My imagination always pictured scenes of pleasure. My thoughts were free, and therefore I was free also.

But now I am a prisoner. My body is in irons in a dungeon, and my soul is fettered by an idea—one horrible, murderous, and implacable idea. I have but one thought, one certainty, one deep-rooted conviction, and that is that I am under sentence of death!

Do what I may, that one terrible thought is ever with me, like a spectre by my side, lonely and jealous, driving away every effort that I may make to liberate myself from its presence, face to face with me, and clutching me with its icy hand when I endeavour to turn aside my head, or to close my eyes upon its horrifying existence.

It intrudes itself into all the thoughts by which I vainly strive to forget it; I hear it like a horrible chorus in every word that is addressed to me; it places its face against mine as I glance through the barred windows of my dungeon; it attacks me whilst waking, it haunts my spasmodic efforts at sleep, and appears in my dreams under the form of the axe of the guillotine.

It is still present as I wake up with a start, and say, “It is but a dream.” Well, even before my eyes have had time to open, and to see the whole terrible reality which surrounds me, written on the damp stone of my prison walls, in the pale rays of my lamp, in the coarse fabric of my clothes, in the dark figure of the sentinel whose bayonet gleams through the loophole of my dungeon, it seems as if a sonorous voice murmurs in my ears:

“*Sentenced to death!*”

CHAPTER II.

It was a lovely morning in August.

Three days had passed since my trial had been commenced; three days since my crime had collected every morning a crowd of curious spectators, who lounged on the benches of the court like carrion crows around a carcase; three days since that strange, half visionary procession of judges, of lawyers, of witnesses, and public prosecutors, had passed and repassed before me, sometimes ludicrous, but always murderous, always gloomy and fatal.

During the first two nights restlessness and nervousness had prevented me from sleeping; on the third, weariness and lassitude had conduced to slumber. At midnight I had left the jury still deliberating. Re-conducted to my cell, I had thrown myself on my pallet, and had fallen at once into a deep sleep—the sleep of forgetfulness. It was my first repose for many days. I was still wrapped in this profound slumber when they came and woke me. This time the tramp of the gaoler’s heavy shoes, the clink of his bunch of keys, and the harsh grating of the bolts, were not sufficient to arouse me from my stupor; he had to shake me, and to shout in my ear—“Get up!”

I opened my eyes, and with a bound rose from my couch. At that instant, through the narrow window pierced in the higher portion of the walls of my cell, I saw reflected upon the ceiling of the adjoining passage (the only means by which I could catch a glimpse of the sky), the sun. I love the sunlight.

“It is a fine day,” remarked I to the gaoler.

He remained silent for an instant, as though considering whether it were worth while to reply to me; then, as though making an effort, he answered sullenly—

“Yes, it seems so.”

I remained motionless, my intellectual powers almost dormant, and my eyes fixed upon that soft golden reflection that gilded the ceiling.

“It is a lovely day,” repeated I.

“Yes,” answered the man, “but they are waiting for you.”

These few words, like the web of the spider that intercepts the flight of the fly, threw me roughly back into every-day life. On a sudden I again saw, as in a flash of lightning, the court of justice, the table before the judges, strewn with blood-stained rags, the three ranks of witnesses with their expressionless faces, the two gendarmes at each side of the dock, the black gowns of the bar constantly moving to and fro, the heads of the crowd thronged together in the body of the court, and the fixed gaze of the twelve jurymen, who had watched whilst I had slept.

I rose up, my teeth chattered, my hands trembled so that I could hardly gather together my clothes, my legs bent under me. At the first step that I attempted to take I staggered like a porter whose load is too heavy for him. However, I nerved myself, and followed my gaoler.

The two gendarmes were waiting for me on the threshold of my cell. They handcuffed me again. It was rather a complicated lock, which they had some trouble in closing. I submitted passively—it was a machine put into a machine.

We passed through one of the inner courtyards; the fresh air of the morning gave me strength. I raised my head. The sky was of a bright blue, and the warm sunbeams, broken by the lofty chimneys, traced great angular lines of light on the tall and gloomy walls of the prison. In truth it was very beautiful.

We mounted a spiral staircase, we passed through one corridor, then another, and again through a third; then a low door was opened. A warm breath of air, and the sound of voices met me; it was the murmuring of the crowd in the court. I entered.

On my appearance there was a clang of arms and a confused sound of voices, seats were noisily pushed aside, and as I passed through the long room between the lines of spectators, kept in position by soldiers, it seemed as if I were the centre point upon which every eye was fixed.

At that instant I perceived that my irons had been removed, but when and how I knew not.

Then there was a deep silence. I had reached my appointed place. As the disturbance ceased in the crowd, so my ideas grew clearer. I understood what I had before only vaguely surmised—that the decisive moment had arrived, and that I had been brought into court to hear my sentence.

Explain it as you may, when this idea entered my head I felt no fear. The windows of the court were wide open, the fresh air and the busy hum of the city poured in freely; the court was as neatly arranged as if it was to be the place in which a marriage was to be celebrated; the bright rays of the sun traced here and there the luminous shadows of the casements, sometimes spread upon the floor, sometimes portrayed on the tables, now and then broken by the angles of the walls; whilst the beams themselves, shining through the panes of glass, looked like great bars of golden dust. The judges at the end of the room wore a self-satisfied air—no doubt pleased that their task was so nearly concluded. The face of the President, upon which the reflection of one of the panes of glass shone, was calm and benevolent, whilst one of his younger colleagues played with his cap as he conversed gaily with a young lady in a pink bonnet, for whom he had procured a seat just behind himself. The jury alone looked pale and worn out, evidently from having remained awake during the long watches of the night; some of them were yawning. The expression of their faces gave no indication that they felt the responsibility of the sentence that they were about to pronounce, the only noticeable point amongst these worthy shopkeepers being an evident desire for sleep.

Exactly opposite to me was a tall window wide open. Through it I could hear the laughter of the stall-keepers on the quays, and in a crevice in the window-sill was a pretty little yellow floweret waving to and fro in the wind.

How, in the midst of all these pleasing objects, could any unpleasant idea intrude itself? With the balmy air, and the bright sun playing around me, it was impossible to think of anything else except liberty. Hope shone round me like the sunbeams; and in full confidence I awaited my sentence with the feelings of a man looking forward to life and freedom. And now my counsel arrived; he had evidently been breakfasting luxuriously. We were waiting for him. As he moved into his place, he bent towards me, and whispered—

"I have hope still."

"Indeed," answered I, in the same light tone, with a smile on my lips.

"Yes," returned he; "I do not yet know what line the prosecution will take, but if they cannot prove premeditation, you will only get penal servitude for life."

"How, sir!" exclaimed I, indignantly. "Sooner death a thousand times."

Yes, death. And besides, an inner voice kept repeating to me that I risked nothing by saying this. Who ever heard of sentence of death being pronounced except at midnight, with burning torches, in a damp and gloomy hall, and on a cold and rainy winter's night! But in the month of August, on so beautiful a day, at eight o'clock in the

morning, those benevolent-looking jurymen could not have the heart to find me guilty! And my eyes again fixed themselves on the little yellow floweret in the sun light.

At that moment the President, who had been waiting for my counsel, ordered me to stand up. The guard carried arms. As if by a shock of electricity, all those assembled in the court became animated with life. A mean-looking man, seated at a table beneath the judge's chair, evidently the clerk of the court, broke the silence by reading the verdict of the jury, which they had given in my absence. A cold sweat bedewed all my limbs, and I leaned against the wall to save myself from falling.

"Counsel, have you anything to urge against the sentence of death being pronounced?" asked the President.

I could have said a great deal, but I was unable to frame a consecutive sentence; my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth.

My counsel rose to his feet.

As I followed his line of argument I understood that he was endeavouring to soften the verdict of the jury, and striving to induce the judge to inflict the lighter penalty, the penalty which I had been so wounded at his suggesting. My indignation must have been very strong to pierce through the numerous complications of my faculties.

I endeavoured to repeat in a loud voice the words I had already said, "Sooner death a thousand times!" but all that I could do was to clutch him convulsively by the arm, and cry out in convulsive accents, "No, no!"

The Public Prosecutor argued against my counsel's plea, and I listened to him with an air of stupid satisfaction. Then the judges left the court to consult together, and on their return the President read the sentence.

"Condemned to death," murmured the spectators; and as they hurried me away the crowd pressed around me with a noise like that of a falling house. I walked along passively, stupefied and confused.

A sudden transformation had taken place in me. Until the sentence of death had been actually passed, I felt that I was living and breathing like other men; now I felt that a barrier had been erected between myself and my fellow-creatures. Nothing now wore the same aspect as it had done previously. Those tall, luminous windows, the bright sunlight, the clear sky, the beautiful flowers, all became white and pallid like the colour of a shroud. Those men and women and children who pressed around me had something of the air of spectres.

A carriage painted a dirty black, with bars to the windows, was waiting for me. As I was about to enter it, I paused, and looked around me. “A condemned criminal!” cried the passers-by, as they hurried towards the vehicle. Through the mist that seemed to interpose between the world and myself I could perceive the young girls who followed my every movement with greedy eyes.

“Good!” cried the younger one, clapping her hands. “It will be in six weeks’ time!”

CHAPTER III.

Condemned to death.

Well, why not? have I not read in some book that *all men are condemned to death with a respite the date of which is not fixed*?

How, then, is my position changed?

Since the day that my sentence was pronounced, how many are dead who had arranged for a long and happy life; how many of those, young, free, and in good health, who expected to see my head fall in the Place de Grêve, have gone before me; and how many more are there, who breathe the free air, and go where they please, who will also precede me to the next world? And why should I long for life? In fact, the prison with its gloomy light, and the black bread which constitutes the prison fare; the thin soup drank from a galley-slave’s cup; to be constantly insulted—I, who am refined by education, to be abused by gaolers and by the convict guards; never to see a human being who considers me worthy of a kind word—these are the sole pleasures of life which the executioner will take from me.

And yet it is very terrible!

CHAPTER IV.

The black carriage has brought me here to the hideous prison of the Bicêtre.

Seen from afar, this building has a certain majestic air about it. It is situated at the foot of a hill, and covers a large extent of ground. Looked at from a distance, it retains some of its ancient splendour as a king’s palace, but as you come nearer to it the building changes into a mere commonplace edifice. The broken turrets wound the eye. There is an air of shame and degradation about it; it seems as if the walls were struck with the leprosy of crime.

No windows, no glass in the frames, but massive crossed bars of iron, through which can occasionally be seen the pallid countenance of a convict or of a madman. Such is the appearance of the prison when seen closely.

CHAPTER V.

Scarcely had I arrived when I was seized in its iron embraces. Every precaution was multiplied; no knife, no fork was permitted for my meals; the strait-waistcoat, a kind of coarse canvas sack, imprisoned my arms. They were responsible for my life.

I was to be with them for six or seven weeks, and it was their duty to deliver me safe and sound to the executioner.

For the first few days they treated me with a tenderness that had something revolting in it. The kindnesses of a turnkey remind you of the scaffold. But to my delight, after a few days had passed away, custom resumed its sway, and they treated me with the same brutality that they did the other prisoners, and ceased those unusual demonstrations of courtesy which reminded me every moment of the executioner.

My youth, my good behaviour, my attention to the gaol chaplain, and especially a word or two of Latin which I addressed to the porter, who did not understand them, by the way, gave me the privilege of outdoor exercise every week with the other prisoners, and released me from the terrible strait-waistcoat which paralyzed my every movement. After a great deal of hesitation I was permitted the use of pen, ink, and paper, as well as a lamp in the evenings. Every Sunday, after hearing mass, I was permitted to go into the courtyard during the hour devoted to exercise. There I had long conversations with the prisoners. Why not? They are good enough fellows, these poor wretches. They told me what crimes they had committed. At first I was horrified, but after a time I found out that they were given to boasting. They taught me to talk slang, *patter-flash*, as they called it. Thieves' slang is a perfect language grafted on to our expressions of every-day life, a species of hideous excrescence like some loathsome worm. When you first hear this language spoken you instinctively experience a feeling of repulsion as when you see a bundle of foul and dirty rags shaken before you.

But these men pitied me, and they were the only ones who did so. As for the warders, the turnkeys, and the gaolers, I scorned their pity, for they would talk and laugh about me to my very face as though I were some inanimate object.

CHAPTER VI.

I said to myself, "Since I have been furnished with the means of writing, why should I not use them? But what shall I write?" Shut up between four cold and naked stone walls, with no liberty for my feet, no vista for my eyes to range, my sole occupation to follow the slow movement of the white square of light, which, falling through the wicket in my cell door, seemed chiselled in the dark wall of my prison, and, as I said

before, alone with one remembrance, the remembrance of a crime and its punishment, of murder, and of death—what have I to say, I who have no longer part and parcel in this world? And how will this shattered brain enable me to write anything worth reading?

But why not? Even though all around me is sombre and out of gear, is there not in me a tempest, a struggle, a tragedy? This fixed idea that holds me in its power, does it not present itself to me each hour in a different shape, in a novel form, and each one more hideous and blood-stained than the one that preceded it? Why should I not endeavour to speak to myself of all the terrible and hitherto unknown sensation that I experience in the desolate position in which I am. Assuredly there is ample material, and though my days are numbered, yet there is enough of anguish, terror, and torture in these last hours of mine to wear out the pen and to empty the inkstand.

Besides, the only method in which I can allay my torments is to observe them closely. The mere fact of describing them will give me repose.

And then what I write will not be without its use. This record of my sufferings hour by hour, and minute by minute, punishment heaped on punishment, if I have the strength to carry it up to that point where it will be *physically* impossible for me to continue it further—this history, unfinished as it necessarily must be, but as complete as I can make it, will it not be well worthy of perusal? Will not this vivid reproduction of agonizing thoughts in that ever-increasing torrent of grief, in that intellectual dissection of the last hours of a man sentenced to death—will it not, I say, contain a striking lesson for those who have condemned him? Perhaps it will make them think twice ere they again consign the living, breathing head of a man to the hands of the executioner. Perhaps, unhappy wretches, they have never considered the slow torture which follows a condemnation to death.

Has the idea never struck them that in the man whom they are going to suppress there is a reasoning intelligence, an intelligence that had counted on a prolonged life, a soul which was not prepared for death? No; they only see in all this the vertical fall of the triangular blade, and doubtless consider that for the condemned man there is neither past nor future.

But my pages will undeceive them. Some day, perhaps, they will be printed, and those who read them will pause for a few moments in this record of a soul's sufferings which they had up to that time never even suspected. They were proud to be able to kill the body with the smallest amount of physical pain. But what good is that? What is physical, when compared with mental pain? A day will come when, perhaps, these memoirs, the last impressions of an unhappy man, may have contributed——Unless,

indeed, after my death the wind may toss about the courtyard a few pieces of paper stained with mud, or else, pasted in a broken pane of glass in the porter's lodge, they may serve to exclude the rain.

CHAPTER VII.

And suppose what I have written may be one day of use to others, and may cause the judge to hesitate to doom a fellow-creature to death, that it may save other unfortunates, innocent or guilty, from the agonies to which I am condemned—what good will all this do to me? When my head has been cut off, what does it matter whether they cut off those of others or not? Can I really have been troubling myself about such follies? What good will it do me to abolish the scaffold after I have suffered upon it? What! am I to lose the sun, the spring, the fields full of flowers, the birds which wake up and chirp in the early morning, the clouds, nature, liberty, and life?

Ah! it is myself that I must save. Is it really true that this cannot be done? that I may be taken out and killed to-morrow, to-day, even, for all that I know? The thought is enough to make me dash out my brains against the wall of my cell.

CHAPTER VIII.

Let me count how much time remains to me.

Three days of delay after sentence has been given, to enable me to appeal in.

Eight days of forgetfulness in the office of the court, after which the statement of the case will be sent to the Minister.

Fifteen days waiting at the Minister's, who does not even know that the affair is before him, and yet he is supposed to send it up to the Court of Appeal after examining it. Then it has to be classed, numbered, and registered; for there is plenty of work for the guillotine, and each one must await his turn.

Fifteen days of watching and waiting.

At last the Court of Appeal assembles—generally upon a Thursday—and rejects twenty appeals in a lump, and sends all the papers to the Minister, who sends them to the Public Prosecutor, who communicates with the executioner. Three days.

On the morning of the fourth day the assistant to the Public Prosecutor says to himself, as he ties his neckcloth, "It is time that this affair was finished." Then, if the assistant to the clerk of the court has not a few friends to breakfast who prevent him from attending to his duties, the order for the execution is noted, dated, registered, and sent out, and the next morning, at the break of day, a scaffold is erected in the

Place de Grêve, and all through the city are heard the hoarse voices of the newsvendors calling out a full, true, and particular account of the execution. And all this in six weeks! That young girl was right.

So that five weeks, perhaps six, remain; but I dare not rely upon this, and I am in a cell in the Bicêtre, and it seems to me that Thursday has passed three days ago.

CHAPTER IX.

I am going to make my will; but no, it is useless. I am condemned to pay the costs of the trial, and all that I possess will hardly be sufficient to meet the expenses.

The guillotine is an expensive luxury.

I have a mother, a wife, and a child.

A little girl three years of age, gentle, rosy, and delicate, with large black eyes and long chestnut hair.

She was just two years and a month old when I last saw her.

Thus, after my death there will be three women without son, husband, or father; three orphans of different kinds, three widows made by the hand of the law.

I allow that I am justly punished; but what have *these* innocent creatures done? No; these are dishonoured and ruined for no fault of their own: and this is justice!

It is not the thought of my poor old mother that disquiets me; she is sixty-four; the blow will kill her at once, or even if she lingers on for a little while, as long as she has a little fire to warm her feet at she will not complain.

Nor am I uneasy regarding my wife; she is an invalid, and her mind is not very strong; she will die too.

Unless, indeed, she goes mad. They say that mad people live a long while; but if her intellect goes she will not suffer: she will sleep, she is as good as dead.

But my daughter, my child, my poor little Marie, who laughs and plays, who even now, perhaps, is singing and thinking of nothing—that is what cuts me to the heart.

CHAPTER X.

This is what my cell is like:

Eight feet square, four walls of hewn stone standing at right angles upon a flooring of flagstones raised a few inches above the exterior corridor.

On the right-hand side of the door as you enter is a kind of recess, a sort of burlesque alcove. A heap of straw has been thrown into it, on which the prisoner is expected to repose and sleep, clad in his canvas trousers and linen frock, winter and summer.

Above my head, instead of the skies of heaven, is an arched roof, from which hang huge spiders' webs like masses of rags.

No window, not even a loophole, and a door the woodwork of which is hidden by its massive iron plates. No window? I am in error. Towards the top of the door is an opening nine inches square, with a grating over it which the gaoler can close at night.

Outside is a long passage, lighted and ventilated by narrow loopholes high up in the wall, and divided into stone compartments which communicate with each other by a series of low doors. Each of these compartments serves as a kind of ante-chamber to a cell similar to mine. It is in these dungeons that convicts who have infringed the gaol regulations are confined. The three first cells are reserved for criminals condemned to death, as they are nearer to the prison, and therefore more convenient for the officials.

These dungeons are the remains of the ancient castle of Bicêtre, built by the Cardinal of Winchester, the same priest who ordered Jeanne d'Arc to be burnt alive. I heard the gaoler telling this to some anxious sightseers who came and stared at me in my dungeon as if I was a beast in a menagerie. I should add that a sentinel is always on guard at the door of the cell, and that whenever my gaze falls upon the opening in the door it meets two widely opened eyes fixed intently upon mine. I believe that it is supposed that there is both air and light in the stone box in which I am confined.

CHAPTER XI.

As daylight has not yet come, what shall I do with the hours of the night? An idea has struck me: I have risen, and moved my lamp along the four walls of my cell. They are covered with writing, drawings, designs, and strange figures of all kinds. It seems as if each condemned prisoner had resolved here at least to leave some remembrance of himself, either in chalk or charcoal, in white or black letters, sometimes deeply graven in the stone, at other times rusty-looking, as though traced in blood. If my mind was more at ease I should take great interest in this strange book which opens its leaves before my eyes on every stone of my dungeon. I should have liked to have collected together all these fragments of thought scattered about on the walls, to have picked out the inscriptions of each man, and to have given sense and life to all these mutilated sentences, to these dismembered phrases, to these half-finished words, heads without bodies, like those who had carved them on the walls.

A little above my bed were two bleeding hearts pierced with an arrow, and above it was *Love for Life*: the unhappy man had not had his wish gratified. By the side of this was a sort of three-cornered hat, and underneath this a small figure clumsily executed, with these words, *Long live the Emperor, 1824*.

Again, I noticed the burning hearts with this motto: *I love Mathias Dunvin-Jacques*. On the opposite wall was the word *Papavoine*, the P covered with elaborate arabesques and flourishes; next to it were a few verses of an obscene song. A cap of Liberty deeply cut into the stone, with the name, *Bovies—The Republic*. This was the name of one of the non-commissioned officers of La Rochelle. Poor young fellow! How hideous are the pretended necessities of political intrigue, to risk for an idea, for a dream, that terrible reality, the guillotine, and I, who pity myself, miserable wretch, I have committed a real crime, and have spilt blood!

I did not continue my researches, for drawn in white, in a dark corner of the room, I saw an appalling design; it was a representation of that scaffold which may even now be in course of erection for me. My lamp almost fell from my hands.

CHAPTER XII.

I turned away and sat down on my bed, my face buried in my hands, and my elbows resting on my knees; my childish fright had passed away, and a strange desire had taken possession of me to continue my researches.

By the side of the name of Papavoine I tore away a large spider's web covered with dust, and stretched across the angle of the wall; under it were four names, easy to decipher: Dantun, 1815; Poulain, 1818; Jean Martin, 1821; Castaing, 1823. As I read these names a flood of horrible recollections pounced upon me: Dantun had cut up his brother, and, going about Paris by night, had thrown his head into a well, and the limbs and trunk into different portions of the sewers. Poulain had murdered his wife. Jean Martin had fired a pistol at his father as the old man was looking out of a window. Castaing was a doctor, who had poisoned his friend, and whilst attending to him professionally gave him fresh doses of poison. Whilst Papavoine was a horrible maniac, who slew little children with knife-thrusts in the head. "These," thought I, as a feverish shiver shook me—"these have been the denizens of this cell before me; it is here, on this very floor, that they, men of blood and slaughter, have thought out their last thoughts; it is in this narrow space that they have paced up and down like savage beasts." They succeeded each other with great rapidity; this cell does not remain empty long. They have left the nest warm, and it is to me that they have left it. I, in my turn, shall join them in the cemetery of Clamont, where the grass grows so luxuriantly and well. I am not a visionary, nor am I superstitious; it is probable that these gloomy

thoughts produced a slight attack of fever, for whilst I was thus musing it seemed to me as if these fatal names were written in fire on the black wall; I heard a buzzing in my ears, which grew quicker and quicker; a red light shone in my eyes, and then it seemed as if the cell was filled with men, strange men, who carried their heads in their left hands, and carried them by the mouth, because the hair was cut off. All shook their fists at me except the parricide.

I shut my eyes in horror, and saw it all the more distinctly.

Dream, vision, or reality, I should have gone mad if something had not aroused me from my paroxysm; I was in the act of falling backwards, when I felt a cold body with hairy feet walk over my foot. It was the spider whose web I had destroyed, and who was escaping. This brought me to my senses, but oh, what terrible apparitions!

No, no! it was imagination engendered by the working of my brain. The dead are dead, these especially, and fastened down securely in their tombs. That is a prison from which there is no escape. How could I be so frightened? The gates of the tomb do not open on this side.

CHAPTER XIII.

I have witnessed a horrible scene to-day.

It was bright daylight, and the prison was full of unaccustomed noise. I could hear the opening and shutting of heavy doors, the creaking of bolts and padlocks, the jingling of the keys that the warders carried at their waists, the shaking of the stairs under the tread of heavy feet, and voices calling to and answering each other, down the long corridors. My neighbours in the cells, the refractory convicts, were gayer than usual. All through Bicêtre rang the sound of mirth, and dance, and song.

I alone in the midst of all this hubbub was dumb. Not understanding the cause, I listened attentively.

One of the gaolers passed my door.

I ventured to ask him if there was a holiday in the prison.

“You may call it one if you like,” replied he. “To-day they are putting irons on the convicts, who will start for Toulon to-morrow. Would you like to see it done?”

After the hermit’s life that I had led such an offer was too good to be refused, odious as the spectacle might be, and I accepted his offer gratefully.

The warder took the usual precautions to ensure my safety, and then he conducted me to an empty cell, without an atom of furniture in it, but with a window, a real window, from which, though strongly barred, a glimpse of the sky could be caught.

“Here you are,” said he; “from this you can both see and hear; you have your private box just like a king!”

Then he left me alone, noisily securing the door with bolts, bars, and padlocks.

The window looked into a large square courtyard, round the four sides of which was a tall stone building six storeys in height. Nothing could look more miserable and naked than these buildings, pierced with an immense number of windows, all of them heavily barred. Every window was filled with a crowd of heads, piled one upon another like the stones that composed the walls, and framed as it were by the interlacing of the iron bars. These were the prisoners, spectators of a ceremony in which one day they would play the principal part. You could compare them to nothing but the souls in purgatory gazing through the windows that looked on to the infernal regions.

All gazed in silence on to the court, which was totally unoccupied.

In one of the buildings that surrounded the courtyard was an opening closed by a gate of iron bars; this opened into a smaller courtyard, surrounded, like the other, by a series of gloomy-looking buildings. All round the larger court were stone benches, built against the wall, and in the centre was a tall iron lamp-post.

Twelve o’clock struck; the gate was hurriedly thrown open. A waggon, escorted by men somewhat resembling soldiers, but dirty and untidy-looking, lumbered heavily into the yard with a loud clanking of iron. The men were the guardians of the galleys, and the waggon contained the chain.

At this moment, as if the noise had galvanized the prison into life, the spectators at the windows, who had up to this time preserved a strict silence, burst into cries of joy, into songs, oaths, and insults, mingled with peals of strident laughter heart-rending to hear. You would have imagined that it was an assembly of demons—on each face appeared a fiendish grin, fists were shaken through the window bars, every throat gave utterance to a yell, every eye flashed fire.

However, the escort proceeded to work at once. Amongst them I noticed several persons whom curiosity had led to the spot, and who now appeared to half repent of their temerity. One of the guards clambered on to the waggon and threw down to his comrades the chains, the travelling collars, and huge bundles of canvas trousers. Then each man proceeded to perform his allotted task; some laid out the chains

against the walls, others arranged the shirts and trousers in heaps, whilst the more sagacious amongst them, under the guidance of their chief, a short, square-built man, carefully tested the iron collars to see that there were no flaws in them. All this was done in the midst of a flood of ribaldry from the prisoners, whose voices were occasionally drowned by the loud laughter of the convicts for whom these preparations were being made.

When these preliminaries were completed, a gentleman in a laced uniform, who was termed the inspector, gave an order to the governor of the prison; and a moment afterwards, through two or three low doors, rushed a yelling crowd of hideous and disgusting-looking men—these were the convicts.

Then the excitement of the lookers-on rose to its highest pitch. Those amongst the convicts who had earned a high criminal reputation were received with loud applause, which they acknowledged with a kind of haughty modesty. Many of the convicts carried in their hands hats which they had made from the straw supplied to them for bedding. One young man, or rather a boy, for he could not have been more than seventeen years of age, was much applauded. He had made himself an entire garment of straw, and came bounding into the yard, turning a succession of somersaults. He was as lithe and active as a serpent, and had been condemned to the galleys for theft. On his appearance there was a frenzied clapping of hands, and loud shouts of admiration. It was a frightful thing to witness this interchange of compliments between the veritable convicts and the aspirants to that distinction. As they came into the yard they were pushed and hustled between a double rank of the guards of the galleys in anticipation of the medical inspection. Then were the last efforts made to avoid the dreaded galleys, some pretending that they were lame, others that their eyesight was defective, and a hundred other excuses. But in most cases they were found to be in quite good enough health for the galleys, and they resigned themselves at once to their fate with utter carelessness, appearing entirely to forget the pretended ailments of a lifetime. The iron barred gate of the little court was now opened, and one of the guards commenced calling the roll, which was arranged alphabetically; and each convict, after answering his name, took up a position by the side of the comrade whom the chance of the initial letter had designated as his companion. Thus, if a convict had a friend, the odds were that he would be separated from him and linked to an unknown—another addition to their punishment.

When about thirty had been collected, the gate was again closed. One of the guards, forming them into line with blows of his stick, threw before each one a coarse shirt and a pair of trousers, and at the word of command they began to undress. And now a fresh and unexpected torture began. Up to this time the weather had been very fine;

and if the October breeze was a little cold, still the rays of the sun were very grateful. But scarcely had the convicts removed their prison rags, and whilst the suspicious guards were examining them as they stood bare and naked before them, than the sky clouded over, and a heavy shower descended, flooding the courtyard with torrents of rain.

In the twinkling of an eye every one except the guards and the galley-slaves had left the courtyard, and had sought shelter under the gateways.

The rain still continued to fall, and nothing was to be seen but the naked bodies of the convicts glistening in the wet. A gloomy silence had succeeded their boastful fanfaronades. They shivered, and their teeth chattered; their emaciated legs and knotty knees trembled beneath the weight of their bodies, and it was pitiable to see them wrap the sodden shirts around their limbs, which were blue with the cold. Shirts and trousers were alike dripping with the rain; nudity would have been preferable to such a covering. One convict only, an elderly man, preserved his gaiety, complaining that “this was not in the programme.” He endeavoured to dry his soaking shirt, and shook his fist at the clouds.

When they had put on their travelling garb, they were collected in parties of twenty or thirty into the corners of the yard where the chains had been deposited. The chains were long and massive, and at every two feet were two shorter transverse ones terminating in a collar, which was rivetted on the neck of the galley-slave during his journey to his destination. When these chains were spread along the ground they resembled the backbone of some huge fish.

The convicts were now ordered to sit down on the muddy pavement; the collars were fitted to their necks; then the blacksmiths, carrying a portable anvil, fixed the rivets with heavy blows of a sledge-hammer.

This was a terrible moment; even the boldest amongst the convicts changed colour.

Every blow of the hammer as it fell on the anvil made the chin of the patient quiver; the slightest movement either forwards or backwards would have crushed the skull like a nutshell.

When this operation had been concluded, an appearance of gloom came over them; nothing could now be heard except the clanking of the chain, and at intervals a cry, and the sound of a blow, as the canes of the guards fell heavily upon the refractory convicts. Some of them wept, some trembled and bit their lips. I gazed with terror upon all these sinister faces in their iron frames.

So there were three acts in this lugubrious drama—the visit of the doctors, the visit of the gaolers, and the fixing of the chain. Suddenly a ray of sunlight appeared. From the conduct of the convicts it would have seemed that this gleam of light had set every brain on fire. They sprang to their feet with an unanimous effort. The five chains of criminals joined hands, and whirled in a mad dance round the lamp-post in the centre of the court, until the brain grew dizzy with watching their evolutions. They shouted out a song of the galleys, a slang romance set sometimes to a plaintive air, and at others to a gay and rollicking tune. Loud cries were heard, the panting of overtasked chests, and every now and then mysterious words were interchanged. The clanking of the chains served as the orchestra for the song, in itself more discordant than its accompaniment. Should I have desired to see a representation of the revels of demons, I could not have selected a better or a worse example.

Large buckets were then brought into the courtyard. The guards broke up the convicts' dance with blows and curses, and forced them to the buckets, in which I could see a few herbs swimming in some dirty smoking liquid.

Then they sat down and ate.

After having finished their meat they threw what remained upon the pavement, and recommenced their songs and dances. It is the custom to relax discipline a little during the day and the night upon which the chain is fastened on.

I was gazing upon this strange spectacle with so greedy a curiosity, and was watching its every phase with such attention, that I absolutely forgot myself. A deep feeling of pity crept over me, and their hollow laughter made me feel inclined to weep.

All of a sudden, in the midst of the sad reverie into which I had fallen, I saw the ring of dancers stop short, become perfectly silent, and then I noticed that every eye was fixed upon the window at which I was standing.

“The condemned man! the condemned man!” exclaimed they. Every finger was pointed at me, and the shouts of diabolical laughter were redoubled.

I was paralyzed. I could not understand how they could know me, how they could have recognized me.

“Good-day! good-day!” they cried, in piercing accents.

One of the youngest of the band, condemned to the galleys for life, gazed upon me with an envious look, and shouted, “Ah, you are in luck, for you will be sliced! Farewell, comrade.”

I hardly know how I felt. It was a fact, I was their comrade, for the Place de Grêve is the sister of the Galleys of Toulon; I even occupied a higher position than they did, and they paid me homage. I shuddered at the idea.

Their comrade—yes, and a few days later I should in my turn furnish a spectacle for men of their stamp.

I had remained spell-bound at the window, motionless, and unable to collect myself; but when I saw the five chains rushing towards me with expressions of fiendish cordiality, when I heard the clash of their chains and the tramp of their footsteps close to the wall, it seemed to me as if a crowd of demons were about to storm my wretched cell. I uttered a loud cry, and cast myself with violence against the door; but there was no means of escape, for it was securely bolted without. I pressed against it, I cried out in mingled terror and rage. I seemed to hear the hated voices of the convicts drawing nearer and nearer; I fancied that I could perceive their hideous heads appear above the window-sill. I uttered another cry of terror, and I fainted.

CHAPTER XIV.

When I came to myself it was night; I was lying on a truckle-bed. By the light of a lamp which hung from the ceiling I could see other beds placed in lines. Then I understood that I had been brought to the hospital.

For a few seconds I remained still; I was awake, but without consciousness or recollection. At any other time this hospital bed in the midst of a prison would have made me recoil with disgust, but I was no longer the same man. The sheets were coarse to the touch, and of a grey hue; the counterpane was thin and ragged; you could feel the palliasse through the mattress. But what did that matter? My limbs could stretch themselves freely between the coarse sheets, and the bed-clothes, thin as they were, drove away that terrible cold which seemed to freeze my very marrow. After a short interval I went to sleep again.

A great disturbance awoke me. It was broad daylight. The noise came from the outside. My bed was next to a window; I raised myself up to see what was the cause of the noise.

The window looked upon the main courtyard of the Bicêtre. It was crowded; a body of pensioners had great difficulty in keeping open a narrow path through the centre of the populace. Between a double rank of soldiers five long waggons, filled with men, jolted heavily along. The convicts were starting for their destination.

The vehicles had no covering. Each chain occupied one; the convicts were seated on a bench running down the centre, back to back, with the chains between them, and at the end stood a soldier with a loaded musket. You could hear their chains clank with every jolt, and their legs shake as they dangled over the side of the cart.

A fine searching rain was falling, chilling the air, and making their thin clothes cling to their limbs; their long beards and short hair were saturated with moisture, their faces were violet with the cold; I could see them shiver, and hear their teeth chatter with cold, and impotent rage.

Once riveted to the chain, a man ceased to exist as a separate individual. He must relinquish his intelligence, for the collar of the galleys condemns him to a living death, and, like a mere animal, he can only partially satisfy his appetite at given hours. Motionless, the majority of them half-naked, with bare heads and dangling feet, they commenced their journey of twenty-five days' duration. Crowded together in the carts, garments of the same texture serving them as a defence against the scorching sun of July and the cold rains of November, it almost seemed as if man were endeavouring to press the elements into the post of executioner. The five waggons, escorted by cavalry and infantry, passed in turn through the main gateway of the Bicêtre; a sixth followed, in which were heaped together small boilers, copper vessels, and spare chains. A few of the guards who had lingered in the canteens hurried to gain their posts; the crowd melted away, and all the ghastly sight vanished like a dream of the night.

The sound of the wheels and the tramp of the horses grew fainter and fainter on the paved road that leads to Fontainebleau; the cracking of whips, the clink of chains, and the shouts of the populace as they wished the galley-slaves a prosperous journey, all died away. And for them this was only the beginning.

What was it my counsel said to me?

The galleys!

Ah, yes, death a thousand times sooner than that. Annihilation rather than hell. Sooner give my head to the knife of Guillotine, than my neck to the galley-slave's collar. The galleys, just Heaven, never!

CHAPTER XV.

Unfortunately I was not ill; the next day I had to leave the hospital, and once more I was relegated to my cell. Not ill! In point of fact, I am young, vigorous, and healthy. The blood flows freely in my veins, my limbs are under perfect control, I am strong in body

and in intellect, made for a long life, and yet I am suffering from a mental disease, a disease the work of men's hands.

Since I left the hospital, an idea has crept into my brain—an idea which, when I think of it, almost drives me mad. It is, that if they had left me there I might have managed to escape. The doctors and the Sisters of Mercy seemed to take a great interest in me; I was so young for such a terrible death. One would have said that they pitied me, so eager were they to crowd round my bed. Bah! it was mere curiosity; and though these people would cure you of a fever, yet they would not cure a judicial sentence of death. And yet how easy it would be!—just an open door; and what harm would it do them? No more chance for me now; my appeal will be rejected, for everything has been done according to rule: the witnesses have testified correctly, the counsel have pleaded well, and the judges have done their part as they should. I cannot calculate on anything, unless——No! it is madness, there is no more ground for hope. An appeal is a cord by which you are suspended over an abyss; you can hear it cracking a long time before it breaks and lets you fall. It is as though the knife of the guillotine took six weeks in which to fall.

If I could only gain my pardon—gain my pardon; but how, and for what reason? It is impossible for them to pardon me. All say that an example must be made.

I have but three steps to take—Bicêtre, the Conciergerie, and the Grêve.

CHAPTER XVI.

Oh, if I could only escape, how I would fly across the fields! Ah, but I must not run—that would draw attention and make people suspicious. On the contrary, I must walk slowly, with my head up, humming a tune. I ought to have an old handkerchief round the lower part of my face, a blue one with a pattern in red on it. It is a capital disguise, all the market-gardeners in the suburbs wear them. I know of a little clump of trees near Arcueil, by the side of a marsh. Once when I was at school I came there with my playmates to fish for frogs; I would hide myself there until night.

When it grew dark I would recommence my journey. I would go to Vincennes; no, the river is in the way, I will go to Arpajon. Perhaps it would be better to go by St. Germain, and get to Hâvre,—from thence I could embark for England. Well, I come to Longjumeau; a policeman passes me, he asks for my passport——I am lost!

Ah! hapless dreamer, first break through the three-foot wall that surrounds you. Death! Death!

I recollect when I was quite a child they brought me to Bicêtre to see the great wall, and the mad people.

CHAPTER XVII.

Whilst I am writing this my lamp has grown dim; the day is breaking, and the chapel clock has just struck six.

What does this mean—the warder has come into my cell, he has taken off his cap, and, softening his rough voice as best he can, has asked me what I should like for my breakfast?

A shiver runs through me.

Is it to be done to-day?

CHAPTER XVIII.

Yes, it is for to-day. The governor of the prison has been here, and has expressed his desire to serve me; has asked if I have any complaints to make about him or his subordinates; has inquired with much interest after my health, and how I have passed the night, and on leaving me called me *Sir*! It *is* for to-day.

CHAPTER XIX.

This gaoler does not believe that I can have any fault to find with him or with his subordinates. He is right; it would be ungracious of me to complain—they have but done their duty. They have guarded me well, and they have been courteous on my arrival, and on my departure. Ought I not to be satisfied? This good gaoler, with his calm smile and soothing words, with an eye that flatters whilst it watches, with his large and powerful hands, he is the incarnation of a prison—a Bicêtre transformed into a man. Everything around me reminds me of a prison; I recognize it in everything, in the human figure, as in the iron bars and bolts: this wall is a prison in stone, this door a prison in wood, these turnkeys are prisoners in flesh and bone. The prison is a kind of horrible being complete and indivisible, half building and half man. I am its victim; it grasps me, it wraps me in its folds, it shuts me up in its granite walls, it padlocks me with its iron bolts, and it watches me through the eyes of its gaolers.

Ah! unhappy wretch that I am, what is to become of me, *what are they going to do with me*?

CHAPTER XX.

I am calm again. All is over, and well for me that it is so. I am relieved from the terrible weight of suspense by the visit of the governor. For I confess it freely, I had hoped—now I hope no longer.

This is what has taken place.

Just as half-past six struck—no, it was a quarter to seven—the door of my cell opened, and an old white-haired man appeared on the threshold; he threw open his great-coat, and I saw from his gown that he was a priest.

This priest was not the chaplain of the prison, and this looked bad for me.

He sat down opposite to me, shook his head, and raised his eyes to heaven—that is, towards the roof of my cell. I understood what he meant.

“My son,” said he, “are you prepared?”

In a feeble voice I replied, “I am not prepared, but I am ready.”

But my sight grew dim; a cold sweat burst out upon me. I felt my temples swell, and there was a loud murmuring sound in my ears.

Whilst I swayed backwards and forwards in my chair like a man asleep, the good old man was talking—at least I suppose that he was, for I could see his lips move, his hands wave, and his eyes shine.

The door opened for the second time; the sound of the withdrawal of the bolts roused me from my stupor. This time it was the governor accompanied by a gentleman in a black coat, who bowed to me on entering; he held a roll of papers in his hands, and had about him that false air of sorrow which we see amongst undertakers.

“Sir,” said he, “I am one of the ushers of the Courts of Justice: I have the honour to be the bearer of a message from the Public Prosecutor.”

The first shock was over; all my presence of mind came back to me.

“The Public Prosecutor demands my head at once—is it not so?” asked I. “What an honour for me that he should write to me! I trust that my death will give him great pleasure, for he worked with too much ardour for it to have been a matter of indifference to him.” Then in a calmer tone I added, “Read, sir.”

Then he began a long rigmarole, intoning the last word in each sentence. This was the rejection of my appeal.

“The sentence will be executed on the Place de Grêve,” added he, as he finished, without raising his eyes to mine. “We leave at half-past seven precisely for the Conciergerie, my good sir; will you have the extreme kindness to follow me?”

For the last few moments I had not been listening to him; the governor was talking to the priest, the usher’s eyes were on his papers, whilst mine were fixed upon the door which had remained half opened. Ah! wretch that I am, there were four soldiers in the passage.

The usher repeated his question, this time looking full at me.

“Whenever you wish,” answered I. “Suit your own convenience.”

He bowed, and replied that he would call for me in half an hour! Then they went out, and left me alone.

Oh for some means of escape! O heavens, is there no hope? I must escape, I must on the spot—by the doors, by the windows, by the roof, even if I leave remnants of my flesh on the rafters and the joists.

Oh! horror, devils, curses, with good tools it would take me a month to pierce these walls, and I have not even a nail to work with or an hour to spare.

CHAPTER XXI.
FROM THE CONCIERGERIE.

Here I am *transferred*, as the order words it. But the journey is worth the trouble of relating. Half-past seven had just struck, as the usher again presented himself at the door of my cell.

“Sir,” said he, “I am waiting for you.”

Me—yes, and thousands of others.

I got up, and made a step towards him; it seemed as if I could not take a second, so heavy was my head, and so weak my legs. However, I made an effort, and advanced tolerably firmly. Before leaving I gave a farewell glance at the cell. I had grown to love it; besides, I left it empty, and open, which gave it a novel aspect. It will not long be so; another tenant is expected this evening—so the turnkey says, for the Court is now sitting, and conviction is certain.

At the end of the passage the chaplain came to take leave of me; he had been to breakfast. At the exit from the gaol the governor shook me affectionately by the hand, and reinforced my escort with four soldiers.

From the door of the hospital a dying man called out "*Au revoir*." We were in the courtyard; I drew a long breath, it did me good.

We were not in the open air for long: a carriage was waiting for us—it was the same which had brought me here; it was oblong in shape, and divided into two compartments by iron bars standing so closely together that they appeared to be interlaced. Each section had a door, one in front, and one behind. The vehicle was so dirty and dusty, that the hearse which conveys paupers to their last resting-place is a state carriage in comparison to this one. Before burying myself in this tomb, I cast one glance round the courtyard, one of those despairing looks before which walls should crumble. There were many spectators waiting for my departure, more than there had been to look at the galley-slaves. As on that day a light rain was falling, and would no doubt fall all day—the shower would last longer than I should. The roads were much cut up, and the courtyard full of dirt and water. It was pleasant to see the crowd tramping about in the mud.

We got into the carriage—the usher and the soldiers in front; the priest, a policeman, and myself in the hindmost compartment.

Four mounted gendarmes surrounded the carriage; thus, without counting the driver, there were eight men to guard one poor wretch. As I got in I heard an old woman say, "Well, for my part I prefer *that* to the galley-slaves' chain."

I understood her—the sight was simpler, more easy to be taken in at a glance.

The carriage started; I heard the echoing sound as it rolled under the main portal of the Bicêtre, whose heavy gates closed behind us. I felt stupefied, like a man who has fallen into a trance, who can neither stir nor cry out, though he knows that they are burying him alive.

I listened dreamily to the jingle of the bells in the horses' collars, the rolling of the wheels, and the cadenced trot of the escort's horses, and the crack of the driver's whip. It seemed as if I was being carried away in a whirlwind.

Through the bars of a window in front of me my eyes caught an inscription in large letters over the Bicêtre—*Hospital for the Aged*.

"Ha!" exclaimed I, "it appears then that *some* people do grow old there."

All at once the vehicle made a sudden turn, which changed the scene. Now I saw the towers of Notre Dame rising through the mist of Paris.

“Those who have a place in the tower where the flagstaff is will have a good view,” thought I.

I think that it was about this time that the priest began talking again. I let him go on without interruption; my ears were filled with the noise of the wheels, the horses’ hoofs, and the coachman’s whip—what mattered a little more noise?

I listened then to this flow of words, which soothed my feelings, like the murmur of falling water, when the sharp voice of the usher broke the silence.

“Well, Abbé,” exclaimed he, “what news have you to-day?”

The chaplain, who had never ceased talking to me, made no reply.

“*Hé, hé!*” resumed the usher, raising his voice to drown the sound of the wheels, “what an infernal carriage this is!”

Infernal, indeed, for I found it so.

He continued: “It is the jolting and the rumbling, no doubt, that prevents your hearing me—what was I saying? Ah! your reverence, have you heard to-day’s news that is exciting all Paris?”

I trembled; was he speaking of me?

“No,” answered the priest, who had at last heard him, “I have not had time to read the morning papers; but I suppose I shall see it all in the evening. When I am much engaged, I tell our porter to keep them for me, and I read them on my return.”

“What!” exclaimed the usher; “is it possible that you have not heard the news of this morning—the news that is convulsing Paris?”

I interrupted him.

“I think that I know it.”

The usher stared at me.

“You! well, really, what do you say to it?”

“You are too curious,” replied I.

“Why so, sir?” answered the usher. “Every one has his own opinion regarding politics, and I respect you too much not to presume that you have yours. For my part I am entirely in favour of the reconstruction of the National Guard; I was the sergeant of my company, and faith, it was most pleasant——”

I interrupted him again.

“It was not that I had imagined which caused the excitement, but something else.”

“What was it then? You said you knew it.”

“I was referring to something else that Paris was thinking of to-day.”

The idiot did not yet understand me.

“Some more news! How on earth did you manage to pick them up? Can you guess what it can be, your reverence? Come, pray let me know. You cannot imagine how fond I am of a piece of news. I will repeat it to the President, it will amuse him.”

And he uttered a hundred more platitudes, turning to the priest and to myself. I shrugged my shoulders.

“Well,” continued he, “what are you thinking of?”

“I was thinking,” answered I, “that I shall think no more this evening!”

“Ah! that is what is troubling you; you are cast down. Come, cheer up; Mr. Castaing talked all the way.”

Then, after a pause, he continued: “I escorted Mr. Papavoine; he wore his otter-skin cap, and smoked all the way. As to those young people from Rochelle, they talked to each other the whole time.”

“Madmen, enthusiasts,” he added, “they appeared to despise all the world; but really, my young friend, you are too sad.”

“Young!” answered I, bitterly; “I am older than you. Each quarter of an hour as it passes adds a year to my age.”

He turned round and looked at me for a few seconds with unfeigned surprise.

“You are joking—older than I am; why I might be your grandfather.”

“I was not joking,” answered I, gravely.

He opened his snuff-box.

“There, my dear sir, do not be angry, and do not bear me a grudge.”

“I shall not bear it long,” was my reply.

At this moment the snuff-box, which he had placed against the barred division, was shaken from his hand by a violent jolt of the vehicle, and fell at his feet.

“Confound the bars!” cried he. “Am I not unlucky? I have lost all my snuff!”

“I am losing more than you,” answered I, with a smile.

He endeavoured to pick up the snuff, grumbling to himself.

“Losing more than me! that is easy to say; not a grain of snuff until I get to Paris; it is awful!”

The chaplain condoled with him on his loss; and, whether it was that I was preoccupied or not, I do not know, but it seemed to me as if this consolation fitted very well with the exhortation that he had commenced to me.

Little by little the conversation between the priest and the usher increased, whilst I buried myself in my own thoughts.

As we passed the barrier, the noise of the great city seemed louder than usual.

The vehicle stopped a moment at the office of the Customs whilst the officers examined it. If it had been an ox or a sheep that was being taken to the slaughter-house a fee would have to have been paid, but man goes free.

The boulevard once passed, we plunged into those old winding streets of the Cité and the Faubourg St. Marceau, which intersect each other like the paths of an ant-hill. On the stone-paved roadway of their streets the noise of the vehicle was so deafening that it drowned all exterior sounds. When I glanced through the little window it seemed to me as if the passers-by stopped to gaze after the carriage, whilst crowds of children followed at a run. At the crossings I could see ragged men and women holding in their hands bundles of newspapers which were eagerly purchased by the crowd.

Half-past eight sounded from the palace clocks as we arrived in the courtyard of the *Conciergerie*. The sight of the wide staircase, the gloomy chapel, and the sinister-looking wickets froze my blood. When the carriage stopped, I thought that my heart too would stop beating.

I summoned up my courage. The door was thrown open like a flash of lightning; I leapt from my rolling dungeon, and found myself under an archway between two ranks of soldiers. A curious crowd had already collected to watch my arrival.

CHAPTER XXII.

As long as I walked through the public passages of the Courts of Justice, I felt almost free and at my ease, but my courage almost failed me when a low door opened, and I

was led through gloomy corridors and down secret staircases—places where only the condemned and their judges are permitted to enter.

The usher was still with me. The priest had left me promising to return in two hours, as he had some business to do.

I was led to the offices of the governor, to whom the usher handed me over. After all it was a mere exchange, for the governor begged him to wait for a few moments, as he had some *game* to give him which was to be taken back to the Bicêtre at once. No doubt this was the newly-condemned criminal; he who was to sleep in my cell upon the truss of straw which I had hardly used.

“Good!” answered the usher, “I will wait a moment, and we can draw up the documents for both of them at the same time.”

Whilst this was being done I was placed in a small room adjoining the director’s office, the door of which was securely fastened.

I do not know how long I had been there, or, indeed, of what I was thinking, when a violent burst of laughter close to my ear aroused me from my reverie. I started and looked up; I was not alone, there was a man with me—a man of about fifty-five years of age, of middle height, wrinkled, bent, and grey-haired, strongly built, with a sinister expression in his eyes, and a mocking smile upon his lips, dirty, ragged, and disgusting to the sight.

The door had been opened, and he had been thrust in without my having perceived it. Would death come thus to me?

This man and I gazed earnestly at each other for some moments, he continuing his sinister chuckle, which had something convulsive in it, and I half alarmed and wholly surprised.

“Who are you?” exclaimed I, at length.

“A nice question to ask,” answered he. “I am *booked through*.”

“What is that?” I inquired.

“It means,” cried he, with another burst of laughter, “that in six weeks the knife will chop my nut into the sack, as it will yours in about six hours. Ha, ha! you understand me now, it seems.”

He was right. I turned pale, and my hair stood on end, for here was the other condemned man of to-day, my heir at the Bicêtre.

He continued—

“Well, this is my history. I am the son of a good old prig, and it was a pity that Charlot[1] strung him up by the neck: that was when the gallows was an institution. At six years of age I was an orphan, and used to pick up a few coppers in the spring by turning head over heels by the sides of the carriages. In winter I used to run about with my naked feet in the mud, blowing my fingers, all red with the cold, and showing my bare skin through the holes in my trousers. At nine I began to use my fingers, and from time to time I would empty a fob, or prig a cloak; and at ten I was a thoroughbred prig. Then I began to get pals round me. At seventeen I was a cracksman and cracked a crib, but they caught me, and I was lagged. The galleys did not suit my complaint: black bread and cold water, a plank bed, and a cannon-ball to drag after me, not to mention blows of a stick, and a scorching sun; besides that they shaved me, and I used to have fine chestnut hair. But I did my time—fifteen years. I was thirty-two when they gave me the yellow passport and sixty-six francs, which I had earned during my fifteen years, working hard sixteen hours daily, thirty days in the month, and twelve months in the year. Well, there it was. I wanted to be an honest man with my sixty-six francs, and I had finer sentiments under my rags than you would find under many a priest’s frock. But may the devil fly away with the passport, for it was yellow, and in it was written, ‘Released Convict.’… I had to show that wherever I went, and to report myself every eighth day to the mayor of the village where they had assigned me a residence. An ex-galley-slave, a nice kind of recommendation! Every one shunned me; the little kids bolted when they saw me coming, and every door was shut in my nose. I could not get a day’s work, and my sixty-six francs were soon eaten, and I wanted to live. I showed my strong arms, and offered a day’s work for fifteen sous, for ten sous, for five sous, and could get nothing. What was I to do? One day, when I was hungry, I smashed a baker’s window with my elbow and stole a loaf of bread. I was not allowed to eat the bread, but I was sent to the galleys for life, with a brand on my shoulders which I will show you if you like. And they call that justice. There I was, a returned lag. They sent me to Toulon, this time with a green cap.[2] I made up my mind to escape. I had three walls to break through, the chains to cut; but I had a nail to do it with. I escaped. They fired the gun, and all were on the alert. We are dressed in red like the cardinals, and they fire a salute when we go out. The powder went to kill the sparrows as far as I know. This time there was no yellow passport, and no money. I made my way back to some old pals who had done time themselves, and filled their pockets often enough. Their boss proposed a bit of high Toby. I was on like a shot, and I began to murder for a living. Sometimes it was a stage-coach, at others a post-chaise; sometimes a cattle merchant. We took their money, and we left the carriage and

horses alone, and buried the man under a tree, taking care that his toes should not show; and then we jumped on the grave so that the newly-turned earth should attract no notice. I grew old at this game, hiding in the thickets—sleeping under the stars—tracked from wood to wood, but at least I was free. Everything comes to an end, however, and one day the slops put their fingers on my collar; my pals hooked it, and I remained with the chaps with the gold-laced hats. Well, they brought me here. I had climbed every rung of the ladder except one. I had got from prigging a wipe to cutting a throat, and there was no medium for me except the three-cornered knife. Well, well! my father had his cravat tied in public, and I shall make a first and last appearance in the Place de Grêve. That is all, my lad!"

I was horror-struck at his recital. He laughed louder than ever, and tried to take my hand. I shrunk away from him.

"My friend," said he, "you do not appear to have much pluck. Try and die game. You have a few unpleasant moments on the scaffold, but that is soon over. I wish that I could show you how to make the last jump properly. I should be glad if they would shave me as well as you to-day. The same priest would serve us both, and you might have him first if you like. You see that I am a good-natured devil."

He again made a step towards me.

"Sir," said I, pushing him back, "I thank you."

There was a fresh burst of laughter at my reply.

"Sir! Sir yourself if you come to that. Why, you must be a marquis at the least."

I interrupted him.

"Leave me alone, my friend; I want to collect myself."

The gravity of my speech made him serious for an instant. He shook his grey head, which was almost bald, and thrust his hand into his open shirt-front.

"I understand," muttered he; "you are expecting the parson."

Then after gazing at me for a few seconds—

"Look here," said he, timidly, "you are a marquis, that is all right; but you have a fine great-coat there, and it will not be of any use to you soon. Give it to me, and I will sell it for tobacco."

I took off my coat and gave it to him; he clapped his hands like a pleased child. Then, noticing that I was shivering in my shirt-sleeves, "You are cold," cried he; "it rains, and

you will get wet. Put this on; besides, you ought to look respectable;" and whilst speaking, he took off his coarse woollen vest and thrust it into my hands.

I permitted him to do so, and then I leaned against the wall. I cannot tell you the effect that this man had on me. He had put on my great-coat, and was examining it with all attention, uttering every now and then cries of delight.

"The pockets are quite new," exclaimed he; "the collar is hardly soiled. I shall get at least fifteen francs for it. What happiness! tobacco for the next six weeks!"

Again the door opened. They came to take both of us away; to lead me to the chamber where the condemned await their last hour, and to remove him to the Bicêtre. He was placed in the midst of the escort, and went off laughing and saying—

"Now then, no mistakes. The gentleman and I have changed our skins, but I am not going to change places with him, now that I have tobacco for the next six weeks."

---

[1] The hangman.

[2] The green cap was a sign of penal servitude for life.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The old scoundrel, he has taken my great-coat, for I did not give it to him, and he has left me this rag, this disgusting garment. What will people think of me?

Did I let him have my great-coat from carelessness, or from charity? Not a bit; but because he was stronger than I was, and had I not given it he would have beaten me with those sledge-hammer fists of his.

Not an atom of charity in it. I was filled with evil thoughts. I could have strangled the old thief; I could have trampled him under foot. I feel that my heart is full of rage and bitterness, as if my very gall-bladder had burst. Approaching death brings up many evil thoughts and feelings.

CHAPTER XXIV.

They have taken me into a bare cell, of course with any amount of bars in the windows and bolts on the door. I have asked for a table and a chair, and the means of writing. They have brought them. Then I asked for a bed. The gaoler cast a look of surprise upon me, which seemed to say, "What is the good of it to you?" However, they have

arranged a trestle-bed in the corner; but at the same time a policeman has taken up his position in my room. Are they afraid that I shall strangle myself with the mattress?

CHAPTER XXV.

It is ten o'clock.

Oh! my poor little daughter, in six hours I shall be dead. I shall be a foul thing that they will lay upon the table at the College of Surgeons; upon one side they will take a mould of my head, upon the other they will dissect my body; then what remains of me they will put into a coffin, and expedite it to the cemetery of Clamont. That is what these men will do to your father. None of them hate me; all pity me, and all could save me; and yet they are going to kill me. Do you understand that, Marie? They will kill me in cold blood, in all due form, for the good that it will do. Oh, great heaven!

Poor little child! Your father who loves you so much, who kisses your little white and perfumed neck, who passes his fingers through the silky curls of your hair, who takes your sweet little face in his hand, who dances you on his knee, and at bedtime joins your little hands together, and teaches you to pray to God. Who will do this for you now? Who will love you? All children of your age will have fathers except you. How you will miss, my dear child, the New Year's gifts, the presents, the pretty play-things, the sugar-plums, and the kisses! You unhappy orphan, you may have to give up eating and drinking!

Ah! if the jury could only have seen my little Marie, they would have thought twice before killing the father of a child of three years old. And when she grows up, if she lives long enough, what will become of her? Her father will be one of the recollections of Paris. She will blush for me and my name. She will be despised and repulsed on all sides. Disgraced on my account who love her with all the tenderness of which my heart is capable. Oh, my well-beloved little Marie, can it be true that you will ever hold me in shame and horror?

Wretch! what crime have I committed, and what crime have I made society commit?

Can it be true that I shall be dead before the end of to-day? Is this really me? That dull sound that I hear outside, the crowds of people that are flocking along the quay, the gendarmes paraded in their barracks, the priest in his black robe, the man with the red-stained hands! Is all this for me? Is it I that am going to die—I, who am sitting here at this table, who lives, who feels, who breathes? Yes, it is I. I know it by the sense of touch, and by the creases I can make on my clothes.

CHAPTER XXVI.

I know something of it.

I was driving by the Place de Grêve once, about eleven o'clock in the morning. All of a sudden the carriage stopped.

There was a crowd in the square. I put my head out of the door. Many women and children were standing in the parapets of the quay. Above their heads I could see a species of red scaffold which some workmen were putting together.

A man was to be executed that day, and they were erecting the machine.

I turned away my head as this caught my eye. I heard a woman near me saying, "Look! the knife does not slide well, they are greasing the groove with a bit of candle!"

Probably they are doing that now. Eleven o'clock is just striking. No doubt they are greasing the groove.

Ah! miserable wretch, this time I shall not turn away my head!

CHAPTER XXVII.

Oh, my pardon, my pardon! perhaps I shall be reprieved. The king may interfere. Let them run and fetch my counsel to me; quick, my counsel! I choose the galleys; five years should settle it; or twenty years; or a brand with the red-hot iron: but let me have my life! A convict lives, moves, goes and comes, and sees the bright sun in the heavens.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The priest has come back to me.

He has white hair, a gentle manner, and a benevolent face. Indeed, I have heard that he is a really good and charitable man. This morning I saw him distribute the contents of his purse amongst the prisoners. But his exhortations have no effect on me. I was callous to all that he could say, his words slided from my mind as cold rain from a frozen window-pane.

However, his reappearance gave me pleasure. Amongst all those who surround me, he is the only one who still looks upon me as a man, and I am thirsting for kind and cheering words.

We sat down, he on my chair, I on the bed.

"My son," commenced he. These words went at once straight to my heart. He continued, "Do you believe in God?"

"Yes, father," I replied.

"Do you believe in the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church?"

"Certainly," answered I.

"My son," observed he, "I fear that you are a waverer." Then he began to speak again. He talked for a long time; then when he fancied that he had said enough, he for the first time raised his eyes to mine as if to question me mutely.

"Well?" asked he.

I declare that I had listened to him first with eagerness, then with attention, and lastly with reverence.

I got up from my seat.

"Sir," said I, "leave me alone, I entreat of you."

"When shall I return?" asked he.

"I will let you know."

Then he left me without another word, shaking his head, as though he were saying to himself:

"An infidel!"

No, low as I have fallen, I am not an infidel. My God is my witness that I believe in Him. But what has this old man been able to say to me? Nothing that I have felt, nothing that has touched me, nothing that has drawn tears from my eyes, nothing which goes from his soul direct to mine. On the contrary, what he has said to me he might say to any one else, emphasizing his words when his argument had need of depth, full of platitudes when it should have been most simple, a kind of sentimental sermon and theological elegy. Here and there he put in a Latin quotation from Saint Gregory, Saint Austin, or some one else. He had the air of a man who repeats a lesson that he has said many times before, and which, though half forgotten and obliterated from his memory, returns again to him from the fact of his having known it long years before. There is no expression in his eye, no emphasis in his voice; nor do his features add to the power of his oratory.

And how could it be otherwise? This priest is the prison chaplain. His duty is to console and to exhort; he lives by that. He has grown old in preparing men for the scaffold. For many years he has made others tremble, whilst his white hairs never bristle at the horrors that he is a witness of. For him the scaffold and the galley are

matters of every-day life. They bore him. Probably he keeps a book of sermons—such and such a page for those sentenced to death, and another for those in penal servitude. To-day he was warned that some one would require the consolations of religion. He asked whether it was a condemned criminal or a galley-slave, and, upon receiving the reply, turned to the necessary page, refreshed his memory, and came here.

Oh! if instead of sending for him they had sought out some young vicar, some old priest from a remote parish sitting in his chimney corner reading his book, and not expecting the summons; and saying to him: "There is a man about to die, come and console him. You will have to be with him when they bind his hands and cut his hair; you must ride in the cart with him, and with the crucifix hide the headsman from his sight; you will be jolting against him on the road to La Grêve; you will pass with him through the terrible crowd thirsting for his blood; you will take leave of him at the foot of the scaffold, and will remain in waiting until his head is in one place and his body in another."

Then when they bring me into his presence trembling from head to foot, when I embrace him and clasp his knees, he will weep; we shall mingle our tears together; he will wax eloquent, and I shall be consoled; my heart will soften to his words, he will take charge of my soul, and I shall rely on his God.

But this old man, what is he to me? What am I to him? A man of the lowest class, a shadow many of which he has seen, a mere unit added to the figures in the list of executions.

I was wrong, perhaps, to send him away as I did; it was he who behaved well, whilst I acted wrongly. It is my breath, that destroys and blasts everything around me.

They have brought me refreshment, fancying that I must be in need of it; a nice enough luncheon—a fowl, and something else, but after the first mouthful I have been unable to eat—everything tasted full of bitterness and corruption.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A man has just come in with his hat on; he produced a foot-rule from his pocket, and commenced measuring the stonework of the wall, murmuring to himself, "It is so;" and again, "No, that will not do."

I asked the gendarme who this was. It appears that he is a sort of assistant architect employed in the prison.

He seemed to feel some curiosity about me, for he whispered a few inquiries to the turnkey who accompanied him; then he fixed his eyes upon me, and, shaking his head in a careless manner, began to talk in a loud voice, and continued his measurements.

When his work was over he approached me, and said in a strident voice—

“My good friend, in six months this prison will be greatly improved.”

But his manner seemed to imply, “It is a pity you will be unable to enjoy it.”

He smiled blandly, and I really thought that he was going to rally me, as you might a young bride on her nuptial morning.

The gendarme in charge of me, an old soldier with several good-conduct stripes, took upon himself to reply.

“Sir,” said he, “you must not talk so loud in the Chamber of Death.”

The architect left the room, but I remained there as dumb as one of the stones that he had been measuring.

CHAPTER XXX.

Then a ridiculous incident occurred. The good old gendarme was relieved, and I, selfish wretch, had not even shaken hands with him. The new sentinel was a man of vulgar features, bull-eyed, with a foolish expression in his face.

I paid no attention to him. I had turned my back to the door, and, seated at the table, was pressing my hand to my forehead. A light tap upon my shoulder caused me to turn my head. The fresh guard and I were alone.

This is something the way in which he began the conversation, “Criminal, have you a kind heart?”

“No,” answered I.

The sharpness of my reply seemed to disconcert him, but he began again after a moment’s hesitation—

“But one is not wicked for the pleasure of being so!”

“Why not?” answered I. “If you have nothing better to say than that, leave me in peace. What are you aiming at?”

“Forgive me, criminal,” replied he. “Suppose that you could ensure the happiness of a poor fellow without its costing you anything, would you not do so?”

I shrugged my shoulders.

“Have you come from a madhouse? You choose a strange moment to ask a favour. Why should I consult any one’s happiness?”

He lowered his voice in a mysterious manner, which accorded ill with his idiotic expression.

“Yes, criminal, happiness for me, fortune for me, and all coming from you. Look here, I am a poor gendarme. The work is hard, and the pay light. The keep of my horse ruins me; so I put into the lottery to try and square myself. One must have an object in life. Up to this time I have failed to gain a prize because I have never chosen a lucky number. I seek for them in sure places, but am always a little wrong. If I stake on 76, 77 is sure to come up. I do all that I can, but the right one will never come up. A moment’s patience, please; I am nearly at the end. Here is a lucky chance for me. It appears, criminal—forgive me—that it is all up with you to-day. It is a well-known fact that those who die as you do, see the lucky number in advance. Promise me that you will come to me to-morrow evening—it will be no trouble for you to do so—and to give me three numbers, three good ones. Will you, eh? I am not afraid of ghosts, so be easy. Here is my address: Cassine Popincourt, Staircase A, No. 26, at the bottom of the passage. You will remember that, will you not? Come this evening if that is more convenient.”

I should have disdained to answer this fool, if a mad hope had not sprung up in my heart. In the desperate position in which I was placed, it seemed as if I might be able to break my chain with a slender reed like this.

“Listen,” said I, playing my part as well as I could, “I can render you richer than a king; I can give you millions, on one condition.”

He opened his dull eyes.

“What is it? what is it? anything that you wish.”

“Instead of three numbers you shall have four. Change clothes with me.”

“Is that all?” exclaimed he, hurriedly unbuttoning his uniform.

I got up from my seat. I watched all his movements—my heart beat; already I saw all doors opening before the uniform of a gendarme, and the Conciergerie left far behind me.

Suddenly he stopped, with an air of hesitation. “Ah! you want to get out of this?”

“Of course,” I replied; “but your fortune is made.”

He interrupted me.

“Ah, no, that will not do; how could the numbers be worth anything if you were not dead?”

I sat down in silence; all hope had fled, and again I was plunged in despair.

CHAPTER XXXI.

I closed my eyes, and covered them with my hands, striving to forget the present in the past. As I pondered, the recollections of my childhood came back to me, soft, calm, and smiling like islands of flowers, in the black gulf of confused thoughts which turned and twisted in my brain.

I could see myself once again, a laughing schoolboy, playing, running, and shouting to my brothers, in the green avenues of the neglected garden of the home where my earlier years were spent. And then, four years later, I was there—still a child, but full of dreams and sentiments. But there was a girl with me in the lonely garden.

A little Spaniard, with large eyes and long hair, olive-tinted skin, red lips and cheeks, an Andalusian, fourteen years of age, called Pepa. Our mothers had told us to run about together in the garden; we came out and walked about. They had told us to play, but we preferred to talk, children of the same age but different sex.

For more than a year we had been in the habit of playing and quarrelling together. I disputed with Pepita for the ripest apple on the tree, and I once struck her for the possession of a bird’s nest. She wept, and I said, “Serves you right,” and we both ran to complain to our mothers, who openly blamed me, but in their inmost heart each thought that her own child was right.

Now she is leaning on my arm; I feel proud and happy. We are walking slowly, and conversing in low tones. She lets her handkerchief drop, I pick it up for her; our hands tremble as they meet. She is talking to me of the little birds, of the sun that we see over there setting in crimson behind the trees, of her schoolmates, of her dress, of her ribbons. We talk of the most innocent things, and yet we blush; the child has become a young girl.

It was a summer’s evening; we were under the chestnut-trees at the bottom of the garden.

After one of those long intervals of silence which occurred so often in our walks, she suddenly let go of my arm, and cried, “Let us run.” And she started off in front of me,

her figure slender as a wasp's, her little feet raising her dress half-way up the leg. I pursued her; she fled. As she dashed along the wind raised her tippet, and showed the olive-tinted hue of her neck.

I was beside myself; I caught her just by the ruined well. As the winner I seized her by the waist, and drew her down upon a bank of turf. She was out of breath, and laughing. I was quite serious, and gazed into her dark eyes, half-veiled by her black lashes.

"Sit there," said she to me; "there is plenty of daylight, let us read. Have you a book?"

I had with me the second volume of the "Travels of Spalanzani." I opened it at hazard, and moved close to her; she rested her shoulder against mine, and we began to read upon the same page. Before turning the page she had always to wait for me. Her intellect ran quicker than mine did.

"Have you finished?" she asked, when I had hardly begun.

Our heads touched, our hair mingled together, and our respirations crossed each other, and then our lips met.

When we wished to begin reading again, the sky was studded with stars.

"Oh, mamma, mamma!" she exclaimed as she entered the house, "how we have been running!"

I kept silence.

"You say nothing, my boy," said my mother. "You look sad."

My heart was full of bliss.

I shall remember that evening until the last day of my life.

The last day of my life!

CHAPTER XXXII.

Some hour has struck—I do not know which. I can hardly hear the sound; there is a buzzing in my ears, it is my last thoughts that are working in my brain.

At this last moment I fall back upon my recollections. I look upon my crime with horror, but I wish for a longer time for repentance. I had more feelings of remorse before my condemnation; since, it seems that there is room for nothing except the thoughts of death. When my thoughts turn for a moment to my past life, they veer round to the axe which will shortly terminate all, and I shiver as if the idea was a new

one. My happy childhood, my glorious youth, the end of which is to be stained with my blood. Between that and the present there is a river of blood, another's and mine. If any one ever reads my life, they will not believe in this fatal year, which opens with a crime, and closes with a shameful punishment. It would be impossible to credit it.

A sanguinary law, O cruel men—and yet I was not naturally wicked.

To die in a few hours, and to think that there was a time when I was free and pure, when I wandered under the trees, when I walked upon the leaf-strewn paths.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

At this very time there is, in the houses around the place in which I am, men who come and go, who laugh and talk, who read the paper and talk over their affairs, tradesmen who sell, young girls who are working at their ball-dresses, and mothers who are playing with their children.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

I recollect one day, when I was a child, going to see the peal of bells of Notre Dame. I was already dizzy with having mounted the dark winding staircase, and having crossed the narrow gallery which connects the two towers of the cathedral, and saw Paris stretching beneath my feet; then I entered the belfry where hangs the bell, and its clapper which weighs I know not how many pounds.

I advanced hesitatingly over the uneven flooring, gazing at the bell so celebrated amongst the children and the people of Paris, and remarked, not without a feeling of terror, that the sloping tile roofs were on a level with my feet; and I took a bird's-eye view of the place of Paris—Notre Dame, and the passers-by looking like a swarm of ants. All of a sudden the heavy bell rang, a vibration shook the air and made the lofty tower quiver. The planking trembled on the beams. Affrighted, I threw myself upon the flooring, and clasped it with my two hands, speechless and breathless, with that tremendous pealing in my ears, whilst under my very eyes was that tremendous precipice where so many people were passing in calm and quiet. Well, it seems that I am still in the belfry tower. Everything seems to be buzzing and humming around me, there is a sound of bells beating on my brain; and around me, as across an abyss, I can see that calm and peaceful life that I have quitted where men walk peacefully to and fro.

CHAPTER XXXV.

The Hotel de Ville is a sinister-looking edifice with its pointed roof, and its strange-looking clock with a white face, its staircases worn by the feet of many passers-by.

There are two arches on the left and right. There it stands facing the Place de Grêve, sombre and melancholy, its front worn away by age, and so dark that even in the sunshine it looks black.

On the day of an execution gendarmes issue in crowds from all the doors, and its hundreds of windows gaze sternly upon the condemned man. In the evening the face of the illuminated clock shows brilliant against its gloomy walls.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

It is a quarter past one.

This is how I feel. A violent headache and cold in the extremities, and a burning forehead. Each time that I rise or bend it seems to me as if some liquid which floats in my skull drives my brain against the top of my head.

I have nervous tremblings, and every now and then the pen falls from my hands as though I had sustained a galvanic shock.

My eyes water as if I were in a smoky room.

I have a pain in my elbows.

But in two hours and forty-five minutes I shall be cured.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

There are those who say that the pain is nothing, that I shall hardly suffer at all, that science has made death very easy.

What then is this six weeks' torment that I have suffered, and this death agony for a whole day? What will be said of this day that goes so slowly, and yet too quickly? What is this ladder of torture that leads to the scaffold?

Perhaps they do not call this suffering.

Are not there the same convulsions when the blood oozes out drop by drop, and the intellect weakens as each thought grows less coherent?

And so there is no suffering. Are they sure? Who has told them so? Has there ever been an instance of a severed head which has risen bleeding to the edge of the basket, and has cried to the populace, "It has not hurt me a bit!"

Have any dead returned to thank the inventor, and to say, "It is a splendid invention, the mechanism is good. Stick to it?"

No, nothing of the kind—in a minute, in a second the thing is done. Have they ever, even in thought, put themselves in the place of the criminal, when the heavy knife falls, bites into the flesh, grinds through the nerves and shivers the vertebræ? But all pain is over in half a second. Horror!

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It is strange that I can think of nothing but the king. It is no use trying to drive it away; a voice in my ears keeps on crying: “At this very moment he is in this city, not far from here, in another palace—a man who, too, has guards at all his doors, a man in a similar position to yourself, except that he is in the highest whilst you are in the lowest. Every instant of his life is nothing but glory, grandeur, delight, and revelry. Around him congregate love, respect, and veneration. The loudest voice softens as it speaks to him, and the haughtiest heads incline. Gold and silk are ever before his eyes. Now he may be holding a council of his ministers, all of whom are of his opinion; or he may be going out hunting, and to a ball this evening, leaving to others the work of preparing his pleasures.”

Well, this man is flesh and blood as I am, and one stroke of his pen would make this horrible scaffold disappear, and restore me to life, liberty, family, and wealth. And he is kind, they say, and would gladly do so; but yet nothing will be done.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

But let me be courageous with death, let me grasp the horrible idea and consider it face to face. Let us ask it what it really is, let it tell us what its wishes are; let us turn it over in every way and spell out the puzzle, gazing forwards into the tomb.

I imagine that when my eyes are closed, I shall see a bottomless abyss of light into which my soul will fall. I believe that the sky itself will be resplendent with light, and that the stars will be mere dark spots instead of being, as they are now, sparks of diamonds upon a canopy of black velvet.

Or perchance, miserable wretch that I am, I shall fall without cessation into the depths of a hideous black gulf, seeing hideous forms threatening me on all sides.

Or, after receiving the blow, shall I awake and find myself upon a soft flat surface, wandering about in semi-darkness, and turning over and over like a head that rolls? I can fancy that there will be a strong wind, and that my head will be jolted with other rolling heads. In places there will be brooks and ponds of an unknown liquid, but all will be black.

When, in the midst of my revolutions, my eyes will be turned upwards, they will look upon a sky of shadows, and far away in the background huge arches of smoke darker than the darkness itself. I shall see millions of red sparks flitting about, which upon coming near to me will turn into birds of fire;—and this will go on for ever and ever.

It may be that, upon certain gloomy nights of winter, those who have died upon the Place de Grêve may meet together, for is it not their domain? It will be a pale and bleeding crowd, and assuredly I shall not be absent from it. There will be no moon, and we shall all speak in a low voice. The Hotel de Ville will be there, with its mouldering walls, its dilapidated roof, and the clock that had no pity for us.

A guillotine from Hell will be erected, where a demon will execute a headsman. The hour will be four, and we shall form the crowd round the scaffold.

Probably things will be like this. But if the dead do return, in what shapes will they appear? What part of their incomplete and mutilated body will they keep? Which will they choose? Shall the head or the trunk appear as a spectre?

Alas! what has Death done with the soul? What feelings does it leave to it? What has it taken away, and what has it given? Where does he put it? and does he ever lend it the eyes of the flesh to look upon this earth and weep?

O for a priest, a priest who can tell me this;

I want a priest, and a crucifix to kiss,

Always the same, my God!

CHAPTER XL.

I have asked them to let me sleep a little, and have thrown myself upon the bed.

I have a rush of blood to the head, which makes rest necessary to me. This is my last sleep in this life. I have had a dream.

I dreamt that it was night, that I was in my study with two or three of my friends, whose names I do not recollect.

My wife was asleep in a room hard by, and our child was with her.

My friends and I spoke in a low voice, so that we might not alarm them.

All of a sudden we heard a strange noise in some other portion of the house; it was like a key being turned quietly, like the creaking of a bolt.

There was something in the sound that alarmed us. We imagined that it might be thieves who had got into the house.

We resolved to search the premises. I rose, took a candle in my hand; my friends followed me one by one. We passed through the bedroom where my wife was sleeping with our child by her side. Then we came to the drawing-room. There was no one there. The family portraits hung upon the wall, which was covered with red paper, motionless in their gilded homes. It seemed to me as if the dining-room door was not in its usual place.

We entered the dining-room, and searched it, I going first. The door that led into the staircase was closed, and so were the windows. Near the stove I noticed that the linen-closet was open, and the door drawn back forming an angle with the wall, as though to conceal something.

This surprised us; we imagined that there was some one hiding behind the door.

I tried to close it, and experienced some resistance. In astonishment I pulled harder, when it yielded suddenly, and behind it we saw a little old woman standing motionless against the wall, her eyes closed, and her arms hanging down in front of her.

She looked hideous, and my hair bristled.

I said, “What are you doing here?”

She made no answer.

I asked, “Who are you?”

She did not reply, nor did she move or unclose her eyes.

My friends said, “No doubt she is in league with those who have broken into the house with some evil design. Upon hearing us coming they fled, but she having been unable to escape hid herself here.”

I again questioned her, but she continued silent, motionless, and sightless.

One of my friends pushed her. She fell to the ground like a log, like some inanimate object.

We pushed her with our feet, then we raised her again, and stood her up against the wall; but she showed no sign of life, and remained dumb to our questions, as though she were deaf.

At last we lost patience; anger began to mingle with our fright.

One of us suggested—

“Put the flame of the candle under her chin.”

I did so; then she half opened one eye, a vague, dull eye with no expression in it.

I moved away the candle, and said—

“Will you answer me now, you old witch?”

The open eye closed again.

“Ah, this is too much,” cried the others. “Give her the candle again—she shall answer us.”

I put the flame again under her chin.

Then she opened both eyes slowly, and gazed upon us all round; then, bending her head abruptly, she blew out the candle with a breath that froze like ice; and at the same instant I felt, in the darkness, three sharp teeth pierce my hand.

I woke trembling, and bathed in a cold perspiration. The good old priest was seated by my side reading his prayer-book.

“Have I slept long?” asked I.

“My son,” replied he, “you have been sleeping an hour. They have brought your child to take leave of you, she is in the adjoining room. She is waiting for you, but I would not let them wake you.”

“My child, my child!” I exclaimed; “bring me my child!”

CHAPTER XLI.

She is young and rosy, and has large eyes; she is a pretty child.

She wears a dear little dress that becomes her well.

I have taken her up in my arms, and placed her upon my knees, and kissed her hair.

Why is her mother not with her? She is ill, and her grandmother is ill too.

She gazed upon me with an air of astonishment; she permitted me to caress her, embrace her, and devour her with kisses, but from time to time she cast an uneasy look at her nurse, who was weeping in a corner of the room.

At last I was able to speak.

“Marie!” said I. “My little Marie!”

I pressed her tightly to my bosom; she pushed me away with a low cry.

“Oh, sir,” said she, “you hurt me.”

Sir! It was nearly a year since she had seen me. She had forgotten me. Words, face, speech, all were faded from her memory; and who would recognize me in this dress, with my beard and my livid complexion? Was I lost to the only one that I should have cared to remember me?

To be no more a father—to be condemned never to hear that word again from the lips of a child, that word which is so sweet, but which a man’s tongue cannot frame, “Papa.”

And yet to hear it once again from those lips, only once again, I would gladly have given the forty years of life that they were going to take away from me.

“Listen, Marie,” said I, joining her two little hands in mine. “Do you not know me?”

She looked at me with her beautiful eyes, and answered—“No.”

“Look at me well,” urged I. “Now who am I?”

“You are a gentleman,” replied she.

Alas! to love one creature so fondly in the world—to love her with all your passionate love, to have her with you to look into her eyes, and to hear her answer that she does not know you.

“Marie,” continued I, “have you a papa?”

“Yes, sir,” said the child.

“Well, where is he?”

She raised her great eyes full of wonder.

“Do you not know?” said she. “He is dead!”

Then she began to cry, and I almost let her fall.

“Dead,” repeated I. “Marie, do you know what it is to be dead?”

“Yes, sir,” answered she; “it is to be in the churchyard, and in heaven.”

Then she continued, “I pray to the good God for him night and morning at mamma’s knees.”

I kissed her forehead.

“Marie, say your prayers.”

“I must not, sir; prayers must not be said in the middle of the day; come this evening and I will say them to you.”

This was too much, and I interrupted her.

“Marie, it is I that am your papa.”

“Oh,” answered she.

I added—

“Do you not wish that I should be your papa?”

I covered her with tears and kisses. She endeavoured to disengage herself from my embrace, crying—

“Your beard hurts me.”

Then I put her once more upon my knees, and, looking into her eyes, asked her—

“Marie, do you know how to read?”

“Yes,” answered she, “I can read; mamma taught me my letters.”

“Come, read a little,” said I, showing her a paper that she had crumpled up in her hand.

She shook her little head.

“I can only read fables,” said she.

“Never mind, try, come, let us see.”

She unfolded the paper, and began to spell it out, pointing to each letter with her finger.

“S, E, N, sen; T, E, N, C, E——”

I snatched it from her hand. It was the sentence of death that she was reading to me, and her nurse had bought the paper for a penny. It would cost me more than that.

No words can describe my feelings. My violence frightened the child. She almost wept. Suddenly she exclaimed, “Give me back my piece of paper; I want it for a plaything.”

I gave her to the nurse. “Take her away,” I cried. Then I fell back in my chair, gloomy, worn-out, and desperate. Let them come now, I care for nothing; the last link that binds me to life is broken, they can do what they like with me.

CHAPTER XLII.

The priest is kind, and the gaoler, too, has his tender side. I believe that they both shed a tear, as I told the nurse to take away my child.

It is over; now I have only to strengthen myself, and to think boldly of the executioner, of the cart, of the gendarmes, of the crowd on the bridge, of the crowd on the quay, of the crowd at the windows, and of that crowd which has assembled expressly for me on the Place de Grêve, which might be paved with the heads that have fallen there. I think that I have a whole hour to accustom myself to these thoughts.

CHAPTER XLIII.

The multitude will laugh, will clap its hands, will applaud; and amongst all those free and unknown men, who hasten, full of pleasure, to an execution, in that crowd of heads that will cover the open space, there will be more than one predestined to follow mine sooner or later into the blood-stained basket. More than one who has come for me will one day come on his own account.

CHAPTER XLIV.

My little Marie, they have taken her back to her play; she will look at the crowd through the windows of the cab, and will think no more of *that gentleman*!

Perhaps I shall yet have time to write a few pages for her, that one day she will read; and fifteen years hence she may perhaps weep for to-day.

Yes, she must have from me my true story, and why my name has a stain of blood upon it.

CHAPTER XLV.
MY HISTORY.

Note by the Editor.—It has been impossible to find the manuscript to which this refers. Perhaps, as is indicated by those that follow, the idea came to him without his having had time to execute it. The time was short when he thought of it.

CHAPTER XLVI.
FROM A ROOM IN THE HOTEL DE VILLE.

From the Hotel de Ville!… I am there; the terrible journey has been made. *The place is there*, below my window. And the vile populace are there, hooting and laughing as they wait for me.

I had need to endeavour to pluck up courage, to strengthen my nerves, for my heart failed me when I saw those two red posts, with the black triangle at their summit, erect themselves between the two lamp-posts on the quay. I demanded to be permitted to make a last declaration, and they brought me here, and have gone to find the Public Prosecutor. I am waiting for him; at any rate it is so much time gained.

Here it comes. They warn me that the time has arrived. I trembled, as though I had thought of nothing else for the last six hours, for the last six weeks, for the last six months. It came upon me as if it were something totally unexpected.

They have led me through their passages, and made me ascend and descend their staircases. They have pushed me through a folding-door into a room on the ground floor, dark and narrow, with a vaulted roof; the foggy, rainy day hardly allows any light to penetrate into it. A chair was standing in the centre; they told me to sit down, and I did so.

There were several people standing about besides the priest and the gendarmes; *there were also three men*.

The first was tall, old, and fat, with a red face, and he wore a great-coat and a broken three-cornered hat. *It was he!*

It was the headsman, the man of the guillotine; the others were his assistants.

Scarcely was I seated, than these two approached me from behind, stealthily as cats; then in a moment I felt cold steel in my hair, and heard the snipping noise of the scissors close to my ears.

Carelessly severed, my hair fell in masses on my shoulders, whilst the man in the three-cornered hat brushed them gently away with his large hand.

Every one round me whispered.

Outside there was a strange murmuring sound; at first I thought that it was the river, but from the laughter that arose from intervals, I knew it was the crowd. A young man seated near the window, who was writing with a pencil in a note-book, asked the men what they were doing.

“It is the last toilet of the condemned,” was the reply.

I then understood that all this would be read to-morrow in the papers.

All at once one of the assistants took off my waistcoat, whilst the other seized my two hands and brought them behind my back, whilst I could feel a cord being knotted round my wrists. At the same moment the other took off my necktie. My linen shirt, a last relic of bygone days, seemed to make him hesitate for a moment; then he cut off the collar.

At this horrible moment, when the cold steel touched my neck, my elbow quivered, and I uttered a low moan of stilled rage. The executioner's hand shook.

“Sir,” said he, “forgive me, have I hurt you?”

These executioners have excellent manners.

The crowd outside is yelling louder than ever.

The headsman pressed to my nostrils a handkerchief, strongly impregnated with aromatic vinegar.

“Thank you,” said I, in as firm a voice as I could; “it is useless. I feel better.”

Then one of them stooped to bind my feet together. This was done with a slender simple cord, which enabled me to take very short steps, and it was attached to the one that secured my wrists.

Then the big man threw the waistcoat on my back, tying the sleeves together under my chin. There was nothing more to be done.

The priest now approached with the crucifix.

“Come, my son,” said he.

The assistants put their hands under my arms, and I was lifted up. My steps were slow and tottering.

At the instant, the outer door was thrown wide open, and an irruption of noise, cold air, and blinding light burst in upon the gloom of the chamber. From the darkness I could see through the rain the thousands of heads, all shouting and yelling, piled one upon the other; on the right a line of mounted gendarmes; in front a detachment of infantry; on the left the back of a cart in which was a ladder—a terrible picture framed by the door of the prison. This was the dreaded moment for which I had nerved myself. I made two steps forward, and appeared on the threshold of the door.

“There he is! there he is!” cried the crowd; “he is coming at last!”

And those nearest to me clapped their hands. The king himself is not received with greater honours.

It was a mere ordinary cart, with a miserable hack in it, driven by a man in a blouse. The big man with the three-cornered hat mounted first.

“Good day, Monsieur Sanson,” cried the children.

One of the assistants followed him.

“Good day, Tuesday,” cried they once more.

Both of them took their place on the seat in front. Now it was my turn, and I mounted with a calm demeanour.

“He is going to die game,” said a woman near the gendarmes.

This infamous praise gave me courage. The priest took his place by me. I was placed in the back seat, my face turned away from the horse. I shivered at this last act of attention. There was an air of humanity in it.

A squadron of gendarmes awaited me at the gate of the palace.

The officer gave the word of command, and the escort and the cart started with a roar of applause from the crowd.

“Hats off! hats off!” cried a thousand throats. It was as if the king was passing.

Then I laughed a ghastly laugh, and muttered to the priest, “Their hats, my head!”

We moved at a foot’s pace.

There was a breath of perfume from the Flower Market; the stall-keepers had left their bouquets to come and see me. A little farther on there were many public-houses, the upper floors of which were full of spectators, rejoicing in the excellent places which they had secured. The women especially seemed delighted. They had hired tables, chairs, scaffolds, and carts to stand upon. Every coign of vantage bent beneath the weight of the spectators. The men who made their living by these spillings of human gore, cried at the top of their voices—

“Who wants a place?”

Hatred for this merciless crowd filled my heart, and I felt inclined to cry out, “*Who wants mine?*”

Still the cart went on; at each step the crowd disappeared from behind it, and I saw them re-form again farther on in front.

Upon passing the Pont de Change, I chanced to cast my eyes backwards on the right-hand side—I saw a tall black tower standing by itself, covered with carvings, upon the top of which sat two stone monsters. I had no reason for putting the question to the priest, but I asked, “What is that?”

“The tower of Saint Jacques la Boucherie,” he replied.

We moved on slowly, the crowd was so great. I feared to show cowardice. Last remnant of vanity! Then I pulled myself together, and endeavoured to be blind and deaf to everything except the priest, whose words I could scarcely catch.

Then I took the crucifix in my hands, and kissed it.

“Have pity on me,” cried I, “O my God!” and I endeavoured to busy myself in that thought. But each jolt of the clumsy vehicle scattered my thoughts. Suddenly I felt very cold; the rain had soaked through my clothes, and my head, deprived of the protecting hair, was quite wet.

“You are shivering with the cold, my son,” remarked the priest.

“Yes,” replied I. Alas! it was not the cold that I was shivering with.

At the end of the bridge some women pitied me because I was so young.

We reached the fatal quay. My sight and hearing grew dim once more; those voices, the heads at the windows, at the doors, in the shops, on the cross-bar of the lamp-posts, those eager and cruel spectators, those crowds who knew me, and amongst whom I knew no one, those lines of human faces——I was intoxicated, stupid, mad. So many eyes all fixed upon me became an unbearable torture.

I shook upon my seat, and paid no more attention to crucifix or priest.

In the tempest of sound that enfolded me I could no longer distinguish expressions of sympathy from jeers and insults; everything roared and resounded in my ears like the echo from a copper vessel.

Unconsciously I began to read the names over the shops. Once a feeling of morbid curiosity urged me to turn my head, and to look at what we were approaching.

It was the last bravado of the intellect—but the body would not obey it, for my neck remained stiff and obstinate.

I glanced to my left across the river; I could see one tower of Notre Dame, the other was hidden by it. It was the one upon which the flagstaff is. There was a great crowd upon it; they must have had a good view.

And the cart went on and on, and shop succeeded to shop, and the people laughed and stamped about in the mud; and I gazed calmly upon everything as people do in their dreams.

All of a sudden the row of shops upon which my eyes were fixed were cut by the corner of a square. The noise of the crowd became more sonorous, tumultuous, and merry. Suddenly the cart stopped, and I almost fell forwards.

The priest caught me by the arm.

“Courage,” murmured he.

Then they brought a ladder to the back of the cart; an arm was stretched out to aid me in my descent. I took the first step, and attempted to take another—but it was useless, for on the quay, between two lamp-posts, I had caught sight of a terrible object.

It was the realization of all my terrors.

I staggered as though I had received a heavy blow.

“I have a last confession to make,” muttered I, feebly. They brought me here.

I asked them to let me write. They untied my hands; but the cord is here, ready for me, and the other horror is below, waiting for me.

A judge, a commissioner, or a magistrate—I know not which—came to me. I asked for a pardon, clasping my hands, and kneeling to them. With a calm smile, they asked me if that was all I had to say.

“My pardon, my pardon,” repeated I: “or five minutes’ more life, for pity’s sake! You do not know—it may be on its way, it may arrive at the last moment—such things have often been heard of before. And of what use will pardon be, sir, if I am no longer in a condition to benefit by it?”

That accursed executioner is whispering to the judge that it must be performed by a certain time, that the hour is at hand, and that he is responsible for its due performance; besides, it is raining, and there is a chance of *the thing* getting rusty.

“For mercy’s sake! one minute more to wait for the coming of my pardon! If you will not grant it, I will defend myself tooth and nail!”

The judge and the executioner have left me. I am alone—alone with two gendarmes.

Oh the horrible crowd, with their hyena-like cries! How do I know that I shall not escape them—if I shall not be saved? My pardon may arrive——Ah, the wretches, they are carrying me on to the scaffold....

*   *   *   *   *   *

FOUR O'CLOCK STRIKES.

TOLD UNDER CANVAS.

TOLD UNDER CANVAS.

BUG-JARGAL.

PROLOGUE.

When it came to the turn of Captain Leopold d'Auverney, he gazed around him with surprise, and hurriedly assured his comrades that he did not remember any incident in his life that was worthy of repetition.

"But, Captain d'Auverney," objected Lieutenant Henri, "you have—at least report says so—travelled much, and seen a good deal of the world; have you not been to the Antilles, to Africa, and to Italy? and above all, you have been in Spain——But see, here is your lame dog come back again!"

D'Auverney started, let fall the cigar that he was smoking, and turned quickly to the tent door, at which an enormous dog appeared, limping towards him.

In another instant the dog was licking his feet, wagging his tail, whining, and gamboling as well as he was able; and by every means testifying his delight at finding his master. And at last, as if he felt that he had done all that could be required of a dog, he curled himself up peaceably before his master's seat.

Captain d'Auverney was much moved, but he strove to conceal his feelings, and mechanically caressed the dog with one hand, whilst with the other he played with the chin-strap of his shako, murmuring from time to time, "So here you are once again, Rask, here you are." Then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he exclaimed aloud, "But who has brought him back?"

“By your leave, captain——”

For the last few seconds Sergeant Thaddeus had been standing at the door of the tent, the curtain of which he was holding back with his left hand, whilst his right was thrust into the bosom of his great-coat. Tears were in his eyes as he contemplated the meeting of the dog and his master, and at last, unable to keep silence any longer, he risked the words—

“By your leave, captain——”

D’Auverney raised his eyes.

“Why, it is you, Thaddeus; and how the deuce have you been able—eh? Poor dog, poor Rask, I thought that you were in the English camp. Where did you find him, sergeant?”

“Thanks be to heaven, captain, you see me as happy as your little nephew used to be when you let him off his Latin lesson.”

“But tell me, where *did* you find him?”

“I did not find him, captain; I went to look for him.”

Captain d’Auverney rose, and offered his hand to the sergeant, but the latter still kept his in the bosom of his coat.

“Well, you see, it was—at least, captain, since poor Rask was lost, I noticed that you were like a man beside himself; so when I saw that he did not come to me in the evening, according to his custom, for his share of my ration bread—which made old Thaddeus weep like a child, I, who before that had only wept twice in my life, the first time when—yes, the day when——” and the sergeant cast a sad look upon his captain. “Well, the second was when that scamp Balthazar, the corporal of the 7th half brigade, persuaded me to peel a bunch of onions.”

“It seems to me, Thaddeus,” cried Henri, with a laugh, “that you avoid telling us what was the first occasion upon which you shed tears.”

“It was doubtless, old comrade,” said the captain kindly, as he patted Rask’s head, “when you answered the roll-call as Tour d’Auvergne, the first grenadier of France.”

“No, no, captain; if Sergeant Thaddeus wept, it was when he gave the order to fire on Bug-Jargal, otherwise called Pierrot.”

A cloud gathered on the countenance of D'Auverney, then he again endeavoured to clasp the sergeant's hand; but in spite of the honour that was attempted to be conferred on him, the old man still kept his hand hidden under his coat.

"Yes, captain," continued Thaddeus, drawing back a step or two, whilst D'Auverney fixed his eyes upon him with a strange and sorrowful expression. "Yes, I wept for him that day, and he well deserved it. He was black, it is true, but gunpowder is black also, and—and——"

The good sergeant would fain have followed out his strange comparison, for there was evidently something in the idea that pleased him; but he utterly failed to put his thoughts into words, and after having attacked his idea on every side, as a general would a fortified place, and failed, he raised the siege, and without noticing the smiles of his officers, he continued:

"Tell me, captain, do you recollect how that poor negro arrived all out of breath, at the moment that his ten comrades were waiting on the spot?—we had had to tie them though. It was I who commanded the party; and when with his own hands he untied them, and took their place, although they did all that they could to dissuade him; but he was inflexible. Ah, what a man he was; you might as well have tried to move Gibraltar! And then, captain, he drew himself up as if he were going to enter a ballroom, and this dog, who knew well enough what was coming, flew at my throat——"

"Generally, Thaddeus, at this point of your story, you pat Rask," interrupted the captain; "see how he looks at you."

"You are right, sir," replied Thaddeus, with an air of embarrassment; "he *does* look at me, poor fellow—but the old woman Malajuda told me it was unlucky to pat a dog with the left hand, and——"

"And why not with your right, pray?" asked D'Auverney, for the first time noticing the sergeant's pallor, and the hand reposing in his bosom.

The sergeant's discomfort appeared to increase.

"By your leave, captain, it is because—well, you have got a lame dog, and now there is a chance of your having a one-handed sergeant."

"A one-handed sergeant! What do you mean? Let me see your arm. One hand! Great heavens!"

D'Auverney trembled, as the sergeant slowly withdrew his hand from his bosom, and showed it enveloped in a blood-stained handkerchief.

"This is terrible," exclaimed D'Auverney, carefully undoing the bandage. "But tell me, old comrade, how this happened."

"As for that, the thing is simple enough. I told you how I had noticed your grief since those confounded English had taken away your dog, poor Rask, Bug's dog. I made up my mind to-day to bring him back, even if it cost me my life, so that you might eat a good supper. After having told Mathelet, your *bât* man, to get out and brush your full-dress uniform, as we are to go into action to-morrow, I crept quietly out of camp, armed only with my sabre, and crouched under the hedges until I neared the English camp. I had not passed the first trench, when I saw a whole crowd of red soldiers. I crept on quietly to see what they were doing, and in the midst of them I perceived Rask tied to a tree; whilst two of the *milords*, stripped to here, were knocking each other about with their fists, until their bones sounded like the big drum of the regiment. They were fighting for your dog. But when Rask caught sight of me, he gave such a bound, that the rope broke, and in the twinkling of an eye the rogue was after me. I did not stop to explain, but off I ran, with all the English at my heels. A regular hail of balls whistled past my ears. Rask barked, but they could not hear him for their shouts of 'French dog! French dog!' just as if Rask was not of the pure St. Domingo breed. In spite of all I crushed through the thicket, and had almost got clean away, when two red coats confronted me. My sabre accounted for one, and would have rid me of the other, had his pistol not unluckily had a bullet in it. My right arm suffered; but 'French dog' leapt at his throat, as if he were an old acquaintance. Down fell the Englishman, for the embrace was so tight that he was strangled in a moment—and here we both are. My only regret is that I did not get my wound in to-morrow's battle."

"Thaddeus, Thaddeus!" exclaimed the captain in tones of reproach; "were you mad enough to expose your life thus for a dog?"

"It was not for a dog, it was for Rask."

D'Auverney's face softened as Thaddeus added—"For Rask, for Bug's dog."

"Enough, enough, old comrade!" cried the captain, dashing his hand across his eyes; "come, lean on me, and I will lead you to the hospital."

Thaddeus essayed to decline the honour, but in vain; and as they left the tent the dog got up and followed them.

This little drama had excited the curiosity of the spectators to the highest degree. Captain Leopold d'Auverney was one of those men who, in whatever position the chances of nature and society may place them, always inspire a mingled feeling of interest and respect. At the first glimpse there was nothing striking in him—his manner was reserved, and his look cold. The tropical sun, though it had browned his cheek, had not imparted to him that vivacity of speech and gesture which amongst the Creoles is united to an easy carelessness of demeanour, in itself full of charm.

D'Auverney spoke little, listened less, but showed himself ready to act at any moment. Always the first in the saddle, and the last to return to camp, he seemed to seek a refuge from his thoughts in bodily fatigue. These thoughts, which had marked his brow with many a premature wrinkle, were not of the kind that you can get rid of by confiding them to a friend; nor could they be discussed in idle conversation. Leopold d'Auverney, whose body the hardships of war could not subdue, seemed to experience a sense of insurmountable fatigue in what is termed the conflict of the feelings. He avoided argument as much as he sought warfare. If at any time he allowed himself to be drawn into a discussion, he would utter a few words full of common sense and reason, and then at the moment of triumph over his antagonist he would stop short, and muttering "What good is it?" would saunter off to the commanding officer to glean what information he could regarding the enemy's movements.

His comrades forgave his cold, reserved, and silent habits, because upon every occasion they had found him kind, gentle, and benevolent. He had saved many a life at the risk of his own, and they well knew that though his mouth was rarely opened, yet his purse was never closed when a comrade had need of his assistance.

He was young; many would have guessed him at thirty years of age, but they would have been wrong, for he was some years under it. Although he had for a long period fought in the ranks of the Republican army, yet all were in ignorance of his former life. The only one to whom he seemed ever to open his heart was Sergeant Thaddeus, who had joined the regiment with him, and would at times speak vaguely of sad events in his early life. It was known that D'Auverney had undergone great misfortunes in America, that he had been married in St. Domingo, and that his wife and all his family had perished in those terrible massacres which had marked the Republican invasion of that magnificent colony. At the time of which we write, misfortunes of this kind were so general, that any one could sympathize with, and feel pity for, such sufferers.

D'Auverney, therefore, was pitied less for his misfortunes than for the manner in which they had been brought about.

Beneath his icy mask of indifference the traces of the incurably wounded spirit could be at times perceived.

When he went into action his calmness returned, and in the fight he behaved as if he sought for the rank of general; whilst after victory he was as gentle and unassuming as if the position of a private soldier would have satisfied his ambition. His comrades, seeing him thus despise honour and promotion, could not understand what it was that lighted up his countenance with a ray of hope when the action commenced, and they did not for a moment divine that the prize D'Auverney was striving to gain was simply—*Death*.

The Representatives of the People, in one of their missions to the army, had appointed him a Chief of Brigade on the field of battle; but he had declined the honour upon learning that it would remove him from his old comrade Sergeant Thaddeus.

Some days afterwards, having returned from a dangerous expedition safe and sound, contrary to the general expectation and his own hopes, he was heard to regret the rank that he had refused.

"For," said he, "since the enemy's guns always spare me, perhaps the guillotine, which ever strikes down those it has raised, would in time have claimed me."

Such was the character of the man upon whom the conversation turned as soon as he had left the tent.

"I would wager," cried Lieutenant Henri, wiping a splash of mud off his boot which the dog had left as he passed him, "I would wager that the captain would not exchange the broken paw of his dog for the ten baskets of Madeira that we caught a glimpse of in the general's waggon."

"Bah!" cried Paschal, the aide-de-camp, "that would be a bad bargain: the baskets are empty by now, and thirty empty bottles would be a poor price for a dog's paw—why, you might make a good bell-handle out of it."

They all laughed at the grave manner in which Paschal pronounced these words, with the exception of a young officer of Hussars named Alfred, who remarked—

"I do not see any subject for chaff in this matter, gentlemen. This sergeant and dog, who are always at D'Auverney's heels ever since I have known him, seem to me more the objects of sympathy than raillery, and interest me greatly."

Paschal, annoyed that his wit had missed fire, interrupted him. "It certainly is a most sentimental scene—a lost dog found, and a broken arm——"

“Captain Paschal,” said Henri, throwing an empty bottle outside the tent, “you are wrong; this Bug, otherwise called Pierrot, excites my curiosity greatly.”

At this moment D’Auverney returned, and sat down without uttering a word. His manner was still sad, but his face was more calm; he seemed not to have heard what was said. Rask, who had followed him, lay down at his feet, but kept a watchful eye on his master’s comrades.

“Pass your glass, Captain d’Auverney, and taste this.”

“Oh, thank you,” replied the captain, evidently imagining that he was answering a question, “the wound is not dangerous—there is no bone broken.”

The respect which all felt for D’Auverney prevented a burst of laughter at this reply.

“Since your mind is at rest regarding Thaddeus’ wound,” said Henri, “and, as you may remember, we entered into an agreement to pass away the hours of bivouac by relating to each other our adventures, will you carry out your promise by telling us the history of your lame dog, and of Bug—otherwise called Pierrot, that regular Gibraltar of a man?”

To this request, which was put in a semi-jocular tone, D’Auverney at last yielded.

“I will do what you ask, gentlemen,” said he; “but you must only expect a very simple tale, in which I play an extremely second rate part. If the affection that exists between Thaddeus, Rask, and myself leads you to expect anything very wonderful, I fear that you will be greatly disappointed. However, I will begin.”

For a moment D’Auverney relapsed into thought, as though he wished to recall past events which had long since been replaced in his memory by the acts of his later years; but at last, in a low voice and with frequent pauses, he began his tale.

CHAPTER I.

“I was born in France, but at an early age I was sent to St. Domingo, to the care of an uncle to whose daughter it had been arranged between our parents that I was to be married. My uncle was one of the wealthiest colonists, and possessed a magnificent house and extensive plantations in the Plains of Acul, near Fort Galifet.

“The position of the estate, which no doubt you wonder at my describing so minutely, was one of the causes of all our disasters, and the eventual total ruin of our whole family.

“Eight hundred negro slaves cultivated the enormous domains of my uncle. Sad as the position of a slave is, my uncle’s hardness of heart added much to the unhappiness of those who had the misfortune to be his property.

“My uncle was one of the happily small number of planters from whom despotic power had taken away the gentler feelings of humanity. He was accustomed to see his most trifling command unhesitatingly obeyed, and the slightest delay on the part of his slaves in carrying it out was punished with the harshest severity; whilst the intercession either of my cousin or of myself too often merely led to an increase of the punishment, and we were only too often obliged to rest satisfied by secretly assuaging the injuries which we were powerless to prevent.

“Amongst the multitude of his slaves, one only had found favour in my uncle’s sight; this was a half-caste Spanish dwarf, who had been given him by Lord Effingham, the Governor of Jamaica.

“My uncle, who had for many years resided in Brazil, and had adopted the luxurious habits of the Portuguese, loved to surround himself with an establishment that was in keeping with his wealth. In order that nothing should be wanting, he had made the slave presented to him by Lord Effingham his fool, in imitation of the feudal lords who had jesters attached to their households. I must say that the slave amply fulfilled all the required conditions. Habibrah, for that was the half-caste’s name, was one of those strangely-formed, or, rather, deformed beings, who would be looked upon as monsters if their very hideousness did not cause a laugh. This ill-featured dwarf was short and fat, and moved with wondrous activity upon a pair of slender limbs, which, when he sat down, bent under him like the legs of a spider. His enormous head, covered with a mass of red curly wool, was stuck between his shoulders, whilst his ears were so large that Habibrah’s comrades were in the habit of saying that he used them to wipe his eyes when he wept. On his face there was always a grin, which was continually changing its character, and which caused his ugliness to be of an ever-varying description. My uncle was fond of him, because of his extreme hideousness and his inextinguishable gaiety. Habibrah was his only favourite, and led a life of ease, whilst the other slaves were overwhelmed with work. The sole duties of the jester were to carry a large fan, made of the feathers of the bird of paradise, to keep away the sandflies and the mosquitoes from his master. At meal-times he sat upon a reed mat at his master’s feet, who fed him with tit-bits from his own plate. Habibrah appeared to appreciate all these acts of kindness, and at the slightest sign from my uncle he would run to him with the agility of a monkey and the docility of a dog.

"I had imbibed a prejudice against my uncle's favourite slave. There was something crawling in his servility, and though outdoor slavery does not dishonour, domestic service too often debases. I felt a sentiment of pity for those slaves who toiled in the scorching sun, with scarcely a vestige of clothing to hide their chains; but I despised this idle serf, with his garments ornamented with gold lace and adorned with bells. Besides, the dwarf never made use of his influence with his master to ameliorate the condition of his fellow-sufferers; on the contrary, I heard him once, when he thought that he and his master were alone, urge him to increase his severity towards his ill-fated comrades.

"The other slaves, however, did not appear to look upon him with any feelings of anger or rancour, but treated him with a timid kind of respect; and when, dressed in all the splendour of laced garments, and a tall pointed cap ornamented with bells and quaint symbols traced upon it in red ink, he walked past their huts, I have heard them murmur in accents of awe, "He is an *obi*" (sorcerer).

"These details, to which I now draw your attention, occupied my mind but little then. I had given myself up entirely to the emotion of a pure love in which nothing else could mingle; a love which was returned me with passion by the girl to whom I was betrothed, and I gave little heed to anything that was not Marie!

"Accustomed from youth to look upon her as the future companion of my life, there was a curious mixture of the love of a brother for a sister, mingled with the passionate adoration of a betrothed lover.

"Few men have spent their earlier years more happily than I have done, or have felt their souls expand into life in the midst of a delicious climate and all the luxuries which wealth could procure, with perfect happiness in the present and the brightest hopes for the future. No man, as I said before, could have spent their earlier years more happily——"

D'Auverney paused for a moment, as if these thoughts of bygone happiness had stilled his voice, and then added—

"And no one could have passed his later ones in more profound misery and affliction."

CHAPTER II.

In the midst of these blind illusions and hopes, my twentieth birthday approached. It was now the month of August, 1791, and my uncle had decided that this should be the date of my marriage with Marie. You can well understand that the thoughts of happiness, now so near, absorbed all my faculties, and how little notice I took of the

political crisis which was then felt throughout the colony. I will not, therefore, speak of the Count de Pernier, or of M. de Blanchelande, nor of the tragical death of the unfortunate Colonel de Marchiste; nor will I attempt to describe the jealousies of the Provincial House of Assembly of the North, and the Colonial Assembly, which afterwards called itself the General Assembly, declaring that the word "Colonial" had a ring of slavery in it.

For my own part, I sided with neither; and if I did espouse any cause, it was in favour of Cap, near which town my home was situate, in opposition to Port au Prince.

Only once did I mix myself up in the question of the day. It was on the occasion of the disastrous decree of the 15th of May, 1791, by which the National Assembly of France admitted free men of colour to enjoy the same political privileges as the whites.

At a ball given by the Governor of Cap, many of the younger colonists spoke in impassioned terms of this law, which levelled so cruel a blow at the instincts of supremacy assumed by the whites, with perhaps too little foundation. I had, as yet, taken no part in the conversation, when I saw approaching the group a wealthy planter, whose doubtful descent caused him to be received merely upon sufferance by the white society. I stepped in front of him, and in a haughty voice I exclaimed, "Pass on, sir! pass on! or you may hear words which would certainly be disagreeable to those with *mixed blood* in their veins."

He was so enraged at this insinuation, that he challenged me. We fought, and each was slightly wounded. I confess that I was in the wrong to have thus provoked him, and it is probable that I should not have done so on a mere *question of colour*, but I had for some time past noticed that he had had the audacity to pay certain attentions to my cousin, and had danced with her the very night upon which I had insulted him.

However, as time went on, and the date so ardently desired approached, I was a perfect stranger to the state of political ferment in which those around me lived; and I never perceived the frightful cloud which already almost obscured the horizon, and which promised a storm that would sweep all before it.

No one at that time thought seriously of a revolt amongst the slaves—a class too much despised to be feared; but between the whites and the free mulattos there was sufficient hatred to cause an outbreak at any moment, which might entail the most disastrous consequences.

During the first days of August a strange incident occurred, which threw a slight shade of uneasiness over the sunshine of my happiness.

CHAPTER III.

On the banks of a little river, which flowed through my uncle's estate, was a small rustic pavilion in the midst of a clump of trees.

Marie was in the habit of coming here every day to enjoy the sea breeze, which blows regularly in St. Domingo, even during the hottest months of the year, from sunrise until evening.

Each morning it was my pleasant task to adorn this charming retreat with the sweetest flowers that I could gather.

One morning Marie came running to me in a great state of alarm: upon entering her leafy retreat she had perceived, with surprise and terror, all the flowers which I had arranged in the morning thrown upon the ground and trampled underfoot, and a bunch of wild marigolds, freshly gathered, placed upon her accustomed seat. She had hardly recovered from her terror when, in the adjoining coppice, she heard the sound of a guitar, and a voice, which was not mine, commenced singing a Spanish song; but in her excitement she had been unable to catch the meaning of the words, though she could hear her own name frequently repeated. Then she had taken to flight, and had come to me full of this strange and surprising event.

This recital filled me with jealousy and indignation. My first suspicions pointed to the mulatto with whom I had fought; but, even in the midst of my perplexity, I resolved to do nothing rashly. I soothed Marie's fears as best I could, and promised to watch over her without ceasing until the marriage tie would give me the right of never leaving her.

Believing that the intruder whose insolence had so alarmed Marie would not content himself with what he had already done, I concealed myself that very evening near the portion of the house in which my betrothed's chamber was situated.

Hidden amongst the tall stalks of the sugar-cane, and armed with a dagger, I waited; and I did not wait in vain. Towards the middle of the night my attention was suddenly attracted by the notes of a guitar under the very window of the room in which Marie reposed. Furious with rage, with my dagger clutched firmly in my hand, I rushed in the direction of the sound, crushing beneath my feet the brittle stalks of the sugar-canes. All of a sudden I felt myself seized and thrown upon my back with what appeared to be superhuman force, my dagger was wrenched from my grasp, and I saw its point shining above me; at the same moment I could perceive a pair of eyes and a double row of white teeth gleaming through the darkness, whilst a voice, in accents of concentrated rage, muttered, "*Te tengo, te tengo*" (I have you, I have you).

More astonished than frightened, I struggled vainly with my formidable antagonist, and already the point of the dagger had pierced my clothes, when Marie, whom the sound of the guitar and the noise of the struggle had aroused, appeared suddenly at her window. She recognized my voice, saw the gleam of the knife, and uttered a cry of terror and affright. This cry seemed to paralyze the hand of my opponent. He stopped as if petrified; but still, as though undecided, he kept the point of the dagger pressed upon my chest; then he suddenly exclaimed in French, “No, I cannot; she would weep too much,” and, casting away the weapon, rose to his feet, and in an instant disappeared in the canes; and before I could rise, bruised and shaken from the struggle, no sound and no sign remained of the presence or the flight of my adversary.

It was some time before I could recover my scattered faculties. I was more furious than ever with my unknown rival, and was overcome with a feeling of shame at being indebted to him for my life.

“After all, however,” I thought, “it is to Marie that I owe it; for it was the sound of *her* voice that caused him to drop his dagger.”

And yet I could not hide from myself that there was something noble in the sentiment which had caused my unknown rival to spare me. But who could he be? One supposition after another rose in my mind, all to be discarded in turn. It could not be the mulatto planter to whom my suspicions had first been directed. He was not endowed with such muscular power; nor was it his voice. The man with whom I had struggled was naked to the waist. Slaves alone went about half-clothed in this manner. But this could not be a slave. The feeling which had caused him to throw away the dagger would not have been found in the bosom of a slave; and besides, my whole soul revolted at the idea of having a slave for a rival. What was to be done? I determined to wait and watch.

CHAPTER IV.

Marie had awakened her old nurse, whom she looked upon almost in the light of the mother who had died in giving her birth, and with them I remained for the rest of the night, and in the morning I informed my uncle of the mysterious occurrence. His surprise was extreme, but, like me, his pride would not permit him to believe that a slave would venture to raise his eyes to his daughter. The nurse received the strictest orders from my uncle never to leave Marie alone for a moment, but as the sittings of the Provincial Assembly, the threatening aspect of the affairs of the colony, and the superintendence of the plantation allowed him but little leisure, he authorized me to accompany his daughter whenever she left the house, until the celebration of our nuptials, and at the same time, presuming that the daring lover must be lurking in the

neighbourhood, he ordered the boundaries of the plantation to be more strictly guarded than ever.

After all these precautions had been taken, I determined to put the matter to further proof. I returned to the summer-house by the river, and repairing the destruction of the evening before, I placed a quantity of fresh flowers in their accustomed place. When the time arrived at which Marie usually sought the sweet shades of this sequestered spot, I loaded my rifle and proposed to escort her thither. The old nurse followed a few steps behind.

Marie, to whom I had said nothing about my having set the place to rights, entered the summer-house the first. “See, Leopold,” said she, “my nest is in the same condition in which I left it yesterday; here are your flowers thrown about in disorder and trampled to pieces, and there is that odious bouquet which does not appear at all faded since yesterday; indeed, it looks as if it had been freshly gathered.”

I was speechless with rage and surprise. There was my morning’s work utterly ruined, and the wild flowers, at whose freshness Marie was so much astonished, had insolently usurped the place of the roses that I had strewn all over the place.

“Calm yourself,” said Marie, who noticed my agitation; “this insolent intruder will come here no more; let us put all thoughts of him on one side, as I do this nasty bunch of flowers.”

I did not care to undeceive her, and to tell her that he *had* returned, yet I was pleased to see the air of innocent indignation with which she crushed the flowers under her foot, but hoping that the day would again come when I should meet my mysterious rival face to face, I made her sit down between her nurse and myself.

Scarcely had we done so than Marie put her finger on my lips; a sound, deadened by the breeze and the rippling of the stream, had struck upon her ear. I listened; it was the notes of a guitar, the same melody that had filled me with fury on the preceding evening. I made a movement to start from my seat, but a gesture of Marie’s detained me.

“Leopold,” whispered she, “restrain yourself, he is going to sing, and we shall learn who he is.”

As she spoke, a few more notes were struck on the guitar, and then from the depths of the wood came the plaintive melody of a Spanish song, every word of which has remained deeply engraved on my memory.

Why dost thou fear me and fly me?

Say, has my music no charms?

Do you not know that I love you?

Why, then, these causeless alarms?

Maria!

When I perceive your slight figure

Glide through the cocoa-nut grove

Sometimes I think ’tis a spirit

Come to reply to my love.

Maria!

Sweeter your voice to mine ears

Than the bird’s song in the sky,

That from the kingdom I’ve lost,

Over the wide ocean fly.

Maria!

Far away, once I was king,

Noble, and powerful, and free;

All I would gladly give up

For a word, for a gesture from thee,

Maria!

Tall and upright as a palm,

Sweet in your young lover’s eyes

As the soft shade of the tree

Mirrored in cool water lies.

Maria!

But know you not that the storm

Comes and uproots the fair tree?

Jealousy comes like that storm,

Bringing destruction to thee,

Maria!

Tremble, Hispaniola's daughter,

Lest all should fade and decay;

And vainly you look for the arm

To bear you in safety away.

Maria!

Why, then, repulse my fond love?

Black I am, whilst you are white;

Night and the day, when united,

Bring forth the beautiful light.

Maria!

CHAPTER V.

A prolonged quavering note upon the guitar, like a sob, concluded the song. I was beside myself with rage. King—black—slave! A thousand incoherent ideas were awakened by this extraordinary and mysterious song. A maddening desire to finish for once and all with this unknown being, who dared to mingle the name of Marie with songs of love and menace, took possession of me. I grasped my rifle convulsively and rushed from the summer-house. Marie stretched out her arms to detain me, but I was already in the thicket from which the voice appeared to have come. I searched the little wood thoroughly, I beat the bushes with the barrel of my rifle, I crept behind the trunks of the large trees, and walked through the high grass.

Nothing—nothing—always nothing! This fruitless search added fuel to the fire of my anger. Was this insolent rival always to escape from me like a supernatural being? Was I never to be able to find out who he was, or to meet him? At this moment the tinkling of bells roused me from my reverie. I turned sharply round, the dwarf Habibrah was at my side.

"Good day, master," said he, with a sidelong glance full of triumphant malice at the anxiety which was imprinted on my face.

“Tell me,” exclaimed I, roughly, “have you seen any one about here?”

“No one except yourself, señor mio,” answered he, calmly.

“Did you hear no voice?” continued I.

The slave remained silent, as though seeking for an evasive reply.

My passion burst forth. “Quick, quick!” I exclaimed. “Answer me quickly, wretch! did you hear a voice?”

He fixed his eyes boldly upon mine; they were small and round, and gleamed like those of a wild cat.

“What do you mean by a voice, master? There are voices everywhere—the voice of the birds, the voice of the stream, the voice of the wind in the trees——”

I shook him roughly. “Miserable buffoon,” I cried, “cease your quibbling, or you shall hear another voice from the barrel of my rifle. Answer at once; did you hear a man singing a Spanish song?”

“Yes, señor,” answered he, calmly. “Listen, and I will tell you all about it. I was walking on the outskirts of the wood listening to what the silver bells of my *gorra* (cap) were telling me, when the wind brought to my ears some Spanish words, the first language that I heard when my age could have been counted by months, and my mother carried me slung at her back in a hammock of red and yellow wool. I love the language, it recalls to me the time when I was little without being a dwarf, a little child, and not a buffoon; and so I listened to the song.”

“Is that all that you have to say?” cried I, impatiently.

“Yes, handsome master; but if you like I can tell you what the man was who sang.”

I felt inclined to clasp him in my arms.

“Oh, speak!” I exclaimed; “speak! here is my purse, and ten others fuller than that shall be yours if you will tell me his name.”

He took the purse, opened it, and smiled.

“Ten purses fuller than this,” murmured he; “that will make a fine heap of good gold coins; but do not be impatient, young master, I am going to tell you all. Do you remember the last verse of his song, something about ‘I am black, and you are white, and the union of the two produces the beautiful light’? Well, if this song is true, Habibrah, your humble slave, was born of a negress and a white, and must be more

beautiful than you, master; I am the offspring of day and night, therefore I am more beautiful than a white man, and——”

He accompanied this rhapsody with bursts of laughter.

“Enough of buffoonery,” cried I; “tell me who was singing in the wood.”

“Certainly, master, the man who sang such buffooneries, as you rightly term them, could only have been—a fool like me! Have I not gained my ten purses?”

I raised my hand to chastise his insolence, when a wild shriek rang through the wood from the direction of the summer-house.

It was Marie’s voice.

Like an arrow I darted to the spot, wondering what fresh misfortune could be in store for us, and in a few moments arrived, out of breath, at the door of the pavilion. A terrible spectacle presented itself to my eyes.

An enormous alligator, whose body was half concealed by the reeds and water plants, had thrust his monstrous head through one of the leafy sides of the summer-house; his hideous widely opened mouth threatened a young negro of colossal height, who with one arm sustained Marie’s fainting form, whilst with the other he had plunged the iron portion of a hoe between the sharp and pointed teeth of the monster. The reptile struggled fiercely against the bold and courageous hand that held him at bay.

As I appeared at the door, Marie uttered a cry of joy, and extricating herself from the support of the negro, threw herself into my arms with “I am saved, I am saved!” cried she.

At the movement and exclamation of Marie the negro turned abruptly round, crossed his arms on his breast, and casting a look of infinite sorrow upon my betrothed, remained immovable, taking no heed of the alligator, which, having freed itself from the hoe, was advancing on him in a threatening manner.

There would have been a speedy end of the courageous negro, had I not rapidly placed Marie on the knees of her nurse, who, more dead than alive, was gazing upon the scene, and, coming close to the monster, discharged my carbine into its yawning mouth. The huge reptile staggered back, its bleeding jaws opened and shut convulsively, its eyes closed, and after one or two unavailing efforts it rolled over upon its back, with its scaly feet stiffening in the air. It was dead. The negro whose life I had so happily preserved turned his head and saw the last convulsive struggles of the monster, then he fixed his eyes upon Marie, who had again cast herself into my arms,

and in accents of the deepest despair, he exclaimed in Spanish, “Why did you kill him?” and, without waiting for a reply, leaped into the thicket and disappeared.

CHAPTER VI.

The terrible scene, its singular conclusion, the extraordinary mental emotions of every kind which had accompanied and followed my vain researches in the wood, had made my brain whirl. Marie was still stupefied with the danger that she had so narrowly escaped, and some time elapsed before we could frame coherent words, or express ourselves otherwise than by looks and clasping of the hands.

At last I broke the silence.

“Come, Marie, let us leave this, some fatality seems attached to the place.”

She rose eagerly, as if she had only been waiting for my permission to do so, and, leaning upon my arm, we quitted the pavilion. I asked her how it had happened that succour had so opportunely arrived when the danger was so imminent, and if she knew who the slave was who had come to her assistance; for that it *was* a slave, was shown by his coarse linen trousers—a dress only worn by that unhappy class.

“The man,” replied Marie, “is no doubt one of my father’s negroes who was at work in the vicinity when the appearance of the alligator made me scream, and my cry must have warned him of my danger. All I know is, that he rushed out of the wood and came to my help.”

“From which side did he come?” asked I.

“From the opposite side from which the song came, and into which you had just gone.”

This statement upset the conclusion that I had been drawing from the Spanish words that the negro had addressed to me, and from the song in the same language by my unknown rival. But yet there was a crowd of other similarities. This negro of great height, and powerful muscular development, might well have been the adversary with whom I had struggled on the preceding night. In that case his half-clothed person would furnish a striking proof. The singer in the wood had said, “I am black”—a further proof.

He had declared himself to be a king, and this one was only a slave, but I recollected that in my brief examination I had been surprised at the noble appearance of his features, though of course accompanied by the characteristic signs of the African race.

The more that I thought of his appearance, the nobleness of his deportment, and his magnificent proportions, I felt that there might be some truth in his statement that he had been a king. But then came the crushing blow to my pride: if he had dared to gaze with an eye of affection upon Marie, if he had made her the object of his serenades, *he*, a *negro* and a *slave*, what punishment could be sufficiently severe for his presumption? With these thoughts all my indecision returned again, and again my anger increased against the mysterious unknown. But at the moment that these ideas filled my brain, Marie dissipated them entirely by exclaiming, in her gentle voice—

"My Leopold, we must seek out this brave negro, and pay him the debt of gratitude that we owe him, for without him I should have been lost, for you would have arrived too late."

These few words had a decisive effect; it did not alter my determination to seek out the slave, but it entirely altered the design with which I sought him, for it was to recompense and not to punish him that I was now eager.

My uncle learned from me that he owed his daughter's life to the courage of one of his slaves, and he promised me his liberty as soon as I could find him out.

CHAPTER VII.

Up to that time my feelings had restrained me from going into those portions of the plantation where the slaves were at work. It had been too painful for me to see so much suffering which I was powerless to alleviate. But on the day after the events had taken place which I have just narrated, upon my uncle asking me to accompany him on his tour of inspection, I accepted his proposal with eagerness, hoping to meet amongst the labourers the preserver of my much beloved Marie.

I had the opportunity in this visit of seeing how great a power the master exercises over his slaves, but at the same time I could perceive at what a cost this power was bought, for though at the presence of my uncle all redoubled their efforts, I could perceive that there was as much hatred as terror in the looks that they furtively cast upon him.

Irascible by temperament, my uncle seemed vexed at being unable to discover any object upon which to vent his wrath, until Habibrah the buffoon, who was ever at his heels, pointed out to him a young negro, who, overcome by heat and fatigue, had fallen asleep under a clump of date-trees.

My uncle stepped quickly up to him, shook him violently, and in angry tones ordered him to resume his work.

The terrified slave rose to his feet, and in so doing disclosed a Bengal rose-tree upon which he had accidentally laid, and which my uncle prized highly.

The shrub was entirely destroyed.

At this the master, already irritated at what he called the idleness of his slave, became furious. Foaming with rage, he unhooked from his belt the whip with wire plaited thongs, which he always carried with him on his rounds, and raised his arm to strike the negro who had fallen at his feet.

The whip did not fall.

I shall, as long as I live, never forget that moment. A powerful grasp arrested the hand of the angry planter, and a negro (it was the very one that I was in search of) exclaimed, "Punish me, for I *have* offended you, but do not hurt my brother who has but broken your rose-tree."

This unexpected interposition from the man to whom I owed Marie's safety, his manner, his look, and the haughty tone of his voice, struck me with surprise. But his generous intervention, far from causing my uncle to blush for his causeless anger, only increased the rage of the incensed master, and turned his anger upon the new-comer.

Exasperated to the highest pitch, my uncle disengaged his arm from the grasp of the tall negro, and pouring out a volley of threats, again raised the whip to strike him. This time, however, it was torn from his hand, and the negro, breaking the handle studded with iron nails as you would break a straw, cast it upon the ground and trampled upon the instrument of degrading punishment.

I was motionless with surprise, my uncle with rage, for it was an unheard-of thing for him to find his authority thus contemned. His eyes appeared ready to start from their sockets, and his lips quivered with passion.

The negro gazed upon him calmly, and then, with a dignified air, he offered him an axe that he held in his hand.

"White man," said he, "if you wish to strike me, at least take this axe."

My uncle, beside himself with rage, would certainly have complied with his request, for he stretched out his hand to grasp the dangerous weapon; but I in my turn interfered, and seizing the axe, threw it into the well of a sugar-mill which was close at hand.

"What have you done?" asked my uncle, angrily.

"I have saved you," answered I, "from the unhappiness of striking the preserver of your daughter; it is to this slave that you owe Marie; it is the negro to whom you have promised liberty."

It was an unfortunate moment in which to remind him of his promise. My words could not soothe the wounded dignity of the planter.

"His liberty!" replied he, savagely. "Yes, he has deserved that an end should be put to his slavery; his liberty indeed! we shall see what sort of liberty the members of a court-martial will accord him."

These menacing words chilled my blood. In vain did Marie join her entreaties to mine.

The negro whose negligence had been the cause of this scene was punished with a severe flogging, whilst his defender was thrown into the dungeons of Fort Galifet, under the terrible accusation of having assaulted a white man; for a slave who did this, the punishment was invariably death.

CHAPTER VIII.

You may judge, gentlemen, how much all these circumstances excited my curiosity and interest. I made every inquiry regarding the prisoner, and some strange particulars came to my knowledge. I learned that all his comrades displayed the greatest respect for the young negro. Slave as he was, he had but to make a sign to be implicitly obeyed. He was not born upon the estate, nor did any one know his father or mother: all that was known of him was that some years ago, a slave ship had brought him to St. Domingo. This circumstance rendered the influence which he exercised over the slaves the more extraordinary, for, as a rule, the negroes born upon the island profess the greatest contempt for the *Congos*, a term which they apply to all slaves brought direct from Africa.

Although he seemed a prey to deep dejection, his enormous strength, combined with his great skill, rendered him very valuable in the plantation. He could turn more quickly, and for a longer period than a horse, the wheels of the sugar-mills, and often in a single day performed the work of ten of his companions to save them from the punishment which their negligence or incapacity had rendered them liable. For this reason he was adored by the slaves, but the respect that they paid him was of an entirely different character from the superstitious dread with which they looked upon Habibrah the Jester.

What was more strange was the modesty and gentleness with which he treated his equals, in contrast to the pride and haughtiness which he displayed to the negroes

who acted as overseers. These privileged slaves, the intermediary links in the chain of servitude, too often exceed the little brief authority that is delegated to them, and find a cruel pleasure in overwhelming those beneath them with work. Not one of them, however, had ever dared to inflict any species of punishment on him, for had they done so, twenty negroes would have stepped forward to take his place, whilst he would have looked gravely on, as thought he considered that they were merely performing a duty. The strange being was known throughout the negro quarter as *Pierrot*.

CHAPTER IX.

The whole of these circumstances took a firm hold upon my youthful imagination. Marie, inspired by compassion and gratitude, applauded my enthusiasm, and Pierrot excited our interest so much, that I determined to visit him and offer him my services in extricating him from his perilous position. As the nephew of one of the richest colonists in the Cap, I was, in spite of my youth, a captain in the Acul Militia. This regiment, and a detachment of the Yellow Dragoons, had charge of Fort Galifet; the detachment was commanded by a non-commissioned officer, to whose brother I had once had the good fortune to render an important service, and who therefore was entirely devoted to me.

(Here the listeners at once pronounced the name of Thaddeus.)

You are right, gentlemen (replied the captain), and as you may well believe, I had not much trouble in penetrating to the cell in which the negro was confined. As a captain in the militia, I had of course the right to visit the fort; but to evade the suspicions of my uncle, whose rage was still unabated, I took care to go there at the time of his noonday *siesta*. All the soldiers too, except those on guard, were asleep, and guided by Thaddeus I came to the door of the cell. He opened it for me, and then discreetly retired.

The negro was seated on the ground, for, on account of his height, he could not stand upright. He was not alone, an enormous dog was crouched at his feet, which rose with a growl, and moved toward me.

“Rask,” cried the negro.

The dog ceased growling, and again laid down at his master’s feet, and began eating some coarse food.

I was in uniform, and the daylight that came through the loophole in the wall of the cell was so feeble that Pierrot could not recognize my features.

“I am ready,” said he, in a clear voice.

“I thought,” remarked I, surprised at the ease with which he moved, “that you were in irons.”

He kicked something that jingled.

“Irons; oh, I broke them.”

There was something in the tone in which he uttered these words, that seemed to say, “I was not born to wear fetters.”

I continued: “I did not know that they had permitted you to have a dog with you.”

“They did not allow it; I brought him in.”

I was more and more astonished. Three bolts closed the door on the outside, the loophole was scarcely six inches in width, and had two iron bars across it.

He seemed to divine my thoughts, and raising as nearly erect as the low roof would permit, he pulled out with ease a large stone placed under the loophole, removed the iron bars, and displayed an opening sufficiently large to permit two men to pass through. This opening looked upon a grove of bananas and cocoa-nut trees which covered the hill upon which the fort was built.

Surprise rendered me dumb; at that moment a ray of light fell on my face. The prisoner started as if he had accidentally trodden upon a snake, and his head struck against the ceiling of the cell. A strange mixture of opposing feelings passed over his face—hatred, kindness, and astonishment were all mingled together; but recovering himself with an effort, his face once more became cold and calm, and he gazed upon me as if I was entirely unknown to him.

“I can live two days more without eating,” said he.

I saw how thin he had become, and made a movement of horror.

He continued, “My dog will only eat from my hand, and had I not enlarged the loophole, poor Rask would have died of hunger. It is better that he should live, for I know that I am condemned to death.”

“No,” I said; “no, you shall not die of hunger.”

He misunderstood me.

“Very well,” answered he, with a bitter smile, “I could have lived two days yet without food, but I am ready: to-day is as good as to-morrow. Do not hurt Rask.”

Then I understood what he meant when he said "I am ready." Accused of a crime the punishment of which was death, he believed that I had come to announce his immediate execution; and yet this man endowed with herculean strength, with all the avenues of escape open to him, had in a calm and childlike manner repeated "I am ready!"

"Do not hurt Rask," said he, once more.

I could restrain myself no longer.

"What!" I exclaimed, "not only do you take me for your executioner, but you think so meanly of my humanity, that you believe I would injure this poor dog, who has never done me any harm!"

His manner softened, and there was a slight tremor in his voice as he offered me his hand, saying,

"White man, pardon me, but I love my dog, and your race have cruelly injured me."

I embraced him, I clasped his hand, I did my best to undeceive him.

"Do you not know me?" asked I.

"I know that you are white, and that a negro is nothing in the eyes of men of your colour; besides you have injured me."

"In what manner?" exclaimed I, in surprise.

"Have you not twice saved my life?"

This strange accusation made me smile; he perceived it, and smiled bitterly.

"Yes, I know it too well: once you saved my life from an alligator, and once from a planter, and what is worse I am denied the right to hate you, I am very unhappy."

The strangeness of his language and of his ideas surprised me no longer; it was in harmony with himself.

"I owe more to you than you can owe to me. I owe you the life of Marie, of my betrothed."

He started as though he had received some terrible shock. "Marie!" repeated he in stilled tones, and his face fell in his hands which trembled violently, whilst his bosom rose and fell with heavy sighs.

I must confess that once again my suspicions were aroused, but this time there were no feelings of anger or jealousy. I was too near my happiness, and he was trembling upon the brink of death, so that I could not for a moment look upon him as a rival, and even had I done so, his forlorn condition would have excited my compassion and sympathy.

At last he raised his head.

“Go,” said he; “do not thank me.”

After a pause he added, “And yet my rank is as lofty as your own.”

These last words roused my curiosity, I urged him to tell me of his position, and his sufferings, but he maintained an obstinate silence.

My proceedings, however, had touched his heart, and my entreaties appeared to have vanquished his distaste for life. He left his cell, and in a short time returned with some bananas and a large cocoa-nut. Then he reclosed the opening and began to eat. As we conversed, I remarked that he spoke French and Spanish with equal facility, and that his education had not been entirely neglected. He knew many Spanish songs, which he sang with great feeling. Altogether he was a mystery that I endeavoured in vain to solve, for he would give me no key to the riddle. At last, with regret, I was compelled to leave him, after having urged on my faithful Thaddeus to permit him every possible indulgence.

CHAPTER X.

Every day at the same hour I visited him. His position rendered me very uneasy, for in spite of all our prayers, my uncle obstinately refused to withdraw his complaint. I did not conceal my fears from Pierrot, who however listened to them with indifference.

Often Rask would come in with a large palm-leaf tied round his neck. His master would take it off, read some lines traced upon it in an unknown language, and then tear it up. I had ceased to question him in any matters connected with himself.

One day as I entered he took no notice of me, he was seated with his back to the door of the cell, and was whistling in melancholy mood the Spanish air, “Yo que soy contrabandista” (“A smuggler am I”). When he had completed it, he turned sharply round to me, and exclaimed—

“Brother, if you ever doubt me, promise that you will cast aside all suspicion on hearing me sing this air.”

His look was earnest, and I promised what he asked, without noticing the words upon which he laid so much stress, "*If ever you doubt me*." He took the empty half of a cocoa-nut which he had brought in on the day of my first visit, and had preserved ever since, filled it which palm wine, begged me to put my lips to it, and then drank it off at a draught. From that day he always called me *brother*.

And now I began to cherish a hope of saving Pierrot's life. My uncle's anger had cooled down a little. The preparations for the festivities, connected with his daughter's wedding had caused his feelings to flow in gentle channels. Marie joined her entreaties to mine. Each day I pointed out to him that Pierrot had had no desire to insult him, but had merely interposed to prevent him from committing an act of perhaps too great severity; that the negro had at the risk of his life saved Marie from the alligator; and besides, Pierrot was the strongest of all his slaves (for now I sought to save his life not to obtain his liberty), that he was able to do the work of ten men, and that his single arm was sufficient to put the rollers of a sugar-mill in motion. My uncle listened to me calmly, and once or twice hinted that he might not follow up his complaint.

I did not say a word to the negro of the change that had taken place, hoping that I should soon be the messenger to announce to him his restoration to liberty.

What astonished me greatly was, that though he believed that he was under sentence of death, yet he made no effort to avail himself of the means of escape that lay in his power. I spoke to him of this.

"I am forced to remain," said he simply, "or they would think that I was afraid."

CHAPTER XI.

One morning Marie came to me, she was radiant with happiness, and upon her gentle face was a sweeter expression than even the joys of pure love could produce, for written upon it was the knowledge of a good deed.

"Listen," said she. "In three days we shall be married. We shall soon——"

I interrupted her.

"Do not say *soon*, Marie, when there is yet an interval of three days."

She blushed and smiled.

"Do not be foolish, Leopold," replied she. "An idea has struck me which has made me very happy. You know that yesterday I went to town with my father to buy all sort's of things for our wedding. I only care for jewels because you say that they become me. I

would give all my pearls for a single flower from the bouquet which that odious man with the marigolds destroyed. But that is not what I meant to say. My father wished to buy me everything that I admired, and amongst other things there was a *basquina* of Chinese satin embroidered with flowers, which I admired. It was very expensive. My father noticed that the dress had attracted my attention. As we were returning home, I begged him to promise me a boon after the manner of the knights of old—you know how he delights to be compared to them. He vowed on his honour that he would grant me whatever I asked, thinking of course that it was the *basquina* of Chinese satin; but no, it is Pierrot's pardon that I will ask for as my nuptial present."

I could not refrain from embracing her tenderly. My uncle's word was sacred, and whilst Marie ran to him to claim its fulfilment, I hastened to Fort Galifet to convey the glad news to Pierrot.

"Brother," exclaimed I, as I entered, "Rejoice, your life is safe; Marie has obtained it as a wedding present from her father."

The slave shuddered.

"Marie—wedding—my life! What reference have these things to each other?"

"It is very simple," answered I. "Marie, whose life you saved, is to be married——."

"To whom?" exclaimed the negro, a terrible change coming over his face.

"Did you not know that she was to be married to me?"

His features relaxed.

"Ah, yes," he replied; "and when is the marriage to take place?"

"On August the 22nd."

"On August the 22nd! Are you mad?" cried he, with terror painted in his countenance.

He stopped abruptly; I looked at him with astonishment. After a short pause he clasped my hand—

"Brother," said he, "I owe you so much that I must give you a warning. Trust to me, take up your residence in Cap, and get married before the 22nd."

In vain I entreated him to explain his mysterious wards.

"Farewell," said he, in solemn tones; "I have perhaps said too much, but I hate ingratitude even more than perjury."

I left the prison a prey to feelings of great uneasiness; but all these were soon effaced by the thoughts of my approaching happiness.

That very day my uncle withdrew his charge, and I returned to the Fort to release Pierrot. Thaddeus, on hearing the noise, accompanied me to the prisoner's cell, but he was gone! Rask alone remained, and came up to me wagging his tail. To his neck was fastened a palm-leaf, upon which were written these words: "Thanks; for the third time you have saved my life. Do not forget your promise, friend;" whilst underneath, in lieu of signature, were the words: "Yo que soy contrabandista."

Thaddeus was even more astonished than I was, for he was ignorant of the enlargement of the loophole, and firmly believed that the negro had changed himself into a dog. I allowed him to remain in this belief, contenting myself with making him promise to say nothing of what he had seen. I wished to take Rask home with me, but on leaving the Fort he plunged into a thicket and disappeared.

CHAPTER XII.

My uncle was furiously enraged at the escape of the negro. He ordered a diligent search to be made for him, and wrote to the Governor placing Pierrot entirely at his disposal should he be re-taken.

The 22nd of August arrived. My union with Maria was celebrated with every species of rejoicing at the parish church of Acul. How happily did that day commence from which all our misfortunes were to date!

I was intoxicated with my happiness, and Pierrot and his mysterious warning were entirely banished from my thoughts. At last the day came to a close, and my wife had retired to her apartments; but for a time duty forbade me joining her there. My position as a captain of militia required me that evening to make the round of the guards posted about Acul. This nightly precaution was absolutely necessary owing to the disturbed state of the colony, caused by occasional outbreaks amongst the negroes, which, however, had been promptly repressed. My uncle was the first to recall me to the recollection of my duty. I had no option but to yield, and, putting on my uniform, I went out. I visited the first few guards without discovering any cause of alarm; but towards midnight, as half buried in my own thoughts I was patrolling the shores of the bay, I perceived upon the horizon a ruddy light in the direction of Limonade and Saint Louis du Morin. At first my escort attributed it to some accidental conflagration; but in a few moments the flames became so vivid, and the smoke rising before the wind grew so thick, that I ordered an immediate return to the Fort to give the alarm, and to request that help might be sent in the direction of the fire.

In passing through the quarters of the negroes who belonged to our estate, I was surprised at the extreme disorder that reigned there. The majority of the slaves were afoot, and were talking together with great earnestness. One strange word was pronounced with the greatest respect—it was *Bug-Jargal*—and occurred continually in the almost unintelligible dialect that they used.

From a word or two which I gathered here and there, I learned that the negroes of the northern districts were in open revolt, and had set fire to the dwelling-houses and the plantations on the other side of Cap.

Passing through a marshy spot, I discovered a quantity of axes and other tools, which would serve as weapons, hidden amongst the reeds. My suspicions were now thoroughly aroused, and I ordered the whole of the Acul militia to get under arms, and gave the command to my lieutenant, and, whilst my poor Marie was expecting me, I, obeying my uncle's orders, who, as I have mentioned, was a member of the Provincial Assembly, took the road to Cap, with such soldiers as I had been able to muster. I shall never forget the appearance of the town as we approached. The flames from the plantations which were burning all around it, threw a lurid light upon the scene, which was only partially obscured by the clouds of smoke which the wind drove into the narrow streets. Immense masses of sparks rose from the burning heaps of sugar-cane, and fell like fiery snow on the roofs of the houses, and on the rigging of the vessels at anchor in the roadsteads, at every moment threatening the town of Cap with as serious a conflagration as was already raging in its immediate neighbourhood. It was a terrible sight to witness the terror-stricken inhabitants exposing their lives to preserve from so destructive a visitant their habitations, which perhaps was the last portion of property left to them; whilst, on the other hand, the vessels, taking advantage of a fair wind, and fearing the same fate, had already set sail, and were gliding over an ocean reddened by the flames of the conflagration.

CHAPTER XIII.

Stunned by the noise of the minute-guns from the Fort, by the cries of the fugitives, and the distant crash of falling buildings, I did not know in what direction to lead my men; but, meeting in the main square the captain of the Yellow Dragoons, he advised me to proceed direct to the Governor.

Other hands have painted the disasters of Cap, and I must pass quickly over my recollections of them, written as they are in fire and blood. I will content myself with saying that the insurgent slaves were already masters of Dondon, of Terrier-Rouge, of the town of Ouanaminte, and of the plantation of Limbé. This last news filled me with uneasiness, owing to the proximity of Limbé to Acul. I made all speed to the

Government House. All was in confusion there. I asked for orders, and begged that instant measures might be taken for the security of Acul, which I feared the insurgents were already threatening. With the Governor, Monsieur de Blanchelande, were M. de Rouvray, the Brigadier, and one of the largest landholders in Cap; M. de Touzard, the Lieutenant-Colonel of the Regiment of Cap; a great many members of the Colonial and the Provincial Assemblies, and numbers of the leading colonists. As I entered, all were engaged in a confused argument.

"Your Excellency," said a member of the Provincial Assembly, "it is only too true, it is the negroes, and not the free mulattoes; it has often been pointed out that there was danger in that direction."

"You make that statement without believing in its truth," answered a member of the Colonial Assembly, bitterly, "and you only say it to gain credit at our expense. So far from expecting a rising of the slaves, you got up a sham one in 1789. A ridiculous farce in which with a supposed insurgent force of three thousand slaves, *one* national volunteer only was killed, and that most likely by his own comrades."

"I repeat," replied the *Provincial*, "that we can see farther than you. It is only natural. We remain upon the spot and study the minutest details of the colony, whilst you and your Assembly hurry off to France to make some absurd proposals; which are often met with a national reprimand *Ridiculus mus*."

The member of the Colonial Assembly answered with a sneer—

"Our fellow citizens re-elected us all without hesitation."

"It was your Assembly," retorted the other, "that caused the execution of that poor devil who neglected to wear a tricolored cockade in a *café*, and who commenced a petition for capital punishment to be inflicted on the mulatto Lacombe with that worn-out phrase, 'In the name of the Father, of the Son, and the Holy Ghost.' "

"It is false," exclaimed the other; "there has always been a struggle of principles against privileges between our assemblies."

"Ha, Monsieur, I see now you are an *Independent*."

"That is tantamount to allowing that you are in favour of the *White Cockade*: I leave you to get out of that confession as best you may."

More might have passed, but the Governor interposed.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, what has this to do with the present state of affairs, and the pressing danger that threatens us? Listen to the reports that I have received. The revolt

began this night at ten o’clock amongst the slaves in the Turpin Plantation. The negroes, headed by an English slave named Bouckmann, were joined by the blacks from Clement, Trémés, Flaville, and Nöe. They set fire to all the plantations, and massacred the colonists with the most unheard-of barbarities. By one single detail I can make you comprehend all the horrors accompanying this insurrection. The standard of the insurgents is the body of a white child on the point of a pike.”

A general cry of horror interrupted the Governor’s statement.

“So much,” continued he, “for what has passed outside the town. Within its limits all is confusion. Fear has rendered many of the inhabitants forgetful of the duties of humanity, and they have murdered their slaves. Nearly every one have confined their negroes behind bolts and bars. The white artisans accuse the free mulattoes of being participators in the revolt, and many have had great difficulty in escaping from the fury of the populace. I have had to grant them a place of refuge in a church, guarded by a regiment of soldiers; and now, to prove that they have nothing in common with the insurgents, they asked that they may be armed and led against the rebels.”

“Do nothing of the kind, your Excellency,” cried a voice which I recognized as that of the planter with whom I had had a duel. “Do nothing of the kind; give no arms to the mulattoes.”

“What, do you not want to fight?” asked a planter, with a sneer.

The other did not appear to hear him, and continued: “These men of mixed blood are our worst enemies, and we must take every precaution against them. It is from that quarter that the insurgents are recruited; the negroes have but little to do with the rising.” The poor wretch hoped by his abuse of the mulattoes to prove that he had nothing in common with them, and to clear himself from the imputation of having black blood in his veins; but the attempt was too barefaced, and a murmur of disgust rose up on all sides.

“Yes,” said M. de Rouvray, “the slaves *have* something to do with it, for they are forty to one; and we should be in a serious plight if we could only oppose the negroes and the mulattoes with whites like you.”

The planter bit his lips.

“General,” said the Governor, “what answer shall be given to the petition: shall the mulattoes have the arms?”

“Give them weapons, your Excellency; let us make use of every willing hand. And you, sir,” he added, turning to the colonist of doubtful colour. “Go arm yourself, and join your comrades.”

The humiliated planter slunk away, filled with concentrated rage.

But the cries of distress which rang through the town reached even to the chamber in which the council was being held. M. de Blanchelande hastily pencilled a few words upon a slip of paper, and handed it to one of his aides-de-camp, who at once left the room.

“Gentlemen, the mulattoes will receive arms; but there are many more questions to be settled.”

“The Provincial Assembly should at once be convoked,” said the planter who had been speaking when first I entered.

“The Provincial Assembly?” retorted his antagonist; “what is the Provincial Assembly?”

“You do not know because you are a member of the Colonial Assembly,” replied the favourer of the *White Cockade*.

The *Independent* interrupted him. “I know no more of the Colonial than the Provincial—I only recognize the General Assembly.”

“Gentlemen,” exclaimed a planter, “whilst we are losing time with this nonsense, tell me what is to become of my cotton and my cochineal?”

“And my indigo at Lumbé?”

“And my negroes, for whom I paid twenty dollars a-head all round?” said the captain of a slave ship.

“Each minute that you waste,” continued another colonist, “costs me ten quintals of sugar, which at seventeen piastres the quintal makes one hundred and thirty livres, ten sous, in French money, by the——”

Here the rival upholders of the two Assemblies again sought to renew their argument.

“Morbleu,” said M. de Rouvray in a voice of thunder, striking the table violently, “what eternal talkers you are! What do we care about your two assemblies. Summon both of them, your Excellency, and I will form them into two regiments, and when they march against the negroes we shall see whether their tongues or their muskets make the most noise.”

Then turning towards me he whispered—

“Between the two Assemblies and the Governor nothing can be done. These fine talkers spoil all, as they do in Paris. If I was seated in his Excellency’s chair, I would throw all these fellows out of the window, and with my soldiers and a dozen crosses of St. Louis to promise, I would sweep away all the rebels in the island. These fictitious ideas of liberty, which they have all run mad after in France, do not do out here. Negroes should be treated so as not to upset them entirely by sudden liberation; all the terrible events of to-day are merely the result of this utterly mistaken policy, and this rising of the slaves is the natural result of the taking of the Bastille.”

Whilst the old soldier thus explained to me his views—a little narrow-minded perhaps, but full of the frankness of conviction—the stormy argument was at its height. A certain planter, one amongst the few who were bitten with the rabid mania of the revolution, and who called himself Citizen General C——, because he had assisted at a few sanguinary executions, exclaimed—

“We must have punishments rather than battles. Every nation must exist by terrible examples; let us terrify the negroes. It was I who quieted the slaves during the risings of June and July by lining the approach to my house with a double row of negro heads. Let each one join me in this, and let us defend the entrances to Cap with the slaves who are still in our hands.”

“How?” “What do you mean?” “Folly,” “The height of imprudence,” was heard on all sides.

“You do not understand me, gentlemen. Let us make a ring of negro heads, from Fort Picolet to Point Caracole. The rebels, their comrades, will not then dare to approach us. I have five hundred slaves who have remained faithful—I offer them at once.”

This abominable proposal was received with a cry of horror.

“It is infamous! It is too disgusting!” was repeated by at least a dozen voices.

“Extreme steps of this sort have brought us to the verge of destruction,” said a planter. “If the execution of the insurgents of June and July had not been so hurried on, we should have held in our hands the clue to the conspiracy, which the axe of the executioner divided for ever.”

Citizen C—— was silenced for a moment by this outburst; then in an injured tone he muttered—

“I did not think that *I*, above all others, should have been suspected of cruelty. Why, all my life I have been mixed up with the lovers of the negro race. I am in correspondence with Briscot and Pruneau de Pomme-Gouge, in France; with Hans Sloane, in England; with Magaw, in America; with Pezll, in Germany; with Olivarius, in Denmark; with Wadstiörn, in Sweden; with Peter Paulus, in Holland; with Avendaño, in Spain; and with the Abbé Pierre Tamburini, in Italy!”

His voice rose as he ran through the names of his correspondents amongst the lovers of the African race, and he terminated his speech with the contemptuous remark—

“But, after all, there are no true philosophers here.”

For the third time M. de Blanchelande asked if any one had anything further to propose.

“Your Excellency,” cried one, “let us embark on board the *Leopard*, which lies at anchor off the quay.”

“Let us put a price on the head of Bouckmann,” exclaimed another.

“Send a report of what has taken place to the Governor of Jamaica,” suggested a third.

“A good idea, so that he may again send us the ironical help of five hundred muskets!” sneered a member of the Provincial Assembly. “Your Excellency, let us send the news to France, and wait for a reply.”

“Wait—a likely thing indeed,” exclaimed M. de Rouvray; “and do you think that the blacks will wait, eh? And the flames that encircle our town, do you think that they will wait? Your Excellency, let the tocsin be sounded, and send dragoons and grenadiers in search of the main body of the rebels. Form a camp in the eastern division of the island; plant military posts at Trou and at Vallieres. I will take charge of the plain of Dauphin; but let us lose no more time, for the moment for action has arrived.”

The bold and energetic speech of the veteran soldier hushed all differences of opinion. The general had acted wisely. That secret knowledge which every one possesses most conducive to his own interests, caused all to support the proposal of General de Rouvray; and whilst the Governor with a warm clasp of the hand showed his old friend that his counsels had been appreciated, though they had been given in rather a dictatorial manner, the colonists urged for the immediate carrying out of the proposals.

I seized the opportunity to obtain from M. de Blanchelande the permission that I so ardently desired, and, leaving the room, mustered my company in order to return to

Acul—though, with the exception of myself, all were worn out with the fatigue of their late march.

CHAPTER XIV.

Day began to break as I entered the market-place of the town, and began to rouse up the soldiers, who were lying about in all directions wrapped in their cloaks, and mingled pell-mell with the Red and Yellow Dragoons, fugitives from the country, cattle bellowing, and property of every description sent in for security by the planters. In the midst of all this confusion I began to pick out my men, when I saw a private in the Yellow Dragoons, covered with dust and perspiration, ride up at full speed. I hastened to meet him, and in a few broken words he informed me that my fears were realized—that the insurrection had spread to Acul, and that the negroes were besieging Fort Galifet, in which the planters and the militia had taken refuge. I must tell you that this fort was by no means a strong one, for in St. Domingo they dignify the slightest earthwork with the name of fort.

There was not a moment to be lost. I mounted as many of my soldiers as I could procure horses for, and taking the dragoon as a guide, I reached my uncle’s plantation about ten o’clock. I scarcely cast a glance at the enormous estate, which was nothing but a sea of flame, over which hovered huge clouds of smoke, through which every now and then the wind bore trunks of trees covered with sparks. A terrible rustling and crackling sound seemed to reply to the distant yells of the negroes which we now began to hear, though we could not as yet see them. The destruction of all this wealth, which would eventually have become mine, did not cause me a moment’s regret. All I thought of was the safety of Marie—what mattered anything else in the world to me? I knew that she had taken refuge in the fort, and I prayed to God that I might arrive in time to rescue her. This hope sustained me through all the anxiety I felt, and gave me the strength and courage of a lion. At length a turn in the road permitted us to see the fort. The tricolour yet floated on its walls, and a well-sustained fire was kept up by the garrison. I uttered a shout of joy. “Gallop, spur on!” said I to my men, and redoubling our pace we dashed across the fields in the direction of the scene of action.

Near the fort I could see my uncle’s house; the doors and windows were dashed in, but the walls still stood, and shone red with the reflected glare of the flames, which, owing to the wind being in a contrary direction, had not yet reached the building.

A crowd of the insurgents had taken possession of the house, and showed themselves at the windows and on the roof. I could see the glare of torches and the gleam of pikes and axes, whilst a brisk fire of musketry was kept up on the fort.

Another strong body of negroes had placed ladders against the walls of the fort and strove to take it by assault, though many fell under the well-directed fire of the defenders.

These black men always returning to the charge after each repulse, looked like a swarm of ants endeavouring to scale the shell of a tortoise, and shaken off by each movement of the sluggish reptile.

We reached the outworks of the fort, our eyes fixed upon the banner which still floated above it. I called upon my men to remember that their wives and children were shut up within those walls, and I urged them to fly to their rescue. A general cheer was the reply, and, forming column, I was on the point of giving the order to charge, when a loud yell was heard, a cloud of smoke enveloped the fort, and for a time concealed it from our sight; a roar was heard like that of a furnace in full blast, and as it cleared away we saw a red flag floating proudly above the dismantled walls. All was over. Fort Galifet was in the hands of the insurgents.

CHAPTER XV.

I cannot tell you what my feelings were at this terrible spectacle. The fort was taken, its defenders slain, and twenty families massacred; but I confess, to my shame, that I thought not of this. Marie was lost to me—lost, after having been made mine but a few brief hours before. Lost, perhaps, through my fault, for had I not obeyed the orders of my uncle in going to Cap I should have been by her side to defend her, or at least to die with her. These thoughts raised my grief to madness, for my despair was born of remorse.

However, my men were maddened at the sight. With a shout of “Revenge,” with sabres between their teeth and pistols in either hand, they burst into the ranks of the victorious insurgents. Although far superior in numbers the negroes fled at their approach; but we could see them on our right and left, before and behind us, slaughtering the colonists, and casting fuel on the flames. Our rage was increased by their cowardly conduct.

Thaddeus, covered with wounds, made his escape through a postern gate. “Captain,” said he, “your Pierrot is a sorcerer, an *obi* as these infernal negroes call him—a devil, I say. We were holding our position, you were coming up fast; all seemed saved—when by some means, which I do not know, he penetrated into the fort, and there was an end of us. As for your uncle and Madam——”

“Marie,” interrupted I, “where is Marie?”

At this instant a tall black burst through a blazing fence, carrying in his arms a young woman who shrieked and struggled: it was Marie, and the negro was Pierrot!

“Traitor,” cried I.

I fired my pistol at him; one of the rebels threw himself in the way, and fell dead. Pierrot turned, and addressed a few words to me which I did not catch; and then grasping his prey tighter, dashed into a mass of burning sugar-canes. A moment afterwards a huge dog passed me, carrying in his mouth a cradle in which lay my uncle’s youngest child. Transported with rage, I fired my second pistol at him; but it missed fire. Like a madman I followed on their tracks; but my night march, the hours that I had spent without taking rest or food, my fears for Marie, and the sudden fall from the height of happiness to the depth of misery, had worn me out. After a few steps I staggered, a cloud seemed to come over me, and I fell senseless.

CHAPTER XVI.

When I recovered my senses I found myself in my uncle’s ruined house, supported in the arms of my faithful Thaddeus, who gazed upon me with an expression of the deepest anxiety. “Victory!” exclaimed he, as he felt my pulse begin to beat. “Victory! the negroes are in full retreat and my captain has come to life again.”

I interrupted his exclamations of joy by putting the only question in which I had any interest.

“Where is Marie?”

I had not yet collected my scattered ideas: I felt my misfortune, without the recollection of it. At my question Thaddeus hung his head.

Then my memory returned to me, and, like a hideous dream, I recalled once more the terrible nuptial day, and the tall negro bearing away Marie through the flames.

The flame of rebellion which had broken out in the colony caused the whites to look on the blacks as their mortal enemies, and made me see in Pierrot, the good, the generous, and the devoted, who owed his life three times to me, a monster of ingratitude and a rival.

The carrying off of my wife on the very night of our nuptials proved too plainly to me, what I had at first only suspected, and I now knew that the singer of the wood was the wretch who had torn my wife from me. In a few hours how great a change had taken place.

Thaddeus told me that he had vainly pursued Pierrot and his dog when the negroes, in spite of their numbers, retired, and that the destruction of my uncle's property still continued, without the possibility of its being arrested.

I asked what had become of my uncle. He took my hand in silence and led me to a bed, the curtains of which he drew.

My unhappy uncle was there, stretched upon his blood-stained couch, with a dagger driven deeply into his heart. By the tranquil expression of his face it was easy to see that the blow had been struck during his sleep.

The bed of the dwarf Habibrah, who always slept at the foot of his master's couch, was also profusely stained with gore, and the same crimson traces could be seen upon the laced coat of the poor fool, cast upon the floor a few paces from the bed.

I did not hesitate for a moment in believing that the dwarf had died a victim to his affection for my uncle, and that he had been murdered by his comrades, perhaps in the effort to defend his master. I reproached myself bitterly for the prejudice which had caused me to form so erroneous an estimate of the characters of Pierrot and Habibrah; and of the tears I shed at the tragic fate of my uncle, some were dedicated to the end of the faithful fool.

By my orders his body was carefully searched for, but all in vain, and I imagined that the negroes had cast the body into the flames; and I gave instructions that, in the funeral service over my uncle's remains, prayers should be said for the repose of the soul of the devoted Habibrah.

CHAPTER XVII.

Fort Galifet had been destroyed, our house was in ruins; it was useless to linger there any longer, so that evening I returned to Cap. On my arrival there I was seized with a severe fever. The effort that I had made to overcome my despair had been too violent; the spring had been bent too far and had snapped. Delirium came on. My broken hopes, my profound love, my lost future, and, above all, the torments of jealousy, made my brain reel.

It seemed as if fire flowed in my veins; my head seemed ready to burst, and my bosom was filled with rage. I pictured to myself Marie in the arms of another lover, subject to the power of a master, of a slave, of Pierrot! They told me afterwards that I sprang from my bed, and that it took six men to prevent me from dashing out my brains against the wall. Why did I not die then?

The crisis, however, passed. The doctors, the care and attention of Thaddeus, and the latent powers of youth, conquered the malady; would that it had not done so. At the end of ten days I was sufficiently recovered to lay aside grief, and to live for vengeance.

Hardly arrived at a state of convalescence, I went to M. de Blanchelande, and asked for employment. At first he wished to give me the command of some fortified post, but I begged him to attach me to one of the flying columns, which from time to time were sent out to sweep those districts in which the insurgents had congregated. Cap had been hastily put in a position of defence, for the revolt had made terrible progress, and the negroes of Port au Prince had begun to show symptoms of disaffection. Biassou was in command of the insurgents at Lumbé, Dondon, and Acul; Jean François had proclaimed himself generalissimo of the rebels of Maribarou, and Bouckmann, whose tragic fate afterwards gave him a certain celebrity, with his brigands ravaged the plains of Limonade; and lastly, the bands of Morne-Rouge had elected for their chief a negro called Bug-Jargal.

If report was to be believed, the disposition of this man contrasted very favourably with the ferocity of the other chiefs. Whilst Bouckmann and Biassou invented a thousand different methods of death for such prisoners as fell into their hands, Bug-Jargal was always ready to supply them with the means of quitting the island. M. Colas de Marjue, and eight other distinguished colonists, were by his orders released from the terrible death of the wheel to which Bouckmann had condemned them, and many other instances of his humanity were cited, which I have not time to repeat.

My hoped for vengeance, however, still appeared to be far removed. I could hear nothing of Pierrot. The insurgents commanded by Biassou continued to give us trouble at Cap; they had once even endeavoured to take position on a hill that commanded the town, and had only been dislodged by the battery from the citadel being directed upon them.

The Governor had therefore determined to drive them into the interior of the island. The militia of Acul, of Lumbé, of Ouanaminte, and of Maribarou, joined with the regiment of Cap, and the Red and Yellow Dragoons, formed one army of attack; whilst the corps of volunteers under the command of the merchant Poncignon, with the militia of Dondon and Quartier-Dauphin, composed the garrison of the town.

The Governor desired first to free himself from Bug-Jargal, whose incursions kept the garrison constantly on the alert, and he sent against him the militia of Ouanaminte, and a battalion of the regiment of Cap. Two days afterwards the expedition returned, having sustained a severe defeat at the hands of Bug-Jargal. The Governor, however,

determined to persevere, and a fresh column was sent out with fifty of the Yellow Dragoons and four hundred of the militia of Maribarou. This second expedition met with even less success than the first. Thaddeus, who had taken part in it, was in a violent fury, and upon his return vowed vengeance against the rebel chief Bug-Jargal.

* * * * * *

A tear glistened in the eyes of D'Auverney; he crossed his arms on his breast, and appeared to be for a few moments plunged in a melancholy reverie. At length he continued.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The news had reached us that Bug-Jargal had left Morne-Rouge, and was moving through the mountains to effect a junction with the troops of Biassou. The Governor could not conceal his delight. "We have them," cried he, rubbing his hands. "They are in our power."

By the next morning the colonial forces had marched some four miles to the front of Cap. At our approach the insurgents hastily retired from the positions which they had occupied at Port-Mayat and Fort Galifet, and in which they had planted siege guns which they had captured in one of the batteries on the coast. The Governor was triumphant, and by his orders we continued our advance. As we passed through the arid plains and the ruined plantations, many a one cast an eager glance in search of the spot which was once his home, but in too many cases the foot of the destroyer had left no traces behind. Sometimes our march was interrupted by the conflagration having spread from the lands under cultivation, to the virgin forests.

In these regions, where the land is untilled and the vegetation abundant, the burning of a forest is accompanied with many strange phenomena. Far off, long before the eye can catch the cause, a sound is heard like the rush of a cataract over opposing rocks, the trunks of the trees flame out with a sudden crash, the branches crackle, and the roots beneath the soil all contribute to the extraordinary uproar. The lakes and the marshes in the interior of the forests boil with the heat. The hoarse roar of the coming flame stills the air, causing a dull sound, sometimes increasing and sometimes diminishing in intensity as the conflagration sweeps on or recedes. Occasionally a glimpse can be caught of a clump of trees surrounded by a belt of fire, but as yet untouched by the flames; then a narrow streak of fire curls round the stems, and in another instant the whole becomes one mass of gold-coloured fire; then up rises the column of smoke driven here and there by the breeze. It takes a thousand fantastic forms, spreads itself out, diminishes in an instant; at one moment it is gone, in

another it returns with greater density; then all becomes a thick black cloud, with a fringe of sparks, a terrible sound is heard, the sparks disappear, and the smoke ascends, disappearing at last in a mass of red ashes, which sink down slowly upon the blackened ground.

CHAPTER XIX.

On the evening of the third day of our march, we entered the ravines of Grande-Riviere; we calculated that the negro army was some twenty leagues off in the mountains.

We pitched our camp on a low hill, which appeared to have been used for the same purpose before, as the grass had been trodden down and the brushwood cut away. It was not a judicious position in a strategical point of view, but we deemed ourselves perfectly secure from attack. The hill was commanded on all sides by steep mountains clothed with thick forests—the precipitous sides of these hills had given the mountains the name of the *Dompté-Mulâtre*. The Grande-Riviere flowed behind our camp; confined within steep banks, it was just about here very deep and rapid. The sides were hidden with thickets, through which nothing could be seen. The waters of the stream itself were frequently concealed by masses of creeping plants, hanging from the branches of the flowering maples, which had sprung up at intervals in the jungle, crossing and recrossing the stream, and forming a tangled net-work of living verdure. From the heights of the adjacent hills they appeared like meadows still fresh with dew, whilst every now and then a dull splash could be heard as a teal plunged through the flower-decked curtain, and showed in which direction the river lay. By degrees the sun ceased to gild the crested peaks of the distant mountains of Dondon; little by little darkness spread its mantle over the camp, and the silence was only broken by the cry of the night-bird, or by the measured tread of the sentinels.

Suddenly the dreaded war-songs of “*Oua-Nassé*” and of “The Camp of the Great Meadow” were heard above our heads; the palms, the acomas, and the cedars, which crowned the summits of the rocks, burst into flames, and the lurid light of the conflagration showed us numerous bands of negroes and mulattoes, whose copper-hued skins glowed red in the firelight upon the neighbouring hills. It was the army of Biassou.

The danger was imminent. The officers, aroused from their sleep, endeavoured to rally their men. The drum beat the “Assembly,” whilst the bugles sounded the “Alarm.” Our men fell in hurriedly and in confusion; but the insurgents, instead of taking advantage of our disorder, remained motionless, gazing upon us, and continuing their song of “*Oua-Nassé*.”

A gigantic negro appeared alone on one of the peaks that overhung the Grande-Riviere, a flame-coloured plume floated on his head; he held an axe in his right hand and a blood-red banner in his left.

I recognized Pierrot.

Had a carbine been within my reach I should have fired at him, cowardly although the act might have been.

The negro repeated the chorus of "*Oua-Nassé*," planted his standard on the highest portion of the rock, hurled his axe into the midst of our ranks, and plunged into the stream. A feeling of regret seized me; I had hoped to have slain him with my own hand.

Then the negroes began to hurl huge masses of rocks upon us, whilst showers of bullets and flights of arrows were poured upon our camp. Our soldiers, maddened at being unable to reach their adversaries, fell on all sides, crushed by the rocks, riddled with bullets, and transfixed by arrows.

The army was rapidly falling into disorder.

Suddenly a terrible noise came from the centre of the stream.

The Yellow Dragoons, who had suffered most from the shower of rocks, had conceived the idea of taking refuge under the thick roof of creepers which grew over the river. It was Thaddeus who had at first discovered this——

Here the narrative was suddenly interrupted.

CHAPTER XX.

More than a quarter of a hour had elapsed since Thaddeus, his arm in a sling, had glided into the tent without any of the listeners noticing his arrival, and, taking up his position in a remote corner, he had by occasional gestures expressed the interest that he took in his captain's narrative; but at last, considering that this direct allusion to himself ought not to be permitted to pass without some acknowledgement on his part, he stammered out—

"You are too good, captain."

A general burst of laughter followed this speech, and D'Auverney, turning towards him, exclaimed severely—

"What, Thaddeus, you here?—and your arm?"

On being addressed in so unaccustomed a tone, the features of the old soldier grew dark; he quivered, and threw back his head, as though to restrain the tears which seemed to struggle to his eyes.

“I never thought,” said he, in a low voice, “that you, captain, could have omitted to say *thou* when speaking to your old sergeant.”

“Pardon me, old friend,” answered the captain, quickly; “I hardly knew what I said. Thou wilt pardon me, wilt thou not?”

The tears sprang to the sergeant’s eyes in spite of his efforts to repress them.

“It is the third time,” remarked he—“but these are tears of joy.”

Peace was made, and a short silence ensued.

“But tell me, Thaddeus, why hast thou quitted the hospital to come here?” asked D’Auverney, gently.

“It was—with your permission, captain—to ask if I should put the laced saddle-cloth on the charger for to-morrow.”

Henri laughed. “You would have been wiser, Thaddeus, to have asked the surgeon-major if you should put two more pieces of lint on your arm,” said he.

“Or to ask,” continued Paschal, “if you might take a glass of wine to refresh yourself. At any rate, here is some brandy; taste it—it will do you good, my brave sergeant.”

Thaddeus advanced, saluted, and, apologizing for taking the glass with his left hand, emptied it to the health of the assembled company.

“You had got, captain, to the moment when—yes, I remember, it was I who proposed to take shelter under the creepers, to prevent our men being smashed by the rocks. Our officer, who did not know how to swim, was afraid of being drowned, and, as was natural, was dead against it until he saw—with your permission, gentlemen—a great rock fall on the creepers without being able to get through them. ‘It is better to die like Pharaoh than like St. Stephen,’ said he: ‘for we are not saints, and Pharaoh was a soldier like ourselves.’ The officer was a learned man, you see. And so he agreed to my proposal, on the condition that I should first try the experiment myself. Off I went; I slid down the bank and caught hold of the roof of creepers, when all of a sudden some one took a pull at my legs. I struggled, I shouted for help, and in a minute I received half a dozen sabre cuts. Down came the dragoons to help me, and there was a nice little skirmish under the creepers. The blacks of Morne-Rouge had hidden themselves there, never for a moment thinking that we should fall right on the top of them. This

was not the right time for fishing, I can tell you. We fought, we swore, we shouted. They had nothing particular on, and were able to move about in the water more easily than we were; but, on the other hand, our sabres had less to cut through. We swam with one hand and fought with the other. Those who could not swim, like my captain, hung on to the creepers, whilst the negroes pulled them by the legs. In the midst of the hullabaloo I saw a big negro fighting like Beelzebub against five or six of ours. I swam up to him, and I recognized Pierrot, otherwise called Bug——But I musn't tell that yet, must I, captain? Since the capture of the fort I owed him a grudge, so I took him hard and fast by the throat; he was going to rid himself of me by a thrust of his dagger, when he recognized me, and gave himself up at once. That was very unfortunate, was it not, captain? for if he had not surrendered, he would not——But you will know that later on, eh? When the blacks saw that he was taken they made a rush at me to get him off; when Pierrot, seeing no doubt that they would all lose their lives, said some gibberish or other, and in the twinkling of an eye they plunged into the water, and were out of sight in a moment. This fight in the water would have been pleasant enough if I had not lost a finger, and wetted ten cartridges, and if the poor man——but it was to be, was it not, captain?"

And the sergeant respectfully placed the back of his hand to his forage cap, and then raised it to heaven with the air of an inspired prophet.

D'Auverney was violently agitated.

"Yes," cried he, "thou art right, my old Thaddeus; that night was a fatal night for me."

He would have fallen into one of his usual reveries had they not urgently pressed him to conclude his story.

After a while he continued.