

THE GALLEY SLAVE'S RING

BY

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CHAPTER I

GILDAS AND JEANIKE

On February 23, 1848, the epoch when, for several days previous, all France, and especially Paris, was profoundly stirred by the question of the reform banquets, there was to be seen on St. Denis Street, a short distance from the boulevard, a rather large shop surmounted by the sign.

LEBRENN, LINEN DRAPER.

THE SWORD OF BRENNUS.

In fact, a picture, pretty well drawn and painted, represented the well known historic incident of Brennus, the chief of the Gallic army, throwing with savage and haughty mien his sword into one of the scales of the balance that held the ransom of Rome, vanquished by our Gallic ancestors, about two thousand and odd years ago.

At first, the people of the St. Denis quarter derived a good deal of fun from the bellicose sign of the linen draper. In course of time they forgot all about the seemingly incongruous sign in the recognition of the fact that Monsieur Marik Lebreann was a most admirable man—a good husband, a conscientious father of his family, and a merchant who sold at reasonable prices excellent merchandise, among other things superb Brittany linen, imported from his native province. The worthy tradesman paid his bills regularly; was accommodating and affable towards everybody; and filled, to the great satisfaction of his "dear comrades," the function of captain in the company of grenadiers of his battalion in the National Guard. All told, he was held in general esteem by the people of his quarter, among whom he was justified to consider himself as a notable.

On the rather chilly morning of February 23, the shutters of the linen draper's shop were as usual removed by the shop-lad, assisted by a female servant, both of whom were Bretons like their master, Monsieur Lebreann, who was in the habit of taking all his attendants, clerks as well as domestic servitors, from his own country.

The maid, a fresh and comely lass of twenty years, was named Jeanike. The lad who tended the shop was called Gildas Pakou. He was a robust youngster from the region of Vannes, whose open countenance bore the impress of wonderment, seeing he was only two days in Paris. He spoke French quite passably; but in his conversations with Jeanike, his "country-

woman," he preferred the idiom of lower Brittany, the old Gallic tongue that our ancestors spoke before the conquest of Gaul by Julius Caesar.

Gildas Pakou seemed preoccupied, although busy carrying to the interior of the shop the shutters that he removed from the outside. He even paused for a moment in the middle of the shop, and, leaning both his arms and his chin upon the edge of one of the boards that he had unfastened, seemed profoundly steeped in thought.

"What are you brooding over, Gildas?" inquired Jeanike.

"Lassy," he answered in his Breton tongue, and with a distant and almost comical look, "do you remember the song of our country—Genevieve and Rustefan?"

"Sure! I was sung to sleep in my cradle with it. It starts this way:

"When little John led his sheep out to pasture,

He then little thought that a priest he would be."

"Well, Jeanike, I am like little John. When I was at Vannes I little dreamed of what I was to see in Paris."

"And what do you find so startling in Paris, Gildas?"

"Everything, Jeanike."

"Indeed!"

"And a good many other things, besides!"

"That's a good many."

"Now listen. Mother said to me: 'Gildas, Monsieur Lebreann, our countryman, to whom I sell the linen that we weave in the evenings, takes you as an assistant in his shop. His is a home of the good God. You, who are neither bold nor venturesome, will find yourself there as comfortable as here in our little town. St. Denis Street in Paris, where your employer lives, is a street inhabited only by honest and peaceful merchants.' Well, now, Jeanike, no later than yesterday evening, the second day after my arrival, did you not hear cries of: 'Close the shops! Close the shops!' And did you not thereupon see the night-patrols, and hear the drums and the hurried steps of large numbers of men who came and went tumultuously? There were among

them some whose faces were frightful to behold, with their long beards. I positively dreamed of them, Jeanike! I did!"

"Poor Gildas!"

"And if that were only all!"

"What! Is there still more? Have you, perchance, anything to blame our master for?"

"Him? He is the best man in all the world. I'm quite sure of that. Mother told me so."

"Or Madam Lebreenn?"

"The dear, good woman! She reminds me of my own mother with her sweet temper."

"Or mademoiselle?"

"Oh! As to her, Jeanike, we may say of her in the words of the Song of the Poor:

"Your mistress is handsome and brimful of kindness;

As lovely her face, yet her deeds with it vie,

And her looks and her kindness have won all our hearts."

"Oh, Gildas! How I do love to hear those songs of our country. That particular one seems to have been composed expressly for Mademoiselle Velleda, and I—"

"Tush, Jeanike!" exclaimed the shop-assistant, breaking in upon his companion. "You asked me what there is to astonish me. Tell me, do you think that mademoiselle's name is a Christian woman's name? Velleda! What can that mean?"

"What do I know! I suppose 'tis a fancy of monsieur and madam's."

"And their son, who went back yesterday to his business college."

"Well?"

"What another devil's own name is that which he also has? One ever seems to be about to swear when pronouncing it. Just pronounce that name, Jeanike. Come, pronounce it."

"It is very simple. The name of our master's son is Sacrovir."

"Ha! ha! I knew it would be so. You did look as if you were swearing—Sacr-r-r-rovir."

"Not at all! I did not roll the r's like you."

"They roll of themselves, my lassy. But, after all, do you call that a name?"

"That also is a fancy of monsieur and madam's."

"Very well, and what about the green door?"

"The green door?"

"Yes, in the rear of the room. Yesterday, at broad noon, I saw our master go in with a light in his hand."

"Quite natural, seeing the shutters are always kept closed—"

"And you find that natural, do you, Jeanike? And why should the shutters always be kept closed?"

"How do I know! It may be another—"

"Notion of monsieur and madam's, are you going to tell me?"

"Sure!"

"And what is kept in that apartment where it is night in broad day?"

"How do I know, Gildas! Only madam and monsieur ever go in there; never their children."

"And nothing of all that seems to you at all surprising, Jeanike!"

"No, because I have become accustomed to it. You will presently feel about it as I do."

The girl stopped short, and after casting a furtive look in the direction of the street, she said to her companion:

"Did you see that?"

"What?"

"The dragoon."

"A dragoon, Jeanike!"

"Yes; and I beg you go out and see if he is coming back—towards the shop. I shall tell you more about it later. Go, quick! quick!"

"The dragoon has not come back," answered the lad, naïvely. "But what can you have in common with the dragoon, Jeanike?"

"Nothing at all, thank God; but they have their barracks near by."

"A bad neighborhood for young girls, close to these men with helmets and sabers," remarked Gildas sententiously. "A bad neighborhood. That reminds me of the song, The Demand:

"In my dove-cote a little dove

Once had I,

When low the sparrow hawk swooped down

Upon her like a gust of wind;

He frightened my wee dove away

And now none

Knows what has become of her.

"Do you understand, Jeanike? The doves are young girls; the sparrow-hawk—"

"Is the dragoon. You are speaking more wisely than you know, Gildas."

"What, Jeanike! Can you have realized that the neighborhood of sparrow-hawks—that is, dragoons—is unwholesome for you?"

"I was not thinking of myself."

"Of whom, then?"

"Tush, Gildas! You are a loyal fellow. I must ask your advice. This is what has happened: Four days ago, mademoiselle, who usually stays in the rear of the shop, was at the desk in the absence of madam. I happened to look out on the street, when I saw a military man stop before our windows."

"A dragoon? A sparrow-hawk of a dragoon? Was it, Jeanike?"

"Yes; but he was not a soldier; he wore large gold epaulettes, and a cockade on his hat. He must have been at least a colonel. He stopped before the shop, and looked in."

The conversation of the two Breton country folks was interrupted by the brusque entrance of a man of about forty years, clad in a cutaway coat and trousers of black velvet, the usual railway employees' garb. His energetic face was partially covered with a thick brown beard. He seemed uneasy, and stepped into the shop precipitately, saying to Jeanike:

"Where is your master, my child? I must see him immediately. Pray, go and tell him that Dupont wants him. Remember my name well—Dupont."

"Monsieur Lebrenn went out this morning at daybreak, monsieur," answered Jeanike. "He has not yet come back."

"A thousand devils! Can he have gone there?" the new arrival muttered to himself.

He was about to leave the shop as precipitately as he had stepped in when a new thought struck him, and turning back to Jeanike he said:

"My child, tell Monsieur Lebrenn, the moment he comes back, that Dupont has arrived."

"Yes, monsieur."

"And that if he—Monsieur Lebrenn," added Dupont, hesitating like one hunting for a word; and then having found it, he proceeded saying: "Say to your master that, if he did not go this morning to inspect his supply of grain—you catch those words: his supply of grain—he should not go there before seeing Dupont. Can you remember that, my child?"

"Yes, monsieur. But if you would like to leave a note for Monsieur Lebrenn—"

"Not at all!" answered Dupont impatiently. "That's unnecessary—only tell him—"

"Not to go and inspect his supply of grain before seeing Monsieur Dupont," Jeanike completed the sentence. "Is that it, monsieur?"

"Exactly," the latter answered. "Good-bye, my child." So saying, he went away in hot haste.

"Well, now, Monsieur Lebrenn, it seems, is also a groceryman," observed Gildas in amazement to his companion. "He seems to keep supplies of grain in store."

"That's the first I heard of it."

"And that man! He looked very much disconcerted. Did you notice him? Oh, Jeanike! There is no doubt about it, this is a puzzling sort of a house."

"You have just landed from the country. Everything surprises you. But let me finish my story about the dragoon."

"The story of that sparrow-hawk with gold epaulettes and a cockade in his hat, who stopped to look at you through the show-window, Jeanike?"

"It was not me he looked at."

"Whom, then?"

"Mademoiselle Velleda."

"Indeed?"

"Mademoiselle was busy sewing. She did not notice that the military man was devouring her with his eyes. And I felt so ashamed for her sake that I did not dare notify her that she was being glowered at."

"Oh, Jeanike, that reminds me of a song that—"

"Let me first come to the end of my story, Gildas. You may then sing your song to me, if you like. The military man—"

"The sparrow-hawk—"

"Be it so—stood there glowering at mademoiselle with both his eyes aflame."

"With his two sparrow-hawk eyes, Jeanike!"

"But let me finish. Presently mademoiselle noticed the attention that she was the object of. She colored like a ripe cherry, told me to watch the shop, and withdrew to the room in the rear. And that's not yet all. The next day, at the same hour, the colonel turned up again, but this time in civilian dress, and there he planted himself again at the window. Madam happened to be in the shop, and he did not stay long. Day before yesterday he turned up again without being able to see mademoiselle. Finally, yesterday, Madam Lebrenn being in the shop, he stepped in and asked her—his language was very polite—whether she could furnish him with a certain grade of linen. Madam said she could, and it was agreed that the colonel would come back to-day to close the bargain with Monsieur Lebrenn."

"And do you believe, Jeanike, that madam was aware that the military man had come several times before, and peeped through the window?"

"I don't know, Gildas; and I am not sure whether I should notify madam. A minute ago I begged you to look and see if the dragoon did not come back. I feared he was charged to spy upon us. Fortunately it was not so. Would you advise me to notify madam, or to say nothing? To speak may alarm her; to keep silent may, perhaps, be wrong. What is your opinion?"

"It is my opinion that you should notify madam. She may become justly suspicious of that big order for linen. Hem!—hem!"

"I shall follow your advice, Gildas."

"And you will be wise if you do! Oh, my dear lassy, these men with helmets—"

"Well, now, I am ready. Let's have your song."

"It is an awful story, Jeanike! Mother told it to me a hundred times in the evenings, just as my grandmother had told it to her, and just as my grandmother's grandmother—"

"Come, Gildas," broke in Jeanike, laughing. "If you keep up at that rate from grandmother to grandmother, you are bound to go back to our mother Eve."

"Sure! Do our countrypeople not transmit from generation to generation narratives that go back to—"

"A thousand and fifteen hundred years, and even further back, like the stories of Myrdin and of The Baron of Jauioz, with which I have been rocked to sleep in my cradle. I am well aware of it, Gildas."

"Well, Jeanike, the song that I have in mind is about people who wear helmets, and prowls around young girls. It is a frightful story. It is called The Three Red Monks," said Gildas, looking formidable;—"The Three Red Monks; or, The Sire of Plouernel."

"What's that?" asked Jeanike interestedly, being struck by the name. "The Sire of—"

"The Sire of Plouernel."

"Singular!"

"Singular what?"

"I've heard Monsieur Lebreun mention that name, more than once."

"The name of the Sire of Plouernel? On what occasion?"

"I'll tell you later. First of all, let's have the song of the Three Red Monks. It will interest me doubly."

"You must know, first of all, my lassy, that the red monks were Templars, and wore a sword and helmet, just like that sparrow-hawk of a dragoon."

"Very well, now go on. Madam may come down any moment, and monsieur is due here now."

"Listen attentively, Jeanike."

And Gildas commenced the following recitative. It was not sung, exactly, but was chanted like a psalm in a grave and melancholic voice:

"At every limb I shudder,

I shudder at the sorrows that afflict our people.

I shudder at the thought of the event that took place,

That has just taken place in the town of Kemper,

That took place at Kemper just a year ago.

"Katelik walked her way as she counted her beads,
When three monks in red, all three Templars were they,
And armed at all points, joined Katelik; three monks,
Astride of their huge barbed steeds,
Barbed from mane down to hoofs.
"Come with us, you pretty young maid;
Come to the convent with us.
Neither gold will you want for,
Nor eke silver coin.'
'May it please, Sires, your graces,
Not I will join you in your ride,'
Said young Katelik. 'I fear your swords,
That hang by your sides.
No, Sires,
I shall not, nor can I go with you.
Too wicked the tales that one hears about you.'
"Come with us, come to the convent, young maid.
Feel not alarmed about us.'
'No, I shall not proceed to the convent.
Seven young maids of the fields
Once went there, 'tis said;
Seven handsome maids, ripe for their nuptials they were.
Yet they never came out from the convent again.'

"If seven young maids,' cried up Gonthram of Plouernel,

One of the three monks in red,

'If seven young maids went in,

You, pretty maid, the eighth will be.'

With this she was seized,

And pulled up on horseback;

With this the three rode to the convent in hot haste,

The maid laid across the saddle,

And gagged to smother her cries."

"Oh, the poor dear girl!" exclaimed Jeanike, clasping her hands. "And what is to become of her in that convent of the red monks?"

"You will learn presently, my lassy," answered Gildas with a sigh; and he proceeded with his recitation:

"Seven months later, or eight,

Or perhaps even more,

Great was the dilemma of the monks in their Abbey,

'What, brothers,' they said,

'Shall with this girl now be done?'

'Let us bury her, to-night let us bury her,

At the foot of the main altar.

None of her folks will there seek to find her.'"

"Great God!" cried Jeanike. "They must have killed her, those bandit monks, and were in a hurry to rid themselves of the body."

"I tell you once more, my lassy, these people with helmets and swords are always up to some mischief or other," remarked Gildas dogmatically; and he proceeded:

"Lo, toward night-fall the vault of heaven is rent.

Rain, wind, hail; thunder the most frightful cracks the air.

A poor knight, his clothes drenched with rain,

Looks about for asylum,

Arrives at the church-door of the Abbey.

He peeps through the key-hole.

He sees a small taper burning;

He sees monks digging at the foot of the altar;

He sees the young girl lying prostrate,

Her little bare feet tied together;

He hears her, desolate, moaning, lamenting,

Begging for mercy.

"'Oh, Sires,' she cried, 'for our dear Lord's sake,

Let me live.

I shall wander about in the dark by night;

By day I shall hide.'

The taper went out.

But the knight, he budged not away from the door,

And he heard the voice of the young girl

Imploring from the depth of the grave,

And praying:

'Pray give me some oil, and baptismal

For the babe I carry with me!'

"The knight, he galloped away to Kemper,

To the Count-Bishop's palace he rode in full haste.

'Sire Bishop of Cornouailles, wake up!

Wake up quick!' cried the knight,

As he battered at the gate.

'You lie snugly in your bed,

Stretched out cosily upon soft down;

But a young girl there is who is now groaning

At the bottom of a pit of hard earth,

And is praying for some oil,

And baptismal for the babe that is with her;

Extreme unction she prays for herself.'

"By orders the Count-Bishop hastened to issue in advance,

The grave at the foot of the altar was dug open; and,

Just as the Bishop arrived, the poor young girl

Was drawn up from the depths of her grave.

She was drawn up, her babe sound asleep on her breast.

Her teeth had torn the flesh on her arms,

Her nails had torn the flesh on her breast,

On her white breast down to her heart.

"And the Bishop,

When this sight he saw,
Fell down on both knees, and wept by the grave.
Three days and three nights he spent there in prayer.
At the end of the third day,
All the red monks standing round,
The babe of the dead girl stirred by the light of the tapers,
It opened its eyes,
It rose,
It walked,
It walked straight to the three monks in red,
And it spoke, and said:
'It is he—
Gonthram of Plouernel."

"Well, now, my lassy," asked Gildas as he shook his head warningly, "is not that a terrible story? Did I not tell you that those helmet-wearers were ever prowling around young girls like so many ravishing sparrow-hawks? But Jeanike, what are you pondering? You do not answer me. You seem steeped in revery."

"It is, indeed, quite extraordinary, Gildas. Was that bandit of a red monk named the Sire of Plouernel?"

"Yes."

"Often have I heard Monsieur Lebrenn mention the name of that family as if he had some cause of complaint against them, and say, whenever he referred to some wicked man: He must be a son of Plouernel!' as one would say: 'He must be a son of the devil!'"

"That is a puzzle—a puzzling house this is," remarked Gildas meditatively, and even in a tone of uneasiness. "To think of Monsieur Lebrenn having complaint against the family of a red monk, who has been dead eight or nine

hundred years. All the same, Jeanike, I hope the story may stand you in good stead."

"Go to, Gildas!" exclaimed Jeanike, laughing. "Do you imagine there are any red monks in St. Denis Street, and that they carry off young girls in omnibuses?"

As Jeanike was saying this, a valet in morning livery stepped into the shop and asked for Monsieur Lebrenn.

"He is not in," said Gildas.

"Then, my good lad," answered the valet, "you will please tell your master that the colonel expects to see him this morning, before noon, to settle with him a matter about some linen that he spoke about with your mistress yesterday. Here is my master's address," added the valet, placing a visiting card upon the counter. "Above all be certain to urge your master to be punctual. The colonel does not like to be kept waiting."

The valet left. Gildas took up the card mechanically, read it and cried out, turning pale:

"By St. Anne of Auray! It is incredible—"

"What is it, Gildas?"

"Read, Jeanike!"

And with a trembling hand he reached out the card to the young girl who read:

COUNT GONTHRAM OF PLOUERNEL.

Colonel of Dragoons.

18 Paradis-Poissonniere Street.

"A puzzling, a fear-inspiring house this is!" Gildas repeated several times, raising his hands to heaven, while Jeanike herself looked as astonished and almost as frightened as the young shop-assistant.

CHAPTER II

GEORGE DUCHENE

While the events narrated in the preceding chapter were happening in the shop of Monsieur Lebrenn the linendraper, another scene was taking place at almost the same hour on the fifth story of an old house, opposite the one which the Breton merchant occupied.

I shall take my reader into a modest little room that is fitted out with extreme neatness; an iron bedstead, a wardrobe, two chairs and a table above which stood a shelf filled with books—such was its furniture. At the head of the bed hung from the wall a species of trophy, consisting of a military cap and two light infantry under-officer's epaulettes, above which, spread in a black frame, was an honorable discharge from service. In a corner of the chamber, and disposed upon a board, were several carpenter's tools.

Upon the bed lay a freshly furbished carbine, and upon a little table a little heap of balls, a gunpowder pouch, and a mold to prepare cartridges in, a number of which had already been gotten ready.

The tenant of the apartment, a young man of about twenty-six, with a virile and handsome face, and wearing a mechanic's blouse, was already up. With his elbows leaning on the sill of his attic window, he seemed to be looking intently at the house of Monsieur Lebrenn, especially at one of the four windows, between two of which the famous sign of The Sword of Brennus was fastened.

That one particular window, furnished with very white curtains closely drawn together, presented nothing remarkable to the sight, except for a wooden box, painted green and daintily wrought with ovolos and other carvings, that filled the full width of the outer sill and contained several winter heliotropes besides some crocuses in full bloom.

The features of the tenant of the attic as he contemplated the window in question, bore an expression of such profound melancholy that it was almost painful to behold. After a while a tear, that fell from the young man's eyes, rolled down upon his brown moustache.

The sound of a clock that struck half past six drew George Duchene—that was the young man's name—from his reverie. He passed his hand over his moist eyes, and left the window murmuring bitterly:

"Bah! To-day, or to-morrow, a bullet through my breast will deliver me from this insane love. Thanks to God, there will soon be a serious engagement. My death will at least serve the cause of freedom."

George remained pensive for a while, and then added:

"But grandfather—I forgot him!"

He then proceeded to a corner of the room where stood a little stove half filled with burning coals, and which he had been using to found his bullets. He placed on the fire a small earthen dish filled with milk, crumbled into it some slices of white bread, and in a few minutes had ready for use a toothsome bowl of milk soup that the expertest housekeeper might have been jealous of.

After concealing the carbine and munitions of war under his mattress, George took up the bowl, opened a door that was cut in the board partition of his apartment, and passed into a contiguous room, where a man of advanced age and with a kind and venerable face framed in long white hair, lay on a much better bed than George's. The old man seemed exceedingly weak; his thin and wrinkled hands were agitated by a continuous tremor.

"Good morning, grandfather," said George, tenderly embracing the old man. "Did you rest well during the night?"

"Quite well, my boy."

"Here is your milk soup. I'm afraid I kept you waiting."

"Not at all. It is only just day. I heard you rise and open your window—about an hour ago."

"That's so, grandfather. I felt my head heavy—I wanted to breathe the early air."

"I also heard you during the night walk up and down your room."

"Poor grandfather! Did I keep you awake?"

"No, I was not sleepy. But, George, be frank with me. There's something troubling you."

"Me? Nothing at all."

"For several months you have looked depressed; you have grown pale; you have changed so much as not to be recognizable. You are no longer as light of heart as you were when you returned from your regiment."

"I assure you, grandfather—"

"You assure me—you assure me! I know perfectly well what I see. As far as that is concerned I can not be deceived. I have a mother's eyes—come, now—"

"That's true," replied George smiling. "I think it is grandmother I should call you—because you are good, tender and uneasy about me, like a true grandma. But believe me, you alarm yourself unnecessarily. Here, hold your spoon; wait a minute till I place the table on your bed. You will be more at ease."

George took from a corner a pretty little shining walnut table of the shape of the trays used by patients for eating on in their beds. After placing upon it the bowl of soup, he gently pushed it in front of the old man.

"There is none like you, my boy, for such thoughtfulness," observed the grandfather.

"It would have been a devilish thing, grandfather, if, with all my carpenter's skill, I had failed to put together this little table that is so handy for you."

"Oh! You have an answer for everything—I know that," observed the old man, smiling.

And with a shaky hand he began his meal. So tremulous were his motions that several times the spoon struck against his teeth.

"Oh, my poor boy!" exclaimed the old man sadly. "Just see how my hands tremble. It seems to me they grow worse every day."

"Nonsense, grandfather! To me, on the contrary, your hands seem to be growing steadier—"

"Oh, no! 'Tis all over—all over. There is no remedy can bring me help in my infirmity."

"Why, do you prefer me to take your hopeless view of the case—"

"That's just what I should have done since this affliction began. And, yet, I can not accustom myself to the idea of being an invalid, and a burden to others unto the end of my life."

"Grandfather! Grandfather! If you talk that way we shall have to fall out."

"I wonder what made me commit the stupidity of taking to the trade of gilder of metals. At the end of twenty years, often before that, one-half of those artisans shake like myself; but, differently from myself, they have no grandchildren who spoil them—"

"Grandfather!"

"Yes, you spoil me; I repeat it—you spoil me—"

"Let it be so! Now, then, I shall give you tit for tat; it is the only way to spike your guns, as we were taught in the regiment. Well, I knew a fine man; his name was father Morin; he was a widower with a daughter of about eighteen. The worthy man married his daughter to a gallant young fellow, but over-much given to resent wrong, and one day he received an ugly blow in a fight, so ugly that two years after his marriage he died, leaving his young wife with a boy in her arms."

"George! George!"

"The poor young mother nursed her child. Her husband's death was such a shock to her that she followed him shortly after—and her little boy remained upon the hands of his grandfather."

"Good God, George! How merciless you are! What is the sense in ever coming back to all that?"

"He loved the boy so much that he would not part with him. During the day, when he had to work in the shop, a good neighbor kept the urchin with her. But, the instant the grandfather returned home, he had but one thought on his mind, but one cry on his lips—'My little George.' He looked after him as lovingly as the best and tenderest of mothers. He ruined himself getting pretty clothes and pretty hats for the chap. He rigged the little fellow up to his own taste, and the grandfather was very proud of his grandchild. And so it came about that all the people in the neighborhood, who loved the worthy man greatly, began to call him the nurse-father."

"But, George!"

"In that way he brought up the boy, cared for him night and day, attended to all his needs, sent him to school, then to his apprenticeship, until—"

"So much the worse!" cried out the old man, unable any longer to contain himself. "Seeing we are to tell the truth to each other, I shall have my turn,

and we shall see! First of all, you were the son of my daughter Georgiana, whom I doted upon. I only did my duty—take that, to begin with—"

"Neither have I done any more than my duty."

"You? Don't tell me that!" cried the old man, vehemently brandishing his spoon. "You! This is what you did: Good luck saved you from drawing the lot of going into the army—"

"Grandfather! Take care!"

"Oh, you can not frighten me!"

"You will upset your bowl of soup if you go on in that way."

"I 'go on'! The devil take it! Do you think I have no blood left in my veins? Yes, answer, you who are always speaking of other people! When my infirmity began, what is it that you did, unhappy boy? You went in search of a merchant of men."

"Grandfather, your soup will grow cold; for heaven's sake take it while it is warm."

"Ta, ta, ta! You want to shut my mouth. I am not your dupe. Yes! And what did you say to the merchant of men? 'My grandfather is ailing; he can hardly any longer earn his living; I am his only support; I may fail him, either through sickness, or through lack of work; he is old; secure to him a little life annuity, and I shall sell myself to you.' And you did it!" cried the old man with tears in his eyes, and raising his spoon to the ceiling with such vehemence that, if George had not quickly seized the table it would have tumbled down to the floor with the bowl of soup and all.

The young man exclaimed:

"Sdeath, grandfather! Keep quiet! You are carrying on like the devil in a sacristy. You will upset everything."

"I don't care! It will not keep me from telling you why and how it came about that you became a soldier, and how you sold yourself for me—to a merchant of men—"

"All that talk is a pretext to keep you from eating your soup. I see, you think it is not well made."

"Just listen to him! I, find his soup bad! Well, well!" exclaimed the old man in pitiful accents, "That devil of a boy has made up his mind to break my heart!"

Father Morin furiously dipped his spoon into the bowl, and precipitately carrying it to his mouth said while eating: "You see—you see—how bad I find your soup—see-see—Oh! it is bad—see—see—Oh, I don't like it at all!"

"For heaven's sake, now you are going too fast," cried George, holding back his grandfather's arm. "You will choke yourself."

"That's also your fault! To tell me I find your soup bad, while it tastes delicious!" complained the old man, moderating his pace and smacking his lips with great gusto. "It is the gods' own nectar!"

"Without vainglory," replied George, smiling, "I enjoyed a great reputation in the regiment for my leek soup. Good, I shall now fill your pipe."

George then leaned over to the old man and said to him as he patted him on the back:

"That's right—my good old grandfather loves to pull at his little pipe in his bed, do you not?"

"What shall I say, George? You turn me into a Pacha; aye, a Pacha!" answered the old man, while his grandson went for the pipe that lay on a table, filled it with tobacco, lighted it, and presented it to old father Morin. The old man was thereupon propped up well in his bed, and began to smoke his delicious pipe.

George sat down at the foot of the bed, and said:

"What do you propose to do to-day?"

"I shall take my little stroll on the boulevard, where, if the weather is good, I shall sit down for a while on a bench."

"Hem! Grandfather, I think you would better postpone your promenade. You must have noticed yesterday how large the crowds were that gathered at several places. They almost came to blows with the municipalists and city sergeants. It may be even worse to-day."

"I know it, my boy. Are you taking a hand in these tussles? I know full well how tempting it is to do so when one's rights are invaded. It is unworthy of

the government to forbid the banquets. But I shall feel very uneasy on your score."

"You need not feel uneasy about me, grandfather. There is nothing to fear, as far as I am concerned. But take my advice. Do not go out to-day."

"Very well, my boy, I shall stay indoors. I shall entertain myself a little reading your books, and shall look at the passers-by from the window, smoking my pipe the while."

"Poor grandfather," observed George with a smile. "From our high floor you see hardly more than moving hats."

"That's all one. It will be enough to entertain me. Besides, I can look at the opposite houses. Our neighbors often sit at their windows. But—hold! It strikes me now—by the way of the houses on the other side of the street, there is a thing I have meant to ask you, and always forgot. Tell me what that sign means which I see before the linendraper's house. What is the meaning of that helmeted warrior throwing his sword into the scales? You who did the carpentering work in the shop, when it was recently renovated, you should know the why and wherefore of its sign."

"I did not know it either until my master detailed me to work in Monsieur Lebrenn's shop."

"All over the quarter people speak of him as a straight-forward man. All the same, what devil of a notion is that of choosing such a looking sign—The Sword of Brennus! If he were an armorer, the thing might pass. True enough, there are scales in the picture, and scales suggest commerce—but why does the warrior with his helmet on and the air of an Artaban throw his sword into the scale?"

"I'll tell you. But really, I feel bashful, at my age, to presume to hold a lecture to you."

"Why bashful? Why that? Instead of going out on Sundays for a walk where people congregate near the fortifications, you read, you learn, you instruct yourself. You may well hold a lecture to your grandfather—there is no harm in that!"

"Well—the warrior with a helmet, that Brennus, was a Gaul, one of our ancestors, the chieftain of the army which, two thousand years and how much more ago I do not know, marched into Italy to attack Rome in order to punish the city for some act of treachery. The city surrendered to the Gauls

and was spared in consideration of a ransom in gold. But, not considering the ransom large enough, Brennus threw his sword into the scale that held the weights."

"In order to secure a larger ransom, the shrewd old fellow! He did the opposite of what the fruit-venders do who help the scales in their interest with their thumbs. I understand that part of it. But there are yet two things I do not understand at all. In the first place you said that that warrior, who lived more than two thousand years ago, was one of our ancestors!"

"Yes, that Brennus and the Gauls of his army belonged to the race from which we descend—almost all of us in this country of France."

"One moment—you say they were Gauls?"

"Yes, grandfather."

"Then we are descendants of the Gallic race?"

"Certainly."

"But we are Frenchmen. How do you account for that, my boy?"

"Simply this way—our country, our mother country, was not always called France."

"Hold on! Hold on! Hold on!" exclaimed the old man, taking the pipe out of his mouth. "How is that? France was not always called France?"

"No, grandfather. During ages immemorial our country was called Gaul, and was a republic, as glorious, as powerful, but happier, and twice as large as France during the Empire."

"The devil you say!"

"Unfortunately, about two thousand years ago—"

"Is that all? Two thousand years! How you do fling around the years, my boy!"

"Dissensions broke out in Gaul; the several provinces rose against one another—"

"Ah! That's ever the trouble! That was the very trick of the clergy and the royalists during the Revolution—"

"And so, grandfather, that befell to Gaul, centuries ago, that befell to France in 1814 and 1815."

"A foreign invasion!"

"Exactly. The Romans, once vanquished by Brennus, had in the meantime become powerful. They profited by the divisions among our fathers; and they invaded the land—"

"Exactly as the Cossacks and the Prussians invaded us!"

"Exactly so. But what the Cossack and Prussian Kings, the good friends of the Bourbons, did not dare to do—not that they lacked the wish—the Romans did. Despite a heroic resistance, our ancestors, ever brave as lions, but unfortunately divided, were reduced to slavery, as the Negroes are to-day in some colonies."

"Is such a thing possible!"

"Yes. They wore iron collars, bearing the initials of their masters, when those initials were not branded on their foreheads with a hot iron."

"Our fathers!" cried the old man, joining his hands with pain and indignation. "Our fathers!"

"And when they tried to run away, their masters had their noses and ears cropped, if not their hands and feet."

"Our fathers!"

"Other times their masters would cast them to wild beasts for amusement, or cause them to be put to death under frightful tortures if they refused to cultivate, under the conqueror's lash, the very lands that had belonged to them—"

"But listen," interposed the old man, gathering his recollections; "that puts me in mind of a song of our old friend, the friend of us poor folks—"

"The song of our Beranger, not so, grandfather—The Gallic Slaves?"

"Yes, my boy. It begins—let me see—yes—this is it:

"Some ancient Gauls, the wretched slaves,

One night, when all around were sleeping—

And the refrain ran:

"Poor Gauls, 'fore whom the world once trembled,

Let us drink to intoxication!"

Then it was our own fathers, the Gauls, that Beranger was referring to? Alas! Poor fellows, like so many others, no doubt, they took to drunkenness in order to forget their misfortunes."

"Yes, grandfather; but soon they realized that to forget one's sorrows does not deliver one therefrom; that to break the yoke is better."

"Right they were!"

"Accordingly, the Gauls, after innumerable insurrectionary efforts—"

"Well, my boy, meseems the method is not new, but ever is the right one. Ha! Ha!" added the old man, striking the bowl of his pipe with his nail. "Ha! Ha! Do you notice, George, sooner or later, it has to come to a Revolution—so it was in '89—so it was in 1830—so it may be to-morrow, perhaps!"

"Poor grandfather!" thought George to himself. "He little knows how near the truth he is."

And he proceeded aloud:

"Right you are! When it comes to the matter of freedom, the people must help themselves, and stick their own fingers into the dish—otherwise there will be only crumbs to pick, and the people will be robbed, as they were robbed eighteen years ago."

"And brazenly were they robbed, my poor boy! I saw it done, myself. I was there."

"Fortunately you know the proverb, grandfather—The scalded cat—enough said. The lesson will have been a good one. But to return to our Gauls. They did as you say—resorted to Revolution. She never leaves her children in the lurch. The latter, by dint of perseverance, of energy and of their own blood copiously poured out, succeeded in re-conquering a portion of their former

freedom from the mailed hand of the Romans, who, moreover, had not unchristened Gaul, but only called her 'Roman' Gaul."

"Just as we to-day speak of French Algeria, I suppose?"

"Exactly so, grandfather."

"Well, thanks to God, our brave Gauls did, with the help of Insurrection, get back a little into the saddle! That soothes my blood somewhat."

"Oh, grandfather, wait, only wait!"

"Why?"

"What our fathers suffered was as nothing to what they were still to suffer."

"Think of it! And I thought they were out of the woods. What's it that happened to them?"

"Figure to yourself a horde of barbarians, semi-savages, named Franks. Thirteen or fourteen hundred years ago they emerged from the recesses of the forests of Germany. Genuine Cossacks they were, in their way. They fell upon the Roman armies. These, enervated by their conquest of Gaul, were rolled in the dust and driven out, and then the Frankish conquerors, in turn, took possession of our poor country. They stripped her even of her name. They called her France, after themselves, in token of possession."

"The brigands!" cried the old man. "I like the Romans better, by my faith! At least they left us our name."

"That's so. Besides, the Romans were, at least, the most civilized people then living, except for the barbarity of their system of slavery. They covered Gaul with magnificent structures, and will ye nil ye, they restored to our ancestors a part of their pristine freedom. The Franks, on the contrary, were, as I said, genuine Cossacks. Under their domination the Gauls had to start all over again."

"Good God! Good God!"

"Those hordes of Frankish bandits—"

"Call them Cossacks! Give their true name!"

"They were even worse, if possible, grandfather! Those Frankish bandits, those Cossacks, if you prefer, called their chiefs Kings. The kingly leaven perpetuated itself in our country, whence it happens that for so many years we have tasted the sweets of Kings of Frankish origin, whom the royalists call Kings by divine right."

"Say by Cossack right! A fine present!"

"The chiefs of lower category were called dukes, and counts. Their seed likewise perpetuated itself upon our soil, whence it happens that for so long a time we have enjoyed the luxury of a nobility of Frankish origin, who treated us as a conquered race."

"What's that you are telling me!" ejaculated the perplexed-looking old man. "If I grasp the meaning of what you say, my boy, the Frankish bandits, those Cossacks, Kings and chieftains, once masters of Gaul, parceled out among themselves the lands that the Gauls had partly reconquered from the Romans?"

"Yes, grandfather. The Frankish Kings and seigneurs robbed the Gauls of their property, and divided among themselves the soil and the people upon it, just as a domain and its live stock are divided."

"And our fathers, despoiled of their goods by those Cossacks—"

"Our fathers were anew reduced to slavery, as they were under the Romans, and were forced to cultivate for the benefit of the Frankish Kings and seigneurs the land that had belonged to themselves, to them the Gauls since Gaul was Gaul."

"Accordingly, my boy, the Frankish Kings and seigneurs, after having robbed our fathers of their property, started to live on their sweat—"

"Just so, grandfather. They sold them—men, women, children, girls—in open market. If they resisted at work, their masters whipped them as recalcitrant animals are whipped, if they did not kill them in their anger, or out of pure cruelty, as often happened, just as one might kill his dog or horse. The theory was that our fathers and mothers belonged to the Frankish Kings and seigneurs neither more nor less than cattle belong to their owner. All this by virtue of the Frankish conquest of Gaul. This state of things lasted until the revolution of 1789, which you witnessed, grandfather. You will remember the enormous difference there still existed at that time between a nobleman and a workingman, between a seigneur and a peasant." "Sdeath! It was the difference between master and slave."

"Or, if you prefer the term, between Frank and Gaul, grandfather."

"But, my little man, how did it happen that our forefathers the Gauls allowed themselves to be martyred in that fashion by a handful of Franks—no, Cossacks, I mean, for so many centuries?"

"Oh, grandfather! The Franks possessed the soil which they had stolen; hence they possessed the fullness thereof. Their army, a numerous body, consisted of pitiless recruits from their own country. Besides, almost exhausted by their long struggle against the Romans, a frightful affliction was furthermore in store for our fathers—the priests."

"That's all that was wanting to finish them up!"

"To their eternal shame, the larger portion of the Gallic bishops, immediately upon the Frankish invasion, betrayed their own country, and made common cause with the Frankish Kings and seigneurs, whom they speedily dominated through cunning and flattery, and from whom they wheedled all the lands and money possible. Accordingly, just as with the conquerors themselves, a large number of holy priests held serfs whom they either sold or exploited, and lived amidst shocking debauchery, degrading, tyrannizing and brutifying at their own sweet pleasure the Gallic masses to whom they preached resignation, and respect for, and obedience to the Franks, threatening with the devil and his horns whatever wretched being might attempt a revolt for the independence of his country from the foreign Kings and seigneurs, the only source of whose power and wealth was violence, rapine and murder."

"I see it all! But, my little man, did our forefathers allow themselves to be shorn without kicking—all that time, from the conquest down to the Revolution, when we turned upon those Frankish Kings and seigneurs, and, along with them, their clergy, who stuck to the habit of gathering fat upon their ribs?"

"It is not likely that everything went on without numerous revolts on the part of the serfs against the Kings, the seigneurs and the priests. But, grandfather, I have told you the little that I know, and even that little I learned only while carpentering in the shop of Monsieur Lebrenn, the linendraper opposite us."

"How did it happen, my boy?"

"While I was at work, Monsieur Lebrenn, who is the best man I know, used to chat with me. He would talk about the history of our fathers, of which I knew as little as you. Once my curiosity was pricked—and it was not slight—"

"I can well imagine that."

"I put a thousand questions to Monsieur Lebrenn, all the while hammering and joining. He answered me with truly paternal kindness. In that way I came to know the little that I have told you. But," added George with a sigh

that he was unable to suppress, "my job being done, the history lessons were interrupted. Accordingly, I have told you all I know, grandfather."

"So, then, the linendraper who lives opposite is as learned as all that?"

"He is as learned as he is a true patriot. He is an old Gaul, as he loves to style himself. And sometimes," added George, unable to avoid blushing slightly, "I heard him say to his daughter, as he proudly embraced her on account of some clever answer or other that she made, 'Oh, as to you—you are a true Gallic girl!'"

At this moment father Morin and George heard someone rapping at the door of the first chamber.

"Walk in!" cried George.

Someone stepped into the front room that connected with the one occupied by the old man.

"Who is there?" George asked.

"I—Lebrenn," answered a voice.

"What! The worthy linendraper that we have been speaking about? The old Gaul?" whispered the venerable grandfather. "Go quick and see what he wants, my boy, and shut the door after you."

As much embarrassed as surprised at this visit, George stepped out of his grandfather's room, and found himself facing Marik Lebrenn.

CHAPTER III

MARIK LEBRENN

Marik Lebreann was a man of about fifty years of age, although looking rather younger. His high stature; his nervy, muscular neck, arms and shoulders; the proud and resolute carriage of his head; his open and strikingly strong countenance; his sea-blue eyes with their firm and penetrating glance; his thick, heavy and light auburn hair, slightly streaked with grey and starting rather low upon a forehead that seemed to partake of the hardness of marble;—all these features betrayed the characteristic type of the Breton race, among which the Gallic tongue and blood have pre-eminently preserved themselves unalloyed down to our own days. Upon the ruddy and thick lips of Monsieur Lebreann sat a perpetual smile that one time betokened kindheartedness, other times bore the impress of that wit and satire, which our old books term salty, when they describe the racy jokes, or the old Gallic character, that ever is inclined to teasing. I shall close the description of the merchant, by clothing him in a large olive overcoat and trousers of a grey material.

Astonished, almost speechless at the unexpected visit, George Duchene waited in silence for Lebreann to speak. The latter said:

"Monsieur George, about six months ago you were assigned by your employer to attend to some repairs in my shop. I was very much pleased with your intelligence and skill."

"You proved as much to me, monsieur, by your kindness."

"You were entitled to it. I noticed that you were industrious, and anxious to learn. I was aware, besides, as all our neighbors are, of your worthy conduct towards your grandfather, who occupies these lodgings for the last fifteen years."

"Monsieur," remarked George, not a little embarrassed by these praises, "my conduct—"

"Is perfectly simple, is it not? Very well. Your job in my shop kept you three months. Very well pleased with our relations to each other, I said to you, and did so in all frankness: 'Monsieur George, we are neighbors; call and see me, either Sundays, or any other day after your work hours; I shall be pleased, very pleased.'"

"Indeed, monsieur, you said so."

"And yet, Monsieur George, you never set your foot in my house."

"I beg you, monsieur, do not attribute my reserve to either ingratitude or forgetfulness."

"What, then, should I attribute it to?"

"Monsieur—"

"Come, Monsieur George, be frank—you love my daughter."

The young man trembled from head to foot. His color left his cheeks, paleness and blushes alternated with each other. Finally he answered Lebrenn with a tremulous and moved voice:

"It is true, monsieur. I love mademoiselle, your daughter."

"So that, your work in my shop being done, you did not return to my house out of fear that your love might carry you away?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And you never mentioned your love to anyone, even to my daughter?"

"Never, monsieur."

"I knew it. But why did you refuse to place confidence in me, Monsieur George?"

"Monsieur," answered the embarrassed young man, "I—did—not dare—"

"Why not! Perchance because I am what is called a bourgeois—a rich man compared to you, who live from day to day by the wages that you earn?"

"Yes, monsieur."

After a moment's silence the merchant proceeded:

"Permit me, Monsieur George, to put a question to you. You may answer it, if you think proper."

"I listen, monsieur."

"About fifteen months ago, shortly after your discharge from the army, you expected to marry?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"A young flower girl, an orphan named Josephine Eloi?"

"Yes, monsieur; it is all so."

"Will you tell me the reason why the marriage did not take place?"

The young man colored; an expression of pain contracted his countenance; he hesitated to answer.

Lebrenn watched him attentively. Pained and surprised at George's silence, he could not withhold a bitter and severe cry:

"I see—seduction, then abandonment and oblivion. Your embarrassment proclaims it all but too loudly."

"You are mistaken, monsieur," George quickly answered. "My embarrassment and emotion are caused by cruel recollections. I shall tell you what happened. I never lie—"

"I know you do not, Monsieur George."

"Josephine dwelt in the same house with my employer. In that way I became acquainted with her. She was very pretty, and, although illiterate, highly gifted. I knew she was inured to work and poverty. I believed her wise. A bachelor's life weighed upon me. I also thought of my grandfather. A wife would have assisted me in taking better care of him. I proposed marriage to Josephine. She seemed delighted, and she herself named the date of our wedding. They lied to you, monsieur, who spoke of seduction and abandonment!"

"I believe you," said Lebrenn, cordially extending his hand to the young man. "I am happy to be able to believe you. But how did your marriage fall through?"

"A week before the day for our wedding Josephine disappeared, leaving a letter for me saying that all was broken off. I subsequently learned that, yielding to the evil advice of one of her girl friends, a lost woman, she followed her example. Having lived in misery all her life, enduring grievous privations despite her long hours, twelve and fifteen of work a day, Josephine recoiled before the life that I offered her—a life of toil and poverty like her own."

"And like so many others," interjected Lebrenn, "she succumbed to the temptations of a less toilsome life. Oh! Poverty! Poverty!"

"I have never seen Josephine again, monsieur. She is now, I am told, a coryphee in one of the public dancing halls. She dropped her old name for one that I do not know, coined according to her habit of improvising upon all manner of subjects some of the wildest of songs. In short, she is lost forever. And yet, the girl had excellent qualities of heart. You now understand, monsieur, the cause of the sad emotion that came over me when you mentioned Josephine's name a minute ago."

"Your emotion testifies in favor of your heart, Monsieur George. You have been calumniated. I doubted the truth of what I was told; I am now certain. Let us say no more upon that subject. I now wish to tell you what happened at my house three days ago. I was, in the evening, in my wife's room, together with my daughter. The girl had sat silent and meditative for a while. Suddenly, taking my hand and her mother's, she said to us: 'I have a secret to confide to you. I have long put off speaking, because I have long been reflecting, lest I speak hastily. I love Monsieur George Duchene'—"

"Great God! monsieur," cried George, clasping his hands, and seized with inexpressible ecstasy. "Is it possible! Mademoiselle, your daughter!"

"That was the language of my daughter to us," proceeded Lebrenn with deliberation. "'I am pleased, my child, at your frankness,' I answered her; 'but how came this love about?' 'First, father, through learning of George's conduct towards his grandfather; then through hearing you often praise his character, his industrious habits, and his efforts to cultivate his mind. Finally, he won his way to my heart with his gentle and refined manners, with his frankness, and his conversation, as I heard him talk with you. I never said to him a word that could make him suspect my sentiments for him. On his part, he never dropped his extreme reserve towards me. I would be happy were he to share the sentiments I entertain for him, and if you, father and mother, think such a marriage proper. If you think otherwise I shall respect your wishes, knowing that you respect my freedom. If I can not marry Monsieur George I shall remain single. You have often told me, father, that I had a will of my own. You will not doubt my resolution. If this marriage be out of the question, you will not find me either sulky or dejected. Your affection will console me. Ever happy, as in the past, I shall ever care for you, for mother and for brother. I have told you the truth. Now, I wish you to decide. I shall wait.'"

George listened to Lebrenn with ever increasing astonishment. He could not believe his own ears. Finally he cried in broken accents:

"Monsieur, is this a dream?"

"Not in the least. My daughter never was more wide awake, I assure you. I know the openness of her nature, also her firmness. Both my wife and I are certain of that—if this union can not be effected, Velleda's affection for us will not change, but neither will she marry anyone else. Now, then, seeing it is quite natural that a young and handsome girl of eighteen should marry, and seeing, furthermore, that Velleda's choice is worthy of herself and us, my wife and I, after mature reflection, might gladly decide to accept you as our son-in-law."

Impossible to describe the look of glad surprise, of intoxication, that was stamped upon George's features at these words of the merchant's. He remained mute, he seemed stupefied.

"Come, Monsieur George," the linendraper proceeded with a smile, "what is there so very extraordinary, so incredible, in what I have been telling you? For three whole months you were at work in my shop. I already knew that, in order to insure your grandfather's existence, you turned soldier. Your rank of under-officer, besides two wounds, proves that you served with honor. During your three months with me I was able—my eyes are sufficiently keen—to gauge your worth in point of heart, intelligence and skill at your trade. Delighted with our acquaintance, I invited you to call upon us. Your reserve in this instance is an additional proof of the delicacy of your character. On top of all that, my daughter loves you and you love her. You are twenty-seven years old, she eighteen. She is a charming being; you a handsome fellow. You are poor; I have enough for two. You are a mechanic, so was my father. What in the devil's name is there to amaze you so much? You look as if you had been treated to a fairy tale."

These kind words failed to put an end to George's stupor. He really believed himself treading on enchanted ground, as the merchant had indicated. With moist eyes and a throbbing heart the young man could barely mutter:

"Oh, monsieur! Excuse my embarrassment—I feel so dazed with joy at all I have heard—at your saying that you consent to my marrying—"

"One moment!" quickly interposed the linendraper. "One moment! Take note that, with all the good opinion I entertain for you, what I said was we might decide to accept you as our son-in-law. It was conditional. The conditions

were these: first, that you were not guilty of the unworthy act of seduction, that you were charged with—"

"Monsieur, did I not swear to you?"

"You did. I believe you. I mention that first condition simply because I had it on my mind when I came in. As to the second—there is a second—"

"What is it, monsieur?" asked George with inexpressible anxiety, and beginning to apprehend he had too readily indulged in an insensate hope.

"Listen to me, Monsieur George. We have talked very little politics together. During the time that you worked at my place, our conversation always turned upon the history of our forefathers. Nevertheless, I know you entertain very liberal ideas. Let us be short about it—you are a Socialist republican."

"I have heard you say, monsieur, that all opinion, sincerely held, was honorable."

"And I do not take that back. I do not blame you. But between the desire to cause one's opinion to prevail by peaceful means, and schemes to bring about its triumph by violence, by the force of arms—between the two there yawns a deep abyss. Not true, Monsieur George?"

"Yes, monsieur," answered the young man, looking at the linendraper with surprise mingled with uneasiness.

"Now, then, never is an armed demonstration attempted single-handed. Is not that also true, Monsieur George?"

"Monsieur," the young man answered with a feeling of increasing uneasiness, "I do not know—"

"Yes, you are bound to know that people ordinarily associate with others of their own opinion. In short, people affiliate in secret societies—and, on the day of battle, turn up boldly upon the street. Is that not true, Monsieur George?"

"I know, monsieur, that the revolution of 1830 was accomplished in that manner," answered George in a high state of anxiety, while his heart felt more and more wrung with pain.

"Certainly," resumed Monsieur Lebrenn, "certainly it was done in that way, and others before it; and still others in the future will take the same course. Nevertheless, as with revolutions, insurrections do not always succeed. Seeing that people who play at that game stake their heads, you will realize, Monsieur George, that my wife and I would be rather disinclined to give our daughter to a man who did not belong to himself; who, at any moment, might take up arms, and march with the secret society that he is a member of at the risk of his life, as behooves a man of honor and conviction. It is all very lofty, very heroic, I admit. The inconvenience lies in that the Chamber of Peers, failing to appreciate that sort of heroism, may send the conspirators to Mt. St. Michel, unless it order their heads cut off. Now, then, I put the question to you as a matter of conscience, Monsieur George, would it not be a sad thing for a young woman to be exposed at any time to see her husband without a head, or consigned to imprisonment for life?"

George, grief-stricken and in consternation, had turned pale. He answered Lebrenn in a depressed voice:

"Monsieur—two words—"

"Allow me, I shall be done in a second," interposed the linendraper; and he proceeded in a grave, almost solemn voice:

"Monsieur George, I place implicit confidence in your word. I have tested you. Swear to me that you do not belong to any secret society. I will believe you, and you shall be my son-in-law—or, rather, my own son," added Lebrenn, reaching out his hand to George, "seeing that since I became acquainted with you and learned to esteem you, I ever felt for you, I repeat it, as much interest as sympathy."

The merchant's praises, together with the cordiality of his manner, intensified the severity of the blow that smote the hopes of George. He, hitherto so determined and energetic, felt himself weakening. He covered his face in his hands, and could not restrain his tears.

Lebrenn contemplated him with commiseration. In a moved voice he addressed the young man:

"I am awaiting your oath, Monsieur George."

The young man turned his head aside to wipe away his tears. He then faced the father of his beloved and said:

"I can not, monsieur, give you the oath that you request."

"Then—your marriage to my daughter—"

"I must renounce it, monsieur," answered George painfully.

"Accordingly, Monsieur George," resumed the merchant, "you admit that you belong to a secret society?"

The young man's silence was his only reply.

"Well," said the merchant, heaving a sigh of regret, and rising; "it is all ended—fortunately my daughter is a brave girl."

"I also shall be so, monsieur."

"Monsieur George," continued the merchant, reaching out his hand to the young carpenter, "you are a man of honor. I need not demand of you secrecy concerning this interview. As you may judge, my inclinations were most favorable towards you. It is not my fault if my plans—I shall say more—my wishes, my warm wishes, to see my daughter and you united meet with an insuperable obstacle."

"Never, monsieur, shall I forget the token of esteem with which you have honored me. You act with the wisdom and discretion of a father. I can not—let it cost me what grief it may—but bow respectfully to your decision. I should, I admit it, myself have forestalled this subject with you—I should have loyally apprized you of the sacred engagement that binds me to my party. I am certain I would have made the confession to you, so soon as I had recovered from the intoxication of happiness that your words threw me into. I would have had time to consider the duties imposed upon me by that unexpected happiness—this marriage. Pardon me, monsieur," George proceeded, in a voice that trembled with anguish, "pardon me. I have no longer the right to speak of that beautiful dream. But what I shall ever remember with pride is your having said to me: 'You can be my son.'"

"It is well, Monsieur George; I expected no less from you," said Lebrenn, moving towards the door.

And, giving his hand once more to the young man, he added with emotion:

"Once more, adieu."

"Adieu, monsieur," responded George, taking the outstretched hand of the merchant. But the latter, suddenly throwing his arms around the young

artisan, pressed him to his breast, crying in a voice that shook with joy, and with eyes moist with tears:

"Well done, George! Honest man! Loyal heart! I judged you rightly!"

Puzzled at these words, and at the conduct of the linendraper, George looked at him unable to utter a word. The latter whispered to him:

"Six weeks ago—Lourcine Street."

A tremor ran over George's frame. In alarm he exclaimed:

"Mercy, monsieur!"

"Number seventeen, fourth floor, in the rear."

"Monsieur, I beg of you!"

"Did not a mechanic named Dupont introduce you blindfolded?"

"Monsieur, I can make no answer."

"Five members of a secret society received you. You took the usual pledge. And you were led out again, still blindfolded. Not so?"

"Monsieur," cried George as stupefied as he was terror-stricken at the revelation, and seeking to regain composure. "I do not understand what you are saying—"

"I was, that evening, the chairman of the committee, my brave George."

"You, monsieur!" cried the young man still hesitating to believe Lebrenn.
"You!"

"Yes, I."

And seeing incredulity still depicted on George's countenance, the merchant proceeded:

"Yes, I presided. And here is the proof."

Saying which he whispered a few words in George's ear.

Unable any longer to doubt, the young man cried, looking at the merchant:

"But, monsieur—the oath that you demanded of me a while ago?"

"It was a last test."

"A test?"

"You must pardon me for it, my brave George. A father is mistrustful. Thank heaven you did not belie my expectations. You stood the test gallantly. You preferred the ruin of your dearest hopes to a lie, notwithstanding you must have felt sure that I relied upon your word with implicit confidence, whatever you may have said."

"Monsieur," replied George with a hesitation that deeply touched the merchant, "can I now—can I this time—can I hope—with certainty? I conjure you, speak! If you only knew what anguish I went through a while ago!"

"Upon my word as an honest man, my dear George, my daughter loves you. My wife and I consent to your marriage. And we look forward to it with delight because we see in it a future of happiness for our child. Is that plain?"

"Oh, monsieur!" cried George pressing with effusion the hand of the merchant, who said:

"As to the exact day of your marriage, my dear George, the events of yesterday—those that are in train to-day—the course that our secret society is to follow—"

"You, monsieur?" cried George with renewed amazement, and unable to avoid interrupting Lebrenn to express his astonishment, for a moment forgotten in his transport of joy; "You, monsieur, are, indeed, a member of our secret society? Indeed, I am dumbfounded!"

"Not bad!" exclaimed the merchant smiling. "Here we have our dear George about to start all over anew with his astonishment. And why, pray, should not I also belong to your secret society? Perchance, because, without being rich, exactly, I enjoy some comfort and have a few duds to sell? What business have I, I suppose you are thinking, with a party, the aim of which is the conquest for the proletariat of political life, through universal suffrage, and of property through the organization of labor? Why, my good George, just because I have, it is my duty to assist my brothers to conquer what they have not."

"These are generous sentiments, monsieur!" exclaimed George. "Rare, indeed, are the men who, having arrived at comfort, turn around to give a helping hand to their less fortunate brothers."

"No, George; no. That is not so rare. When, perhaps within not many hours, you will see running to arms all the members of our society, one of the chiefs of which I have been for some time, you will find among them merchants, artists, manufacturers, literary people, lawyers, men of learning, physicians, in short—bourgeois, most of whom, like myself, live in modest comfort, all of them animated with no higher ambition than the emancipation of their brothers, the common people, and anxious to drop their guns, after the struggle, in order to return to their industrial and peaceful occupations."

"Oh, monsieur, how surprised and happy I am at what you tell me!"

"Still surprised! Poor George! And why so? Because there are bourgeois—or, to use the full, big term, republican Socialist bourgeois? Come, now, George, speaking seriously, is not the cause of the bourgeois that of the proletariat? Is there any doubt but that I, for instance, yesterday a proletarian, whom good luck has so far favored, might, through some stroke of bad luck, become again a proletarian to-morrow; and, if not I, my son? Am not I—and my case is that of all other small traders—at the mercy of the barons of high finance, of the strong iron safes, just as our forefathers were at the mercy of the barons of the strong forts? Are not the small holders as much enslaved and plundered by the Dukes of Mortgage, by the Marquises of Usury, by the Counts of Speculation? Are we, the merchants, not daily, despite all our probity, despite all our labors, despite all our economy, despite all our intelligence—are not we, despite all that, ever on the brink of ruin through any crisis that may hap to come upon us, whenever, either through the fear, the cupidity or the whim of the satraps, it pleases those autocrats of capital to stop credit and to reject our signature, however honorable the same may be? Would we, were credit, instead of being the monopoly of the few that it is to-day, democratically organized by the state, as it ought to be,—would we be then exposed to ruin by the sudden withdrawal of capital, by usurious extortion, of discount, or as the consequence of a merciless competition? Are not we to-day, we old men, on the eve of finding ourselves in as precarious a position as was that of your grandfather, that brave invalid of toil, who, after thirty years of work and probity, would have died of want but for your devotion to him, my dear George? Have I, already once ruined like so many other merchants, the certainty that my son will always find the means of earning his daily bread, that he will not be forced to experience, like you, George, like all other proletarians, the trials of being laid-off—that homicidal

manoeuvre which causes you to die a little every day for want of sufficient food? And my daughter—but no! I know her too well! She would sooner die! But how many young girls, brought up in comfort, and whose fathers were, like myself, modest merchants, have not been plunged into atrocious misery—and, not infrequently, from such misery hurled into the abyss of vice, like the wretched working girl whom you would have married! No, no, George! The intelligent bourgeois, and they are numerous, do not separate their cause from that of their brothers of the common people. Proletarians and bourgeois have for centuries fought side by side, heart by heart, in order to regain their freedom. Their blood has mingled in order to cement the holy union of the conquered against the conquerors! of the vanquished against the vanquishers! of the weak and the disinherited against force and privilege! How, then, should the interests of the bourgeois and the proletarians not be common? They have ever had the same enemy to contend with. But, enough of politics, George. Let us talk of yourself and my daughter. The commotion in Paris began last evening, it is at its height this morning. Our sections have been notified to hold themselves in readiness. We expect a call to arms from one moment to another. Are you aware of that?"

"Yes, monsieur; I have been notified."

"This evening, or to-night, we shall have to descend into the street. My wife and daughter do not know this. Not that I mistrust them," added the merchant with a smile, "they are true Gallic women, worthy of our mothers, the valiant women, who, with act and voice, encouraged their fathers, brothers, sons and husbands in battle. But you know our by-laws. They impose upon us absolute silence towards outsiders. George, within three days either the throne of Louis Philippe will be overthrown, or our party will have been once more vanquished. But not discouraged. To it belongs the future. At this appeal to arms, you or I, you and I, my friend, may be laid low upon the barricade."

"Such is the chance of war, monsieur; may you be spared!"

"To inform my daughter in advance that I consent to her marriage with you, and that you love her, would be only to increase her sorrow in case you succumb in the fray."

"It would, monsieur."

"I, therefore, request you, George, to await the issue of this crisis before speaking to my daughter. Should I be killed, my wife will be apprised of my last wishes, that you marry Velleda."

"Monsieur," replied George, profoundly moved, "what I feel at this moment can not be expressed. All I can say to you is—I shall approve myself worthy of your daughter—worthy of you; I am not overcome by the magnitude of the obligation that you put me under—my heart and my life will prove equal to it, I assure you, monsieur."

"I believe you, my brave George," said the linendraper, affectionately pressing the young man's hands in his own. "One word more. Have you arms?"

"I have a carbine hidden here, and fifty cartridges that I manufactured last night."

"Should the insurrection explode this evening, a very likely occurrence, we shall barricade the street up to my house. The post is excellent. We have several stacks of arms and ample powder. I went out this morning to inspect the deposits of ammunition that it was feared the police spies had discovered. I found the rumor false. At the first commotion, return to your apartment, George. I shall communicate with you—and then, 'sdeath! Firm on the barricades! Tell me, is your grandfather discreet?"

"I answer for him, as for myself, monsieur."

"Is he there in the next room?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Very well, grant me the favor of allowing me to impart to him news that will give him joy."

Monsieur Lebrenn stepped into the room of the old man, who was still smoking his pipe "like a Pacha," as he expressed it.

"Good father," said the linendraper to him, "your grandson has so good and so generous a heart that I give him my daughter, with whom he is crazily in love. All I ask of you is to keep the secret for a few days, after which you are entitled to the expectation of soon seeing yourself promoted to the dignity of great-grandfather. George will explain the whole thing to you. Adieu, my good old man. And you George—so long!"

Leaving George alone with his grandfather, Lebreun proceeded to the residence of the Count of Plouernel, the colonel of dragoons who was waiting for the linendraper, to consider the purchase of a large supply of linen.

CHAPTER IV

PRADELINE

Gonthram Neroweg, Count of Plouernel, occupied a cosy little house on Paradis-Poissonniere Street, built by his own grandfather. The somewhat rococo elegance of the establishment suggested it must have been constructed about the middle of the last century, and had done service as a city residence. The quarter of the Poissonnieres, or Fish-markets, as the neighborhood was called in the days of the Regency, but now almost deserted, was perfectly appropriate for those mysterious retreats that are devoted to the cult of Venus Aphrodite.

The Count of Plouernel was breakfasting tête-a-tête with a pretty girl of about twenty years—a brunette, lively and laughterful, who had been surnamed Pradeline because of her readiness, at the suppers of which she always was the soul and often the queen also, in improvising upon all imaginable subjects, ditties that the celebrated improviser, whose name she bore with a feminine termination, would surely not have cared to father, but which had at least the redeeming feature of lacking neither in point nor in mirthfulness.

The Count of Plouernel, having heard speak of Pradeline, invited her to sup the previous night with him and some of his friends. After the supper, which was prolonged until three in the morning, the right of hospitality for the night had been earned by the girl. After the hospitality came breakfast the following morning. The two companions were, accordingly, at table in a little boudoir fitted out in Louis XV style, and contiguous to the bed chamber. A good fire blazed in the marble-tipped hearth. Thick curtains of light blue damask, covered with roses, softened the glare of the daylight. Flowers filled large porcelain vases. The atmosphere was warm and perfumed. The wines were choice, the dishes toothsome. Pradeline and the Count of Plouernel were doing honor to both.

The colonel was a man of about thirty-eight years of age—tall, and at once lithe and robust. His face, though rather haggard, on that morning, was of a species of bold beauty, and strongly betrayed his German or Frankish stock, the characteristic traits of which Tacitus and Caesar frequently described. His hair was light blonde, his moustache long and reddish, his eyes light grey, and his nose hooked like an eagle's beak.

Wrapped in a costly morning gown, the Count of Plouernel seemed no less hilarious than the young girl.

"Come, Pradeline," said he, pouring out to her a glass of generous old Burgundy wine, "to the health of your lover."

"Nonsense! Do you think I keep a lover?"

"You are right. To the health of your lovers!"

"You don't seem to be jealous, darling!"

"And you?"

At this question Pradeline nonchalantly opened her red corsage, and clinking her glass with the blade of her knife she answered the Count of Plouernel with an improvisation to the tune then in vogue of La Rifla:

"For ague-cheeked Sir Fidelity

I only have duplicity.

When some gay lover pleases me,

'Tis quickly done! He pleases me—

La rifla-fla-fla-fla, la rifla-fla-fla-fla,

La rifla-fla-fla-fla-fla-fla-fla."

"Bravo, my dear!" cried the colonel, laughing boisterously.

And joining in chorus with Pradeline, he sang, also clinking his glass with the edge of his knife:

"When some gay lover pleases me,

'Tis quickly done! He pleases me.

La rifla-fla-fla-fla, la rifla-fla-fla-fla,

La rifla-fla-fla-fla-fla-fla-fla."

"And now, my little girl," he proceeded to say at the close of the refrain, "since you are not jealous, give me some advice—some friendly advice. I am in love—desperately in love."

"Is it possible!"

"If she were a woman of the world I would not ask your advice, but—"

"Well! Well! Am I, perchance, not a woman? and of the world, too?"

"Of all the world, not true, my dear?"

"Naturally, seeing I'm here—which is little to your credit, my dear, and less creditable to me. But that matters not. Proceed, and don't be rude again—if you can avoid it."

"Oh! The little one gives me a lesson in politeness!"

"You want my advice; you see I can give you lessons. Proceed, what have you to say?"

"You must know I am in love with a shop-girl, that is to say, her father and mother keep a shop. You surely know the ways of such folks, their customs and habits. What means would you advise me to employ in order to succeed?"

"Make yourself beloved."

"That takes too long. When a violent fancy seizes me, I find it impossible to wait."

"Indeed! 'Tis wonderful, but, darling, you interest me greatly. Let's see. First of all is the shop-girl poor? Is she in great want? Does she seem very hungry?"

"How? Whether she is hungry? What the devil do you mean?"

"Colonel, I can not deny your personal attractions—you're handsome, you're brilliant, you're charming, you're adorable, you're delicious—"

"Irony?"

"What do you think! Would I dare to? Well, as I was saying, you're delicious! But, in order for the poor girl to appreciate you duly, she must first be dying of hunger. You have no idea how hunger—helps to find people adorable."

Whereupon Pradeline sailed in to improvise a new ditty, not, this time, in merry vein, but with marked bitterness, and keeping time with such a slow measure that her favorite tune sounded melancholic:

"You're hungry and you weep,
Come, maid, and fall asleep;
Come, you'll have plenty of gold,
Thyself to me be sold.

La rifla-fla-fla-fla, la rifla—"

"The devil take that song! This one is not at all jolly," remarked the Count of Plouernel, struck by the melancholic accents of the young girl, who, however, quickly resumed her reckless bearing and wonted cheerfulness. "I understand the allusion," he added; "but my pretty shop-girl is not hungry."

"The next thing—is she coquettish? Does she love to be prinked? Does she like jewelry, or theaters? These are famous means to blast a poor girl."

"I presume she likes all those things. But she has a father and mother, and they probably keep a close watch over her. In view of all this I had a plan—"

"You? At last you have a plan of your own! And what is it?"

"It is to make frequent and large purchases in that shop, even to loan them money at a pinch, because I know those small traders must ever be hard pushed for cash to pay their bills."

"In other words, you believe they will be ready to sell you their daughter—for cash?"

"No; but I figure that they will at least shut their eyes—I would then be able to dazzle the minx with presents, and proceed rapidly to my goal. Well, how does my plan strike you?"

"I'll be blown! How can I tell?" answered Pradeline, affecting innocence. "If things are done in your upper world in that manner, if parents sell their daughters, perhaps the thing is done in the same way among the poorer folks. Still, I don't believe it. These people are too bourgeois, they are too niggardly, you see?"

"My little girl," said the Count of Plouernel haughtily, "you are emancipating yourself prodigiously."

At this reproach the young girl broke out with a peal of laughter, which she interrupted to sing in merry notes this new improvisation:

"O! See that bold signor,

So full of pride, honor?

To such a haughty flea

All bourgeois bend the knee!

La rifla-fla-fla-fla, la rifla—"

After which Pradeline rose, took from the mantelpiece a cigar that she deftly lighted, and proceeded to hum her refrain between the puffs of smoke that she blew out of her cherry lips. She then stretched herself at full length upon a lounge, and drove in silence the bluish smoke of her choice Havana towards the ceiling.

Forgetting the anger with which he was seized shortly before, the Count of Plouernel could not avoid laughing at the originality displayed by the young girl, and said:

"Come, my little pet; let us talk seriously. I am not asking for songs, but for advice."

"I must first be informed of the quarter of the town in which your love is located," observed the young girl dogmatically, turning over on the lounge. "The knowledge of the quarter is very important in such matters. What may be done in one quarter, can not be done in another. Darling, there are prudish quarters, devout quarters, and décolletéquarters."

"Profoundly reasoned, my charmer. The influence of a quarter upon the virtue of its women is considerable. Without running any risk I may tell you that my shop-girl lives on St. Denis Street."

The young girl, who, stretched out upon the lounge, had been leisurely and nonchalantly rolling the clouds of smoke from her cigar before her, started at the mention of St. Denis Street, and rose so suddenly that the Count of Plouernel looked at her in astonishment, and cried:

"What the devil has come over you?"

"What has come over me—" answered Pradeline, quickly recovering her composure and wonted nonchalance, "what has come over me is that your horrible cigar has burnt me—but that's no matter. You were saying, darling, that your love is located in St. Denis Street? Well, now I have something to go by; but not yet enough."

"And you shall not learn any more, my little beauty."

"The pest take this cigar!" exclaimed Pradeline, again shaking her head. "It will blister me! It will blister me surely!"

"Would you like some cold water?"

"No, it will soon be over. So, then, your love lives in St. Denis Street. You should also let me know—is the place at the head or the foot of the street? There is quite some difference between the head and the foot of a street, you must admit. The proof is, that the prices of the shops are dear at one end and cheap at the other. According as the rent runs high or low, a lover's generosity must keep step and be proportionately great or less so. You can not get over this positive fact."

"It is a very positive fact. Well, I shall confide to you that my love lives not far from the St. Denis Gate."

"I need put no further questions to render my opinion," said Pradeline with a voice that she was at great pains to modulate into comical tones. Nevertheless, a closer observer than the Count of Plouernel would have noticed a vague shadow of uneasiness flit over the otherwise gay girl.

"Well, what is your advice?"

"First of all—you should—" but, suddenly breaking off, the young girl said:

"Someone raps at the door, darling."

"You think so?"

"I am quite certain. Listen! Don't you hear?"

In fact the rapping was renewed.

"Walk in!" cried the Count.

A valet presented himself, looking disconcerted, and said to the Count anxiously:

"Monsieur Count, his Eminence—"

"My uncle!" exclaimed the Count of Plouernel, looking no less disconcerted than his valet, and hastily rising to his feet.

"Yes, Monsieur Count. Monsignor the Cardinal arrived last night in the city from his trip abroad, and—"

"A Cardinal!" cried Pradeline, interrupting the valet with boisterous peals of laughter, already oblivious of the matters that seemed to preoccupy her mind a minute before. "A Cardinal! That's a rare sight! That's a thing one does not find every day at Mabilles or at Valentino's! A Cardinal! I've never seen one. I must give myself a treat."

Whereupon she forthwith improvised to the tune of her favorite song:

"The young Queen Bacchanal

She saw a Cardinal,

And said: Let's have some fun,

And make him dance and run—

La rifla-fla-fla-fla, la rifla-fla-fla-fla,

La rifla-fla-fla-fla-fla-fla-fla!"

So saying, Pradeline raised the hem of her dress and started to pirouette around the room with great grace and utterly unconstrained, all the while singing her latest improvisation, while the valet, standing motionless at the half-opened door was with difficulty keeping a serious face, and the Count of Plouernel, nettled at the freedom of the brazen minx, called to her:

"Come, my dear; that's foolish; keep still."

Cardinal Plouernel, just announced, not caring to be kept waiting in his nephew's ante-chamber, and little imagining him to be in such profane company, had followed upon the heels of the valet, and entered the room just as Pradeline, throwing out her well shaped limb, undulated her upper body as she sang:

"Oh, let us have some fun,

And make him dance and run!

La rifla-fla-fla-fla, la rifla—"

At the sight of the Cardinal the Count of Plouernel ran to the door, and repeatedly and effusively embracing his uncle, gently pushed him back into the salon from which he came. The valet, like the experienced menial that he was, discreetly shut the door of the boudoir upon his master, and drew the bolt.

CHAPTER V

CARDINAL AND COUNT

Cardinal Plouernel was a man of sixty-five years of age, lean, lank and leathery of skin. Except for the difference in age, he was possessed of the identical type of face as his nephew. His long neck, bald head, large and crooked nose like the beak of a bird of prey, and wide-set, round and penetrating eyes, imparted to his physiognomy, if analyzed and the high grade of intelligence that they denoted left out of consideration, a singular resemblance to that of a vulture.

To sum up, the priest, if clad in his red robes of Prince of the Church, could not choose but present a fear-inspiring aspect. On a visit to his nephew, he was clad simply in a long black coat, strictly buttoned up to his throat.

"Pardon, dear uncle," said the Count, smiling. "Not being aware of your return to town, I did not expect this matitudinal call."

The Cardinal was not the man to be astonished at a colonel of dragoons keeping a mistress. He made answer in his brief manner:

"I am pressed for time. Let us talk to the point. On my way from abroad I made a wide tour through France. We are on the verge of a revolution."

"Indeed, uncle?" asked the colonel incredulously. "Do you really believe—"

"I believe a revolution is at hand."

"But, uncle—"

"Have you available funds about you? If not, I can help you out."

"Funds—what for?"

"To exchange into gold, or for good drafts upon London. The latter are more convenient on a voyage."

"What! A voyage, uncle? What voyage?"

"The voyage that you are to make by keeping me company. We shall depart this evening."

"Depart—this evening!"

"Would you prefer to serve the Republic?"

"The Republic!" exclaimed the Count of Plouernel. "What Republic?"

"The one that will be proclaimed in Paris, within shortly, after the downfall of Louis Philippe."

"The downfall of Louis Philippe! The Republic in France—and within shortly!"

"Yes, the French Republic—one, and indivisible—proclaimed in our interest—provided we know how to wait—"

And the Cardinal indulged in a singular smile as he inhaled a pinch of snuff.

The Count contemplated him dumbfounded. He looked as if he had just dropped down from the clouds.

"I see, my poor Gonthram, you must have been either blind or deaf," the Cardinal proceeded, shrugging his shoulders. "Do you see nothing in those revolutionary banquets that have succeeded one another throughout the principal cities of France during the last three months?"

"Ha! Ha! Ha! uncle," answered the Count, laughing out aloud; "do you take those bibbers of blue wine, those swallows of veal—at twenty sous a plate—to be capable of making a revolution?"

"The simpletons—I can not blame them, so much the worse—the simpletons have turned the heads of the bigger simpletons who listened to them. There is nothing, in and of itself, so stupid as gunpowder; is there? Yet that does not prevent it from exploding. Well, these banqueters have played with gunpowder. The mine is about to explode, and it will blow up the throne of the Orleans dynasty."

"You are joking, uncle. There are fifty thousand soldiers in the city. If the mob but raise a finger it will be mowed down like grass. Everybody is so completely at ease regarding the state of Paris that, despite the seeming commotion of yesterday, the troops have not even been furnished with passwords in the barracks."

"Is that so? Well, so much the better!" put in the Cardinal, rubbing his hands. "If their government is seized with the vertigo, these Orleans will quickly vacate their seats for the Republic, and our turn will come all the sooner."

At this point his Eminence was interrupted by two raps given at the door of the salon that communicated with the boudoir. Promptly upon the raps followed the following ditty, still to the tune of La Rifla, and sung by Pradeline in measured rhythm on the other side of the door:

"To get out of this scrape—

I sorely need my cape,

On this occa-si-on,

Your bene-dic-ti-on.

La rifla-fla-fla-fla, la rifla!"

"Oh, uncle!" said the colonel in anger, "Pay no attention, I beg you, to the insolence of that foolish little minx."

And rising, the Count of Plouernel took from the sofa where they had lain since the previous evening the cape and hat of the brazen girl, rang the bell quickly, and, throwing the articles at the valet who answered the summons, said to him:

"Deliver these traps to the hussy, and have her leave the house instantly."

And then, returning to his Eminence, who had remained impassive, and was at the moment in the act of opening his snuff-box, he continued:

"I assure you, uncle, that I am ashamed. But droll creatures like that respect nothing."

"She has very well shaped limbs," mused the Cardinal, taking his snuff; "she is quite comely, the droll creature. Nevertheless, in the Fifteenth Century, we would have ordered her roasted alive like a little Jewess, in reward for such a joke. But patience. Oh, my friend, never—never before were our chances so favorable!"

"Our chances favorable if the Orleans dynasty is chased away and the Republic is proclaimed?"

The Cardinal again shrugged his shoulders and proceeded to explain:

"Either one thing or the other will happen—either the Republic of the barefooted mob will be anarchy, the dictatorship, emigration, pillage, paper

money, the guillotine, and war with all Europe—and then the thing will last six months at the longest, and Henry V will be brought back triumphantly by the Holy Alliance; or, on the contrary, their Republic will be benign, stupid, legal and moderate with universal suffrage for its foundation—"

"And, if so, uncle?"

"If so, it will last longer, but we shall lose nothing by waiting. Wielding our influence as large landed proprietors, and operating through the lower clergy upon the peasants, we shall become masters at the hustings, obtain the majority in the Chamber, and hamper the passage of every measure that might, I will not say cause the Republic to be loved, but even cause such a revolutionary state of things to seem tolerable. We shall sow the seeds of mistrust and fear in all minds. Soon, with its credit destroyed, with universal ruin, with disaster on all sides, a chorus of curses will rise against the infamous Republic that will then die peaceably after a trial that will for all time disgust the people with it. At that psychologic moment we shall step forward. The hungry people, the bourgeois, frightened out of their senses, will throw themselves at our feet, praying to us with clasped hands for Henry V, the savior of France. Finally, the hour for stipulating conditions will arrive. These will be ours: Royalty, at least such as it existed before 1789, that is, no more bourgeois insolent and clamorous Chamber, holding the reins of government as much as the King, seeing it decides upon appropriations and taxes—an ignominious state of things; an end of the present mongrel system—all or nothing, and we want all, to wit, an absolute King resting upon an omnipotent clergy; a strong aristocracy and a merciless army; a hundred thousand, two hundred thousand foreign troops, if needed; the Holy Alliance will lend them to us. Misery will be so frightful, fear so intense, the general lassitude such, that our conditions will be accepted as soon as imposed. Thereupon we shall take prompt and terrible measures—the only effective ones in such emergencies. Our measures will be these: First of all, provost courts; reinstitution of the laws pronouncing sacrilege and lese majesté capital crimes, and making them retroactive, back to 1830; execution to follow verdict within twenty-four hours, in order to smother in their own poison all revolutionists, all people tainted with impiety; it will be an era of terror—another St. Bartholomew, if necessary. France will not die under the knife; on the contrary, she is suffering of plethora, she needs a bleeding from time to time. The second measure will be to assign public instruction to the Society of Jesus—it alone is able to emasculate the human species. The third measure will be to break the sheaf of centralization; in it lay the strength of the Revolution; our effort must be, on the contrary, to isolate the provinces as much as possible from the small centers, where, unmolested, we shall hold sway through the lower

clergy; or, by virtue of our large holdings, restrain, prevent, if at all possible, the intercommunication of one section of the country with another. It is not helpful to us for people to draw together and meet each other with frequency. With the view of dividing and keeping them divided, we shall assiduously rekindle the rivalries, jealousies, and where needed, the old provincial hatreds. To that end an occasional little douse of civil war will be a helpful expedient. It breeds and nurses the germs of implacable animosity."

The Cardinal stopped a moment to take another pinch of snuff, and then concluded with these words:

"People who are divided by hatred never conspire."

The merciless logic of the priest repelled the Count of Plouernel. Despite his own fatuity and caste prejudices, he rather leaned towards modern thought. No doubt he would have preferred a reign of "legitimate Kings." But he did not stop to think that he who wants the end must not object to the means, and that, in order to be lasting in the eyes of its partisans, a complete and absolute restoration could not possibly take place and maintain itself except by the frightful means that the Cardinal had just laid bare with complacent assurance. The colonel replied with a smile:

"But, uncle, think of it! In these days of ours the idea of isolating the population is chimerical. The thing is impossible! What about the strategic highways! The railroads!"

"The railroads?" echoed the Cardinal angrily. "A devil's invention, good only to cause the revolutionary fever to circulate from one end of Europe to the other! For that very reason our Holy Father wants no railroads in his states, and right he is. It is incredible that the monarchs of the Holy Alliance could have allowed themselves to yield to such diabolical innovations! They may have to pay dear therefor! What did our forefathers do, at the time of the conquest, with a view to subjugate and keep the yoke riveted to the neck of this perverse Gallic race—our vassals by birth and by kind, that has so often risen in rebellion against us? Our ancestors staked them within their separate domains, forbidding them to step outside under penalty of death. Thus chained to the glebe, thus isolated and brutified, the breed is more easily kept under control—that must be the goal we should aim at returning to."

"But I repeat—what about the railroads? You would not tear up the highways and railroads, would you, uncle?"

"Why not? Did not the Franks, our ancestors, in pursuit of an unerring policy, tear up the highways, the magnificent roads of communication that they found in Gaul, and which those pagans of Romans had constructed? Would it be so difficult a task to hurl against the railroads the mass of brutes whom that infernal invention threw out of their means of earning a livelihood? Anathema—anathema against those proud monuments of haughty Satan! By the blood of my race! If he is not curbed in his sacrilegious career, man will yet end—may God forefend!—by changing this valley of tears into a terrestrial paradise, wholly oblivious of the fact that original sin condemns him to perpetual suffering!"

"Zounds! Dear uncle, not so fast!" interjected the colonel. "I am not inclined to carry out my destiny with quite such scrupulous accuracy."

"You big baby!" replied the Cardinal impatiently, taking a fresh pinch of snuff. "Do you not understand that, in order that the large majority of the race of Adam suffer and be meritoriously conscious of its suffering, it is requisite that there be always in evidence a neat small number of happy people in the world?"

"Oh, I see! As a contrast; is that it, dear uncle?"

"Necessarily. The depth of the valley is not realized but for its contrast with the mountain top. But enough of philosophy. As you know, I have an accurate eye, quick and certain. The situation is such as I have described it to you. I repeat—do as I have done. Realize all your negotiable effects in gold, or in good drafts upon London. Send in your resignation this minute, and let us depart to-morrow at the very latest. Such is the blindness of those people that they apprehend nothing. You said so yourself. There is hardly any military precaution taken. You can, accordingly, without in any way wounding your military honor, quit your regiment this instant."

"Impossible, my dear uncle—that would be an act of cowardice. If the Republic is to be established, the thing will not be done without the firing of some guns. I wish to do my part—I wish to be quits. Politeness for politeness, with good round discharges of muskets! My dragoons will want nothing better than a chance to charge upon the canaille."

"Then you propose to defend the throne of the wretches of Orleans!" exclaimed the Cardinal with a loud outburst of sardonic laughter.

"Dear uncle, you know very well I did not wheel in line in support of the Orleans dynasty. No more than you, do I love them. I simply joined the

army, because I have a military turn of mind. The army has but one opinion—discipline. In short, if your foresight is correct—and your trained experience inclines me to the belief that you are not mistaken—then a battle will be fought this very day. Under such circumstances I would be a despicable wretch to hand in my resignation on the eve of an encounter."

"Then you are determined to run the risk of being riddled with bullets or brained by the mob on a barricade—in the interest of the Orleans dynasty?"

"I am a soldier—I am determined to fulfil the duties of my profession."

"But, you devil of a stubborn block! Suppose you are killed, our house would then fall from the lance to the distaff."

"I promised you I would marry at forty—"

"But until then—think of it—these street fights are disgraceful—to die in the mud of the gutters, killed by a lot of beggars!"

"Before it came to that I would have treated myself to the sport of hewing several of them down with my saber," coolly replied the colonel. "In that event it will not be difficult for you to find some sturdy Plouernel bastard of my own making—whom you will then adopt, uncle. He will perpetuate my name. Bastards often have brought good luck to great houses."

"Triple fool! To play with your life in that manner! And that at the very moment when the future smiles upon us as it never smiled before! At the moment when, after having been beaten, kicked and cuffed by the descendants of the men who for fourteen centuries were our vassals and serfs, we are about to wipe out at a single stroke these last fifty years of shame! At the moment when, instructed by experience, and aided by the course of events, we are about to resume our power and become even mightier than we were in 1789! Go to—I pity you! You are right, races degenerate!" exclaimed the intractable old man, rising. "I would despair of our cause if all our people were like you."

The valet, stepping in again after rapping at the door, said to the Count of Plouernel:

"Monsieur Count, the linendraper of St. Denis Street has arrived. He is waiting in the ante-chamber."

"Take him to the salon of the portraits."

The valet left; the colonel said to the Cardinal, whom he saw angrily picking up his hat and moving towards the door:

"For God's sake, uncle, do not go away angry, in that way—"

"I am not going away angry; I am going away ashamed."

"Come, dear uncle, you will think better of me."

"Will you, yes or no, depart with me for England?"

"Impossible, uncle."

"Then go to the devil!" was the rather uncanonical shout with which the Cardinal furiously took his leave, slamming the door behind him.

CHAPTER VI

JOEL AND NEROWEG

Marik Lebrenn had been taken by order of the Count of Plouernel into a richly furnished salon. From the walls hung a number of family portraits.

Some wore the cuirass of knights, others the white cross and red cloak of the Templars, others the civilian dress of noblemen, still others the ermine of a peer of France, or the purple of the Princes of the Church.

It was likewise with the women. They wore monastic garbs, and court costumes. But, whether it was that each painter had scrupulously reproduced nature, or that they yielded to the requirements of a family who held it a point of honor to make manifest an uninterrupted racial affiliation in their line of descent, the generic type of the several faces was reproduced in all. Some in beauty, others in ugliness, all by the marked distance between the eyes, together with the pronounced hook of the nose, recalled the bird of prey. Similarly, what by common accord has been called the Bourbon type, which bears some resemblance to the ovine breed, is visibly perpetuated in the house of the Capets. Similarly, also, almost all the descendants of the house of Rohan had, it is said, an erect tuft of hair that was long spoken of as the Rohan crest.

As with almost all ancient family paintings, the Plouernel coat-of-arms and the name of the original represented in the picture were designed in a corner of the canvas. For instance, there were the names of Gonthram V, Sire of Plouernel; Gonthram IX, Count of Plouernel; Hildeberta, Lady of Plouernel; Meroflede, Abbess of Meriadek in Plouernel; and so on, the names of the descendants, men and women, of the Plouernel lineage.

As he contemplated these family portraits Marik Lebrenn experienced a singular mixture of curiosity, bitterness, and sentiments rather sad than wrathful. He moved from one to the other of the portraits as if they awakened a thousand memories within him. His eyes would rest meditatively upon the motionless faces, mute as those of specters. Several of the personages seemed to draw his attention violently. One of them, evidently painted from indications or traditions transmitted subsequent to the date—the year 297—that the portrait bore, must have been the founder of this old house. The corner of the canvas bore the name Gonthram Neroweg.

This personage was of colossal stature. His copper-red hair, combed back Chinese style and held together on the top of his head with a gold band, fell backward over his shoulders like the plume of a helmet. His cheeks and chin were closely shaven, but a long moustache, as red as his hair, drooped down to his chest, which was tattooed in blue and was partly covered by a species of plaid or mantle barred yellow and red. A more savage and ferocious face than that of this first of the Nerowegs can not be easily imagined.

Undoubtedly, at the sight of this portrait, cruel thoughts agitated the linendraper. After long contemplating it Marik Lebrenn could not refrain from shaking his fist at him. It was an involuntary and childish gesture, that he quickly felt ashamed of.

The second portrait that likewise seemed to impress the linendraper keenly represented a woman clad in monastic garb. The picture bore the date of 729, and the name of Meroflede, Abbess of Meriadek in Plouernel. It seemed a singular detail, but this woman held, in one hand, an abbatial crosier, and, in the other, a naked and bloodstained sword, meant, undoubtedly, to convey the idea that the weapon did not always rest inactive in its sheath. The woman was handsome, but of a haughty and sinister beauty, a beauty that betrayed a violent temperament. Her features bore the stamp of that lassitude that excesses leave in their train. Her head was enveloped in long white and black veils. Her large grey-green eyes sparkled under their thick red brows. Her blood-red lips expressed at once wickedness and sensuousness. Finally, the crosier and the bloody sword in the hands of an abbess imparted to the portrait a weird, almost shocking appearance.

Lebrenn contemplated the image with disgust and horror, and muttered to himself:

"Oh, Meroflede! Noble Abbess, consecrated by Satan! Messalina and Fredegonde were immaculate virgins beside you, Marshal Retz a lamb, and his infamous castle a sanctuary beside your damnable cloister!"

Emitting a sigh of sorrow and raising his eyes to heaven as if invoking its mercy for the victims of Meroflede, he exclaimed:

"Poor Septimine! And you—ill-starred Broute-Saule!"

Lebrenn turned away his head in sadness, and long remained pensive. When he again raised his eyes they fell upon another portrait. That one was dated 1237. It represented a warrior with close-clipped hair, a long red

beard, and armed cap-a-pie. From his shoulders hung the red cloak with the white cross of the Crusaders.

"Ah!" came from the linendraper with a fresh gesture of disgust and indignation—"the Red Monk!"

And he passed his hand over his eyes as if to drive away the hideous vision.

Soon, however, Lebrenn's face brightened up. He heaved a sigh of relief, as if pleasant thoughts had succeeded the painful ones of just before. His eyes rested delighted, almost moved with affection upon a portrait dated 1463, and bearing the name of Gonthram XII, Sire of Plouernel.

This portrait represented a young man of thirty years of age. He was clad in black velvet and wore the gold collar of the Order of St. Michael. A more sympathetic face it would be difficult to conceive. The looks, and the smile that flitted over the lips of this personage, were expressive of touching melancholy.

"Oh!" said Lebrenn, "the sight of this one rests my mind—calms it—consoles it. Thanks to God, he is not the only one who fell short of the hereditary wickedness of his stock!"

Lebrenn's meditations were interrupted by the entrance of the Count of Plouernel.

Lebrenn was so absorbed in his own thoughts that he started at the entrance of the Count into the hall. Despite his self-control, the linendraper, the descendant of Joel, whose family had, across the ages, so often encountered that of Neroweg in deadly feud, could not help betraying a certain degree of emotion at finding himself face to face with a descendant of this ancient family. Moreover, it should be stated that Lebrenn had been informed by Jeanike of the colonel's frequent peering through the glass windows of his shop. Nevertheless, so far from seeming concerned or irritated, Lebrenn assumed an air of naive and embarrassed simplicity, which the Count of Plouernel attributed to the respectful deference that he would naturally inspire in a resident of St. Denis Street.

The Count, accordingly, addressed the merchant in an accent of patronizing familiarity, pointing him to an easy chair, while he let himself down in another.

"Oh, monsieur," said Lebrenn, bowing clumsily, "indeed, you do me great honor—"

"Come, come; no ceremonies, my dear sir," interjected the Count, and he added interrogatingly; "my dear monsieur—Lebrenn—I believe?"

"Lebrenn," answered the merchant, with a bow. "Lebrenn, at your service."

"Very good. I yesterday had the pleasure of seeing Madam Lebrenn, and of mentioning to her a large order I have for linen goods for my regiment."

"Very happy, indeed, we are, monsieur, that you have honored our poor shop with your custom. I came to learn from you how many meters of linen you want, and of what quality. I have here some samples with me," he added, affecting to be busily engaged rummaging in his coat pockets after the samples. "Will it please you to choose—I shall give you the price, monsieur—the exact price—the lowest figure—"

"That's not necessary, dear Monsieur Lebrenn. I can tell you in a few words what I want. I have four hundred and fifty dragoons. I want a supply of four hundred and fifty shirts for them, of good quality. I also wish you to attend to the sewing. Your price shall be mine. You see, dear Monsieur Lebrenn, that I know you to be the very cream of honesty."

"Oh, monsieur!"

"The flower of linendrapers."

"Monsieur, monsieur, you embarrass me. I do not deserve—"

"You do not deserve! Come, my dear Monsieur Lebrenn; on the contrary, you deserve that, and a good deal more."

"Monsieur, I shall not venture to contradict you. When will you want the shirts?" asked the merchant, rising. "If the matter is urgent, the labor will come somewhat higher."

"Do me the favor, first of all, to resume your seat, my good man! Do not take your leave from me so abruptly. I may have some other orders for you."

"Monsieur, in obedience to your orders I shall sit down again. When will you want the order filled?"

"Toward the end of next month."

"In that case, monsieur, the four hundred and fifty shirts, of good quality, will cost seven francs apiece."

"Very well, upon my honor! That's cheap, my dear Monsieur Lebrenn. That is a compliment that, I suppose, is not often heard from a purchaser, hey?"

"No, it is not at all frequent; that's true, monsieur. But you mentioned some other orders."

"Zounds, my good man! You do not take your eyes from the cards. Your thoughts run to solid business."

"Eh! Eh! monsieur, one is a merchant in order to sell—"

"And are you selling much these days?"

"Hem—hem—so so, indifferently—"

"Indeed? Only so so? Well, so much the worse, my dear Monsieur Lebrenn! That must go against your grain—because I presume you have a family to maintain?"

"You are very considerate, monsieur. I have a son."

"And are you bringing him up to be your successor?"

"That's it, monsieur! He attends the Central School of Commerce."

"How old is the fine fellow? You have only one son, my dear Monsieur Lebrenn?"

"Begging your pardon for contradicting you, I also have a daughter."

"A daughter also! The dear Lebrenn! If she at all looks like her mother she must be a charming girl—"

"Eh! Eh!—she is slender—she is comely—"

"You must be proud of her. Come, confess it!"

"Zounds! I do not deny it, monsieur. More than that I can not say."

"Strange," thought the Count of Plouernel to himself, "the fellow has a curiously old-fashioned style of expression. It must be something peculiar to St. Denis Street. He puts me in mind of my old steward Robert, who brought me up, and who spoke like the people of the previous century."

The Count proceeded aloud:

"Forsooth! Coming to think of it, I should pay a visit to dear Madam Lebrenn."

"Monsieur, she is at your service."

"You should know that I contemplate giving a tournament soon in the large yard of my barracks, where my dragoons are to go through all manner of exercises on horseback. You must promise me to come some Sunday to the rehearsal with Madam Lebrenn; and I wish you to accept, without any compliments, a little collation after we leave the place."

"Oh, monsieur, that's too much honor to us—you overwhelm me—"

"Never mind that; you are joking; is it agreed?"

"May I bring my boy along?"

"Zounds! Of course!"

"And also my daughter?"

"How can you put such a question to me, my dear Monsieur Lebrenn?"

"Indeed, monsieur? You won't object if my daughter—"

"Better still! I have an idea, my dear man; an excellent idea!"

"What is it, monsieur?"

"Did you ever hear of the tourneys of olden days?"

"Tourneys, monsieur?"

"Yes, in the days of chivalry."

"I beg your pardon, monsieur; plain people like us—"

"Well, dear Monsieur Lebrenn, in the days of chivalry, tourneys were held, and at those tourneys several of my ancestors, whom you see there," and he waved his hand towards the pictures, "took a hand."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the merchant, affecting great surprise, and following with his eyes in the direction pointed by the colonel, "I was thinking to myself, there is something of a family resemblance."

"You think so?"

"I do, monsieur—I beg your pardon for the great liberty—"

"Don't begin apologizing again! For God's sake, be not so very formal at all points, my dear man! As I was saying, at those tourneys there always was what was called a Queen of Beauty. She distributed the prizes to the victors. Now, then, that shall be the role for your charming daughter. She shall be the Queen of Beauty at the tournament that I am about to give—she will be well worthy of the distinction."

"Oh, monsieur! That is too much! Oh, it is too much! Moreover, do you not think that for a young girl—to be in that way—in plain view—vis-a-vis to messieurs your dragoons—is a little—I beg your pardon for the great liberty—but it is a little—what shall I say?—a little—"

"Dismiss all such scruples, my dear Monsieur Lebrenn. The noblest dames were in olden days chosen as the Queens of Beauty at the tourney. They even gave a kiss to the victor, on his mouth."

"I understand that—they were accustomed thereto—while my daughter—you see—confound it!—she is only eighteen, and has been brought up—like a bourgeois girl."

"You need not feel uneasy on that score. I never thought for a moment that your daughter should give the victor a kiss."

"That is good, monsieur! How kind you are! And if you will also consent that my daughter do not embrace—"

"That goes without saying, my dear monsieur. You do not need my consent. I am too happy, as it is, to have you and also your family, accept my invitation."

"Oh, monsieur, all the honor is on our side!"

"Not at all, it is on my side!"

"Surely not! Surely not, monsieur! You are too kind! I can clearly see that you mean to bestow great honor upon us."

"Well, have it your way, my good man! There are faces like yours—that charm one on the spot. Besides, I found you to be so honest a man in the matter of the price of the shirts—"

"It is only a matter of conscience, monsieur. Only a matter of conscience."

"That I said to myself on the spot—This Monsieur Lebrenn must be an admirable, an honest man. I would like to be pleasant to him—even to oblige him, if I can."

"Oh, monsieur, I know not how to express to you—"

"Come, you told me a minute ago that business was poor—would you like me to pay you in advance for my order?"

"Oh, no, no, no, monsieur; that is unnecessary."

"Do not be bashful! Be frank. The amount is large—I shall give you an order upon my banker."

"I assure you, monsieur, that I do not need payment in advance."

"Times are so hard yet."

"Very hard, indeed, the times are; that's true, monsieur; we must hope for better."

"Admit it, my dear Monsieur Lebrenn," said the Count, again pointing to the pictures that ornamented the walls of the salon, "the times in which those redoubtable seigneurs lived, were the real good times!"

"Truly so, monsieur."

"And who knows! Perhaps those better times may come back again!"

"Indeed! Do you think so?"

"Some other day we shall talk politics—I suppose you talk politics, occasionally?"

"Monsieur, I do not indulge myself so far. You understand, a merchant—"

"Oh, my dear Monsieur Lebrenn! You are a man of the good old pattern; that's what you are; I'm glad of it! Right you are not to meddle in politics! It is the silly mania that spoiled everything. In those good old times, that I was speaking about to you, nobody grumbled. The King, the clergy and the nobility ordered—and everybody obeyed without saying a word."

"Sure! Sure! It must have been very convenient, monsieur."

"Zounds! I should say so!"

"If I understand you rightly, monsieur, the King, the priests and the seigneurs said: 'Do that!'—and it was done?"

"Just so!"

"Pay!—and people paid?"

"Exactly."

"Go!—and people went?"

"Why! Yes! Yes!"

"In short, everything as on the parade ground—to the right!—to the left!—forward!—double quick! People did not even have the trouble to will this or that? The King, the seigneurs and the clergy took to themselves the trouble of willing for us? And they have changed that! They have changed all that!!!"

"Fortunately we need not despair, my dear Monsieur Lebreun."

"May the good God hear you!" said the merchant, rising and bowing respectfully to the Count. "Monsieur, to command."

"So, then, next Sunday—at the tournament. You will come, my good fellow—you—your family—agreed?"

"Certainly, monsieur, certainly. My daughter will not fail to attend the festivity—seeing she is to be the queen of—of?"

"Queen of Beauty, my dear fellow! It is not I who assign the role to her—it is Nature!"

"Oh, monsieur, if you would only allow me—"

"What?"

"To repeat in your name to my daughter the gallantries that you have uttered about her."

"Why, my dear fellow, not only do I authorize you to do so, but I request you. Moreover, without further ceremony, I shall myself carry to Madam Lebrenn and her charming daughter the invitation that I extend to them."

"Oh, monsieur—the poor women—they will feel so flattered by your good will towards us. I shall say nothing about myself; if I were to receive the Cross of Honor I could not feel prouder."

"You are a first class fellow, my dear Lebrenn!"

"Your servant, monsieur, your servant with all my heart," repeated the merchant, moving away.

The moment, however, that the linendraper reached the door, he seemed to change his mind, scratched himself behind the ear, and returned to the Count of Plouernel.

"Well, my dear fellow?" asked the Count, rather astonished at his return. "What is the matter?"

"The matter is," said the merchant, continuing to scratch the back of his ear, "meseems a thought strikes me—I beg your pardon for the great liberty—"

"Zounds! Speak up! Why should you not have an idea—as well as anybody else?"

"That's true, monsieur, it sometimes happens that the common people, like the noble folks, do not desiderate—ideas."

"Do not desiderate—what the devil does that word mean? I do not remember ever to have heard it."

"It is a good, square, old word, monsieur, which means to lack. Moliere often uses it."

"How, Moliere!" exclaimed the astonished Count. "Do you read Moliere, my good fellow? Indeed, I did notice, while you were speaking, that you often used old turns of expression."

"I shall tell you why, monsieur: When I noticed that you spoke to me in the style that Don Juan uses to Monsieur Dimanche, or Dorante to Monsieur Jourdain—"

"What are you driving at?" put in the Count of Plouernel, more and more taken aback, and beginning to suspect that the merchant was not quite so simple as he seemed. "What do you mean?"

"Well," proceeded Lebreun in his tone of bantering simplicity, "well, when I noticed that, then, in order to reciprocate the honor that you were doing me, monsieur, I, in turn, assumed the language of Monsieur Dimanche, or of Monsieur Jourdain—I beg your pardon for my great liberty—and meseems, according to what little judgment I have, monsieur, meseems you would not greatly object to taking my daughter for your mistress—"

"What!" cried the Count, utterly disconcerted by this brusque apostrophe. "I do not know—I do not understand what you mean—"

"Oh, monsieur! I am but a plain man—I can only speak as my little judgment dictates."

"Your little judgment! It serves you very poorly. Upon my honor, you are crazy! Your idea lacks common sense."

"Indeed? Oh, well, so much the better! I said to myself, follow closely, if you please, my plain way of reasoning—I said to myself: I am a good bourgeois of St. Denis Street; I sell linen; I have a handsome daughter; a young seigneur—because it does seem we are returning to the days of young seigneurs—has seen my daughter; he covets her; he gives me a large order; he adds offers of service, and, under the pretext—"

"Monsieur Lebreun—there are jokes I do not tolerate from people!"

"I agree—but follow closely my plain way of reasoning, if you please, monsieur: The young seigneur, I said to myself, proposes to give a tournament in honor of my daughter's pretty eyes, and to come frequently to see us, all with the only end in view, by thus playing the good Prince, to succeed in seducing my child."

"Monsieur," cried the Count, growing purple with vexation and rage, "by what right do you allow yourself to impute such intentions to me?"

"That's well, monsieur; I call that speaking to the point. You would not, is it not true? scheme a plot that is not only so unworthy, but so supremely ridiculous?"

"Enough, monsieur, enough!"

"Good! Good! You did not—I shall suppose you did not, and I feel better at ease. Otherwise, you see, I would have been compelled to say to you, humbly, respectfully, as becomes poor people of my class: Pardon me, my young seigneur, for the great freedom that I am taking, but you see, the daughters of the good bourgeois are not to be seduced in that way. Since about fifty years ago, that sort of thing can no longer be done, not at all, absolutely not. Monsieur Duke, or Monsieur Marquis still calls the bourgeois, men and women, of St. Denis Street rather familiarly dear Monsieur Thing, dear Madam Thing, looking, with habitual race conceit, upon the bourgeoisie as an inferior species. But, zounds! To go further than that would no longer be prudent! The bourgeois of St. Denis Street are no longer afraid, as once they were, of lettres de cachet to the Bastille. And if Monsieur Duke, or Monsieur Marquis took it into his head to be discourteous to them—to them or to their family—bless my soul! the bourgeois of St. Denis Street might bestow a thorough drubbing—pardon me, monsieur, for this great freedom—I said, might administer a thorough drubbing to Monsieur Marquis or Monsieur Duke—even if he were of royal or imperial lineage."

"Sdeath, monsieur!" ejaculated the colonel, hardly able to restrain his anger, and turning pale with rage. "Are you making threats to me?"

"No, monsieur," calmly answered Lebreun, dropping his tone of banter and proceeding in firm and dignified accents; "no, monsieur; it is not a threat, it is a lesson I am giving you."

"A lesson!" cried the Count of Plouernel, furious with rage. "A lesson! to me!"

"Monsieur, despite all your race prejudice, you are a man of honor—swear to me upon your honor that, in endeavoring to introduce yourself into my house, that in tendering your services to me, it was not your intention to seduce my daughter! Yes, swear to that upon your honor, and, admitting my mistake, I shall retract all I said."

Thrown out of countenance by the alternative offered to him, the Count of Plouernel blushed, lowered his eyes before the steady gaze of the linendraper, and remained silent.

"Oh!" said the linendraper sorrowfully, as if musing to himself, but loud enough to be heard by the Count of Plouernel. "They are incorrigible; they have forgotten nothing, learned nothing; we still are in their estimation a vanquished, conquered, subject race!"

"Monsieur!"

"Well, monsieur! I know my ground! No longer do we live in the days when, after having violated my daughter, you would have ordered me whipped with switches, and hanged afterwards before the gate of your castle, as was the practice in former centuries—and as was done to one of my own ancestors by that seigneur yonder—"

Saying this Lebreun pointed at one of the portraits that hung from the wall, to the profound astonishment of the Count of Plouernel.

"The matter looked quite simple to you," the merchant proceeded, "the notion of taking my daughter for your mistress. I am no longer your slave, your serf, your vassal, your chattel; playing the good Prince, you graciously condescended to have me take a chair, and you even addressed me patronizingly—'Dear Monsieur Lebreun.' There are Counts no longer, still you carry your title and the coat-of-arms of a Count. Civil equality has been declared, and yet nothing would seem more monstrous to you than to marry your daughter or your sister to a bourgeois or a mechanic, whatever their worthiness and the honorable character that they might bear. Would you dare to gainsay my words? No; you might, perhaps, cite some exception, it would be but a fresh proof that such unions remain misalliances in your eyes. Trifles, you may say; they certainly are trifles—but what a grave symptom the attaching of so much importance to trifles is! You and yours, were you to become all-powerful in the nation to-morrow, would fatedly and necessarily, as happened under the Restoration, seek by little and little to re-establish your ancient privileges, which, from being trivial, would then become hateful, disgraceful and oppressive to us, as they were for centuries hateful, disgraceful and oppressive to our ancestors."

So stupefied was the Count of Plouernel at the transformation of the bearing, tone and language of the linendraper that he did not interrupt him. Assuming finally an air of haughtiness he replied ironically:

"I doubt not, monsieur, that the moral of the beautiful lesson in history which you have had the kindness to read to me in your capacity of linendraper probably is that the priests and nobles should be sent to the lamp-post—as was the fashion in the good old days of 1793, and our daughters and sisters married to the nearest valet at hand."

"Oh, monsieur," said the merchant in a tone of lofty sorrow, "let us not mention reprisals. Forget what your fathers suffered during those ominous years—I, on my part, will forget what our ancestors suffered, at the hands of

yours, and, not during a few years, but during FIFTEEN CENTURIES OF TORTURE! Marry your daughters and sisters as it may please you, it is your right; believe in misalliances, that is your affair. These are facts that I mention; and, as a symptom, I repeat it, they are grave; they prove that, in your estimation, there are and ever will be two distinct races in the land."

"And supposing it is so, monsieur, what business is it of yours how we look upon things?"

"The devil! It is very much our business, monsieur. The Holy Alliance, the divine and absolute right of Kings, the clerical party, aristocracy by birth and omnipotent in the nation—these are the inevitable consequences of the opinion that there are two races, a superior and an inferior one, one made to rule, the other to obey, and suffer. You asked what was the moral of this lesson in history? It is this, monsieur," the merchant proceeded: "Being jealous of the liberties that our fathers conquered at the price of their blood and their martyrdom;—seeing we do not wish to be treated any longer as a conquered race; I in my capacity of an elector vote against your party so long as it remains upon the field of legality; but when, as happened in 1830, your party leaves the field of legality with the end in view of reducing us back to arbitrary and clerical rule, that is to say, to the system that obtained before 1789—that moment I go out into the street, and fire bullets into your party."

"And it returns the compliment to yours."

"Very true—my arm was broken in 1830 by a Swiss ball. But, monsieur, listen to reason: Why should there be feud, ever feud, ever bloodshed, useful blood poured out by both sides? Why ever dream of a past that is no more, and can nevermore be? You vanquished, despoiled, dominated, exploited and tortured us fifteen centuries at a stretch! Have you not had enough? Do we contemplate oppressing you, in turn? No, no, a thousand times no! Liberty has cost us too dear to conquer; we prize it too highly to seek to deprive others of it. It is not our fault, it is yours; since 1789 your foreign alliances, civil war instigated by yourselves, your constant attempts at counter-revolution, your intimate relations with the clerical party—all that keeps thoughtful people in alarm and afflicts them, while it irritates and exasperates the men of action. I ask you again—what does it boot? Has mankind ever retrograded? No, monsieur, never. You can, no one questions that, do mischief; much mischief; but your divine right and your privileges are done for. Let your party learn that lesson. You would then save the nation, and yourself, perhaps, who knows what new disasters, because, I tell you, the future belongs to democracy."

The linendraper's voice and accent were so impressive that, although not convinced, the Count of Plouernel was touched by his words. His indomitable race pride struggled with his impulse to acknowledge to the merchant that he at least saw in him a generous adversary.

That moment the door was abruptly thrown open by an officer, the major-adjutant of the Count's regiment, who, rushing in, hastily made the military salute and said hurriedly:

"I beg your pardon, colonel, for coming in without being announced, but orders have just been issued to have the regiment mount horse forthwith, and remain ready for action on the square of the quarter."

The linendraper was about to leave the salon when the Count of Plouernel said to him:

"Well, monsieur, to judge by the course things are taking, together with your republican opinions, it is quite possible that I may have the honor of meeting you to-morrow on a barricade."

"I know not what may happen, monsieur," answered the linendraper; "but I neither fear nor desire such an encounter."

And then, with a smile, he added:

"I think, monsieur, that the order for linen may be canceled."

"I think so, too, monsieur," replied the colonel, bowing stiffly to Lebrenn, who left the salon.

CHAPTER VII

"THE SWORD OF BRENNUS"

While Marik Lebrenn was holding the conversation, just reported, with the Count of Plouernel, the merchant's wife and daughter were, as was their custom, busy in the shop, over which hung the sign—The Sword of Brennus.

While her daughter was engaged with her needle, Madam Lebrenn saw to the books of the establishment. She was a tall woman of forty. Her face, at once serious and kind, preserved the traces of extraordinary beauty. In the cadence of her voice, her carriage, and her countenance there was a certain calmness and firmness that conveyed a high opinion of her nature. A glance at her was enough to remind one that our mothers, the Gallic women, took part in the councils of the nation on critical occasions, and that such was the valor of those matrons that Diodorus Siculus expresses himself in these terms:

"The women of Gaul vie with the men not in tallness only, they also match them by their moral strength."

And Strabo adds these significant words:

"The Gallic women are fertile and good teachers."

Mademoiselle Velleda Lebrenn sat by the side of her mother. So marked was the girl's exceptional beauty that none could behold her without being struck by its radiance. Her mien was at once proud, ingenuous and thoughtful. Nothing more limpid than the blue of her eyes; nothing more dazzling than her complexion; nothing loftier than the carriage of her charming head, crowned with long tresses of brown hair that here and there gleamed in gold. Tall, lithesome and strong without masculinity, the sight and nature of the beauty explained the paternal whim that caused the merchant to give his child the name Velleda, the name of an illustrious heroine in the patriotic annals of the Gauls. Mademoiselle Lebrenn could be readily imagined with her brow wreathed in oak leaves, clad in a long white robe belted with brass, and vibrating the gold harp of the female druids, those wonderful teachers of our forefathers who, exalting them with the thought of the immortality of the soul, taught them to die with so much grandeur and serenity! In Mademoiselle Lebrenn the type was reproduced of those Gallic women, clad in black, with arms "so wonderfully white and nervy," as Ammienus Marcellinus expresses it, who followed their husbands

to battle, with their children in their chariots of war, encouraged the combatants with word and gesture, and mingled among them in the hour of victory or of defeat, ever preferring death to slavery and shame.

Those whose minds were not stored with these tragic and glorious remembrances of the past saw in Mademoiselle Lebrenn a beautiful girl of eighteen, coiffed in her magnificent head of brown hair, and whose elegant shape outlined itself under a pretty high-necked robe of light blue poplin, which set off a little orange cravat tied around her neat, white collar.

While Madam Lebrenn was casting up her accounts and her daughter sewed, occasionally exchanging a few words with her mother, Gildas Pakou, the shop-boy, stood at the door. The youngster was uneasy and greatly disturbed in mind, so very much disturbed that it never occurred to him, as was otherwise his wont, to recite promiscuously favorite passages from his beloved Breton songs.

The worthy fellow was preoccupied with just one thought—the strange contrast that he found between the reality and his mother's promises, she having informed him that St. Denis Street in general, and the house of Monsieur Lebrenn in particular, were particularly quiet and peaceful spots.

Gildas suddenly turned about and said to Madam Lebrenn in a high state of alarm:

"Madam! Madam! Listen!"

"What is it, Gildas?" asked Madam Lebrenn, proceeding unperturbed to make her entries in the large ledger.

"But, madam, it is the drum! Listen! Besides—Oh, good God!—I see some men running!"

"What of it, Gildas," returned Madam Lebrenn; "let them run."

"Mother," put in Velleda after listening a few seconds, "it is the call to arms. There must be some fear that the agitation that has reigned in Paris since yesterday may spread."

"Jeanike," Madam Lebrenn called out to the maid servant, "Monsieur Lebrenn's National Guard uniform must be got ready. He may want it on his return home."

"Yes, madam, I shall see to it," answered Jeanike, going to the rear room.

"Gildas," Madam Lebrenn proceeded, "can you see the St. Denis Gate from where you are?"

"Yes, madam," answered Gildas, all in a tremble; "would you want me to go there?"

"No; be at ease; only let me know whether there is much of a crowd gathering at that end of the street."

"Oh! yes, madam," answered Gildas, craning his neck. "It looks like an ant-hill. Oh, good God! Madam! Madam! Oh, my God!"

"What is it now, Gildas?"

"Oh, madam! Down there—the drums—they were about to turn the corner—"

"Well?"

"A lot of men in blouses stopped them—they have broken the drums. Listen! Madam! Look! The whole crowd is running this way. Do you hear them screaming, madam? Should we not close the shop?"

"It is very evident, Gildas, you are none too brave," said Mademoiselle Lebrenn without raising her eyes from her needlework.

At that moment a man clad in a blouse and dragging with difficulty a small handbarrow that seemed to be heavily loaded, stopped before the door, pulled the barrow up alongside the sidewalk, stepped into the shop, and accosted the merchant's wife:

"Monsieur Lebrenn, madam?"

"This is his place."

"I have here four bales for him."

"Linen, I suppose?" asked Madam Lebrenn.

"Well, madam, I think so," answered the messenger with a smile.

"Gildas," she resumed, addressing the good fellow, who was casting ever more uneasy glances into the street, "help monsieur carry the bales to the rear of the shop."

The messenger and Gildas raised the bales out of the barrow. They were long and thick rolls, and were wrapped in coarse grey cloth.

"This must be fiercely close-packed linen," remarked Gildas as, with great effort, he was helping the barrowman to carry in the last of the four rolls. "This thing is as heavy as lead."

"Do you really think so, my friend?" said the man in the blouse, fixedly looking at Gildas, who modestly lowered his eyes and blushed.

The barrowman thereupon addressed himself to Madam Lebrenn, saying:

"There, my errand is done, madam. I must, above all things, recommend to you that the bales be kept in a dry place, and no fire near, until Monsieur Lebrenn arrives. That linen is very—very delicate."

And the barrowman mopped the sweat from his forehead.

"You must have had work to wheel those bales here all alone," remarked Madam Lebrenn kindly; and opening the drawer in which she kept the small change, she took out a ten-sou piece, which she pushed over the desk to the barrowman. "Take this for your pains."

"Thank you very much, madam," answered the man, smiling. "I have been paid."

"A messenger thanks very much, and refuses a tip!" said Gildas to himself. "A puzzling—a very puzzling house this is!"

Herself considerably surprised at the manner in which the barrowman formulated his declination, Madam Lebrenn raised her eyes and saw a man of about thirty years, of an agreeable face, and who, an exceptional thing with package carriers, had remarkably white hands, carefully trimmed nails, and a neat gold ring on his little finger.

"Could you tell me, monsieur," asked the merchant's wife, "whether the excitement in Paris is on the increase?"

"Very much so, madam. One can hardly move on the boulevard. Troops are pouring in from all sides. Artillerymen are posted in front of the Gymnasium with their fuses lighted. I came across two squadrons of dragoons on patrol duty, with loaded carbines. Everywhere the roll of the drum is calling to arms—although, I must say, the National Guard does not seem to be in any great hurry. But you must excuse me, madam," added the barrowman,

bowing politely to Madam Lebrenn and her daughter. "It will be soon four o'clock. I am in a hurry."

He went out, took his handbarrow and wheeled it rapidly away.

On hearing of artillerymen stationed in the neighborhood with lighted fuses in hand, Gildas was overwhelmed with a fresh flood of misgivings. Nevertheless, rocked between fear and curiosity, he risked another peep into the fearful St. Denis Street, which lay so near to the artillery station.

At the moment that Gildas stretched his neck outside of the shop again, the young girl who had taken breakfast with the Count of Plouernel that very morning, and who improvised such giddy-headed ditties, emerged from the alley of the house where George Duchene lodged, and which, as was stated before, stood opposite the linendraper's shop.

Pradeline looked sad and uneasy. After taking a few steps on the sidewalk, she approached the shop of Lebrenn as near as she dared, in order to cast an inquisitive look within. Unfortunately, the shade over the window intercepted the sight. True enough, the door was ajar. But Gildas, who stood before it, entirely obstructed the passage. Nevertheless, Pradeline, believing herself unobserved, persevered in her efforts to obtain a look at the interior of the place. For some time Gildas watched with increasing curiosity the suspicious manoeuvres of the young girl. Appearances deceived him; he took himself to be the object of Pradeline's obstinate glances. The prudish youngster lowered his eyes and blushed till his ears tingled. His alarmed modesty ordered him to go into the shop in order to prove to the brazen girl how little he cared for her blandishments. Nevertheless certain promptings of self-esteem held him nailed to the threshold, and more than ever he muttered to himself:

"A puzzling town this is, where, not far from the artillery where fuses are held lighted, young girls come to devour shop-boys with their eyes!"

He noticed that Pradeline crossed the street once more and stepped into a neighboring cafe.

"The unfortunate girl! She surely means to drown her disappointment in several glasses of wine. If she does she will be capable of coming out again and pursuing me straight into the shop. Good God! What would Madam Lebrenn and mademoiselle think of that!"

A new incident cut short, for a while, the chaste apprehensions of Gildas. A four-wheeled truck, drawn by a strong horse, and containing three large, flat

chests about two meters high and inscribed Glass, drew up before the shop. The vehicle was in charge of two men in blouses. One of these, named Dupont, was the same who had been to the shop early that morning in order to recommend to Monsieur Lebrenn not to inspect his supply of grain. The other wore a thick grey beard. They alighted from their seat, and Dupont, the driver, stepping into the shop, greeted Madam Lebrenn and said:

"Has Monsieur Lebrenn not yet returned, madam?"

"No, monsieur."

"We have brought him three cases of looking glasses."

"Very well, monsieur," answered Madam Lebrenn. And calling Gildas, she added:

"Help these gentlemen to bring in the looking glasses."

The shop-assistant obeyed, saying to himself:

"A puzzling house! Three chests with looking glasses—and so heavy! Master, his wife and daughter must be very fond of looking at themselves!"

Dupont and his grey-bearded companion had helped Gildas to place the chests in the room behind the shop, as directed by Madam Lebrenn, when she said to them:

"What is the news, messieurs? Is the agitation in Paris subsiding?"

"On the contrary, madam, 'tis getting hotter—and still hotter," answered Dupont with barely concealed satisfaction. "They have commenced to throw up barricades in the St. Antoine quarter. To-night the preparations—to-morrow, battle."

Hardly had Dupont uttered these words, when a formidable clamor was heard from the distance, the words "Long live the Reform!" being distinctly audible.

Gildas ran to the door.

"Let's hurry," said Dupont to his companion. "Our truck may be taken for the center of a barricade; it would be premature—we have still several errands to attend to;" and bowing to Madam Lebrenn, he added, "Our regards to your husband, madam."

The two men leaped upon the seat of their truck, gave their horse the whip, and drove away in the direction opposite to that whence the clamor proceeded.

Gildas had closely followed with his eyes and with renewed uneasiness the new concourse of people near the St. Denis Gate. Suddenly he saw Pradeline emerge from the cafe which she had entered a few minutes before, and direct her steps towards the shop, holding a letter in her hand.

"What a persistent minx! She has been writing to me!" thought Gildas. "The wretched woman is bringing me the letter herself! A declaration! I am going to be disgraced in the eyes of my employers!"

The bewildered Gildas stepped in quickly, closed the door, turned the key, and cuddled up quiet as a mouse close to the desk.

"Well," said Madam Lebreann, "why do you lock the door, Gildas?"

"Madam, it is more prudent. I saw coming up from down below a band of men—whose frightful faces—"

"Go to, Gildas, you are losing your head! Open the door."

"But madam—"

"Do as I tell you. Listen, there is someone trying to come in. Open the door."

"It is that devil of a girl with her letter," thought Gildas to himself, more dead than alive. "Oh, why did I leave my quiet little village of Auray!"

And he opened the door with his heart thumping against his ribs. Instead, however, of seeing before him the young girl with her letter, he stood face to face with Monsieur Lebreann and his son.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE EVE OF BATTLE

Madam Lebrenn was agreeably surprised at seeing her son, whom she did not expect, thinking he was at the College. Velleda tenderly embraced her brother, while the merchant himself pressed the hand of his wife.

The resolute carriage of Sacrovir Lebrenn suggested the thought that he was worthy of bearing the glorious name of the hero of ancient Gaul, one of the greatest patriots of the land recorded in history.

Marik Lebrenn's son was a strapping lad of slightly over nineteen years. He had an open, kind and bold countenance. A sprouting beard shaded his lip and chin. His full cheeks were rosy, and looked bright with animation. He very much resembled his father.

Madam Lebrenn embraced her son, saying:

"I did not expect the pleasure, son, of seeing you here to-day."

"I went to the College for him," explained the merchant. "You will presently know the reason, my dear Henory."

"Without being exactly uneasy about you," said Madam Lebrenn to her husband, "Velleda and I were beginning to wonder what kept you away so long. It seems that the commotion in Paris is on the increase. Do you know they sounded the call to arms?"

"Oh! Mother," cried Sacrovir with eyes that sparkled with enthusiasm, "Paris has the fever—it follows that all hearts must be beating more strongly. Without knowing one another, people look for and understand at a glance. On all the streets the words you hear are ardent, patriotic appeals to arms. In short, it smells of gunpowder. Oh, mother! mother!" added the young man with exaltation, "what a beautiful sight is the awakening of a people!"

"Keep cool, enthusiast that you are!" said Madam Lebrenn.

And with her handkerchief she wiped the perspiration that stood in drops on her son's forehead. In the meantime Monsieur Lebrenn embraced his daughter.

"Gildas," the merchant called out to his clerk, "some chests must have been brought in during my absence."

"Yes, monsieur, linen bales and looking glasses. They have been deposited in the rear room."

"Very well—they can remain there. Be careful no fire comes near the bales."

"They must be inflammable stuff like bolting-cloth, muslin or gauze," Gildas thought to himself, "and yet they are heavy as lead—another puzzling thing!"

"My dear friend," Lebrenn said to his wife, "I have matters to talk over with you. Shall we go up to your room with the children, while Jeanike sets the table? It is getting late. You, Gildas, may put up the shutters. We shall have but few customers this afternoon."

"Close up the shop! Oh, monsieur, I think you are very right!" cried Gildas delightedly. "I thought so long ago."

And as he ran to execute the orders of his employer, the latter said to him:

"Stop a moment, Gildas. Do not close the front door. I expect several people to call for me. If they come take them to the rear room and notify me."

"Yes, monsieur," answered Gildas with a sigh, seeing he would have preferred to see the shop closed tight, and the door protected with its good strong iron bars, and bolted from within.

"And now, my dear," Lebrenn proceeded to say to his wife, "we shall go up to your room."

It was by this time almost dark. The merchant's family mounted to the first floor, and gathered in Madam Lebrenn's bedroom. The merchant then addressed his wife in a grave voice:

"My dear Henory, we are on the eve of great events."

"I believe it, my friend," answered Madam Lebrenn thoughtfully.

"I shall tell you in a few words how the situation has shaped itself to-day," proceeded Lebrenn. "Then judge whether my plan is good or bad; oppose it, if you disapprove, or encourage me if you approve."

"I listen, my friend," answered Madam Lebrenn calm, serious and thoughtful, like one of our mothers of old at the solemn councils where their views prevailed more than once.

Monsieur Lebrenn proceeded:

"After having carried on their agitation in France during three months by means of reform banquets, the deputies yesterday summoned the people to the street. Heart seemed to have failed the intrepid agitators at the last moment. They did not dare to appear at the rendezvous which they themselves had set. The people came in order to maintain their right of assemblage and to run their own business. It is now rumored that the King has appointed a cabinet out of the leaders of the dynastic center. This concession does not satisfy us. What we want, what the people want, is the total overthrow of the monarchy; we want the Republic, which means sovereignty for all—political rights for all—in order to insure education, wellbeing, work, and credit to all, provided we are brave and honest. That is our program, wife! Is it right or wrong?"

"Right!" answered Madam Lebrenn in a tone of firm conviction. "It is right!"

"I told you what we want," proceeded Lebrenn. "I shall now mention what we want no longer—we no longer want that two hundred thousand privileged electors be the sole arbiters of the fate of thirty-eight million proletarians or small holders, similar to what happened when a trifling minority of conquerors, Roman or Frankish, despoiled, enslaved and exploited our fathers for twenty centuries. No, we want an electoral or industrial feudality no more than we will tolerate the feudality of conquerors! Wife, is that right, or is it wrong?"

"It is right! Serfdom and even slavery have in reality perpetuated themselves down to our own days," answered Madam Lebrenn with indignation. "It is right! I am a woman, and I have seen women, the slaves of an insufficient wage, die by degrees, exhausted by excessive toil and want. It is right! I am a mother, I have seen young girls, the virtual slaves of certain manufacturers, forced to choose between dishonor and enforced idleness, which means hunger. It is right! I am a wife, and I have seen fathers of families, honest, industrious and intelligent traders, the slaves and victims of the whim or the usurious cupidity of their seigneurs the large capitalists, suffer bankruptcy, and be plunged into ruin and despair. Finally, your resolution is good and just, my friend," added Madam Lebrenn, extending her hand to her husband, "because, if you have hitherto been fortunate enough to escape many a snare, it is your duty to go to the assistance of those of our brothers who are afflicted with misfortunes that we remain exempt from."

"Brave and generous woman! You redouble my strength and courage," said the merchant, pressing Madam Lebrenn's hand in ecstasy. "I expected no

less from you. But just as are the rights that we demand for our brothers, they will have to be conquered by force, arms in hand."

"I believe it, my friend."

"Accordingly," proceeded the merchant, "to-night, the barricades—to-morrow, battle. That is the reason why I fetched my son from his College. Do you approve? Shall he remain with us?"

"Yes," answered Madam Lebrenn. "Your son's place is at your side."

"Oh, thank you, mother!" cried the young man, joyously embracing his mother, who clasped him to her breast.

"Look at him, father," said Velleda to the merchant with a smile and nodding toward Sacrovir, "he looks as happy as if he were graduated."

"But tell me, my friend," asked Madam Lebrenn, addressing the merchant, "will the barricade, on which you and my son are to fight, be near our place? on this street?"

"It will be at our very door," answered Lebrenn. "Agreed?"

"All the better!" exclaimed Madam Lebrenn. "We shall be there—near you."

"Mother," interjected Velleda, "should we not prepare lint to-night, and bandages? There will be many wounded."

"I was thinking of that, my child. Our shop will serve as field-hospital."

"Oh, mother! Sister!" cried the young man. "We are to fight—and under your very eyes—for liberty! How that will inspire us! Alas," he added after a moment's reflection, "why should this be, this fratricidal duel?"

"It is a sad fact, my boy," answered Lebrenn with a sigh. "Oh, may the blood shed in such a strife fall upon the heads of those who compel the people to take up arms for their rights—as we shall have to do to-morrow—as our fathers have done in almost every century of our history!"

"Thank God, at least in our days the struggle takes place without hatred," replied the young man. "The soldier fights in the name of discipline—the people in the name of their rights. It is a deadly duel, but a loyal one, after which the surviving adversaries shake hands."

"But seeing these are survivors only, and I or my son may be laid low on the barricade," replied Monsieur Lebrenn with a benign smile, "there is one thing more I wish to impress upon you, my children. As you will see, where others turn pale with fright we will smile with serenity. Why? Because death does not exist for us; because, brought up in the belief of our fathers, instead of seeing in what is called the close of life only a dismal and fear-inspiring ending that plunges us into eternal darkness we see in death only the severance of the soul from the body, which emancipates the former, leaving it free to rejoin, or to wait for the sooner or later arrival of, those whom we love, and reunite with them on the other side of the veil, which, during our terrestrial life, hides from us the marvelous, the dazzling mysteries of our future lives, infinite lives as various as the divine power from which they emanate. To us, death is but a new birth."

"That is the picture I have of death," cried Sacrovir. "I feel sure I will die overmastered by curiosity. What new, wonderful, dazzling worlds there will be to visit!"

"Brother is right," put in the young girl with no less curiosity. "It must be beautiful to behold! novel! marvelous! And, besides, never more to be separated from our beloved ones but temporarily in all eternity! What a variety of infinite voyages there are to be made by us together in our new incarnations in the stars! Oh, when I think of that, mother, my head grows dizzy with impatience to see and know!"

"Go to, you inquisitive girl! Be not so impatient," answered Madam Lebrenn, smiling, and in a tone of affectionate reproach. "You know, when you were small, I always scolded you when, at your drawing lessons, you seemed to give less thought to the model that you were copying than to those that you were to copy later. Well, my dear child, do not allow your curiosity, however natural it may be, to ascertain what is on the other side of the curtain, as your father expresses it, to cause your mind to wander too much away from that which is on this side."

"Oh, you may be easy, mother, on that score!" answered the young girl affectionately. "On this side of the curtain are you and father and brother—quite enough to keep my mind from wandering."

"Just see how time is wasted in philosophizing!" interjected Lebrenn. "Jeanike will soon be calling us to supper, and still I shall not have told you a word of what I meant to confide to you. In case my curiosity should be satisfied before yours, my dear Henory," the merchant proceeded to say to his wife, pointing to a desk, "you will find there my last will. It is no secret to

you. We have but one heart. But this," added Lebrenn, drawing a folded but not sealed letter from his pocket, "concerns our dear daughter. You are to give it to her after reading it yourself."

Velleda colored slightly, realizing that it referred to her marriage.

"As to you, my boy," proceeded the merchant, addressing his son, "take this key," and he detached it from his watch chain. "It is the key of the room with the closed windows which, until now, only your mother and I have entered. On the 11th of September of next year you will be twenty-one years of age. On that day, but not before, open the door. Among other things you will find a manuscript in the cabinet. It will impart to you the information of the immemorial tradition of our family—because," added Lebrenn interrupting himself with a smile, "we plebeians, we of the conquered race, we also have our archives, proletarian archives, often as glorious, you may believe me, as those of our conquerors. You will then learn, as I was saying, that, obedient to a family tradition, at the age of twenty-one the eldest son or, in default of a son, the eldest daughter, or our nearest of kin is to acquaint himself with our family archives and several relics that are gathered with them. And now, my loved ones," added Lebrenn in a moved voice, rising and throwing his arms around his wife and children, "a last embrace. Before to-morrow's sun goes down, we may be temporarily separated; the possibility of a separation ever saddens one a little."

It was a touching picture. Monsieur Lebrenn held his wife and children in a close embrace. His wife hung upon his neck, while with his right arm he held his daughter, and with his left his son. He pressed them all ardently to his breast, and they in turn held their father in their loving arms.

The touching group, a symbol of the family, remained silent for a few moments. Only the sound of exchanging kisses was heard. Their emotion once calmed, the group separated; heads were again held up serene, though affected: the mother and daughter grave and serious; the father and son tranquil and resolute.

"And now," resumed the merchant, "to work, my children. You, wife, will see to getting lint and bandages ready, with the help of your daughter and Jeanike. Sacrovir and I, while waiting for the hour when the barricades are to be simultaneously thrown up all over Paris, will unpack the cartridges and arms which a large number of our brothers will call for."

"But where are the arms, my friend?" inquired Madam Lebrenn.

"The chests," answered the merchant smiling, "the chests and bales that came in to-day."

"Oh, I now understand!" exclaimed Madam Lebrenn. "But you will have to take Gildas into your confidence. He is, no doubt, an honest lad. Still, do you not fear—"

"At this hour, my dear Henory, the mask may be raised. An indiscretion is no longer to be feared. If poor Gildas is afraid, I shall allow him to hide himself in some nook in the garret—or in the cellar. And now, first of all, to supper. After supper you and Velleda shall come up again with Jeanike to get everything in readiness for the hospital. We shall remain in the shop, Sacrovir and I, because we shall have a lot of company to-night."

The merchant and his family descended back into the shop and went to supper in the rear room, where their meal was hastily despatched.

The agitation grew intenser on the street with every minute. From the distance the muffled rumbling could be heard of large surging masses. It sounded threateningly, like the distant blast of an approaching storm. A few windows on the street were lighted in honor of the change of Cabinet officers. But some friends of Monsieur Lebrenn's, who came in and went out again several times to bring tidings of what was afoot, reported that the royal concessions were interpreted as a sign of weakness, that the night would be decisive, that everywhere the people were arming themselves by entering certain appointed houses and demanding guns, after which they would take their departure, leaving on the door an inscription in chalk—"Arms delivered."

After supper, Madam Lebrenn, her daughter and the maid returned upstairs to the first floor, into a room that faced the street. The merchant, his son and Gildas remained in the rear of the shop.

Gildas was gifted by nature with a robust appetite; nevertheless, he did not partake of supper. His uneasiness grew at every instant; with more insistence than ever he whispered to Jeanike, or muttered to himself:

"A puzzling house! A puzzling street! Altogether a puzzling city!"

"Gildas," called Lebrenn, "fetch me a couple of hammers and chisels. My son and I shall open these cases, while you may rip up the bales."

"The bales of linen, monsieur?"

"Yes—rip them open with your knife."

Furnished with hammers and chisels, the merchant and Sacrovir began to pry open the chests, while Gildas, who had rolled one of the bales flat on the floor, knelt down beside it and made ready to cut it open.

"Monsieur!" he suddenly cried, frightened by the hard blows that Lebrenn was dealing to the chest with his hammer. "Monsieur! If it please you, take care—look at the lettering on the chests—glass! You will break the looking-glasses to pieces!"

"Do not be frightened, Gildas," answered his employer, "these looking glasses are of solid material."

"They are plated with lead and iron, my friend Gildas," added Sacrovir, striking still more heavily.

"More and more puzzling!" muttered Gildas to himself as he again went down on his knees beside one of the bales in order to rip it open. In order to furnish himself with more light at his work he took a candle, and placed it upon the floor beside him. He was just about to remove the heavy outer wrappage of coarse grey burlap when Monsieur Lebrenn, who only then noticed the illumination which his shop-assistant had provided himself with, cried out:

"Hold, Gildas! Are you crazy? Put the candle back on the table, quick. The devil take it! You would blow us all up, my boy!"

"Blow us all up!" echoed Gildas, terror-stricken, and he bounded away from the bale, while Sacrovir himself placed the candle on the table. "What should blow us up?"

"The cartridges, my lad, which these bales contain. You must look out what you are doing."

"Cartridges!" ejaculated the amazed Gildas, stepping still further back, and more and more overcome with fear, while his employer took out two guns from the chest which he had just opened, and his son drew from the same receptacle several braces of pistols, muskets and carbines.

At the sight of these weapons, and knowing himself surrounded by cartridges, the head of Gildas swam, he grew pale, and leaning against a table again muttered to himself:

"A puzzling house, this! Its bales of linen are filled with cartridges! Its looking glasses turn into guns and muskets and pistols!"

"My good Gildas," said Lebreann, addressing him affectionately, "there is no danger whatever in unpacking these arms and munitions. That is all I want you to do. After you have done that, you may, if you prefer, either go down into the cellar, or climb up into the garret, where you can remain in all security until after the battle. Because, I might as well let you know, there will be fighting going on with the break of day. Once you are ensconced in the hiding place that you may choose, all I warn you against is sticking your nose either out of the sky-light or out of the air-hole when the firing has begun—not infrequently bullets fly astray."

The linendraper's words—stray bullets, fighting, firing—completely plunged Gildas into a vertigo that is easily imaginable. He had not expected to find in the St. Denis quarter a stronghold of belligerency. Other events soon crowded upon each other, all conspiring to increase the terror of Gildas. Fresh clamors, at first distant, drew perceptibly nearer and nearer, and finally seemed to explode with such fury that not only Lebreann and his son, but Gildas also, ran to the shop door in order to ascertain what was happening on the street.

CHAPTER IX

POPULAR JUSTICE

When, attracted by the growing tumult, Monsieur Lebrenn, his son and Gildas reached the door of the shop, the street was already filled with a large crowd.

Windows were flying open and inquisitive heads appeared at them. Presently a flickering reddish glare lighted the house fronts. A vast and swelling flood of people was rushing by. Some preceded, others accompanied the sinister illumination. The uproar grew more and more violent. Now and then, rising above the din, the angry cries could be heard:

"To arms!" "Vengeance!"

Exclamations of horror kept chorus with the cries. Women, who, attracted by the noise, looked out of their windows, recoiled with horror as if anxious to escape the sight of some frightful vision.

Their hearts gripped with apprehension, and drops of sweat standing out upon their foreheads, the linendraper and his son realized that some horrible spectacle was approaching, and remained motionless upon their threshold.

Finally the procession hove in sight.

An innumerable mass of men in blouses, in bourgeois dress and also in the uniform of the National Guard, and brandishing guns, swords, knives and sticks, preceded a cart, that was slowly drawn by a horse, and that was surrounded by a number of men bearing torches.

In the cart lay heaped up a mass of corpses.

A tall man with a scarlet hat on his head, naked from the waist up, and his breast bleeding from a recent wound, stood erect in the front part of the cart, carrying aloft a burning flambeau, which he waved to right and left.

He might have been taken for the genius of Vengeance and of Revolution.

At each movement of his flambeau, he lighted with a ruddy glare to the left of him the bloodstained head of an old man, to the right the bust of a woman whose arms, like her bleeding head, half veiled by her disheveled hair, dangled down over the edge of the cart.

From time to time the man with the scarlet hat waved his torch and cried out in stentorian tones:

"They are butchering our brothers! Vengeance! To the barricades! To arms!"

And thousands of voices, trembling with indignation and rage, repeated:

"Vengeance! To the barricades! To arms!"

Whereupon thousands of arms, some equipped with weapons, others not, rose up toward the somber and threatening sky as if to take it to witness of the vengeful pledges.

In the meantime the exasperated mob that the funeral procession recruited in its passage went steadily on increasing. It passed as a bloody vision before the linendraper and his son. So painful was the first impression of both that they could not utter a word. Their eyes swam in tears at learning that the butchery of inoffensive and unarmed people had taken place upon the Boulevard of the Capuchins.

Hardly had the cart of corpses disappeared when Lebreun seized one of the iron bars, used to fasten the shop window from within, brandished it over his head, and cried out to the indignant mass of people who were trooping by:

"Friends! Royalty throws us the gage of battle by butchering our brothers! Let the blood of the victims fall upon the head of that accursed royalty! To the barricades! Long live the Republic!"

Immediately the merchant and his son tore up the first paving stones. The man's words and example produced a magic effect. From a thousand throats the answer came back:

"To arms! To the barricades! Long live the Republic!"

The next moment the people had invaded the neighboring houses, everywhere demanding arms, and levers and crowbars to tear up the pavement. Soon as the first row of cobblestones was removed, those who had neither iron bars, nor sticks, pulled up the pavement with their bare hands and nails.

Monsieur Lebreun and his son were hard at work raising the barricade a few paces above their door when they were joined by George Duchene, the young carpenter, who arrived in the company of a score of armed men, the

members of a demi-section of the secret society with which they, together with the linendraper, were affiliated.

Among these new recruits were the barrowman and the two truckmen who had brought the arms and munitions to the shop in the course of the afternoon. Dupont, who had driven the truck, was a mechanic; of the other two, one was a man of letters, the other an eminent scientist.

George Duchene approached Lebrenn as the latter, having stopped working on the barricade for a moment, stood at the door of his shop distributing arms and ammunition among the men of his own quarter upon whom he felt sure he could rely, while Gildas, the previous poltroonery of whom had been transformed into heroism from the instant the sinister cart of corpses passed before him, emerged from the cellar with several baskets of wine, which he poured out to the men at work at the barricade, to steel them to their task.

Clad in his blouse, George carried a carbine in his hand and a bunch of cartridges tied up in a handkerchief hanging from his belt. He said to the merchant:

"I did not arrive earlier, Monsieur Lebrenn, because we had to cross a large number of barricades. They are rising on all sides. I left Caussidiere and Sobrier behind—they are making ready to march upon the Prefecture; Lesserre, Lagrange, Etienne Arago are, at the earliest dawn, to march upon the Tuileries, and barricade Richelieu Street. Our other friends distributed themselves in various quarters."

"And the troops, George?"

"Several regiments fraternize with the National Guard and the people, and join in the shouts of 'Long live the Reform!' 'Down with Louis Philippe!' On the other hand, the Municipal Guard and two or three regiments of the line show themselves hostile to the movement."

"Poor soldiers!" observed the merchant sadly. "They, like ourselves, are under the identical and fatal spell that arms brothers against one another. Well, let us hope this struggle will be the last. And your grandfather, George; did you succeed in making him feel at ease?"

"Yes, monsieur; I just come from him. Despite his great age and weakness, he wanted to accompany me. I finally managed to induce him to stay indoors."

"My wife and daughter are yonder," said the merchant, pointing toward the lattices on the first floor, through which the gleam of a lighted lamp could be seen. "They are busy preparing bandages and lint for the wounded. We shall set up a hospital in the shop."

Suddenly the cry: "Stop thief!" "Stop thief!" resounded in the middle of the road, and a man who was running away as fast as his legs could carry him was seized by four or five workingmen in blouses and armed with guns. Among these a ragpicker with a long white beard, but still strong, was conspicuous. His clothes were in tatters, and, although he carried a musket under his arm he did not remove his pack from his shoulder. He was one of the first to seize the runaway, and now held him firmly by the collar, while a woman, running toward the group and panting for breath, cried:

"Stop thief! Stop thief!"

"Did this fellow rob you, my good woman?" asked the ragpicker.

"Yes, my good man," she answered. "I was standing at my door. This man ran up and said to me: 'The people are rising; we must have arms.' 'Monsieur, I haven't any,' I answered him. Thereupon he pushed me aside and went into my shop, despite all I could do, saying: 'Well, if you have no arms, I shall take money to buy some.' So saying, he opened my till, took out of it thirty-two francs that I had there, and a gold watch. I tried to hold him, but he drew a knife upon me—fortunately I parried the blow with my hand—here, see the cut I got. I cried for help, and he fled!"

The culprit was a good sized, robust, and well clad man, but of ignoble countenance. Hardened vice had left its indelible impress upon his wasted features.

"It is not true! I stole nothing!" he cried in a husky voice, struggling to avoid being searched. "Let me go! What does it concern you, anyhow?"

"That may concern us considerably, my young fellow!" answered the ragpicker, holding firm to his collar. "You stabbed this poor woman after robbing her of her money and a watch in the name of the people. Keep still! This demands an explanation."

"Here is the watch, for one thing," said a workingman after searching the thief.

"Can you identify it, madam?"

"I should think so, monsieur! It is old and heavy."

"Correct!" replied the workingman. "Here it is, madam."

"And in his vest," said another workingman after searching another of the thief's pockets, "six hundred-sou pieces and one forty-sou piece."

"My thirty-two francs!" cried the tradeswoman. "Thank you, my dear men, thank you!"

"That part being settled, my young fellow, you must now settle scores with us," proceeded the ragpicker. "You stole and meant to commit murder in the name of the people, did you not? Answer!"

"What is all this pother about, my friends, are we engaged in a revolution, or are we not?" answered the thief in a hoarse voice and affecting a cynical laugh. "Well, then, let us break into the money boxes!"

"Is that what you understand by a revolution?" asked the ragpicker. "To break into the money boxes?"

"Well?"

"Accordingly, you believe the people rise in revolt for the purpose of stealing—brigand that you are?"

"What other purpose have you, then, in insurrecting, you pack of hypocrites? Is it, perhaps, for honor's sake?" replied the thief brazenly.

The group of armed men, the ragpicker excepted, who stood around the thief, consulted for a moment in a low voice. One of them, noticing the door of a grocery store standing ajar went thither; two others went in another direction, saying:

"I think we would better tell Monsieur Lebrenn of this affair, and ask his opinion."

Still a fourth whispered a few words in the ear of the ragpicker, who answered:

"I think so, too. It would be no more than he deserves. It may be a wholesome example. But while we wait, send me Flameche to help me mount guard over this bad Parisian."

"Halloa, Flameche!" called a voice. "Come and help father Bribri hold a thief."

Flameche ran to the ragpicker. He was a true Parisian gamin. Wan, frail, wasted away by want, the lad, who was gifted with an intelligent and bold face, was sixteen years of age, but looked only twelve. He wore a dilapidated pair of trousers, and old shoes to match, and a blue sack coat that hung in shreds from his shoulders; for weapon he carried a saddle-pistol. Flameche arrived jumping and leaping.

"Flameche," said the ragpicker, "is your pistol loaded?"

"Yes, father Bribri. It is loaded with two marbles, three nails and a knuckle-bone—I rammed all my toggery into it."

"That will do to settle the gentleman if he but budges. Listen, my friend Flameche—finger on trigger, and barrel in vest."

"'Tis done, father Bribri."

With these words Flameche neatly inserted the muzzle of his pistol between the shirt and the skin of the thief. Seeing that the latter tried to resist, Flameche added:

"Don't fidget; don't fidget; if you do you may cause Azor to go off."

"Flameche means his dog of a pistol," added father Bribri by way of translation.

"Frauds that you are!" cried the thief, carefully abstaining from moving, but beginning to tremble, although he made an effort to smile. "What do you propose to do? Come, now, be done with your fooling! I have had enough of it."

"Wait a minute!" interjected the ragpicker. "Let us converse a spell. You asked me why we are in insurrection. I shall satisfy your curiosity. First of all, it is not to break into money boxes and loot shops. Mercy! A shop is to a merchant what a sack is to me. Each to his trade and his tools. We are in insurrection, my young fellow, because it annoys us to see old folks like myself die of hunger on the street like a stray dog when our strength to work is no more. We are in insurrection, my young fellow, because it is a torment to us to hear ourselves repeat the fact that, out of every hundred young girls who walk the streets at night, ninety-five are driven thereto by misery. We are in insurrection, my young fellow, because it riles us to see thousands of

ragamuffins like Flameche, children of the Paris pavements, without hearth or home, father or mother, abandoned to the mercy of the devil, and exposed to become, some day or other, out of lack for a crust of bread, thieves and assassins, like yourself, my young fellow!"

"You need not fear, father Bribri," put in Flameche; "you need not fear—I shall never need to steal. I help you and other traders in old duds to pack your sacks and dispose of your pickings. I treat myself to the best that the dogs have left over. I make my burrow in your bundle of old clothes, and sleep there like a dormouse. No fear, I tell you, father Bribri, I need not steal. As to me, when I insurrect, by the honor of my name! it is because it finally rasps upon me not to be allowed to angle for red fish in the large pond of the Tuileries—and I have made up my mind, in case we come out victors, to fish myself to death. Each one after his own fancy. Long live the Reform! Down with Louis Philippe!"

And turning to the thief who, seeing the five or six armed workingmen coming back, made an effort to slip away:

"Do not budge, mister! Or, if you do, I shall let Azor loose upon you." Saying which he tightened his finger again on the trigger of his pistol.

"But what is it you have in mind to do with me?" cried the thief, turning pale at the sight of three of the workingmen, who were getting their guns ready, while another, coming out of the grocery that he had just before stepped into, brought with him a poster made of brown paper on which some lettering had been freshly traced with a brush dipped in blacking.

A dismal presentiment assailed the thief. He straggled to disengage himself and cried out:

"If you charge me with theft—take me before the magistrate."

"Can not be done. The magistrate is just engaged marrying his daughter," explained father Bribri calmly. "He is now at the wedding."

"Besides, he has the toothache," added Flameche; "he is at the dentist's."

"Take the thief to the lamp-post," said a voice.

"I tell you that I demand to be taken to the magistrate!" repeated the wretch, struggling violently to free himself, and he began to shout:

"Help! Help!"

"If you can read, read this," said one of the workingmen, holding up the poster before the thief. "If you can not read, I shall read it for you:

"SHOT AS A THIEF."

"Shot?" stammered the fellow growing livid. "Shot? Mercy! Help! Assassins! Murder! Watchmen, murder!"

"An example must be set for the likes of you, in order that they may not dishonor the Revolution!" explained father Bribri.

"Now, down on your knees, you scoundrel!" ordered a blacksmith who still had his leathern apron on. "And all of you, my friends, get your guns ready! Down on your knees!" he repeated to the thief, throwing him down on the ground.

The wretch sank upon his knees in a state of such utter collapse and terror that, crouching upon the pavement, he could only extend his hands and mutter in an almost inaudible voice:

"Oh, mercy! Not death!"

"You fear death! Wait, I shall bandage your eyes," said the ragpicker.

And letting down his sack from his shoulders, father Bribri took a large piece of cloth out of it and threw it over the condemned man who, on his knees and gathered into a lump, was almost wholly covered therewith. Soon as that was done, the ragpicker stepped quickly back.

Three shots were fired at once.

Popular justice was done.

A few minutes later, fastened under his arms to the lamp-post, the corpse of the bandit swung to the night breeze with the poster attached to his clothes:

"Shot as a thief."

CHAPTER X

ON THE BARRICADE

Shortly after the execution of the thief day began to dawn.

Presently the men who were stationed on the lookout at the corners of the streets in the neighborhood of the barricade, that now reached almost as high as the first story windows of the linendraper's house, were seen falling back; after firing their pieces, they cried out "To arms!"

Almost immediately after, the drums, silent until then, were heard to beat the charge, and two companies of the Municipal Guards turned in from a side street and marched resolutely upon the barricade. Instantaneously the interior of the improvised fortress was filled with defenders.

Monsieur Lebrenn, his son, George Duchene and their friends took their posts and held their guns in readiness.

Father Bribri, who was a great lover of tobacco, foreseeing that he might soon not have leisure to take his pinch of snuff, inhaled a last load out of his pouch, seized his musket and knelt down in front of a species of loophole that was contrived between several cobblestones, while Flameche, pistol in hand, climbed up the ledges like a cat, in order to reach the summit of the barricade.

"Will you come down, you imp, and not make a target of your nose!" cried out the ragpicker, pulling Flameche by the leg. "You will be shot to dust."

"No fear, father Bribri!" replied Flameche, tugging away, and finally succeeding in slipping from the old man's grip. "This is gratis—I wish to treat myself to a first salvo, face to face—and have a good look at things."

And raising half his body above the barricade, Flameche stuck out his tongue to the Municipal Guard, which was approaching at the double quick.

Addressing the combatants who surrounded him, Monsieur Lebrenn said:

"Those soldiers are, after all, our brothers. Let us make one last attempt to avoid the effusion of blood."

"You are right—try again, Monsieur Lebrenn," came from the bare-armed blacksmith as he flipped the stock of his gun with his nail; "but it will be love's labor lost—as you will see."

The merchant climbed to the top of the heap of cobblestones. Standing there, with one hand resting upon his gun, and waving a handkerchief with the other, he signalled to the approaching soldiers that he wished to speak to them.

The drums of the detachment ceased beating, rolled the order for silence, and all listened.

At one of the windows on the first floor of the merchant's house his wife and daughter stood partly concealed behind the blinds, which they had slightly opened. They stood side by side, holding their breath, pale, but calm and resolute. They did not remove their eyes from Lebrenn as he was addressing the soldiers with his son—who had closely followed his father up the barricade in order, if necessary, to cover him with his own body—standing beside him, gun in hand. George Duchene was about to join the two when he suddenly felt himself violently plucked back by his blouse.

He turned and saw Pradeline. She had been running fast, as the redness of her cheeks and short breath denoted.

The defenders of the barricade had seen the young girl approach; they were surprised to see her among them. As she sought to push her way through the crowd in order to reach George, they said to her:

"Don't stay here, young woman; it is too dangerous a place."

"You here!" cried George stupefied at the sight of Pradeline.

"George, listen to me!" the girl said to him imploringly. "I went twice to your house yesterday, and failed to find you at home. I wrote to you that I would call again this morning. To keep my appointment I had to cross several barricades, and—"

"Stand back!" cried George, alarmed for her safety. "You will be shot—this is no place for you."

"George, I have come to render you a service—I—"

Pradeline could not finish her sentence. Lebrenn, who had in vain been parleying with the captain of the Municipal Guards, turned around and cried out:

"They insist upon war! Very well, war it shall be! Wait for them to open fire—then return it."

The Municipal Guard fired; the insurgents responded; soon a cloud of smoke hovered above the barricade. Shots were fired from the neighboring windows; shots came from the air-holes of the cellars; even the old grandfather of George Duchene could be seen at his attic window throwing upon the heads of the Municipal Guard, in default of better arms and ammunition, all manner of household furniture and kitchen utensils—tables, chairs, pots and pitchers; in short, everything that could go through the window was hurled down by the good old invalid of toil, as Lebreann had justly styled him. It was an almost comic sight. The old man seemed to be moving out by the window. When his supply of projectiles was exhausted, he threw in despair even his cotton cap at the troops. He then looked around, disconsolate at finding nothing more handy to his purpose, but immediately a shout of triumph went up from his throat, and he began to tear up the roof tiles that were within reach of his hands, and to fling them one after the other down upon the soldiers.

The engagement was hotly contested. After returning the discharges of the insurgents with several rounds of shot, the Municipalists rushed intrepidly upon the barricade with felled bayonets, expecting to carry it by assault.

Several groups could be descried through the dense whitish smoke that settled and rose over the top of the barricade. In one of these groups, Marik Lebreann, after having discharged his gun, was wielding it as a club to drive the assailants back. His son and George, close behind him, seconded his efforts vigorously. From time to time, and without lagging in the fight, father and son cast a hurried glance at the half open blinds above their heads, and off and on these words reached their ears:

"Courage, Marik!" would come from Madam Lebreann. "Courage, my son!"

"Courage, father!" echoed Velleda. "Courage, brother!"

A stray bullet shattered with a great clatter one of the thin slats of the lattice behind which the two heroic women were posted. The two true Gallic women, as Lebreann called them, did not wince. They remained in their places to watch the merchant and his son.

There was a moment when, after boldly struggling hand to hand with a captain, and having beaten the officer down, Lebreann was endeavoring to regain his feet, which slipped and stumbled over the uncertain cobblestones; on the instant a soldier who had succeeded in reaching the top of the barricade, and from his elevated position towered over the merchant, raised his gun, and was on the point of transfixing the linendraper with his

bayonet. George perceived the imminent danger of Velleda's father; he threw himself in front of the threatened thrust; the bayonet ran through his arm and he dropped to the ground. The soldier was about to deal the merchant's protector a second thrust when two small hands seized him by his legs, and holding him with the convulsive grip of despair, caused him to lose his balance. Head foremost the soldier rolled down the other side of the barricade.

George owed his life to Pradeline. Bold as a lioness, her hair streaming, her cheeks aflame, the girl had managed to draw near to George during the struggle. The very instant, however, after she had saved him, a rebounding bullet struck her in the breast. She fell down upon her knees and fainted—her last glances sought George.

Father Bribri, seeing the young woman wounded, dropped his musket, ran to her, and raised her up. He was looking around for some safe place to lay her down when he noticed Madam Lebrenn and her daughter at the door of the shop. They had just descended from the floor above, and were busy, with the help of Gildas and Jeanike, making preparations to receive the wounded.

Gildas was beginning to accustom himself to the firing. He aided father Bribri to transport Pradeline into the rear room, where Madam Lebrenn and her daughter immediately turned their attention to her.

The ragpicker was stepping out of the shop when there came, rolling down to his feet, a frail body clad in tattered trousers and a ragged jacket, all clotted with blood.

"Oh, my poor Flamechel!" cried the old man, trying to pick up the boy. "Are you wounded? It may not be dangerous—courage!"

"I am done for, father Bribri," answered the boy in a fast ebbing voice. "It is a pity—I shall not—go—angling for the red fishes in—the—pond—of—"

And he expired.

A big tear rolled down upon the scrubby beard of the ragpicker.

"Poor little devil! he was not a bad boy," father Bribri soliloquized with a sigh. "He dies as he lived—on the Paris pavement!"

Such was the short funeral oration pronounced over Flameche's body.

At the moment that the poor boy died, George's grandfather, unable any longer to restrain himself, decided, despite his feebleness, to join the fray. He hurried down to the street, and ran to the barricade. From his window, his ammunition, moveables and fixtures, being exhausted, he had had leisure to follow the vicissitudes of the conflict. He saw the little fellow fall; looked for him among the dead and the wounded; he called to him in heartrending accents.

So stubborn was the resistance offered by the defenders of the barricade that the Municipalists, after sustaining heavy losses, were compelled to beat a retreat, which they effected in good order.

The firing had ceased for several minutes when suddenly a shot was heard in the near vicinity, and, almost immediately after, the sound of horses approaching at a gallop.

Presently, on the rear side of the barricade, a colonel of dragoons hove in sight, followed by a number of horsemen, sabers in hand, like their commander, driving before them a group of insurgents who fired at intervals as they retreated on the run.

It was Colonel Plouernel. Separated from his squadron by an onrush of insurgents, he was endeavoring to cut himself a passage to the boulevard, not imagining he would find his path barred at that spot by a barricade.

The combat, suspended for a moment, broke out afresh. At first the defenders of the barricade believed that the small number of troopers was the vanguard of a regiment which meant to take them in the rear, and thus place them between two fires, by the return of the Municipalists to the assault.

The fifteen or twenty dragoons commanded by Colonel Plouernel were received with a general discharge of musketry. Several of the dragoons fell; the colonel himself was wounded. But obedient to his natural intrepidity, he drove his spurs into his horse's flanks, waved his sword and cried out:

"Dragoons! Cut down this rabble with your swords!"

The colonel's horse gave an enormous bound; it brought him to the very base of the barricade, but the animal slipped over the rolling cobblestones and fell prone.

Although wounded and pinned to the ground under his mount, the Count of Plouernel still defended himself with heroic valor. His every sword thrust

found its mark. But it was all of no avail; he was about to succumb to superior numbers when, at the risk of his own life, Monsieur Lebrenn, assisted by his son and George, although the latter was wounded, threw themselves between the prostrate colonel and his exasperated assailants, and succeeded in extricating him from under his horse, and in pushing him into the shop.

"Friends! These dragoons are isolated; they are in no condition to resist us; let us disarm them; let there be no useless carnage—they are our brothers!" someone cried.

"Mercy to the soldiers—but death to their colonel!" cried the men who had just been driven to the spot before the merciless and headlong onslaught of the Count of Plouernel. "Death to the colonel!"

"Yes! Yes!" repeated several voices.

"No!" shouted back the linendraper, barring the door with his gun, while George came to his support. "No! No! No massacre after battle! No cowardice!"

"The colonel killed my brother with a pistol shot fired within an inch of his face—down there, at the corner of the street," bellowed a man with bloodshot eyes, his mouth foaming with rage, and brandishing a sword. "Death to the colonel!"

"Yes! Yes! Death!" shouted several threatening voices. "Death!"

"No! You shall not kill a wounded man! You can not mean to murder an unarmed man—a prisoner!"

"Death," shouted back an increasing number of angry voices. "Death!"

"Very well, walk in! Let us see if you will have the heart to dishonor the cause of the people with a crime."

And the merchant, although ready to offer fresh resistance to the ferocity of the angry men, left free the passage of the door which he had until then blocked.

The assailants remained motionless. Lebrenn's words had gone home.

Nevertheless, the man who desired to avenge his brother rushed forward, sword in hand, emitting a savage cry. Already his feet were on the threshold when, seizing him by the waist, George held him back, saying:

"Would you, indeed, commit murder! Oh, no, brother! You are no murderer!"

And with tears in his eyes, George Duchene embraced the man.

George's voice, his countenance, his accent and his deportment made so deep an impression upon the angry man who cried for vengeance, that he lowered his head, flung away his sword, and, dropping upon a heap of cobblestones, covered his face in his hands, murmuring between the sobs that choked him:

"My brother! My poor brother!"

The struggle was over. The merchant's son went out for tidings, and returned with the information that the King, together with the royal family, had fled; that everywhere the troops fraternized with the people; that the Chamber of Deputies was dissolved; and that a provisional government was set up at the City Hall.

The wounded, whether they belonged to the insurrectionists or to the army, were transported to the improvised hospitals that were set up in several shops, as had been done in the linendraper's. As much attention was bestowed upon the soldiers as upon those who shortly before were engaged in a deadly struggle with them. The women gathered around the wounded. If there was aught to be regretted it was the excessiveness of the zeal of the tenders of good offices.

Several soldiers of the Municipal Guard, besides an officer of dragoons who accompanied Colonel Plouernel, having been taken prisoner, they were distributed among the neighboring houses, whence they soon thereafter emerged in civilian dress, and arm in arm with their adversaries of the same morning.

Lebrenn's shop was crowded with wounded men. One of these lay upon the counter; the others on mattresses hastily spread upon the floor. The merchant and his family assisted several surgeons of the quarter. Gildas was engaged in distributing wine mixed with water to the patients, whose throats were parched with thirst. Among the latter, and lying beside each other upon the same mattress, were father Bribri and a sergeant of the Municipal Guards, an old soldier with moustaches as grey as those of the ragpicker himself.

The latter, after having pronounced Flameche's funeral oration, had been shot in the leg during the encounter with the dragoons. The sergeant, on his part, had received a wound in the loins in the course of the first attack that the barricade had to sustain.

"Zounds! How I suffer!" murmured the sergeant. "And what a thirst! My throat is on fire!"

Father Bribri overheard the words, and seeing Gildas approach holding in one hand a bottle of wine and water, and in the other a basket with glasses, called out to him as if he were at an inn:

"Waiter! This way, waiter! The old man here wants something to drink, if you please! He is thirsty!"

Surprised and touched by the civility of his companion on the mattress, the sergeant said to him:

"Thank you, my good old man; I may not decline, because I feel as if I would choke."

Upon the summons of father Bribri, Gildas filled one of the glasses in his basket. He stooped down and handed it to the soldier. The latter essayed to rise, but failed, and said as he dropped back:

"Zounds! I can not sit up. My loins are shattered."

"Wait a second, sergeant," said father Bribri; "one of my legs is disabled, but my loins and arms are still sea-worthy. I shall give you a helping hand."

The ragpicker helped the soldier to sit up, and supported him until he had emptied his glass. After that he gently helped him to lie down again.

"Thanks, and pardon the trouble, my good old man," said the Municipalist.

"At your service, sergeant."

"Tell me, old boy—"

"What is it, sergeant?"

"Doesn't it strike you that this thing is rather droll?"

"What, sergeant?"

"Well, to think that two hours ago we were trying to shoot holes through each other, and now we are exchanging courtesies."

"Don't mention it, sergeant! Shots are stupid things."

"All the more when people have no ill-will for each other—"

"Zounds! May the devil take me, sergeant, if I had any ill-will towards you! Nevertheless, for all I know, it was I who put the bullet in your loin—just as, without having the slightest ill feeling for me, you would have planted your bayonet in my bowels. Wherefore, I repeat it, it is a stupid thing for people who have no ill-will toward each other to come to blows."

"That's the truth of it."

"And, furthermore, were you particularly stuck upon Louis Philippe, sergeant?"

"I? Little did I trouble my head about him! What I was after was to obtain my furlough, so that I could go to the country and plant my cabbages. That's what I was after. And you, old boy, what were you after?"

"I am after the Republic that will guarantee work, and will furnish bread to those who need it."

"If that is so, old fellow, I am as much for the Republic as yourself, because I have a poor brother with a large family upon his hands, to whom to be out of work is like death. Ah! And was it for that that you fought, old fellow? By my honor, you were not so far out of the way. Long live the Republic!"

"And yet, it may be you, old fraud, who shot that bullet into my leg—but, at least you are not to be blamed."

"How the devil could I help it! Do we ever know why we fall into one another's hair? The old custom of obeying orders is what sets us agoing. We are ordered to fire—and we fire, without at first taking any particular aim—that's true. But the other side answers in kind. Zounds! From that minute it is each for his own skin."

"I believe you."

"And then one gets pricked, or sees a comrade fall; he grows hotter in the collar; the smell of gunpowder intoxicates you; and then you begin to bellow as if you were among deaf people—"

"Once so far, the rest comes natural, sergeant!"

"It does not matter so much, you see, my good old man, so long as you are at guns' length. But the moment you come to close quarters, to a bayonet charge, and you can see the white of each others' eyes, then the compliments exchanged are: 'Take this!' 'Take that!' and yet one feels a weakness stealing over his legs and arms."

"Quite natural, sergeant, because you think to yourself—"These are, after all, brave fellows who want the Reform, they want the Republic. Good—what harm can they do me? Besides, am I not one of the common people, like themselves? Have I not relatives and friends among the common people? I wager a hundred to one that I should be of their opinion, that I should fall in line with them, instead of charging upon them!"

"That's so true, my old man, that I'm as much for the Republic as yourself, if it can furnish work to my poor brother."

"And that's why I repeat, sergeant, that there is nothing so stupid as for people to shoot holes into one another, without, at least, knowing the why and the wherefore."

Saying this father Bribri drew out of his pocket his old snuff-box of white wood, and holding it out to his companion, added:

"Will you have some, sergeant?"

"Zounds! That's not to be refused, old man; it will help to clear up my head."

"Tell me, sergeant," remarked father Bribri laughing, "have you perhaps a cold in the head? Do you know the song:

"There were six soldiers, or five,

They had a cold in the head—"

"Ah, you gay old fraud!" exclaimed the Municipalist, giving his mattress-fellow a friendly tap on the shoulder and laughing heartily at the opportune refrain. He took a pinch of snuff, and after absorbing and relishing it like a connoisseur, he added:

"Zounds! This is good!"

"I'll take you into my confidence, sergeant," whispered father Bribri, taking a pinch himself, "this is my only luxury. I get it at the Civitte, nowhere else!"

"That's the very place my wife makes her purchases in."

"Oh, so, then, you are married, sergeant? The devil take it! Your poor wife must be feeling frightfully uneasy."

"Yes, she is an excellent woman. If my wound is not fatal, old man, you must come to my house and take a bowl of soup with us. Ho! Ho! We shall chat about St. Denis Street while nibbling a crust."

"You are very kind, sergeant. Neither is that to be refused. And seeing that I do not keep house, you and your wife must return the visit by coming and sharing a rabbit-stew with me on the outer boulevard."

"Agreed, old man!"

As the civilian and the Municipalist were exchanging these courtesies, Monsieur Lebrenn came out of the rear room, the door of which had been kept closed. The linendraper looked pale; there were tears in his eyes. He said to his wife, whom he found busy attending one of the wounded men:

"Will you come in a minute, my dear friend?"

Madam Lebrenn joined her husband, and the door of the rear room closed behind them. There a sad spectacle presented itself to the eyes of the merchant's wife.

Pradeline lay stretched out upon a sofa. The girl was in her death agony. George Duchene, with his arm in a sling, was on his knees beside her, urging her to take some of the wine and water in a cup that he held up to her lips.

At the sight of Madam Lebrenn, the poor creature endeavored to smile. She gathered all the strength she could, and said in a faint and broken voice:

"Madam—I asked to see you—before I die—in order to tell you—the truth about George. I was an orphan; I worked at flower-making. I had suffered a good deal—underwent untold privations—but still I kept my character. I should also say, so as not to praise myself too highly, I had never been tempted," she added with a bitter sigh; and then she smiled: "I met George upon his return from the army—I fell in love with him—I loved him—Oh! I loved him dearly—let that pass—he was the only one—perhaps it was

because he never became my lover. I am sure I loved him more than he loved me. He was better than I—it was out of kindness that he offered to marry me. Unfortunately, a girl friend crossed my way and led me astray. She had been a working girl, like myself—and misery had driven her to sell herself! I saw her rich, well dressed—well fed—she urged me to do as she had done—my head turned—I forgot George—but not for long—but for nothing in the world would I have dared to appear before him again. Occasionally, nevertheless, I would come to this street—seeking to catch a glimpse of him. I saw him more than once at work in your shop, madam—and talking to your daughter, who seemed to me very beautiful—Oh, as beautiful as the day! A presentiment told me George was bound to fall in love with her. I watched him—more than once, recently, I saw him early in the morning at his window—looking across the street at yours. Yesterday morning I was with someone—"

A feeble blush of shame colored for an instant the pallid cheeks of the dying girl. She dropped her eyes, and presently proceeded in a voice that was fast sinking:

"There—accidentally—I learned that that person—found your daughter—very beautiful, and—knowing that that person is utterly—reckless of consequences—I feared for your daughter and for George—I tried—yesterday—to notify him—he was not at home; I wrote to him—asking to see him, without stating my reasons—This morning—I went out—without knowing—that there—were barricades—and—"

The young girl could not finish; her head fell back; mechanically she raised both her hands to the wound on her bosom, heaved a sigh of profound grief, and stammered a few unintelligible words. Monsieur and Madam Lebrenn wept in silence as they contemplated her.

"Josephine," said George, "do you suffer much?" And covering his eyes with his hands he added: "This mortal wound—was received by her in the attempt to save my life!"

"George—George," muttered the dying girl almost inaudibly, as her eyes roved aimlessly about, "George—you—do—not know—"

And she began to laugh.

That laugh of death was heartrending.

"Poor child! Come to your senses," pleaded Madam Lebrenn.

"My name is Pradeline," came deliriously from the wretched girl. "Yes—because—I always sing."

"Unhappy child!" cried Lebrenn. "Poor girl, she is delirious!"

"George," she resumed, her mind wandering, "listen to my songs—"

And in an expiring voice she improvised to her favorite melody:

"I feel th'approach of death,

I'm breathing my last breath—

It is my fate, and yet

I grieve—to die—"

She did not complete the last line. Her arms twitched; her head drooped upon her shoulder. She was dead.

That instant, Gildas opened the door that communicated with a back staircase leading to the upper story, and said to the merchant:

"Monsieur, the colonel upstairs wishes to speak with you."

The merchant went up to his own bed chamber, where the colonel had been quartered as a measure of precaution.

The Count of Plouernel had received only two slight wounds, but was severely bruised. In order to facilitate the staunching of the blood he had taken off his uniform.

Lebrenn found his guest standing in the middle of the apartment, pale and somber.

"Monsieur," said he, "my wounds are not serious enough to prevent me from leaving the house. I shall never forget your generous conduct towards me. Your conduct was all the more noble in view of what transpired between us yesterday morning. My only wish is to be able some day to return your generosity. That, I suppose, will be difficult, monsieur, seeing my party is vanquished, and you are the vanquishers. I was blind with regard to the actual state of public sentiment. This sudden Revolution opens my eyes. I realize it—yes, the day of the people's triumph has come. We had our day, as you said to me yesterday, monsieur; your turn has come."

"I think so too, monsieur. But now, allow me to advise you. It would not be prudent for you to go out in uniform. The popular effervescence has not yet cooled down. I shall supply you with a coat and hat, and, in the company of one of my friends, you will be able to return to your own residence without any difficulty, or running any danger."

"Monsieur! You can not mean that! To disguise myself—that would be cowardice!"

"If you please, monsieur! No exaggerated scruples! Have you not the consciousness of having fought with intrepidity to the very end?"

"Yes; but of having been disarmed—by—"

But the Count of Plouernel checked himself, and offering his hand to the merchant said:

"Pardon me, monsieur—I forgot myself; besides, I am vanquished. It shall be as you say. I shall take your advice. I shall assume the disguise without feeling that I am committing an act of cowardice. A man whose conduct is as worthy as yours must be a good judge in matters of honor."

A minute later the Count of Plouernel was in bourgeois dress, thanks to the clothes that the merchant lent him.

The Count then pointed to his battered casque which lay on top of his uniform, that had been torn in several places during the struggle, and said to Monsieur Lebreun:

"Monsieur, I request you to keep my casque, in default of my sword, which I would have preferred to leave with you as a souvenir from a soldier whose life you generously saved—as a token of gratitude."

"I accept it, monsieur," answered the linendraper. "I shall join the casque to several other souvenirs which have come down to me from your family."

"From my family!" exclaimed the Count of Plouernel in amazement. "From my family! Do you know my family?"

"Alas, monsieur," answered the merchant in melancholy tones, "this was not the first time that, in the course of the centuries, a Neroweg of Plouernel and a Lebreun met, arms in hand."

"What is that you say, monsieur?" asked the Count with increasing wonderment. "I pray you, explain yourself."

Two raps at the door interrupted the conversation of Monsieur Lebrenn and his guest.

"Who is there?" demanded the merchant.

"I, father."

"Walk in, my boy!"

"Father," said Sacrovir in great glee, "several friends are downstairs. They come from the City Hall. They want to see you."

"My boy," said Monsieur Lebrenn, "you are known as well as myself in the street. I wish you to escort our guest home. Take the back stairs in order to avoid going out by the shop door. Do not leave Monsieur Plouernel until he is safe at home."

"Rest assured, father. I have already crossed the barricade twice. I answer for monsieur's safety."

"Excuse me, monsieur, if I now leave you," said the merchant to the Count of Plouernel. "My friends are waiting for me."

"Adieu, monsieur," answered the Count in a voice that came from the heart. "I do not know what the future has in store for us; mayhap we may meet again in opposite camps; but I swear to you, I shall not, henceforth, be able to look upon you as an enemy."

With these words the Count of Plouernel followed the merchant's son.

Monsieur Lebrenn, left alone in the chamber, contemplated the colonel's casque for a moment, and muttered to himself:

"Truly, there are strange fatalities in this world."

He lifted up the casque and took it into that mysterious chamber which so much excited the curiosity of Gildas.

Lebrenn then joined his friends, from whom he learned that there was no longer any doubt but that the Republic would be proclaimed by the provisional government.

CHAPTER XI

LONG LIVE THE REPUBLIC!

After the battle, after the victory, the inauguration of the triumph, and the glorification of the ashes of the victims.

A few days after the overthrow of the throne of Louis Philippe, a large crowd gathered towards ten in the morning around the Madeleine Church, the facade of which was completely draped in black and silver. The front of the edifice bore the inscription:

THE FRENCH REPUBLIC.

LIBERTY—EQUALITY—FRATERNITY.

An immense multitude crowded the boulevards, where, from the site of the Bastille clear to the square of the Madeleine, there rose two long lines of lofty funeral tripods. On that day homage was rendered to the shades of the citizens who died in February in defense of freedom. A double cordon of National Guards under the command of General Courtais, with the old republican soldier Guinard as his lieutenant, lined the road.

The multitude, grave and calm, looked conscious of its new sovereignty, freshly conquered with the blood of its brothers.

Presently the cannon boomed, and the patriotic hymn, the Marseillaise, was intoned. The members of the provisional government arrived. They were Citizens Dupont of L'Eure, Ledru-Rollin, Arago, Louis Blanc, Albert, Flocon, Lamartine, Cremieux, Garnier-Pages and Marast. Slowly they ascended the broad stairs of the church. Tricolor sashes fastened with a knot were the sole badges that distinguished the citizens upon whom at that juncture rested the destinies of France.

Behind them, and acclaiming the Republic and popular sovereignty, came the heads of Departments, the high magistrature in red robes, the learned corps in their official dress, the marshals, the admirals and the generals in resplendent uniform.

Passionate shouts of "Long live the Republic" broke out along the line of march of the dignitaries, most of whom, courtiers under so many regimes and now neophyte republicans, had grown grey in the service of the monarchy.

All the windows of the houses situated on Madeleine Square were choked with spectators. On the second floor of a shop occupied by one of Monsieur Lebrenn's friends Madam Lebrenn and her daughter were seen at a window. They were both clad in black. Monsieur Lebrenn, his son, as well as father Morin and his grandson George, who still wore his arm in a sling, stood behind them—all now constituting one family. On the evening before this memorable day Monsieur and Madam Lebrenn had announced to their daughter that they consented to her marriage with George. The beautiful visage of Velleda said as much. It expressed profound happiness, a happiness, however, that the character of the imposing ceremony which aroused a pious emotion in the merchant's family kept under restraint. When the procession had entered the church and the Marseillaise ceased, Monsieur Lebrenn cried out with eyes swimming in tears of joy:

"Oh! This is a great day! It sees the establishment in perpetuity of our Republic, clean of all excesses, of all proscription, of all stain! Merciful as strength and right, fraternal as its own symbol, the first thought of the Republic has been to throw down the political scaffold, the scaffold, which, had the Republic been vanquished, it would have been made to dye purple with its own purest and most glorious blood! Contemplate it—loyal and generous, the Republic summons those very magistrates and generals, until yesterday implacable enemies of the republicans, whom they smote both with the sword of the Law and the sword of the Army, to join with it in a solemn pact of oblivion, of pardon and of concord, sworn to over the ashes of the latest martyrs of our rights! Oh, it is beautiful; it is noble, thus to reach out to our foes of yesterday a friendly and unarmed hand!"

"My children," put in Madam Lebrenn, "let us hope, let us believe that the martyrs of liberty, whose ashes we to-day render homage to, may be the last victims of royalty."

"Yes! Everywhere freedom is awakening!" cried Sacrovir Lebrenn enthusiastically. "Revolution in Vienna—revolution in Milan—revolution in Berlin—every day brings the tidings that the republican ferment of France has caused all the thrones of Europe to shake! The end of monarchy has arrived!"

"One army on the Rhine, another on the frontier of Italy—both ready to march to the support of our brothers of Europe," said George Duchene. "The Republic will make the rounds of the world! From that time on—no more wars, not so Monsieur Lebrenn? Union! The fraternity of the peoples! Universal peace! Labor! Industry! Happiness for all! No more insurrections,

since the peaceful struggle of universal suffrage will henceforth replace the fratricidal struggles in which so many of our brothers have perished."

"Oh!" cried Velleda Lebreann, who had watched her betrothed with sparkling eyes as he spoke. "How happy one must feel to live in times like these! What great and noble things are we not about to witness; not so, father?"

"To doubt it, my children, would be to deny the onward march, the constant progress of humanity," answered Lebreann. "Never yet did mankind retrogress."

"May the good God hear you, Monsieur Lebreann," put in father Morin. "Although I am quite old, I expect to see a good part of that beautiful picture. To want more than that, one must be quite a glutton," added the old man naïvely, and casting a tender look upon the merchant's daughter. "Could I, after that, still have anything to wish for, now that I know that this good and beautiful girl is to be the wife of my grandson? Is he not now a member of a family of good people? The daughter is worthy of the mother, the son is worthy of the father. Zounds! When one has seen all that, and is as old as I am, there is nothing more that the heart can wish for—one may take his leave with a contented mind."

"Take your leave, good father?" said Madam Lebreann, taking and warming in her own one of the trembling hands of the old man. "And what about those who remain behind and love you?"

"And who will feel doubly happy," added Velleda embracing the grandfather, "if you remain to witness their happiness."

"And who desire to render homage in you, good father, and for many long years, to labor, to courage, and to a big good heart!" exclaimed Sacrovir in accents of respectful deference, while the old man, more and more moved, carried his tremulous and venerable hands to his eyes.

"Oh! Do you imagine, Monsieur Morin," asked the merchant, smiling, "that you are not our 'good grandfather' as well? Do you imagine you do not belong to us, as well as to our dear George? As if our affections were not his own, and his own ours!"

"My God! My God!" exclaimed the old man, so moved with delight that tears filled his eyes. "What can I say to all that? It is too much—too much—all I can say is thanks, and weep. George, you who can talk, speak for me, do!"

"That is easy enough for you to say, grandfather," replied George, no less moved than Monsieur Morin.

"Father!" suddenly cried Sacrovir, stepping to the window. "Look! Look!"

And he added with exaltation:

"Oh, you brave and generous people of all peoples!"

At the call of the young man all rushed to the window.

The funeral ceremony being over, the boulevard was now free. At the head of a long procession of workingmen, there marched four members of their class carrying on their shoulders a species of shield decked with ribbons, in the middle of which a small casket of white wood was placed. Immediately behind followed a banner bearing the inscription:

LONG LIVE THE REPUBLIC!

LIBERTY—EQUALITY—FRATERNITY.

AN OFFERING TO THE FATHERLAND.

The people who lined the street shouted in transports of joy:

"Long live the Republic!"

"Oh!" cried the merchant with moist eyes. "I recognize them by their conduct! It is like themselves, the proletarians—they who uttered the sublime sentiment: We gave three months of misery to the service of the Republic, they the poor workingmen in the civil service, who were the first to be struck by the commercial crisis! And yet, behold them, the first to offer to the country the little that they possess—half their morrow's bread, perhaps!"

"And these men," added Madam Lebrenn, "who set such a noble example to the rich and the happy of the land; these men who display so much abnegation, such broadness of heart, so much resignation, so much patriotism, are they not to escape from their servitude! What, are their intelligence and industry forever to remain sterile only to themselves! Is for them a family ever to be the source of worry, the present a continuous privation, the future a frightful nightmare, and property a sardonic dream! No, no, you God of Justice! These men who have triumphed with so much grandeur have at last climbed to the top of their Calvary! The day of justice

has come for them also! With your father, my children, I say—this is a glorious day, a day of equity and of justice, free from all taint of vengeance!"

"And those sacred words are the symbol of the emancipation of the workers!" exclaimed Monsieur Lebrenn pointing to the inscription in front of the church:

LIBERTY—EQUALITY—FRATERNITY.

CHAPTER XII

THE GALLEY-SLAVE AND THE GENERAL

About eighteen months have elapsed since the memorable day of the imposing ceremonies described in the previous chapter, that were so rich with splendid promises to France—and all the world. It is after the lapse of that period that we are now to meet again Marik Lebreann and his family.

The following scene was taking place in the early part of the month of September, in 1849, at the convict-prison of Rochefort.

The meal hour had sounded. The convicts were eating.

One of the galley-slaves, attired like all the others in the regulation red vest and red cap, with the manille, or iron ring fastened to a heavy chain, on his feet, sat on a stone, and was biting into a chunk of black bread.

The galley-slave was Marik Lebreann.

He had been sentenced to hard labor by a council of war after the June insurrection of 1848.

The merchant's features preserved their usual expression of serenity and firmness. The only change in him was that his face, exposed during his arduous work to the scorching heat of the sun on the water, had acquired, one might say, the color of brick.

A guard, with sword at his side and cane in hand, after having looked over several groups of convicts, stopped, as if he were in search of someone, and then, pointing with his cane in the direction of Marik Lebreann, called out:

"Halloa, down there—number eleven hundred and twenty!"

The merchant continued to eat his black bread with a hearty appetite and did not answer.

"Number eleven hundred and twenty!" repeated the guard in a louder voice. "Don't you hear me, scamp!"

Continued silence on the part of Lebreann.

Grumbling and put out at being obliged to take a few more steps, the guard approached Lebrenn at a rapid pace, and touching him with the end of his cane, addressed him roughly:

"The devil! Are you deaf? Answer me, you brute!"

As Lebrenn felt himself touched by the guard's cane his face lowered, but quickly suppressing the impulse to anger and indignation, he answered calmly:

"What do you want?"

"I called you twice—eleven hundred and twenty! And you did not answer. Do you expect to escape me in that way? Look out!"

"Come, be not so brutal!" answered Lebrenn, shrugging his shoulders. "I did not answer you because I have not yet become accustomed to hearing myself called by any but my own name—and I am always forgetting that my present name is eleven hundred and twenty."

"Enough of argumentation! Step up, and come to the Commissioner of Marine."

"What for?"

"None of your business. Step up! march! quick!"

"I follow you," said Lebrenn with imperturbable calmness.

After crossing a part of the port, the guard, followed closely by the galley-slave, arrived at the door of the Commissioner in charge of the convicts.

"Will you kindly notify the Commissioner that I have brought him number eleven hundred and twenty?" said the guard to one of the keepers at the door.

A minute later the keeper returned, ordered the merchant to follow him, led him down a long corridor, and opening the door of a richly furnished room, said to Lebrenn:

"Walk in, and wait there."

"How is that?" asked the astonished merchant. "You leave me alone?"

"The Commissioner so ordered me."

"The devil!" exclaimed Lebrenn smiling. "This is a mark of confidence that flatters me greatly."

The keeper closed the door and left.

"Once more, the devil!" said Lebrenn with a broader grin as his eyes alighted upon an inviting arm-chair. "This is a good opportunity for me to enjoy a more comfortable seat than the stone benches of the prison yard."

And comfortably dropping into the soft seat he proceeded:

"No question about it, a good arm-chair is one of the comforts of life."

At that moment a side door opened and Lebrenn saw a tall man in the uniform of Brigadier General—blue coat, gold epaulettes and dark brown trousers—enter the apartment.

At the sight of the staff officer, Lebrenn was seized with surprise, sat up straight, and cried:

"Monsieur Plouernel!"

"Who did not forget the evening of February 23, 1848, monsieur," answered the General, stepping forward, and cordially extending his hand to Lebrenn. The latter took the proffered hand, and, while doing so, saw and considered the meaning of the two silver stars that ornamented the Count of Plouernel's epaulettes. With a smile of good-natured irony the merchant replied:

"You have become a General in the service of the Republic, monsieur, and I a galley-slave! You must admit, this is piquant."

The Count of Plouernel contemplated the merchant with astonishment. He had expected to see him either utterly dejected, or in a state of violent indignation. He found him calm, smiling and witty.

"Well, monsieur," proceeded Lebrenn, keeping his seat while the General, standing before him, continued to contemplate the man with increasing wonderment. "Well, monsieur, it is almost eighteen months since that evening of February 23, which it has pleased you to recall to memory! Who would then have thought that we would have met again in the position in which we find ourselves to-day!"

"Such fortitude!" exclaimed the Count of Plouernel. "This is heroism!"

"Not at all, monsieur—it is simply a matter of a clean conscience, and of confidence."

"Confidence!"

"Yes. I am calm because I have faith in the cause to which I devoted my life—and because my conscience assails me with no reproaches."

"And yet—you are in this place, monsieur."

"I pity the error of my judges."

"You—the incarnation of honor, in the livery of infamy!"

"Bah! That does not affect me."

"Far from your wife, from your children!"

"They are as often here with me as I am with them. The body is chained and separated, but the spirit laughs at chains and space."

And interrupting himself, Lebrenn added:

"But, monsieur, kindly inform me by what accident I see you here. The Commissioner of the prison sent for me. Was it only to afford me the honor of receiving your visit?"

"You would misjudge me, monsieur," answered the General, "were you to believe that, after owing my life to you, I could come here with no other motive than that of idle and offensive curiosity."

"I shall not do you such an injustice, monsieur. You are, I presume, on a tour of inspection?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"I presume you learned I was here in prison, and you came, perhaps, to offer me your good offices?"

"Better yet, monsieur."

"Better yet? Pray, what do you mean? You seem to feel embarrassed."

"Indeed—I am; very much so—" replied the General, visibly put out of countenance by the calmness and easy manners of the galley-slave. "Revolutions often bring about bizarre situations."

"Bizarre situations?"

"Yes," replied the General; "the situation in which we two find ourselves at this moment, for instance."

"Oh, we already have exhausted the obvious bizarreness of fate, monsieur!" remarked the merchant smiling. "That, under the Republic, I, an old republican, should be found on the galley-bench, while you, a republican of recent date, should have been promoted to the rank of General—that is, no doubt, bizarre, we are agreed upon that. What else?"

"My embarrassment proceeds from another reason, monsieur."

"Which?"

"It happens—that—" answered the General, hesitatingly.

"It happens that?"

"I applied—"

"You applied—for what, monsieur?"

"And obtained—"

"A pardon for me!" cried Lebrenn. "Why, that's charming!"

And the situation brought about by the whirligig of politics was so droll that the merchant could not refrain from laughing heartily.

"Yes, monsieur," the General proceeded, "I have asked and obtained your pardon—you are free. Mine has been the honor of carrying the news to you personally."

"One word of explanation, monsieur," said the merchant in a tone of lofty seriousness. "I do not accept pardon; but, however tardy, I do accept atoning justice."

"What do you mean?"

"If, at the time of the fatal June insurrection, I had shared the views of those of my brothers who are here in prison with me, I would decline to accept a pardon. After having done like them, I would remain here as they, and with them!"

"Nevertheless, monsieur, your conviction—"

"Was iniquitous. I shall prove it to you in a few words. At the time of the June insurrection, last year, I was a captain in my legion. I responded without arms to the call issued by the National Guard. There I declared loudly, very loudly, that it was only without arms that I would march at the head of my company, my purpose being not to engage in a bloody conflict, but to endeavor to convince my brothers, that, notwithstanding they were exasperated by misery, by a deplorable misunderstanding, and above all by atrocious deceptions, they should never forget that the people's sovereignty was inviolable, and that, so long as the power which represented the same had not been legally impeached and convicted of treason, to revolt against that power, to attack it with arms instead of overthrowing it by means of the universal suffrage, was a suicidal act, and was an impeachment of popular sovereignty itself. About one-half of my company shared my views and followed my example. While other citizens were charging us with treason, bare-headed, unarmed, our hands fraternally linked, we advanced towards the first barricade in our path. The guns were raised at our approach—we were heard. Already our brothers understood that, however legitimate their grievances, an insurrection would mean the immediate triumph of the enemies of the Republic. At that juncture a hail of bullets rained down upon the barricade behind which we were parleying. Ignorant, no doubt, of this circumstance, a battalion of the line had attacked the position. Taken by surprise, the insurgents defended themselves heroically. The larger number were slain, a few were made prisoners. Confounded among the latter, several others of my own company and myself were seized and treated as insurgents. If I, thrown along with several friends of mine, into the underground dungeons of the Tuileries and kept there three days and nights, did not go crazy; if I preserved my reason, it was that, in the spirit, I was with my wife and children. Dragged before the military tribunal I there told the truth; they did not believe me. I was sent to this place. So you see, monsieur, it is not pardon that is granted to me, but tardy justice. Nevertheless, that does not prevent me from being grateful to you for the efforts you have put forth in my behalf. Well, then, I am free?"

"The Commissioner of Marine will be here presently; he will confirm what I have said to you. You can leave this place to-day—this hour."

"Now, monsieur, finding you so well entrenched at court—the republican court," the merchant proceeded to say, smiling, "I wish you would be kind enough to use your good offices with the Commissioner that he grant me a favor which he may be inclined to refuse."

"I am at your service, monsieur."

"You see this iron ring that I carry on my leg, and to which my chain is fastened? Now, then, I would like to be allowed to take this ring with me. I shall pay for it, of course."

"How! That ring! You would like to preserve it?"

"It is merely a collector's mania, monsieur. I already own several small historic curiosities—among others the casque which you so kindly presented to me as a souvenir. I would like to join to them the iron ring of the political galley-slave. You will understand, monsieur, that, to me and my family, the two curiosities together will mean a good deal."

"Nothing easier, I believe, monsieur, than to meet your wishes. I shall so notify the Commissioner. But allow me a question—it may be indiscreet."

"What is it, monsieur?"

"I remember that eighteen months ago—and many a time and oft have I recalled the incident—I remember that, when I asked you to keep my casque as a memento of your generous conduct towards me, you answered—"

"That that would not be the only article from your family that my collection contained; not so?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"I told you the truth."

"You also told me, I believe, monsieur, that the Nerowegs of Plouernel—"

"Had several times, in the course of the ages and of events, encountered several members of my obscure slave, serf, vassal or plebeian family," the merchant put in, completing the sentence of the Count of Plouernel. "That is also true, monsieur."

"And what were the occasions? What the circumstances? How come you to be informed on events that took place so very long ago?"

"Permit me, monsieur, to keep that secret, and pardon me for having so thoughtlessly awakened in you a curiosity that I may not satisfy. Still laboring under the intoxicating influence of that day of triumphant civil war, and of the singular fatality that brought us, you and me, face to face, an allusion to the past escaped my lips. I regret it, because, I repeat—there are family remembrances that must never go outside of the domestic hearth."

"I shall not insist, monsieur," said the Count of Plouernel.

And after a moment's hesitation he added:

"I have another question, also, I presume, indiscreet—"

"I listen, monsieur."

"What do you think of seeing me serve the Republic?"

"Such a question demands a frank answer."

"I know you are incapable of making any other, monsieur."

"Well, I think you have no faith in the continuance of the Republic. Your policy is to turn to the best use you can, in the interest of your own party, the authority that the present government entrusts to you and many others. In short, you expect, at a given moment, to utilize your position in the army in favor of the return of your master, as you call, I believe, that big boy, the last of the Capets and of the Frankish Kings by the right of conquest. The government is placing in your hands weapons against the Republic. You accept them; it is all fair in war, from your viewpoint. As to me, I hate the monarchy of divine right by reason of the ills with which it has scourged my country. I have fought it with all my strength; nevertheless, never would I have served it with the intention of ruining it. Never would I have worn its livery, or its colors."

"Monsieur, I do not wear the livery of the Republic," answered General Plouernel warmly. "I wear the uniform of the Army."

"Come, monsieur," replied the merchant, smiling, "admit it, without reproach, that, for a soldier, what you have just said is, perhaps, a little—a little priestlike. But let that pass—everyone serves his cause in his own fashion. Besides, as you see, here we are, we two—you decked in the insignia of power and of force; I, a poor man, dragging a galley-slave's chain, the very same as, fifteen hundred years ago, my forefathers wore the slave's iron ring. Your party is powerful and influential. It enjoys the good wishes

and would, at a pinch, enjoy the material support of the monarchists of Europe. It owns wealth; it has the clergy on its side; furthermore, the waverers, the camp-followers, the cynics, the ambitious of all previous regimes, have rallied to your side in the fear that popular sovereignty inspires them with. They proclaim aloud that, rather than democracy, they prefer the monarchy of divine right and absolute such as existed before 1789, even if it be necessary to have it supported by a permanent army of Cossacks. On the other hand, those of my party and I have implicit faith in the triumph of democracy."

The entrance of the Commissioner of Marine put an end to the conversation between the General and the merchant. The latter obtained without difficulty, thanks to the intervention of his "protector," permission to take with him his iron ring, his manille as the thing is called in the galleys.

That same evening Marik Lebreann proceeded to Paris.

CHAPTER XIII

HOME AGAIN

On the 10th of September, 1849, two days after General Plouernel brought to Marik Lebrenn his pardon and complete restitution to civic and political rights, the merchant's family was gathered in a modest apartment on the second floor of their house.

The shop had been closed two hours before. A lamp, placed upon a large round center table, lighted the several personages who sat around it.

Madam Lebrenn was busy with the mercantile books of the establishment; her daughter, dressed in mourning, gently rocked on her knees a babe asleep; while George, also in mourning, like his wife, on account of the death of his grandfather Morin a few months previous, sketched on a sheet of paper the draft of a wainscot. Immediately upon his marriage, and agreeable to the wishes of Lebrenn, George had established upon the profit-sharing principle a large joiner's shop on the ground floor of a house contiguous to that of his father-in-law.

Sacrovir Lebrenn was reading a treatise on the mechanics of cloth weaving, and from time to time inserted some notes in the margin of his book.

Jeanike was busy ironing some napkins, while Gildas, who sat before a little table with a heap of articles of linen belonging to the shop, was labeling and folding them in shape for exhibition in the show window.

Madam Lebrenn's face was pensive and sad. So also would surely have been the expression on the face of her daughter, then in the full bloom of her beauty, had she not at that moment exchanged a sweet smile with her babe, which stretched out its arms to her.

His mind drawn for a moment from his work by the gurgling laughter of the child, George turned his eyes to, and completed the group with inexpressible joy.

It was obvious that a settled grief weighed every instant, so to speak, upon this family, otherwise so tenderly and happily united. Indeed, not an hour seemed to pass without the sad thought embittering the minds of all, that the so-much-beloved, so-much-venerated head was absent from the family hearth.

During the first week of the insurrectionary month of June, 1848, Madam Lebrenn took a trip to Brittany in order to make some purchases of linen and visit several members of her family. She took her daughter and son-in-law with her. To the young couple the journey was a pleasure trip. On his part, Sacrovir had gone to Lille on a business errand for his father. He was due back in Paris before his mother's departure. Being, however, detained on the road longer than was expected, he only learned upon his return to Paris of the imprisonment of his father, who was at first sent to the dungeons of the Tuileries as an insurgent.

So soon as tidings of this shocking event reached them, Madam Lebrenn, her daughter and George returned from Brittany in all haste.

Needless to say that Monsieur Lebrenn received in his prison all the consolation that the love and devotion of his family could bestow upon him. After his sentence his wife and children wished to follow him to Rochefort, in order, at least, to live in the same city as he, and see him often. He, however, firmly opposed the plan on several grounds, both of family comfort, and interests. Moreover, the merchant's principal objection to such an inconvenient transplantation of the whole household was—and in this his otherwise good judgment this time deceived him—his positive conviction that a general amnesty would sooner or later be decreed. He caused his family to share his belief, and they, in their turn, were but too anxious to hug so bright a hope to their hearts. Thus days, and weeks and months flowed by vainly hoping, and the hope ever rising anew.

Every day the prisoner at Rochefort received a long collective letter from his wife and children; he, likewise, answered them every day. Thanks to these daily unbosomings, as much as to his own so firmly steeled character, Lebrenn had sustained without faltering the horrible ordeal from which his political enemy, the Count of Plouernel, was at last able to secure his release.

The merchant's household continued to attend to their several pursuits in silence. Presently Madam Lebrenn stopped writing for a moment and leaned her head upon her left hand, while her right remained motionless, holding the pen.

Noticing the preoccupation of his mother-in-law, George Duchene made a sign to Velleda. The two looked at Madam Lebrenn in silence. Presently her daughter said to her lovingly:

"Mother, something seems to be troubling you! What is on your mind?"

"This is the first day, children, during the last thirteen months," answered the merchant's wife, "that we have had no word from your father."

"If Monsieur Lebrenn were ill, mother," observed George, "and unable to write to us, he would have let you know through some one else, sooner than alarm you by silence. As we were saying a minute ago, it is probable his letter miscarried this time, through some accident or other."

"George is right, mother," put in the young woman, "you must not yield so readily to fears for father's safety."

"Besides, who knows," suggested Sacrovir bitterly, "the police regulations are becoming so exacting and despotic that maybe they decided to deprive father of his only consolation. The present administration of the country hates the republicans with such bitter hatred! Oh, we have relapsed into sad times."

"After imagining the future so beautiful!" exclaimed George with a sigh. "And now to see it look so black, almost desperate! There is Monsieur Lebrenn—he!—he!—sentenced to the galleys! Oh, such a sight is enough to make one despair of the triumph of justice and right—except as an accidental and transitory incident!"

"Oh, brother, brother! I feel as if a frightful ferment of hatred and vengeance were gathering and rising in my breast!" exclaimed the merchant's son in a hollow voice. "If I could have one day—one single day—to pay back for all this—even if I were to spend the rest of my life in torment."

"Patience, brother!" answered George. "Everyone has his turn—patience!"

"Children," interposed Madam Lebrenn in a grave and melancholy voice, "you speak of justice—do not mix words of vengeance or of hatred with it. Were your father here—and he is ever with us in the spirit—he would tell you that the right does not hate—does not revenge itself. Hatred and vengeance make the head giddy. Those who persecuted your father and his party with such ferocity are a proof of what I say. Pity them—do not follow their example."

"And yet to see what we see, mother!" cried the youth. "To think that father, our dear father, a man of such integrity and courage, of such tried patriotism, finds himself at this hour in a convict's prison! To know that our enemies derive an insane joy from the prolongation of his undeserved sufferings!"

"In what way does that affect the honor, courage or patriotism of your father, my child?" suggested Madam Lebrenn. "Is it in the power of anybody in the world to stain that which is pure? to disgrace what is great? to turn an honest man into a felon? Do you imagine your father is honored less by his unjust sentence and the mark of the chain that he is now made to drag than by the wounds that he received in 1830? Will he not, when the hour of justice shall have sounded, step out of prison even more beloved, even more venerated than ever before? Oh, my children! We may weep over your father's absence, but let us never forget that every day of his martyrdom exalts and does him honor!"

"You are right, mother," replied Sacrovir, sighing heavily. "Thoughts of hatred and vengeance injure the heart."

"Oh!" exclaimed Velleda sadly. "Poor father! He looked forward to to-morrow's date with so much impatience!"

"To to-morrow?" George asked his wife. "Why so?"

"To-morrow is my son's birthday," explained Madam Lebrenn. "To-morrow, September 11, he will be twenty-one years of age. For several reasons that anniversary was to be a family holiday to us."

Hardly had Madam Lebrenn uttered these words when the street door bell was heard to ring.

"Who can it be, so late? It is nearly midnight," observed Madam Lebrenn. "Go and see who it is, Jeanike."

"I shall go, madam!" cried Gildas heroically, rising from his seat. "There may be some danger."

"I do not think so," replied Madam Lebrenn; "but you may go."

A few minutes later Gildas returned holding in his hand a letter that he delivered to Madam Lebrenn, saying:

"Madam, a messenger brought this—there is no answer."

Hardly had the merchant's wife cast her eyes upon the envelope when she cried:

"Children—a letter from your father!"

George, Sacrovir and Velleda rose together and drew near their mother.

"Singular," she pondered aloud and not without some signs of uneasiness as she examined the envelope which she was unsealing. "This letter must come from Rochefort, like all the others, and yet it is not stamped."

"Perhaps," observed George, "Monsieur Lebrenn commissioned someone who was leaving Rochefort to bring it to you."

"And that must have been the cause of the delay," added Sacrovir. "That is the explanation."

Feeling not a little alarmed at the unusual occurrence, Madam Lebrenn hastened to open the letter, which she proceeded to read aloud to her children:

"Dearly beloved friend, embrace our children in the name of a bit of good news, that will surprise you as much as it will make you happy—I have hopes of seeing you soon—"

When the merchant's wife uttered these words it became impossible for her to continue reading. Her children gathered around her and threw their arms about her neck with shouts of joy, too many and loud to reproduce, while George and Jeanike, standing at a respectful distance, shared the general family glee.

"Dear children, be sensible—do not let us rejoice too soon," cautioned Madam Lebrenn. "Your father only expresses a hope to us. God knows how often our hopes of an amnesty have been dashed!"

"Oh, mother! Mother! Quick! Read on! finish the letter!" exclaimed the children in all keys of impatience. "We shall soon see whether the hope is well founded."

Madam Lebrenn proceeded to read her husband's letter:

"I have hopes of seeing you soon again—sooner perhaps than you may imagine—"

"Do you see, mother, do you see!" cried the children, trembling with joy and clasping their hands as if in prayer.

"Good God! Good God! Is it possible! We are to see him soon again!" exclaimed Madam Lebrenn, wiping from her eyes the tears that darkened them, and she proceeded reading:

"When I say I hope, my dearly beloved friend, I mean more than a mere hope; it is in fact a certainty. I should, perhaps, have begun my letter by giving you this assurance; but, however well aware I am of your self-possession, I feared lest too sudden a surprise might hurt you and our children. By this time, I consider, your minds are quite familiarized with the idea of seeing me soon, very soon, not so? Accordingly, I now feel free to promise you—"

"Why, mother," broke in George interrupting the reading of the letter, "Monsieur Lebrenn must be in Paris!"

"In Paris!" the family cried in chorus.

"The letter bears no stamp," proceeded George excitedly. "Monsieur Lebrenn has arrived—and he sent the letter ahead with a messenger."

"There can be no doubt! George is right," put in Madam Lebrenn.

And she read rapidly the rest of the missive:

"Accordingly, I now feel free to promise you that we shall all celebrate together our son's anniversary. That day begins to-night after twelve o'clock; at that hour, or, perhaps, even sooner, I shall be with you. Just so soon as the messenger who takes my letter to you, leaves the house, I shall run upstairs and wait—yes, I shall wait behind the door, there, near you."

No sooner were these last words read than Madam Lebrenn and her children precipitated themselves upon the door.

It opened.

Indeed, Monsieur Lebrenn was there.

Futile to describe the transports of joy of this family when once again they had their adored father in their midst!

CHAPTER XIV

SACROVIR'S BIRTHDAY

The family of Marik Lebrenn were assembled in their little parlor on the day after the merchant's arrival. It was the birthday of his son, who on that day completed his twenty-first year.

"My son," Lebrenn said to Sacrovir, "to-day you are twenty-one years of age. The time has come to introduce you to the chamber with the closed window that has so often excited your curiosity. You are about to become acquainted with its contents. I wish first to explain to you the reason for and the cause of this mystery. The moment you are initiated, my son, I know your curiosity will turn to pious respect. Accident has so willed it that the day of your initiation into this family mystery should be providentially chosen. Since my arrival yesterday, we have given ourselves over to tokens of love, and have had little time to consider public matters. Nevertheless, a few words that escaped you—as well as you, my dear George," added the merchant addressing his daughter's husband, "cause me to apprehend that you feel discouraged—that you may even despair."

"It is but too true, father," answered Sacrovir.

"When one witnesses the things that are happening every day," added George, "one may well feel alarmed for the future of the Republic, and of mankind."

"Well, tell me, children," asked Lebrenn with his usual smile, "what is happening that is so very terrible? Tell me all about it."

"Everywhere at this hour the people's liberty is being kicked and cuffed, and even strangled by the henchmen of absolute Kings. Italy, Prussia, Germany, Hungary, are all again forced under the bloody yoke that, electrified by our example in 1848, they that year broke, relying upon our support as their brothers! To the northeast the despot of the Cossacks planted one foot upon Poland, another upon Hungary, smothered both countries in their own blood, and now threatens the independence of Europe with his knout, and is even ready to hurl upon us his savage hordes!"

"Similar hordes, my children, our wooden-shoed fathers rolled in the dust in the days of the Convention—we shall do as much. As to the Kings, they massacre, they threaten, they foam at the mouth with rage—and, above all, with terror! Already they see myriads of avengers arise out of the blood of the martyrs whom they assassinated. These crown-carriers have the vertigo.

And there is good reason therefor. If a European war breaks out, immediately the Revolution will raise its head in their own camp and devour them; if peace prevails, the pacific tide of civilization will rise higher and higher, and engulf their thrones. Proceed, children."

"But at home!" cried George. "At home!"

"Well, my friend, what is happening at home?"

"Alas, father! Mistrust, fear, misery sowed everywhere by the hereditary enemies of the people and the bourgeoisie. Credit is destroyed. Turn around, the population, misled, betrayed and deceived, mutinies against the Republic."

"Poor dear blind boys!" replied Lebrenn with his placid and sarcastic smile. "Does not the prodigious industrial movement that is going on among the working class and the bourgeoisie strike your eyes? Only consider the innumerable workingmen's associations that are founded on all sides; consider the admirable attempts made at establishing banks of exchange, commercial bureaus, land credits, co-operative associations, etc. Of these attempts, some are already crowned with success, others are still doubtful, but they are all undertaken with intelligence, boldness, probity, perseverance and faith in the democratic future of society. Do not they prove that the people and the bourgeoisie, no longer leaning upon government for support, seek their strength and resources in themselves, with the end in view of freeing themselves from capitalist and usurious exploitation? Believe me, my children, when the mass of a people like ours goes about seeking the solution of the problem as to the source of their true liberty, of their labor, of their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their families, the problem can not remain unsolved, and, with Socialism giving its help, the problem will be solved."

"But where are our forces, father? Our party is shattered! The republicans are hounded down, calumniated, imprisoned, proscribed!"

"And what is the conclusion you draw from your discouragement, my boys?"

"Alas," answered Sacrovir sadly, "what we fear is the ruin of the Republic and the return of the days of old; retrogression instead of progress; the desolate conviction that, instead of steadily marching forward, mankind is fatedly condemned to turn in a circle, unable ever to step out of that iron grip. If the Republic goes down we run the risk of retrogressing, who knows

how far back, perchance back to the point from which our fathers started in 1789!"

"That, indeed, is exactly what the royalists say and hope, my children. That the royalists should be blind enough to incur that error in logic is easily understood. Nothing blinds so completely as passion, interests, or caste prejudices. But that we, my children, that we should shut our eyes to the obvious evidences of progress, evidences more glaring than the sun, and plunge ourselves in the dismal vapors of doubt;—that we, my children, should do the sanctity of our cause the injustice of questioning its power and its ultimate, supreme triumph, when on all sides it manifests—"

"But, father—"

"As I was saying, when it manifests its power on all sides! I repeat it—under such circumstances to allow oneself to be disheartened and discouraged, that would be to endanger our cause. But humanity pursues its steady march onward, despite the incredulity, the blindness, the weakness, and also the treasons and the crimes of man!"

"But, father—does humanity, indeed, march steadily on the path of progress?"

"Steadily, my sons."

"But yet, centuries ago, our forefathers the Gauls lived free and happy! Nevertheless, were they not forced backward on the path of progress? They were despoiled and enslaved by the Roman conquest, and later by the Frankish Kings."

"I did not say, my friends, that our forefathers did not suffer; what I said was that mankind marched onward. The latest descendants of an old world that was crumbling down on all sides to make room for the Christian world—an immense progress!—our fathers were bruised and mutilated under the falling ruins of ancient society. Nevertheless a deep-reaching and far-spreading social transformation was taking place. Mankind marches evermore—slowly, at times—never, however, does it take a step backward."

"Father, I believe you—yet—"

"Despite yourself, still you doubt, Sacrovir? I can understand it. Fortunately, the lessons, the proofs, the data, the facts, the names, that you are about to be made acquainted with in the mysterious chamber, will go further to convince you than any words of mine. When you will see, my friends, that in

the gloomiest days of our history—such days as the Kings, the seigneurs and the clergy have almost always afflicted man with; when you will see that we, the conquered, started with slavery and arrived step by step to popular sovereignty; you will then ask yourselves whether, at this hour, when we find ourselves invested with that so painfully earned sovereignty, it would not be criminal on our part to mistrust the future. To mistrust it! Great God! Oh! Our fathers, despite all their martyrdom never did mistrust the future! There was hardly a century when they failed to take a step towards deliverance! Alas, almost always that step was marked with blood! If our masters, the conquerors, showed themselves implacable, there hardly was a century when, as you will see, there were not frightful reprisals levied upon them to satisfy divine justice. Yes, you will see, there hardly was a century when the woolen cap did not rise against the casque of gold, when the peasant's scythe did not strike fire with the lance of the knight, when the horny hand of the vassal did not smite the delicately pampered hand of some episcopal petty tyrant! You will see it, my children—hardly a century when the infamous debauches and acts of rapine and ferocity indulged in by the Kings and most of the seigneurs and upper clergy failed to rouse the people, or when they failed to protest, arms in hand, against the tyranny of the throne, the nobility and the Popes! You will see it—hardly a century, when the famishing masses, rising as inexorable as hunger, failed to throw their lordlings into terror—hardly a century without its Belshazzar's feast, buried along with its golden drinking cups, its flowers, its songs and its displayful magnificence, under the avenging wave of some popular torrent. Undoubtedly, alas! the terrible, though legitimate, reprisals of the oppressed were succeeded by ferocious acts of revenge. Nevertheless, formidable examples had been made. At each recurring epoch the Revolution wrung from the hereditary oppressors of our fathers some lasting concession, registered in the law and necessarily observed."

"I believe you," said Sacrovir. "Judging the past by the present, in 1789 the Revolution conquered our freedom; in 1830 the Revolution returned to us a part of our rights; finally, last year, in 1848, the Revolution proclaimed the sovereignty of the people and universal suffrage, which is calculated to put an end to bloody fratricidal conflicts."

"And so it ever has been, my boy. You will see it—there is not a single social, political, civil or religious reform that our fathers were not forced to conquer from century to century at the price of their blood. Alas! This is a cruel fact—it is deplorable. There was no choice but to resort to arms so long as the only answer made by the stiff-necked and inexorable enjoyers of privilege to the tears, the sorrows, the prayers of the oppressed was—No! No! No! Then frightful outbursts of rage flared up—then torrents of blood flowed

on both sides. It was by dint of unterrified valor, persistent efforts, battles and martyrdom that our fathers first broke the old shackles of slavery in which the Franks kept them since the conquest. Thence they arrived at serfdom, a somewhat less horrible condition. Next, from serfs, they became vassals, thereupon subject to mortmain—each of these a step upwards. And evermore thus, from step to step, cutting themselves by dint of abnegation a path across the centuries and all obstacles, they finally came so far as to conquer the sovereignty of the people. And you despair of the future when now, thanks to universal suffrage, the disinherited are able to impose their sovereign will upon the privileged minority! What, you despair, now that power is revokable by the voice of our representatives, whom we select as the supreme judges of the executive power! What, you despair because we have had eighteen months of constant struggle and of occasional suffering! Oh, it was not for so short a period as eighteen months that our forefathers struggled and suffered; it was for the long-drawn period of more than eighteen centuries! If every generation had its martyrs, it also registered its conquests! It is of those martyrs and those conquests that you are about to see the pious relics, the glorious trophies! Come, my children."

With this solemn invocation Marik Lebreunn proceeded, followed by his family, to the room with the closed windows, which the son, the daughter and the son-in-law of the merchant now entered for the first time.

CHAPTER XV

THE MYSTERIOUS CHAMBER

The mysterious chamber into which Marik Lebrenn now for the first time introduced his son, his daughter and George Duchene, presented, as far as exterior appearance went, nothing extraordinary, except that it was kept always lighted by a pendant lamp of antique workmanship, after the fashion of certain consecrated sanctuaries. And was not that spot the sanctuary of pious reminiscences, of the traditions, often heroic, of that plebeian family? Under the lamp the merchant's children saw a large cloth-covered table, on which stood a casket of bronze. Around the casket and musty with centuries, lay a number of articles, some of which dated back to the very furthest antiquity, and the most recent of which were the galley-slave's ring, which the merchant had brought with him from Rochefort, and the casque of the Count of Plouernel.

"My children," said Lebrenn in an impressive voice, indicating the historic curios gathered upon the table, "behold the relics of our family. Around each of these articles clusters some memory, some name, some deed, some date of interest to us. The same as when our descendants will have the narrative of my experience, written by me, the casque of Monsieur Plouernel and the galley-slave's ring that I brought with me from prison will possess their own historic significance. It is in this manner that almost every generation, of the many of whom we are lineal descendants, has for now nearly two thousand years furnished its contribution and tribute to this collection."

"During so many centuries, father!" said Sacrovir with profound astonishment, and looking at his sister and brother-in-law.

"Yon will later learn, my children, how these relics came down to us. They do not fill much space, as you may notice. With the exception of Monsieur Plouernel's casque and the sword of honor bestowed upon my father at the close of last century, all these articles can be locked up, as they have often been, in that bronze casket—the tabernacle of our family archives, that sometimes lay concealed in some sequestered place, and was often left there for safety during long years, until better days dawned upon its then possessor."

Lebrenn then took up from the table the first of these fragments of the past, which lay ranged in chronological order. It was a piece of gold jewelry, blackened with age, and shaped like a sickle. A movable ring, attached to

the handle, indicated that the jewel was meant to be worn from a chain or suspended from a belt.

"This little gold sickle, my children," Lebreann proceeded to explain, "is a druid emblem. It is the oldest souvenir we possess of our family. It dates back to the year 57 before Jesus Christ, that is to say, nineteen hundred years ago."

"And did any of our forefathers wear that jewel, father?" asked Velleda.

"Yes, my child," answered Lebreann with deep emotion. "She who wore it was young as you—and gifted with a most angelic heart and proudest courage withal! But why anticipate the history of the relic? You will read that narrative of our family in this manuscript," added Lebreann, pointing to a booklet which lay beside the gold sickle. The booklet, like all the older ones of those that were exhibited upon the table, consisted of a large number of oblong strips of tanned skin, which, once sewed together by the ends so as to present the appearance of a long and narrow band, were later, for the sake of greater convenience, ripped apart and fastened together in the shape of a small tome covered with black shagreen, on the face of which, in letters of silver, was the inscription:

YEAR 57 B. C.

"But father," said Sacrovir, "I see upon the table a booklet, very much like this one, lying beside each of the articles that you have referred to."

"Because, my children, each of these relics, coming from some one of the members of our family, is accompanied by a manuscript, written by himself, and relating his own life, often that of his relatives also."

"Why! Father!" exclaimed Sacrovir more and more amazed. "These manuscripts—"

"Have all been written by some ancestor of ours. Does that astonish you, my children? It is hard, I presume, for you to understand how an obscure family can possess its own chronicles, as if it were of some ancient royal lineage! Besides, you are naturally wondering how these chronicles could follow one another without interruption, from century to century, for nearly two thousand years, down to our own days."

"Indeed, father," said the young man, "that does seem most extraordinary to me."

"You think that verges on the improbable, do you not?" asked the merchant.

"No, father," Velleda hastened to explain, "seeing you say it is so. But it certainly justifies us in wondering."

"I should first of all inform you, my children, that the custom of transmitting family traditions from generation to generation, be it orally or in writing, has ever been one of the most characteristic with our forefathers, the Gauls, and was observed with peculiar religiousness by the Gauls of Brittany, by them more than by any others. Every family, however obscure it might be, had its own traditions, while in the other lands of Europe the habit was observed but rarely even among Princes and Kings. In order to convince you of this," added the merchant, taking from the table a small old book that seemed to date from the earliest days of the printing press, "I shall quote to you a passage translated from one of the most antique works of Brittany, the authority of which is unquestioned in the world of learning."

Marik Lebreann read as follows:

"Among the Bretons the most obscure people know their forefathers, and preserve the memory of their full ancestral line, back to the remotest ages, and they state it in this way, for instance: Eres, the son of Theodrik—son of Enn—son of Aecle—son of Cadel—son of Roderik the Great or the Chief. And so on to the end. Their ancestors are, to them, the object of a positive cult, and the wrongs which they punish most severely are those done to their kin. Their revenge is cruel and sanguinary, and they punish, not the fresh wrongs only, but also the oldest done to their kin, which they keep steadily in mind so long as not revenged.' So you see, my children," observed Lebreann, laying the book down upon the table, "that explains our family chronicle. Unfortunately, you will learn that some of our ancestors have been but too faithful to this custom of pursuing vengeance from generation to generation. More than once in the course of the ages, the Plouernels—"

"What! Father!" cried George. "Have the ancestors of the Count of Plouernel been, occasionally, the enemies of our family?"

"Yes, children, you will see it. But let us not anticipate events. You will readily understand that, if our fathers were from time immemorial in the habit of handing down a grudge from generation to generation, they necessarily handed down, along with the grudge, the cause therefor, besides the leading events of each generation. Thus it happens that our archives are found written from age to age, down to our own days."

"You are right, father," agreed Sacrovir; "that custom explains what at first seemed extraordinary to us."

"In a minute I shall give you, my children," the merchant proceeded to explain, "some further information regarding the language used in these manuscripts. I must first bespeak your attention for these pious relics, which will make clear to you many things that you will run across in the manuscripts. This gold sickle," added the merchant, replacing the jewel upon the table, "is, as you see, the symbol of manuscript Number 1, dated the year 57 before Jesus Christ. You will learn that that epoch was to our family, free at the time, an epoch of happy prosperity, of virile virtues, of proud principles. It was, alas! the close of a beautiful day. Frightful disasters came upon its heels—slavery, torture and death." After a moment's silence during which the merchant remained steeped in thought, he resumed: "Each of these manuscripts will inform you, century by century, concerning the life of our ancestors."

For several minutes the eyes of the children of Marik Lebrenn wandered over the mementoes of the past lying on the table. Their eyes rested occasionally with greedy curiosity upon one object or another. They contemplated them in silence, and no less moved than their father.

Attached to the little gold sickle was, as Marik Lebrenn had stated, a manuscript bearing the date of the year 57 before Jesus Christ.

To manuscript Number 2, dated the year 56 before Jesus Christ, was attached a little brass bell, very much like the bells which to this day are attached to the necks of cattle in Brittany. The bell, accordingly, was at least nineteen hundred years old.

To manuscript Number 3, bearing the date of the year 28 before Jesus Christ, was attached a fragment of an iron collar, or carcan, corroded with rust, and on which the outlines of certain Roman letters could be deciphered, cut into the iron:

SERVUS SUM—(I am the slave).

As a matter of course the name of the slave's owner was on the missing fragment. The carcan must have been at least eighteen hundred and seventy-seven years old.

To manuscript Number 4, which was dated the year 32 of our era, was attached a little silver cross from which hung a tiny little chain of the same

metal. Both seemed to have been blackened by fire. The little cross was eighteen hundred and seventeen years old.

To manuscript Number 5, dated the year 296 of our era, was attached a massive copper ornament that once formed part of the top of a casque and represented a lark with wings partly distended. This fragment of a casque was fifteen hundred and fifty-three years old.

To manuscript Number 6, dated the year 550 of our era, was attached the hilt of an iron dagger, black with the mould of ages. On one of its sides could be seen the word:

GHILDE

on the other the following two words in the Celtic and Gallic tongues respectively—very much resembling the Breton of our own days:

AMINTIAICH (Friendship)

COMMUNITEZ (Community)

The poniard's hilt was every bit of thirteen hundred years old.

To manuscript Number 7, dated the year 615 of our era, a rusty branding needle was attached. This article was fully twelve hundred and thirty-four years old.

To manuscript Number 8, dated the year 737 of our era, an abbatial crosier was attached. It was of chiseled silver and bore evidence of once having been gilded over. The name Meroflede could be deciphered amid the exquisitely wrought ornamentation of the relic. The crosier was eleven hundred and twelve years old.

To manuscript Number 9, dated the year 811, two pieces of Carolingian money were attached. Their reverse bore the effigy of Charlemagne, still recognizable. One of the coins was of copper, the other of silver. They were held together by an iron wire. The two coins were ten hundred and thirty-eight years old.

To manuscript Number 10, dated the year 912, was attached a barbed iron arrow head. The arrow-head was nine hundred and thirty-seven years old.

To manuscript Number 11, dated the year 999, was attached a fragment of an infant's skull. The child, judging by the size and structure of the

fragment, must have been between eight and ten years of age. The external wall of the fragment bore, graven in the Gallic tongue, the words:

FIN-AL-BRED (The End of the World).

The skull was eight hundred and fifty years old.

To manuscript Number 12, dated the year 1096, was attached a ribbed white shell, of the sort that is seen on the pictures of pilgrims' mantles. The frail shell was seven hundred and fifty-three years old.

To manuscript Number 13, dated the year: 1208, was attached a pair of iron pincers, an instrument of torture, the tongues of which were serrated so that the teeth fitted exactly into one another. This instrument of torture was six hundred and forty-one years old.

To manuscript Number 14, dated the year 1358, was attached a little iron trevet of about twenty centimeters in diameter, that looked as if it, had been almost fretted out of shape by fire. The trevet was four hundred and ninety-nine years old.

To manuscript Number 15, bearing the date of the year 1413, was attached an executioner's knife with a horn handle, the blade of which was eaten up with rust and partly broken. The knife was four hundred and thirty-six years old.

To manuscript Number 16, bearing the date of the year 1535, was attached a little pocket Bible, belonging to the first years of the printing press. The cover of the book was almost wholly burnt up, likewise the corners of the pages, as if the Bible had been exposed to fire. Several pages also bore stains that must have been of blood. The Bible was three hundred and fourteen years old.

To manuscript Number 17, dated the year 1673, was attached the iron head of a heavy blacksmith's hammer, on which, engraved in the Breton tongue, could be read the words:

EZ-LIBR (To be free).

The hammer was one hundred and seventy-six years old.

To manuscript Number 18, dated the year 1794, was attached a sword of honor, with hilt of gilded copper bearing, the following inscription engraved on the blade:

JOHN LEBRENN HAS DESERVED WELL OF THE FATHERLAND.

Finally, unaccompanied by any manuscript, and only bearing the dates of 1848 and 1849, came the last two articles that made up the collection:

The dragoon's casque which was presented in February of 1848 to Marik Lebrenn by the Count of Plouernel, and the iron ring that the merchant had worn in the galleys of Rochefort that very year of 1849.

It can easily be imagined with what pious respect and burning curiosity these fragments of the past were examined by the merchant's family. He interrupted the pensive silence that his children preserved during the examination, and resumed:

"Accordingly, as you see, my children, these manuscripts relate the history of our plebeian family for the last two thousand years. Accordingly, also, this history could be called the history of the people, of their faults, their excesses, occasionally even of their crimes Slavery, ignorance and misery often deprave man in degrading him. But thanks be to God, in our family, the bad acts are rare, while, on the other hand, numerous have been the patriotic and heroic deeds of our Gallic forefathers and mothers during their long struggle against the Roman and then the Frankish conquest. Yes, the men and the women—for, often will you see in the pages of these narratives that the women, like worthy daughters of Gaul, vie with the men in abnegation and intrepidity. Many a one of these touching and heroic figures will remain cherished and glorified in your memory as the saints of our domestic legend. Now, one word concerning the language used in these manuscripts. As you know, my children, your mother and I have ever kept at your side, since your earliest years, a female servant from our own country, in order that you might learn to speak the Breton dialect at the same time that you learned to speak French; furthermore, your mother and I ever kept you familiar with that dialect by using it frequently in conversation with you."

"Yes, father."

"Well, my son," said Marik Lebrenn to Sacrovir, "in teaching you the Breton tongue I had above all in mind—obedient, moreover, to a tradition in our family, according to which it never forgot its mother tongue—to enable you to read these manuscripts."

"Are they, then, written in the Breton tongue, father?" asked Velleda.

"Yes, my children. The Breton tongue is none other than the Celtic or Gallic that was once spoken all over Gaul before the Roman and Frankish conquests. With the exception of a few changes that have taken place in the course of the centuries, it has preserved its purity in our Brittany, down to our own days. Of all the provinces of Gaul, Brittany was the last to submit to the Frankish Kings who issued from the conquest. Yes, let us never forget the proud and heroic motto of our fathers, conquered and despoiled though they were by the invader: We still preserve our name, our tongue, our faith. Now, then, my children, after two thousand years of struggles and strifes, our family has preserved its name, its tongue and its faith. We call ourselves Lebreunn, we speak Gallic, and I have raised you in the faith of our fathers, in the faith of the immortality of the soul and of the continuity of existence which enables us to look upon death as a change of habitation, nothing more—a sublime faith the morality of which, taught by the druids, was summed up in precepts like these: Adore God; do no harm; exercise charity; he is pure and holy who performs celestial works and pure. Fortunately, my children, we are not the only ones who preserved the sublime dogma of the continuity of life. Armand Barbès, one of the bravest militants of the democracy, when taken prisoner and subsequently condemned to death under the reign of Louis Philippe, awaited the hour of his execution with religious serenity of soul. The serenity which he preserved he drew from his faith in the perpetuity of life, a fundamental principle in our creed. I can do no better, my friends, than to read to you a page from the writings of Armand Barbès, the page which he dedicated to the memory of Godefroid Cavaignac, the publicist of the democracy, entitled: 'Two days of a death sentence.'"

Lebreunn read:

"It was the 12th of June, 1839. After four days' deliberation the Court of Peers notified me of its sentence. According to the usage in such cases, it was the registrar who brought me the sentence, and the honorable Cauchy thought it his duty to add to his message a little puff for the Roman Catholic and Apostolic religion. I answered him that I had my own religion and believed in God, but that that was no reason why I should be in need of the consolations of a priest, whosoever he might be. I requested him to be kind enough to inform his masters that I was ready to die, and that I only hoped that when their last hour approached their soul might be as tranquil as mine.

"Armand Barbès then proceeds to tell how, instinctively inspired, and led by the approach of his last hour to a plane of lofty thought, he recalled with

thrilling gratitude the source from which he drew his supreme tranquility in the face of death. He then says further:

"One day I read in the New Encyclopedia the superb article on Heaven by John Raynaud. Passing by the irrefutable arguments with which he incidentally demolishes the heaven and hell of the Catholics, his leading thought, as taught by the druid faith, of deriving from the law of progress the infinite series of our lives, as they continuously progress in worlds that gravitate ever nearer and nearer to God, seemed to me to satisfy at once all our multiple aspirations. Do not the moral sense, the imagination, do not our desires, does not everything find there its place? Nevertheless, carried away, while I read the article, by the pre-occupations of an active republican, I gave at the time little thought to details; all I did with these was to deposit them, so to speak, undigested in my heart. But later, when picked up wounded on the street I inhabited a prison cell with the scaffold in perspective, I drew them out of the place where I held them in reserve as a last store of wealth the value of which the time had come for me to appreciate in full—and these thoughts rose naturally to my mind during my watches, already a victim bound for the executioner, during these solitary hours when I kept watch in the solemn night of death.

"I beg pardon of John Raynaud, the elegant encyclopedist, for my having turned into a vile plummet, in order to meet the exigency of the moment, the pure gold of his philosophy. Thus, after confirming with some preliminary reasoning my belief in the immortality of the soul, meseems a sublime Jacob's ladder unrolled before my eyes, with its foot resting on the earth to climb heavenward, eternally, from star to star, from sphere to sphere! The cart, this planet upon which I had spent thirty years, looked to me to be one of the innumerable specks where man makes his first landing in life—whence he begins to climb upwards before God, and, when the phenomenon which we call death is accomplished, man, drawn by the attraction of progress, is forthwith re-born in a superior star with a new expansion of his being.

"So you see, my children, what fortitude of soul the dogma of the perpetuity of life is able to impart. Let us, then, follow the example of our forefathers; let us follow in the footsteps of their belief; and let us, like them, preserve our name, our tongue and our faith."

"We shall not fail in that pledge, father," answered Velleda.

"We shall show neither less courage nor less persistence than our ancestors," added Sacrovir. "Oh, how I shall be thrilled with ecstasy when I

read those venerated lines which they have traced! But is the chirography of the Celtic or Gallic language the same exactly as the Breton, which we are accustomed to read, father?"

"No, my boy. Since a number of centuries back, the Gallic chirography, which originally was the same as the Greek, began to be little by little modified in the course of time, and finally fell into disuse. But my grandfather, a working compositor, learned and well lettered, transcribed into modern Breton all the manuscripts that were in Gallic. Thanks to his work, you will be able to read those manuscripts as fluently as you read the legends that our good Gildas loves so well, and which, composed eight or nine hundred years ago, are still current in our villages of Brittany, printed on brown paper."

"Father!" exclaimed Sacrovir. "One more question. Did our family always inhabit our beloved Brittany during all these centuries?"

"No—not always, as you will see in these narratives. The conquest, the wars, the rude vicissitudes to which a family like ours was exposed in those evil days, often compelled our forefathers to leave their natal soil,—sometimes because they were carried away slaves or prisoners into other provinces; sometimes in order to escape death; other times, again, in order to gain their bread; still other times in obedience to foreign laws; and, finally, occasionally driven thereto by the whims of fate. Nevertheless, few are our forefathers who did not make a certain pious pilgrimage, as I have made myself, and as you, in turn will make on the first of January following the year of your majority, that is next January 1."

"And why on that particular day, father?"

"Because the first day of each new year has ever been a solemn day with the Gauls."

"And in what does the pilgrimage consist?"

"You will proceed to the druid stones of Karnak, near Auray."

"Indeed, I have heard it said, father, that that assemblage of gigantic granite blocks, found down to to-day, ranked in a mysterious fashion, dates back to the remotest antiquity."

"Already two thousand years and more ago, my boy, it was not known at what epoch—an epoch that is lost in the night of the past—the stones of Karnak were raised and put in place."

"Oh! father, one is seized as with a vertigo in thinking of the age that those monumental stones must have."

"Only God knows it, my friends! If we are to judge of their future by their past, myriads of generations will yet succeed one another at the feet of those gigantic monuments, which seem to defy the tooth of time, and upon which the eyes of our fathers have so often rested from century to century in pious meditation."

"And why did they make the pilgrimage, father?"

"Because the cradle of our family, the fields and the homesteads of the first of our ancestors of whom these manuscripts make mention, were situated near the stones of Karnak. As you will see, that ancestor was named Joel, en Brenn an Lignez an Karnak, which, as you know, means Joel, the chief of the tribe of Karnak. He was the chief or patriarch, chosen by his tribe, or by his clan, as the Scotch call it."

"Accordingly," interjected George Duchene, "your name, father, the name of Brenn, means chief?"

"Yes, my friend, that honorable appellation, attached to the name of each individual, to his baptismal name, as the saying is since the advent of Christianity, has in the course of time been transformed into a family name. The custom of family names does not begin to be generally observed among plebeian families until towards the Fourteenth or Fifteenth Century. In earlier days, the son of the first of our ancestors, for instance, whom I mentioned to you, was called Guilhern, mab eus an Brenn—Guilhern, the son of the chief—then Kirio, grandson of the chief, and so on. In the course of time the words grandson and great-grandson were suppressed, and the only name added to the word Brenn, which was corrupted into Lebrenn, was the baptismal one. Accordingly, almost all the names taken from a trade—as Carpenter, Smith, Baker, Weaver, Miller, etc., etc.—have their origin in some manual occupation, the designation of which has been converted in the course of time into a family appellation. These explanations may seem trivial; they nevertheless attest a grave and painful fact—the absence of a real family name with our brothers of the masses of the people. Alas! So long as they were slaves or serfs, could people who did not belong to themselves have a patronymic? Their masters dubbed them with bizarre and grotesque nicknames, as one gives to a horse or a dog such names as suit his whim. When the slave was sold to a new master he was dressed up in a new name. But, as you will see, in the measure that, thanks to their energetic and unflagging struggle, the oppressed arrived at a less servile state, the

consciousness of their dignity as human beings developed apace. When, finally, they could have a name of their own and transmit the same to their children, however obscure, yet always honorable, it was a sign that they were slaves no longer, nor yet serfs, although still steeped in wretchedness. The conquest of a proper, or family name, has been, by reason of the duties it imposes and the rights that it gives, one of the longest steps taken by our ancestors in the direction of their complete emancipation. In the manuscripts that we are about to read you will encounter an admirable sentiment of the Gallic nationality and of its religious faith—a sentiment all the more irrepressible, all the more exaggerated, perhaps, by reason of the Roman and Frankish conquests being felt as galling yokes by those heroic men and women, who were so proud of their race and who carried their contempt for death to the point of superhuman grandeur. Let us admire them, let us emulate them in their ardent love for their country, in their implacable hatred of oppression, in their belief in the progressive continuity of life which delivers us from the disease of death. But, while piously glorifying the past, let us continue, in step with the movement of mankind, to march towards the future. Let us apt forget that a New World began with Christianity. Unquestionably its divine spirit of fraternity, equality and freedom has been outrageously belied, trampled in the dirt, and persecuted since the first centuries of its era by most of the Catholic bishops, who were themselves holders of slaves, and were gorged with wealth that they wheedled from the conquering Franks, in return for the absolution of their abominable crimes which the high clergy sold to them. It could be no otherwise than that our fathers, seeing the evangelical word smothered and impotent to deliver them, took matters into their own hands, rose in rebellion and in arms against the tyranny of the conquerors, and almost always, as you will find proof in these manuscripts, where sermons only suffered shipwreck, revolt secured some lasting concession. It happened obedient to the time-honored behest—Help yourself, and heaven will help you. Nevertheless, despite the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, the breath of Christianity has passed over the world, and warms it more and more with that sweet and tender warmth which, notwithstanding all its grandeur, the druidic faith of our ancestors was lacking in. Thus rejuvenated and completed, our old druid belief is bound to receive a fresh impetus. It no doubt was a trying experience for us to undergo, the loss of even the name of our nationality, and to see the name of France substituted for that of our old and illustrious Gaul by a horde of ferocious conquerors.

"No doubt the Gallic Republic would sound no less pleasant to our ears than the French Republic. But our first and immortal Republic has sufficiently cleansed the French name of whatever monarchic odor clung to it, by carrying its colors triumphantly over all the lands of Europe. Moreover, my

friends," added the merchant with his habitual smile, "the same thing happens to that old and brave Gaul as happened to her own heroic women who rendered themselves illustrious under their husband's name—although, to be sure, the marriage of Gaul with the Frank came about in a singularly forced manner."

"I understand that, father," observed Velleda, also smiling. "The same as many women sign their own family name beside the one they hold from their husband, all the admirable deeds performed by our heroine under a name that was not her own should be signed—FRANCE, born GAUL."

"An excellent comparison," remarked Madam Lebrenn. "Our name might change, our race has remained our race."

"And now," resumed Marik Lebrenn with deep emotion, "now that you are initiated into the family tradition which founded our plebeian archives, do you, my children take the solemn pledge to perpetuate them, and to cause your children to follow your example? Do you, my son, and you, my daughter, in default of him, pledge yourselves to register in all sincerity the deeds and events of your own lives, be they just or unjust, praiseworthy or blamable, to the end that the day when you depart from this existence to another, the narrative of your own life may increase our family chronicles, and that the inexorable sense of justice of our descendants may praise or condemn our memory, according as we shall have deserved?"

"Yes, father—we swear!"

"Well, then, Sacrovir, this day on which you have completed your twenty-first year, you are free, agreeable to our traditions, to read these manuscripts. We shall begin the reading this very evening, in a family circle, and continue it from day to day. In order that George may participate, we shall translate into French, as we read."

Marik Lebrenn, his wife and George being gathered together that evening, Sacrovir Lebrenn began the readings, starting with the first manuscript, entitled: "The Gold Sickle."

EPILOGUE

I request my reader to leap over the space of time that elapsed since we left the family of Lebrenn assembled in the room, held to be so mysterious by Gildas, and which contained the archives or narratives of the family, which they began to read successively.

It is now Sunday, December 1, 1851. The same personages—Marik Lebrenn, Henory his wife, Sacrovir, his sister Velleda, and her husband—are assembled on the evening of that Sunday in the modest upper parlor connected with the linendraper's shop.

Answering a question put to him by his father, Sacrovir was saying:

"The prophecy came very near being fulfilled in 1848. The thrones shook everywhere—revolutions in Naples, Vienna, Berlin, Milan, Rome. Italy was on fire. The German Confederation contemplated declaring itself a republican federation at the diet of Frankfort. Frankfort was in revolt; Hungary up in arms; Poland and Spain shook to their very center; all Europe was in a revolutionary ferment, Russia alone excepted. What, however, could that country's autocrat do against the confederation of all the other peoples, leagued against him in a holy, the holiest of alliances! One more step, and our generation would have hailed the United States of Europe. Alas! The sublime moment was missed! The plan miscarried. Will it be long before the opportunity returns?"

"What does it matter, my children," replied Lebrenn, "whether we actually witness or not the dawn, if we have the certainty that the sun of that beautiful day is bound eventually to shine over a regenerated world! The very disappointment of 1848 is a positive earnest that the prophecy of our ancestress Victoria the Great will be accomplished. Do you for a moment imagine that the lava is cold which, in 1848, ran boiling over such wide areas of Europe? No! No! Whatever appearances may be, whatever the present depression, revolutionary thought is at this very hour germinating under the soil. It is spreading and gaining in depth through a thousand underground rootlets. Sooner or later, its sudden and last irresistible explosion will be heard. Upon the ruins of the old social system a new social order will be established.

"There can be no doubt whatever, my children, regarding that great and crowning event. Progress is the law of humanity—for society as well as for the individual. Our plebeian narratives furnish the irrefutable proof. Our ancestors, subjected, first by the Roman and then by the Frankish conquest, to a most galling slavery, progressed by little and little towards freedom. Originally slaves and sold and exploited and treated like vile human cattle, they then became serfs, and, from serfs, vassals. Finally they revindicated and conquered their sovereignty, consecrated by the immortal Republic of 1792, and confirmed by that of 1848. When we see such progress traced across the pages of the centuries, how can we entertain any doubts as to what the future has in store?"

"A knowledge of the past," observed George Duchene, "imparts a firm faith in the future."

"How strange the emotions that come over one," remarked Velleda, "when the long procession of the personages of our ancient family files before our mind's eye in the living flesh, I may say, as if they emerged from the dust of the ages! Hena, the virgin of the Isle of Sen; Joel, the brenn of the tribe of Karnak; Sylvest, the Roman slave, and his sister Syomara; then Genevieve, who witnessed the execution of Jesus of Nazareth; Schanvoch, the soldier and foster-brother of Victoria the Great; then Ronan the Vagre, the intrepid insurgent against the Frankish conquest; Loysik the hermit laborer, who saw Brunhild die; Amael, Charles Martel's companion in arms, and appointed keeper of the last pitiful scion of the once redoubtable Clovis; Vortigern, the beloved of Thetralde, Charlemagne's daughter; Eidiol, the Parisian skipper, besides Gaëlo the Pirate and ancestor of the Prince of Gerolstein and companion in arms of Rolf, who became Duke of Normandy and son-in-law of the French King Charles the Simple; Yvon the Forester, an eye-witness of the death of Louis the Do-Nothing, the last scion of the Carolingian dynasty, succeeded by Hugh Capet who enthroned his house with the aid of adultery and murder; Fergan the Quarryman, serf of the seigneur of Plouernel, and who, departing for Palestine, was present at the siege and capture of Jerusalem. His son Colombaik, one of the bold communiers of the city of Laon, who battled against their episcopal seigneur in the endeavor to emancipate the communes from the feudal yoke; Karvel the Perfect, done to death with his sweet wife Morise during the Crusade against the Albigensians; Mazurec the Lambkin, the husband of Aveline-Who-Never-Lied, daughter of William Caillet, the immortal chieftain of the Jacques; Jocelyn the Champion who witnessed the martyrdom of Joan Darc, the Maid of Gaul; Christian the Printer, whose daughter Hena was burned alive before Francis I; Antonicq, who battled intrepidly at the siege of La Rochelle by the side of Cornelia Mirant, his brave bride-to-be; Salaun, the mariner, one of the chiefs in the revolt of the vassals of Brittany who endeavored to impose the Peasant Code upon their seigneurs and bishops during the reign of Louis XIV. Finally, John Lebrenn, our own grandfather, whose sister Victoria was the victim of the lewdness of Louis XV—that John Lebrenn, who was commissioned as a guard over Louis XVI, but who, alas! did not live to hail the Republic of 1848! When so many members of our race and our blood rise before my mind from the vasty depths of the centuries that have rolled by, a vertigo seizes me as I climb the ladder from Age to Age up to the fountainhead of our family, in the days of the Republic of the Gauls."

Velleda's words were listened to with rapt attention by all the members of her family. Her father was the first to break the silence:

"My children, if indeed our family history is priceless, the reason lies in that that history is the history, not of a family merely, but, above all, of all the proletarians and all the bourgeois of Gallic extraction, of that Gallic race that was conquered and subjugated by the Franks, the dominant race, until 1789, the date of their final emancipation. The struggle of the Children of Joel across the ages with the Children of Neroweg, of whom the Count of Plouernel is a descendant, is a summary of the centuries-old struggle between the vanquishers and the vanquished, the oppressors and the oppressed. By imparting to us a knowledge and the consciousness of what our forefathers have undergone in order to regain their freedom and their rights, this history must render us all the prouder and more jealous of the boon that we have conquered at the cost of so many tears, of such untold privations, and of such torrents of blood. It must inspire us with the desire to defend it unto death."

THE END