

THE MYSTERIES OF
PARIS
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BY
EUGÈNE SUE

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS

CHAPTER I

PUNISHMENT

We will again conduct the reader into the study of Jacques Ferrand. Availing ourselves of the loquacity of the clerks, we shall endeavour, through their instrumentality, to narrate the events that had occurred since the disappearance of Cecily.

"A hundred sous to ten, if his present state continues, that in less than a month our governor will go off with a pop."

"The fact is, since Cecily left, he is only skin and bones."

"And now he takes to the priests again more than ever."

"The curé of the parish is a most respectable man, and I overheard him say yesterday, to another priest who accompanied him, 'It is admirable! M. Jacques Ferrand is the personification of charity.'"

"Well, then, when the curé declares a thing one must credit it; and yet to believe that the governor is charitable is almost beyond my belief."

"Remember the forty sous for our breakfast."

"Yes, but then the head clerk says that three days ago the governor realised a large sum in the funds, and that he is about to sell his business."

"Well, no doubt he has the means to retire."

"He has speculated on the Bourse, and gained lots of money."

"What astonishes me is this friend who follows him like his shadow."

"Yes, he does not leave M. Ferrand for a moment; they eat together, and seem as if they were inseparable."

"It seems to me as if I had seen this intruder somewhere!"

"Have you not remarked that every two hours there comes a man with large light moustaches, with a military air, who inquires for the intruder of the porter? This friend then goes down-stairs, discourses for a moment with the

hero with moustaches, after which the military gent turns on his heel, goes away, and returns two hours afterwards."

"Yes, I have remarked it. It appears to me that, as I go and come, I see in the street men who appear to be watching the house."

"Perhaps the head clerk knows more of this than we do. By the way, where is he?"

"At the house of the Countess Macgregor, who has been assassinated, and is now despaired of. They sent for the governor to-day, but the head clerk was despatched in his stead."

"He has plenty in his hands, then, for I suppose he will fill Germain's place as cashier."

"Talking of Germain, an odd thing has occurred. The governor, in order to free him from prison, has declared that he made a mistake in his accounts, and that he has found the money he accused Germain of taking."

"I do not see anything odd in that,—it is but justice. I was sure that Germain was incapable of theft."

"Ah, here's a coach, gents!" said Chalamel, looking out of the window; "it is not a spicy turn-out like that of the famous vicomte, the gay Saint-Remy, but a hack concern."

"Who is coming out of it?"

"Only the curé,—a very worthy man he is, too."

"Silence! Some one comes in! To your work, my boys!"

And all the clerks, leaning over their desks, began to scrawl away with much apparent industry, and as if their attention had not been taken off their business for a single instant.

The pale features of the priest expressed at once a gentle melancholy combined with an air of intelligence and venerable serenity. A small black cap covered the crown of his head, while his long gray locks hung down over the collar of his greatcoat. Let us merely add to this hasty sketch, that owing to the worthy priest's implicit confidence in the words and actions of others, he was, and ever had been, completely blinded by the deep and well-practised hypocrisy of Jacques Ferrand.

"Is your worthy employer in his room, my children?" inquired the curé.

"Yes, M. l'Abbé, he is," answered Chalamel, as, rising respectfully, he opened the door of an adjoining study, and waited for the priest to enter.

Hearing loud voices in the apartment, and unwilling to overhear words not intended for his ears, the abbé walked rapidly forwards, and tapped briskly at the door.

"Come in," said a voice with a strong Italian accent; and, entering, the priest found himself in the presence of Polidori and Jacques Ferrand.

The clerks did not appear to have erred in calculating upon the approaching end of their employer. He was, indeed, scarcely to be recognised. Spite of the almost spectral thinness and pallor of his sharpened features, a deep red fever-spot burned and scorched upon his projecting cheek-bones; a sort of incessant tremor, amounting occasionally to convulsive spasms and starts, shook his attenuated frame. His coarse but wasted hands seemed parched with feverish heat, while his bloodshot eyes were shrouded from view by the large green glasses he wore. Altogether his face was a fearful index of the internal ravages of a fast consuming disease.

The physiognomy of Polidori offered a strong contrast to that of the notary. Nothing could express a more bitter irony, a more biting contempt, than the features of this hardened villain, surrounded as they were by a mass of red hair, slightly mingled with gray, hanging in wild disorder over his pale, wrinkled brow, and partially hiding his sharp, penetrating eyes, which, green and transparent as the stone known as the aqua marine, were placed very close to his hooked nose, and imparted a still more sinister character to the look of sarcastic malevolence that dwelt on his thin, compressed lips. Such was Polidori, as, attired in a suit of entire black, he sat beside the desk of Jacques Ferrand. At the sight of the priest both rose.

"And how do you find yourself, my good M. Ferrand?" inquired the abbé, in a tone of deep solicitude; "let me hope you are better."

"Much the same as you last saw me, M. l'Abbé," replied the notary. "No sleep, no rest, and constantly devoured by fever; but God's will be done!"

"Alas, M. l'Abbé!" interposed Polidori, "my poor friend is no better; but what a blessed spirit he is in! What resignation! Finding no other relief from his suffering than in doing good!"

"Have the goodness to cease these praises, which I am far from meriting," said the notary, in a short, dry tone, as though struggling hard to restrain his feelings of rage and resentment; "to the Lord alone belongs the right of judging what is good and what evil,—I am but a miserable sinner!"

"We are all sinners," replied the abbé, mildly; "but all have not the extreme charity by which you are distinguished, my worthy friend. Few, indeed, like you, are capable of weaning their affections from their earthly goods, that they may be employed only as a means of leading a more Christianlike life. Are you still determined upon retiring from your profession, the better to devote yourself to religious duties?"

"I disposed of my practice a day or two ago, for a large and handsome sum. This money, united with other property, will enable me to found the institution I was speaking to you of, and of which I have entirely sketched out the plan. I am about to lay it before you, and to ask your assistance in improving it where necessary."

"My noble-minded friend," exclaimed the abbé, with the deepest and holiest admiration, "how naturally and unostentatiously you do these things! Ah, well might I say there were but few who resembled you; and upon the heads of such too many blessings can scarcely be prayed for and wished."

"Few persons, like my friend Jacques here," said Polidori, with an ironical smile, which wholly escaped the abbé, "are fortunate enough to possess both piety and riches, charity and discrimination as to the right channel into which to pour their wealth, in order that it may work well for the good of their soul."

At this repetition of sarcastic eulogium, the notary's hand became clenched with internal emotion, while, through his spectacles, he darted a look of deadly hatred on Polidori.

"Do you perceive, M. l'Abbé," said the dear friend of Jacques Ferrand, hastily, "he has these convulsive twitchings of the limbs continually?—and yet he will not have any advice. He really makes me quite wretched to see him, as it were, killing himself! Nay, my excellent friend, spite of those displeased looks, I will persist in declaring, in the presence of M. l'Abbé, that you are destroying yourself by refusing all succour as you do."

As Polidori uttered these words, a convulsive shudder shook the notary's whole frame; but in another instant he had regained the mastery over himself, and was calm as before. A less simple-minded man than the abbé

might have perceived, both during this conversation and in that which followed, a something unnatural in the language and forced actions of Jacques Ferrand, for it is scarcely necessary to state that his present proceedings were dictated to him by a will and authority he was powerless to resist, and that it was by the command of Rodolph the wretched man was compelled to adopt words and conduct diametrically the reverse of his own sentiments or inclinations. And so it was that, when sore pressed, the notary seemed half inclined to resist the arbitrary and invisible power he found himself obliged to obey. But a glance at Polidori soon put an end to his indecision, and, restraining all his rage and impotent fury, Jacques Ferrand forbore any further manifestation of futile rage, and bent beneath the yoke he could neither shake off nor break.

"Alas, M. l'Abbé!" resumed Polidori, as though taking an infernal pleasure in thus torturing the miserable notary, "my poor friend wholly neglects his health. Let me entreat of you to join your request to mine, that he will be more careful of his precious self, if not for himself or his friends, at least for the sake of the poor and needy, whose hope and support he is."

"Enough! Enough!" murmured the notary, in a deep, guttural voice.

"No," said the priest, much moved, "'tis not enough! You can never be reminded too frequently that you belong not to yourself, and that you are to blame for neglecting your health. During the ten years I have known you I cannot recollect your ever being ill before the present time, but really the last month has so changed you that you are scarcely like the same person. And I am the more struck with the alteration in your appearance, since for some little time I have not seen you. You may recollect that when you sent for me the other day, I could not conceal my surprise on finding you so changed; during the short space of time that has elapsed since that visit, I find you even more rapidly altered for the worse. You are visibly wasting away, and occasion us all very serious uneasiness. I therefore most earnestly entreat of you to consider and attend to your health."

"Believe me, M. l'Abbé, I feel most grateful for the kind interest you express, but that I cannot bring myself to believe my situation as dangerous as you do."

"Nay," said Polidori, "since you are thus obstinate, M. l'Abbé shall know all. He greatly loves, esteems, and honours you; but how will those feelings be increased when he learns the real cause of your languishing condition, with the fresh claims your additional merits give you to his regard and veneration!"

"M. l'Abbé," said the notary, impatiently, "I sent to beg your company that I might confer with you on a matter of importance, and not to take up your time in listening to the absurd and exaggerated eulogiums of my friend!"

"You know, Jacques," said Polidori, fixing a piercing glance of fearful meaning on the notary, "that it is useless attempting to escape from me, and that you must hear all I have got to say."

The person so addressed cast down his eyes, and durst not reply. Polidori continued:

"You may probably have remarked, M. l'Abbé, that the first symptoms of our friend's illness manifested themselves in a sort of nervous attack, which followed the abominable scandal raised by the affair of Louise Morel, while in his service."

A sort of aguish shivering ran over the notary.

"Is it possible that you, sir, are acquainted with that unfortunate girl's story?" inquired the priest, greatly astonished. "I imagined you had only been in Paris a few days."

"And you were correctly informed; but my good friend Jacques told me all about it, as a man would relate such a circumstance to his friend and physician, since he attributed the nervous shock under which he is now labouring to the excessive indignation awakened in his mind by the discovery of his servant's crime. But that is not all. My poor friend's sympathies have been still more painfully awakened by a fresh blow, which, as you perceive, has had a very serious effect on his health. An old and faithful servant, attached to him by many years of well-requited service—"

"You allude to the untimely end of Madame Séraphin, I presume," said the curé, interrupting Polidori. "I heard of the melancholy affair; she was drowned, I believe, from some carelessness or imprudence manifested by her while making one in a party of pleasure. I can quite understand the distress such a circumstance must have occasioned M. Ferrand, whose kind heart would be unable to forget that she who was thus snatched from life had, for ten long years, been his faithful, zealous domestic; far from blaming such regrets, I think them but natural, and reflecting as much honour on the survivor as the deceased."

"M. l'Abbé," said the notary, "let me beseech of you to cease commending my virtues; you confuse—you make me really uncomfortable."

"And who, then, shall speak of them as they deserve?" asked Polidori, with feigned affection. "Will you? Oh, no! But, M. l'Abbé, you shall have a fresh opportunity of praising him as he deserves. Listen! You are, perhaps, ignorant that Jacques took a third servant, to replace Louise Morel and Madame Séraphin? If you are not aware of that fact, you have still to learn all his goodness towards poor Cecily; for that was the name of the new domestic, M. l'Abbé."

Involuntarily the notary sprung from his seat, and with eyes glaring with rage and madness, even in spite of the glasses he wore, he cried, while a deep, fiery glow overspread his before livid countenance:

"Silence! I command! I insist! I forbid another word on this subject!"

"Come, come!" said the abbé, soothingly, "compose yourself. It seems there is still some generous action I have not yet been told of. I really must plead guilty to admiring the candour of your friend, however his love of truth may offend your modesty. I was not acquainted with the servant you alluded to, as, unfortunately, just about the time she entered the service of our worthy M. Ferrand, he became so overwhelmed with cares and business as to be obliged temporarily to interrupt our frequent friendly meetings."

"That was merely a pretext to conceal the fresh act of goodness he meditated, M. l'Abbé, and, at the risk of paining his modesty, I am determined you shall know all about it," said Polidori, with a malignant smile, while Jacques Ferrand, in mute rage, leaned his elbows on his desk, while he concealed his face with his hands. "Imagine, then, M. l'Abbé," resumed Polidori, feigning to address himself to the curé, but at each phrase contriving to direct an ironical glance towards Jacques Ferrand, "imagine that my kind-hearted friend here found his new domestic possessed of the purest and rarest qualifications, the most perfect modesty, with the gentleness and piety of an angel; nor was this all. The quick penetration of my friend Jacques soon discovered that the female in question (who, by the way, was both young and beautiful) had never been accustomed to a servant's life, and that, to the most austere virtue, she added great and varied information, with first-rate talents, which had received the highest cultivation."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the abbé, much interested in the recital. "I was not aware of this. But what ails you, my good M. Ferrand? You seem ill and disturbed!"

"A slight headache," answered the notary, wiping the cold, clammy drops from his brow, for the restraint he imposed upon himself was most severe,—
"nothing more! It will soon pass off."

Polidori shrugged up his shoulders, smiled maliciously, and said:

"Observe, M. l'Abbé, that Jacques is always seized with the same symptoms directly any of his good actions are brought forward. But never mind,—I am determined that his light shall no longer be hid under a bushel, and it is my firm intention to reveal all his hidden charities. But first let me go on with the history of his generous exertions in favour of Cecily, who, on her side, had quickly discovered the excellency of Jacques's heart, and, when questioned by him touching the past, she candidly confessed that, left a stranger and wholly destitute in a foreign land, by the imprudence of her husband, she considered herself particularly fortunate in being able to obtain a shelter under so sanctified a roof as M. Ferrand's as a most singular interposition of Providence. The sight of so much misfortune, united to so much heavenly resignation, banished all hesitation from the mind of Jacques, and he wrote to the birthplace of the unfortunate girl for further information respecting her. The reply to his inquiries was most satisfactory, as well as confirmatory of all the young person had previously stated. Then, assured of rightly dispensing his benevolence, Jacques bestowed the most paternal kindness on Cecily, whom he sent back to her own country, with a sum of money to support her till better days should dawn, or she be enabled to obtain some suitable employment. Now I will not utter one word in Jacques's praise for doing all this,—let the facts speak for themselves."

"Excellent! Most excellent!" exclaimed the deeply affected curé.

"M. l'Abbé," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hoarse and abrupt tone, "I do not desire to take up your valuable time in discoursing of myself, but of the project respecting which I requested your presence, and for the furtherance of which I wished to obtain your valuable concurrence."

"I can well understand that the praises so justly bestowed on you by your friend are painful to one of your extreme modesty; let us, then, merely speak of your good works as though you were not the author of them. But, first of all, let me give an account of my own proceedings in the matters you confided to me. According to your desire, I have deposited the sum of one hundred thousand crowns in the Bank of France, in my own name, with the intention of employing that amount in the act of restitution of which you are the medium, and which I am to effect. You preferred the money being lodged

in the bank, although, in my opinion, it would have been in equal safety with you."

"And in so doing, M. l'Abbé, I only acted in concurrence with the wishes of the person making this restitution for the sake of his conscience. His request to me was to place the sum mentioned by you in your hands, and to entreat of you to forward it to the widow lady, Madame Fermont, whose maiden name was Renneville (the notary's voice trembled as he pronounced these two names), whenever that person should present herself to you. I fully substantiate her claims."

"Be assured," replied the priest, "I will with pleasure discharge the trust committed to me."

"But that is not the only matter in which your assistance is solicited."

"So much the better, if the others resemble this, for, without seeking the motives which dictate it, a voluntary restitution is always calculated to excite a deep interest; these rigid decrees of an awakened conscience are always the harbingers of a deep and sincere repentance, and such an expiation cannot fail to bring forth good fruits."

"True, M. l'Abbé, the soul must indeed be in a perilous state when such a sum as one hundred thousand crowns is voluntarily refunded. For my part, I confess to having felt more inquisitive on the subject than yourself; but what chance had my curiosity against the firm and unshaken discretion of my friend Jacques? I am, therefore, still in ignorance of the name of the individual who thus restores such immense wealth for their conscience's sake."

"But," continued Polidori, eyeing Jacques Ferrand with a keen, significant glance, "you will hear to what an extent are carried the generous scruples of the author of this restitution; and, to tell the truth, I strongly suspect that our right-minded friend here was the first to awaken the slumbering feelings of the guilty person, as well as to point out the surest and fittest way of tranquillising them."

"How so?" inquired the priest.

"What do you mean?" asked the notary.

"Why, remember the Morels, those honest, deserving people."

"True, true!" interposed Jacques Ferrand, in a hasty tone, "I had forgotten them."

"Imagine, M. l'Abbé, that the author of this restitution, doubtless influenced by Jacques, not contented with the restitution of this large sum, wishes also—But my worthy friend shall speak for himself—I will not deprive him of the pleasure of relating so fine an action."

"Pray let me hear all about it, my dear M. Ferrand," said the priest.

"You are aware," replied Jacques Ferrand, with affected sympathy, strangely mingled with the deep repugnance he entertained at being compelled to play a part so opposite to his inclinations, and which betrayed itself in the alteration his voice and manner exhibited, even in spite of all his attempts to be on his guard,—"you are aware, I say, M. l'Abbé, that the misconduct of that unhappy girl, Louise Morel, took so deep an effect on her father as to deprive him of his senses, and to reduce his numerous family to the very verge of destitution, thus bereft of their sole support and prop. Happily Providence interposed in their behalf, and the person whose voluntary restitution you have so kindly undertaken to arrange, not satisfied with this step, believed his abuse of confidence required still further expiation, and, therefore, inquired of me if I knew any genuine case of real and unmerited distress. I immediately thought of the Morel family, and recommended them so warmly that the unknown personage begged me to hand over to you (as I shall do) the necessary funds for purchasing an annuity of eighty pounds a year for the joint lives of Morel, his wife, and children."

"Truly," said the abbé, "such conduct is beyond my poor praise. Most gladly will I add this commission to the former; still permit me to express my surprise that you were not yourself selected to arrange an affair of this nature, the proceedings of which must be so much more familiar to you than to me."

"The reason for your being preferred, M. l'Abbé, was because the individual in question believed that his expiatory acts would go forth even in greater sanctity if they passed through hands as pure and pious as your own."

"Then be it so! And I will at once proceed to arrange for an annuity to Morel, the worthy but unfortunate parent of Louise. Still I am inclined to think, with your friend, that you are not altogether a stranger to the motives which dictated this additional expiation."

"Nay, M. l'Abbé, let me beg of you to believe that all I did was to recommend the Morel family as a deserving case upon which to exercise charitable sympathy; I had no further share in the good work," said Jacques Ferrand.

"Now, then," said Polidori, "you are next to be gratified, M. l'Abbé, with seeing to what an extent my worthy friend there has carried his philanthropic views, as manifested in the foundation of such an establishment as that we have already discussed. He will read to you the plan definitely decided on. The necessary money for its endowment is ready, and all is prepared for immediate action; but since yesterday a doubt has crossed his mind, and if he does not like to state it himself I will do so for him."

"There is no occasion for your taking that trouble," said Jacques, who seemed to find a relief in talking himself rather than be compelled to sit in silence and listen to the ironical praises of his accomplice. "The fact is this, M. l'Abbé, I have reflected upon our purposed undertaking, and it occurs to me that it would be more in accordance with a right spirit of humility and Christian meekness if the projected establishment were instituted in your name, and not in mine."

"Nay, nay!" exclaimed the abbé, "such humility is exaggerated beyond all reasonable scruples. You may fairly pride yourself upon having originated so noble a charity, and it becomes your just right, as well as your duty, to give it your own name."

"Pardon me for insisting in this instance on having my own way. I have thought the matter well over, and am resolved upon preserving a strictincognito as to being the founder of the undertaking. I therefore venture to hope you will do me the favour to act for me, and carry the scheme into execution, selecting the various functionaries requisite for its several departments. I merely desire to have the nomination of the chief clerk and one of the doorkeepers. To this kindness you must add the most inviolable secrecy as regards myself."

"Independently of the pleasure it would afford me to coöperate in such a work as yours, my duty to my fellow creatures would not permit me to do otherwise than accede to your wishes; you may therefore reckon upon me in every way you desire."

"Then, with your permission, M. l'Abbé, my friend will read you the plan he has decided on adopting."

"Perhaps," said Jacques Ferrand, bitterly, "you will spare me the fatigue of reading it, by taking that office on yourself? You will oblige me by so doing, will you not?"

"By no means!" answered Polidori. "The pure philanthropy which dictated the scheme will sound far better from your lips than mine."

"Enough!" interrupted the notary; "I will read it myself."

Polidori, so long the accomplice of Jacques Ferrand, and consequently well acquainted with the black catalogue of his crimes, could not restrain a fiendish smile as he saw the notary compelled in his own despite to read aloud and adopt as his own the words and sentiments so arbitrarily dictated by Rodolph.

"ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BANK FOR WORKMEN OUT OF EMPLOY.

"We are instructed to 'Love one another!' These divine words contain the germ of all charities. They have inspired the humble founder of this institution. Limited as to the means of action, the founder has desired at least to enable as many as possible to participate in what he offers. In the first place, he addresses himself to the honest, hard-working workmen, burdened with families, whom the want of employment frequently reduces to the most cruel extremities. It is not a degrading alms which he offers to his brethren, but a gratuitous loan he begs them to accept. And he hopes that this loan may frequently prevent them from involving their future by distressing loans, which they are forced to make in order to await a return of work, their only resource for a family of whom they are the sole support. As a guarantee of this loan he only requires from his brethren an undertaking on honour, and a keeping of the word pledged. He invests a sum producing an annual income of twelve thousand francs, and to this amount loans of twenty to forty francs, without interest, will be advanced to married men out of work. These loans will only be made to workmen or workwomen with certificates of good conduct given by the last employer, who will mention the cause and date of the suspension from labour. These loans to be repaid monthly by one-sixths' or one-tenths', at the option of the borrower, beginning from the day when he again procures employment. He must sign a simple engagement, on his honour, to return the loan at the periods fixed. This engagement must be also signed by two fellow workmen as guarantees, in order to develop and extend by their conjunction the sacredness of the promise sworn to. The workman and his two sureties who do not return the sum borrowed must never again have another loan, having forfeited his sacred engagement, and, especially, having deprived so many of his

brethren of the advantage he has enjoyed, as the sum he has not repaid is for ever lost to the Bank for the Poor. The sums lent being, on the contrary, scrupulously repaid, the loans will augment from year to year. Not to degrade man by a loan, not to encourage idleness by an unprofitable gift, to increase the sentiments of honour and probity natural to the labouring classes, to come paternally to the aid of the workman, who, already living with difficulty from day to day, owing to the insufficiency of wages, cannot, when work stops, suspend the wants of himself and family because his labour is suspended,—these are the thoughts which have presided over this institution. May His Holy Name who has said 'Love one another!' be alone glorified!"

"Ah, sir," exclaimed the abbé, "what a charitable idea! Now I understand your emotion on reading these lines of such touching simplicity."

In truth, as he concluded the reading, the voice of Jacques Ferrand had faltered, his patience and courage were at an end; but, watched by Polidori, he dared not infringe Rodolph's slightest order.

"M. l'Abbé, is not Jacques's idea excellent?" asked Polidori.

"Ah, sir, I, who know all the wretchedness of the city, can more easily comprehend of what importance may be for poor workmen out of employ a loan which may seem so trifling to the happy in this world! Ah, what good may be done if persons but knew that with thirty or forty francs, which would be scrupulously repaid, if without interest, they might often save the future, and sometimes the honour of a family, whom the want of work places in the grasp of misery and want!"

"Jacques values your praises, Monsieur l'Abbé," replied Polidori. "And you will have still more to say to him when you hear of his institution of a gratuitous Mont-de-Piété (pawnbroking establishment), for Jacques has not forgotten this, but made it an adjunct to his Bank for the Poor."

"Can it be true?" exclaimed the priest, clasping his hands in admiration.

The notary contrived to read with a rapid voice the other details, which referred to loans to workmen whose labour was suspended by fatigue or illness, and his intention to establish a Bank for the Poor producing twenty-five thousand francs a year for advances on pledges, which were never to go beyond ten francs for each pledge, without any charges for interest. The management and office of the loans in the Bank for the Poor was to be in the Rue du Temple, Number 17, in a house bought for the purpose. An income

of ten thousand francs a year was to be devoted to the costs and management of the Bank for the Poor, whose manager was to be—

Polidori here interrupted the notary, and said to the priest:

"You will see, sir, by the choice of the manager, that Jacques knows how to repair an involuntary error. You know that by a mistake, which he deeply deplores, he had falsely accused his cashier of embezzling a sum which he afterwards found. Well, it is this honest fellow, François Germain by name, that Jacques has named as manager of the institution, with four thousand francs a year salary. Is it not admirable, Monsieur l'Abbé?"

"Nothing now can astonish me, or rather nothing ever astonished me so much before," the priest replied; "the fervent piety, the virtues of our worthy friend, could only have such a result sooner or later. To devote his whole fortune to so admirable an institution is most excellent!"

"More than a million of francs (40,000l.), M. l'Abbé," said Polidori; "more than a million, amassed by order, economy, and probity! And there were so many wretches who accused Jacques of avarice! By what they said, his business brings him in fifty or sixty thousand francs a year, and yet he leads a life of privations!"

"To that I would reply," said the abbé, with enthusiasm, "that during fifteen years he lived like a beggar, in order one day to console those in distress most gloriously."

"But be at least proud and joyful at the good you do," cried Polidori, addressing Jacques Ferrand, who, gloomy, beaten, and with his eye fixed, seemed absorbed in painful meditation.

"Alas!" said the abbé, in a tone of sorrow, "it is not in this world that one receives the recompense of so many virtues! There is a higher ambition."

"Jacques," said Polidori, lightly touching the notary's shoulder, "finish reading your prospectus."

The notary started, passed his hand across his forehead, and addressing himself to the priest, "Your pardon, M. l'Abbé," said he, "but I was lost in thought; I felt myself involuntarily carried away by the idea of how immensely the funds of this 'Bank for the Poor' might be augmented if the sums lent out were, when repaid, allowed to accumulate only for a year. At the end of four years, the institution would be in a condition to afford loans, either wholly gratuitously, or upon security, to the amount of fifty thousand

crowns! Enormous! And I am delighted to find it so," continued he, as he reflected, with concealed rage, on the value of the sacrifice he was compelled to make. He then added, "A revenue of ten thousand francs will be secured for the expenses and management of the 'Bank for unemployed Workmen,' whose perpetual director shall be François Germain; and the housekeeper, the present porter in the place, an individual named Pipelet. M. l'Abbé Dumont, in whose hands the necessary funds for carrying out the undertaking will be placed, will establish a board of superintendence, composed of the magistrate of the district and other legal functionaries, in addition to all such influential personages whose patronage and support may be likely to advance the interests of the 'Poor Man's Bank;' for the founder would esteem himself more than paid for the little he has done, should his example induce other charitable persons to come forward in aid of his work."

"The opening of 'the bank' will be duly announced by every channel calculated to give publicity."

"In conclusion, the founder has only to disclaim any desire to attract notoriety or draw down applause, his sole motive being an earnest wish to reëcho the divine precept of 'Love ye one another!'"

The notary had now concluded; and without making any reply to the congratulations of the abbé, he proceeded to furnish him with the cash and notes requisite for the very considerable outlay required in carrying out the institution just described, and purchasing the annuity for Morel; after which he said, "Let me hope, M. l'Abbé, that you will not refuse the fresh mission confided to your charity. There is, indeed, a stranger, one Sir Walter Murphy, who has given me the benefit of his advice in drawing up the plan I have lately read to you, who will in some degree relieve you of the entire burden of this affair; and this very day he purposes conversing with you on the best means of bringing our schemes to bear, as well as to place himself at your disposal whenever he can render you the slightest service. To him you may speak freely and without any reserve, but to all others I pray of you to preserve the strictest secrecy as regards myself."

"You may rely on me. But you are surely ill! Tell me, my excellent friend, is it bodily or mental pain that thus blanches your cheek? Are you ill?"

"Somewhat indisposed, M. l'Abbé; the fatigue of reading that long paper, added to the emotions called up by your gratifying praises, have combined to overcome me; and, indeed, I have been a great sufferer during the last few days. Pray excuse me," said Jacques Ferrand, as he threw himself back

languidly in his chair; "I do not apprehend any serious consequences from my present weakness, but must own I do feel quite exhausted."

"Perhaps," said the priest, kindly, "your best plan would be to retire to bed, and allow your physician to see you."

"I am a physician, M. l'Abbé," said Polidori; "the condition of my friend Jacques requires the greatest care, and I shall immediately do my best to relieve his present symptoms."

The notary shuddered.

"Well, well," said the curé, "let us hope that a little rest is all you require to set you to rights! I will now take my leave; but first let me give you an acknowledgment for the money I have received."

While the priest was writing the receipt, a look wholly impossible to describe passed between Jacques Ferrand and Polidori.

"Come, come," said the priest, as he handed the paper he had written to Jacques Ferrand, "be of good cheer! Depend upon it, it will be long ere so faithful and devout a servant is suffered to quit a life so usefully and religiously employed. I will come again to-morrow, and inquire how you are. Adieu, monsieur! Farewell, my good, my holy, and excellent friend!"

And with these words the priest quitted the apartment, leaving Jacques Ferrand and Polidori alone there. No sooner was the door closed than a fearful imprecation burst from the lips of Jacques Ferrand, whose rage and despair, so long and forcibly repressed, now broke forth with redoubled fury. Breathless and excited, he continued, with wild and haggard looks, to pace to and fro like a furious tiger going the length of his chain, and then again retracing his infuriated march; while Polidori, preserving the most imperturbable look and manner, gazed on him with insulting calmness.

"Damnation!" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, at last, in a voice of concentrated wrath and violence; "the idea of my fortune being thus swallowed up in founding these humbugging philanthropic institutions, and to be obliged to give away my riches in such absurdities as building banks for other people! Your master must be the fiend himself to torture a man as he is doing me!"

"I have no master," replied Polidori, coldly; "only, like yourself, I have a judge whose decrees there is no escaping!"

"But thus blindly and idiotically to follow the most trifling order of this man!" continued Jacques Ferrand, with redoubled rage. "To compel me, constrain me, to the very actions most galling and hateful to me!"

"Nay, you have your chance between obedience and the scaffold!"

"And to think that there should be no way to escape this accursed domination! To be obliged to part with such a sum as that I lately handed over to that old proser,—a million sterling! The very extent of all my earthly possessions are now this house and about one hundred thousand francs. What more can he want with me?"

"Oh, but you have not done yet! The prince has learned, through Badinot, that your man of straw, 'Petit Jean,' was only your own assumed title, under which you made so many usurious loans to the Count de Remy, whom you so roughly took to task for his forgeries. The sums repaid by Saint-Remy were supplied him by a lady of high rank; and you may, very probably, be called upon to make a second restitution in that case, as well as the former; however, you may escape that in consequence of the fear entertained of wounding the delicacy of the noble lender, were the facts brought before the public."

"And fixed, chained here!"

"As firmly as though bound by an iron cable!"

"With such a wretch as you for my gaoler!"

"Why, it is the prince's system to punish crime by crime,—the guilty by the hand of his accomplice. So how can you object to me?"

"Oh, rage!"

"But, unhappily, powerless rage; for until he sends me his orders to permit you to leave this house, I shall follow you like your shadow! I, like yourself, have placed my head in danger of falling on the scaffold; and should I fail to perform my prescribed task of gaoler, there it would quickly fall. So that, you perceive, my integrity as your keeper is necessarily incorruptible. And as for our both attempting to free ourselves by flight, that is wholly impossible. Not a step could we take without immediately falling into the hands of those who, day and night, keep vigilant watch around and at each door of this house."

"Death and fury! I know it."

"Then resign yourself to what is inevitable; for if even flight were practicable, what would it do for our ultimate safety? We should be hunted down by the officers of justice, and speedily overtaken, with certain death before us; while, on the contrary, by your submitting and my superintending your obedience, we are quite sure to keep our heads on our shoulders."

"Do not exasperate me by this cool irony, or—"

"Well, go on—or what? Oh, bless you, I am not afraid of you or your anger; but I know you too well not to adopt every precaution. I am well armed, I can tell you; and though you may have possessed yourself of the celebrated poisoned stiletto carried by Cecily, it would not be worth your while to try its power on me. You are aware that I am obliged, every two hours, to send to him who has a right to demand it a bulletin of your precious health! Should I not present myself with the required document, murder would be suspected, and you be taken into custody. But I wrong you in supposing you capable of such a crime. Is it likely that, after sacrificing more than a million of money to save your life, you would place it in danger for the poor satisfaction of avenging yourself on me by taking my life? No, no! You are not quite such a fool as that, at any rate!"

"Oh, misery, misery! Endless and inextricable! Whichever way I turn, I see nothing but death or disgrace! My curse be on you—on all mankind!"

"Your misanthropy, then, exceeds your philanthropy; for while the former embraces the whole world, the latter merely relates to a small part of Paris."

"Go on, go on, monster! Mock as you will!"

"Would you rather I should overwhelm you with reproaches? Whose fault is it but yours that we are placed in our present position? Why would you persist in hanging to that letter of mine relative to the murder I assisted you in, which gained you one hundred thousand crowns, although you contrived to make it appear the man had fallen by his own hand? Why, I say, did you keep that letter of mine suspended around your neck, as though it had been a holy relic, instead of the confession of a crime?"

"Why, you contemptible being! Why, because having handed over to you fifty thousand francs for your share and assistance in the deed, I exacted from you that letter containing an admission of your participation in the affair, in order that I might have that security for your playing me fair; for with that document in existence, to betray me would have been to denounce yourself."

That letter was the security, both for my life and fortune. Now are you answered as to my reasons for keeping it so carefully about me?"

"I see! It was skilfully devised on your part, for by betraying you I gained nothing but the certainty of perishing with you on the same scaffold; and yet your cleverness has ruined us, while mine has assured our safety, up to the present moment."

"Great safety, certainly, if our present situation is taken into consideration!"

"Who could foresee the turn things have taken? But according to the ordinary course of events, our crime would have remained for ever under the same veil of concealment my management had thrown over it."

"Your management?"

"Even so! Why, do you not recollect that, after we had killed the man, you were for merely counterfeiting his writing, in order to despatch a letter as if from himself to his sister, stating his intention of committing suicide in consequence of having utterly ruined himself by losses at play? You believed it a great stroke of policy not to make any mention, in this letter, of the money entrusted to your charge. This was absurd because the sister, being aware of the deposit left in your hands, would be sure to claim it; it was wiser to take the contrary path, and make mention, as we did, of the money deposited with you; so that, should any suspicions arise as to the manner in which the murdered man met his death, you would be the very last on whom suspicion could fall; for how could it be supposed for an instant that you would first kill a man to obtain possession of the treasure placed under your care, and then write to inform the sister of the fact of the money having been lodged with you? And what was the consequence of this skilful suggestion on my part? Every one believed the dead man had destroyed himself. Your high reputation for probity enabled you successfully to deny the circumstance of any such sum of money as that claimed ever having been placed in your hands; and the general impression was, that the unprincipled brother had first dissipated his sister's fortune, and then committed suicide."

"But what does all this matter now, since the crime is discovered?"

"And who is to be thanked for its discovery? Is it my fault if my letter has become a sort of two-edged sword? Why were you so weak, so silly, as to surrender so formidable a weapon to—that infernal Cecily?"

"Silence!" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, with a fearful expression of countenance; "name her not!"

"With all my heart! I don't want to bring on an attack of epilepsy. You see plainly enough that, as regards the common course of ordinary justice, our mutual precautions were quite sufficient to ensure our safety; but he who now holds us in his formidable power goes to work differently; he believes that cutting off the heads of criminals is not a sufficient reparation for the wrongs they have done. With the proofs he has against us, he might give you and myself up to the laws of our country; but what would be got by that? Merely a couple of dead bodies, to help to enrich the churchyard."

"True, true! This prince, devil, or demon—whichever he is—requires tears, groans, wringings of the heart, ere he is satisfied. And yet 'tis strange he should work so much woe for me, who know him not, neither have ever done him the least harm. Why, then, is he so bitter against me?"

"In the first place, because he professes to sympathise with the sufferings of other men, whom he calls, simply enough, his brethren; and, secondly, because he knows those you have injured, and he punishes you according to his ideas."

"But what right has he to exercise any such power over me?"

"Why, look you, Jacques! Between ourselves it is not worth while to question the right of a man who might legally consign us to a scaffold. But what would be the result? Your two only relations are both dead; consequently government would profit by your wealth, to the injury of those you have wronged. On the other hand, by making your fortune the price of your life, Morel (the father of the unhappy girl you dishonoured), with his numerous family, may be placed beyond the reach of want; Madame de Fermont, the sister of the pretended self-murderer, Renneville, will get back her one hundred thousand crowns; Germain, falsely accused by you of robbery, will be reinstated in life, and placed at the head of the 'Bank for distressed Workmen,' which you are compelled to found and endow as an expiation for your many offences against society. And, candidly looking at the thing in the same point of view as he who now holds us in his clutches, it must be owned that, though mankind would have gained nothing by your death, they will be considerably advantaged by your life."

"And this it is excites my rage, that forms my greatest torture!"

"The prince knows that as well as you do. And what is he going to do with us, after all? I know not. He promised us our lives, if we would blindly comply with all his orders; but if he should not consider our past offences sufficiently expiated, he will find means to make death itself preferable a thousand times to the existence he grants us. You don't know him. When he believes himself called upon to be stern, no executioner can be more inexorable and unpitying to the criminal his hand must deprive of life. He must have had some fiend at his elbow, to discover what I went into Normandy for. However, he has more than one demon at his command; for that Cecily, whom may the descending lightning strike to the earth—"

"Again I say, silence! Name her not! Utter not the word Cecily!"

"I tell you I wish that every curse may light upon her! And have I not good reason for hating one who has placed us in our present situation? But for her, our heads would be safe on our shoulders, and likely to remain so. To what has your besotted passion for that creature brought us!"

Instead of breaking out into a fresh rage, Jacques Ferrand replied, with the most extreme dejection, "Do you know the person you are speaking of? Tell me, have you ever seen her?"

"Never; but I am aware she is reported to be very beautiful."

"Beautiful!" exclaimed the notary, emphatically; then, with an expression of bitter despair, he added, "Cease to speak of that you know not. What I did you would have done if similarly tempted."

"What, endanger my life for the love of a woman?"

"For such a one as Cecily; and I tell you candidly I would do the same thing again, for the same hopes as then led me on."

"By all the devils in hell," cried Polidori, in utter amazement, "he is bewitched!"

"Hearken to me," resumed the notary, in a low, calm tone, occasionally rendered more energetic by the bursts of uncontrollable despair which possessed his mind. "Listen! You know how much I love gold, as well as all I have ventured to acquire it. To count over in my thoughts the sums I possessed, to see them doubled by my avarice, to know myself master of immense wealth, was at once my joy, my happiness; to possess, not for the sake of expending or enjoying, but to hoard, to gloat over, was my life, my

delight. A month ago, had I been told to choose between my fortune and my head, I should certainly have sacrificed the latter to save the former."

"But what would be the use of possessing all this wealth, if you must die?"

"The ecstasy of dying in the consciousness of its possession; to enjoy till the last moment the dear delightful feeling of being the owner of those riches for which you have braved everything, privations, disgrace, infamy, the scaffold itself, to be able to say, even as you lay your head on the fatal block, 'Those vast treasures are mine!' Oh, death is far sweeter than to endure the living agonies I suffer at seeing the riches accumulated with so much pain, difficulties, and dangers torn from me! Dreadful, dreadful! 'Tis not dying daily, but each minute in the day; and this dreadful state of misery may be protracted for years! Oh, how greatly should I prefer being struck down by that sudden and rapid death that carries you off ere one fragment of your beloved riches is taken from you! For still, with your dying breath, you might sigh forth, 'Those treasures are mine,—all, all mine! None but me can or dare approach them!'"

Polidori gazed on his accomplice with profound astonishment. "I do not understand you," said he, at last; "if such be the case, why have you obeyed the commands of him whose denunciation of you would bring you to a scaffold? Why, if life be so horrible to you, have you chosen to accept it at his hands, and pay the heavy price you are doing for it?"

"Because," answered the notary, in a voice that sunk so low as to be scarcely audible, "because death brings forgetfulness—annihilation—and then, too, Cecily—"

"What!" said Polidori, "do you still hope?"

"No," said the notary, "I possess—"

"What?"

"The fond impassioned remembrance of her."

"But what folly is this when you are sure never to see her more, and when she has brought you to a scaffold!"

"That matters not; I love her even more ardently, more frantically than ever!" exclaimed Jacques Ferrand, amid a torrent of sighs and sobs that contrasted strongly with the previous gloomy dejection of his last remark. "Yes," continued he, with fearful wildness, "I love her too well to be willing to

die, while I can feast my senses upon the recollection only of that night—that memorable night in which I saw her so lovely, so loving, so fascinating! Never is her image, as I then beheld her, absent from my brain; waking or sleeping, she is ever before me, decked in all the intoxicating beauty that was displayed to my impassioned gaze! Still do her large, lustrous eyes seem to dart forth their fiery glances, and I almost fancy I can feel her warm breath on my cheek, while her clear, melodious voice seems ringing its full sounds into my ear with promises of bliss, alas, never to be mine! Yet, though to live thus is torturing—horrible—yet would I prefer it to the apathy, the still nothingness of the grave. No, no, no; let me live, poor, wretched, despised,—a branded galley-slave, if you will,—but give me yet the means of doting in secret on the recollection of this wonderful being; whether she be fiend or angel, yet does she engross my every thought!"

"Jacques," said Polidori, in a voice and manner contrasting strongly with his habitual tone of cool, provoking sarcasm, "I have witnessed almost every description of bodily and mental suffering, but certainly nothing that equalled what you endure. He who holds us in his power could not have devised more cruel torture than that you are compelled to endure. You are condemned to live, to await death through a vista of long, wasting torments, for your description of your feelings fully explains to me the many alarming symptoms I have observed in you from day to day, and of which I have hitherto vainly sought to find the cause."

"But the symptoms you speak of as alarming are nothing but exhaustion, a sort of reaction of the bodily and mental powers; do you not think so? Tell me! I am not surely in any danger of dying?"

"There is no immediate danger, but your situation is precarious; and there are some thoughts you must cease to dwell on—nay, banish from your memory—or your danger is imminent."

"I will do whatever you bid me, so that my life be preserved,—for I will not die. Oh, let priests talk of the sufferings of the damned, but what are their tortures compared to mine? Tormented alike by passion and avarice, I have two open wounds rankling in my heart, each occasioning mortal agony. The loss of my fortune is dreadful, but the fear of death is even still more so. I have desired to live; and though my existence may probably be but one protracted scene of endless wretchedness, it is preferable to death and annihilation; for it would be the termination of my fatal happiness,—the power of recalling each word and look of Cecily!"

"You have at least one vast consolation," said Polidori, resuming his accustomed sang-froid, "in the recollection of the good actions by which you have sought to expiate your crimes!"

"Rail on! Mock my misery! Turn me on the hot coals on which my ill fortune has placed me! But you well know, mean and contemptible being that you are, how I hate, how I loathe all mankind, and that these forced expiations to which I am condemned only serve to increase my detestation of those who compel me to make them, and those who profit by them. By all that is sacred, it passes human malice to condemn me to live in endless misery, such as would dismay the stoutest nature, while my fellow creatures, as they are called, have all their griefs assuaged at the cost of my dearly prized treasures! Oh, that priest who but now quitted us, loading me with blessings while my heart seemed like one vast ocean of fiery gall and bitterness against himself and all mankind—oh, how I longed to plunge a dagger in his breast! 'Tis too much—too much for endurance!" cried he, pressing his clenched hands to his forehead; "my brain burns, my ideas become confused, I shall not be able much longer to resist these violent attacks of impotent, futile rage,—these unending tortures; and all through you, Cecily,—fatal, adored Cecily! Will you ever know all the agonies I have borne on your account, and will you still haunt me with that mocking smile? Cecily, Cecily! Back to the fiends from whom you sprung, and drive me not to destruction!"

All at once a hasty knock was heard at the door of the apartment. Polidori immediately opened it, and perceived the principal clerk in the notary's office, who, pale and much agitated, exclaimed, "I must speak with M. Ferrand directly!"

"Hush!" answered Polidori, in a low tone, as he came forth from the room and shut the door after him; "he is very ill just now, and cannot be disturbed on any account."

"Then do you, sir, who are M. Ferrand's best and most intimate friend, step forward to help and assist him; but come quickly, for there is not an instant to be lost!"

"What has happened?"

"By M. Ferrand's orders, I went to-day to the house of the Countess Macgregor, to say that he was unable to wait on her to-day, according to her request. This lady, who seems quite out of danger at present, sent for me to her chamber; when I went in, she exclaimed, in an angry, threatening

manner, 'Go back to M. Ferrand, and say to him that if he is not here in half an hour, or at least before the close of the day, he shall be arrested for felony. The child he passed off as dead is still living; I know into whose hands he gave her up, and I also know where she is at this present minute.'"

"This lady must be out of her senses," cried Polidori, shrugging up his shoulders. "Poor thing!"

"I should have thought so myself, but for the confident manner in which the countess spoke."

"I have no doubt but that her illness has affected her head; and persons labouring under any delusion are always impressed with the most perfect conviction of the truth of their fancies."

"I ought also to state that, just as I was leaving the room, one of the countess's female attendants entered all in a hurry, and said, 'His highness will be here in an hour's time!'"

"You are sure you heard those words?" asked Polidori.

"Quite, quite sure, sir! And I remember it the more, because I immediately began wondering in my own mind what highness she could mean."

"It is quite clear," said Polidori, mentally, "she expects the prince; but how comes that about? What strange course of events can have induced him to visit one he ought never again to meet? I know not why, but I greatly mistrust this renewal of intimacy. Our position, bad as it is, may even be rendered still worse by it." Then, addressing himself to the clerk, he added, "Depend upon it there is nothing of any consequence in the message you have brought; 'tis merely the effects of a wandering imagination on the part of the countess; but, to prevent your feeling any uneasiness, I promise to acquaint M. Ferrand with it directly he is well enough to converse upon any matter of business."

We shall now conduct the reader to the house of the Countess Sarah Macgregor.

CHAPTER II

RODOLPH AND SARAH

A salutary crisis had occurred, which relieved the Countess Macgregor from the delirium and suffering under which, for several days, her life had been despaired of.

The day had begun to break when Sarah, seated in a large easy chair, and supported by her brother, Thomas Seyton, was looking at herself in a mirror which one of her women on her knees held up before her. This was in the apartment where La Chouette had made the attempt to murder.

The countess was as pale as marble, and her pallor made her dark eyes, hair, and eyebrows even more striking; and she was attired in a dressing-gown of white muslin. "Give me my bandeau of coral," she said to one of her women, in a voice which, although weak, was imperious and abrupt.

"Betty will fasten it on for you," said Seyton; "you will exhaust yourself; you are already very imprudent."

"The bandeau,—the bandeau!" repeated Sarah, impatiently, who took this jewel and arranged it on her brow. "Now fasten it, and leave me!" she said to the women.

The instant they were retiring, she said, "Let M. Ferrand be shown into the little blue salon." Then she added, with ill-dissembled pride, "As soon as his royal highness the Grand Duke of Gerolstein comes, let him be introduced instantly to this apartment."

"Was Looking at Herself in a Mirror"

Original Etching by Adrian Marcel

"At length," said Sarah, as soon as she was alone with her brother, "at length I trust this crown—the dream of my life: the prediction is on the eve of fulfilment!"

"Sarah, calm your excitement!" said her brother to her; "yesterday your life was despaired of, and to be again disappointed would deal you a mortal blow!"

"You are right, Thomas; the fall would be fearful, for my hopes were never nearer realisation! Of this I feel assured, for it was my constant thought of

profiting by the overwhelming revelation which this woman made me at the moment of her assassination that prevented me from sinking under my sufferings."

"Again, Sarah, let me counsel you to beware of such insensate dreams,—the awaking would be terrible!"

"Insensate dreams! What, when Rodolph learns that this young girl, who is now locked up in St. Lazare, and formerly confided to the notary, who has passed her off for dead, is our child! Do you suppose that—"

Seyton interrupted his sister. "I believe," he said, bitterly, "that princes place reasons of state, political conveniences, before natural duties."

"Do you then rely so little on my address?"

"The prince is no longer the ingenuous and impassioned youth whom you attracted and swayed in other days; that time is long ago, both for him and for you, sister."

Sarah shrugged her shoulders, and said, "Do you know why I was desirous of placing this bandeau of coral in my hair,—why I put on this white dress? It is because the first time Rodolph saw me at the court of Gerolstein I was dressed in white, and wore this very bandeau of coral in my hair."

"What!" said Seyton, "you would awake those remembrances? Do you not rather fear their influence?"

"I know Rodolph better than you do. No doubt my features, changed by time and sufferings, are no longer those of the young girl of sixteen, whom he so madly loved,—only loved, for I was his first love; and that love, unique in the life of man, always leaves ineffaceable traces in the heart. Thus, then, brother, trust me that the sight of this ornament will awaken in Rodolph not only the recollection of his love, but those of his youth also; and for men these souvenirs are always sweet and precious."

"But these sweet and precious souvenirs will be united with others so terrible: the sinister dénouement of your love, the detestable behaviour of the prince's father to you, your obstinate silence to Rodolph. After your marriage with the Count Macgregor, he demanded his daughter, then an infant,—your child,—of whose death, ten years since, you informed him so coldly in your letter. Do you forget that from that period the prince has felt nothing but contempt and hatred for you?"

"Pity has replaced his hatred. Since he has learned that I am dying, he has sent the Baron de Graün every day to inquire after me; and just now he has promised to come here; and that is an immense concession, brother."

"He believes you dying,—that you desire a last adieu,—and so he comes. You were wrong not to write to him of the discovery you are about to disclose to him."

"I know why I do so. This discovery will fill him with surprise, joy, and I shall be present to profit by his first burst of softened feeling. To-day or never he will say to me, 'A marriage must legitimise the birth of our child!' If he says so, his word is sacred, and then will the hope of my life be realised!"

"Yes, if he makes you the promise."

"And that he may do so, nothing must be neglected under these decisive circumstances. I know Rodolph; and once having found his daughter, he will overcome his aversion for me, and will not retreat from any sacrifice to assure her the most enviable lot, to make her as entirely happy as she has been until now wretched."

"However brilliant the destiny he may assure to your daughter, there is, between the reparation to her and the resolution to marry you in order to legitimise the birth of this child, a very wide abyss."

"Her father will pass over this abyss."

"But this unfortunate child has, perhaps, been so vitiated by the misery in which she has lived that the prince, instead of feeling attracted towards her—"

"What are you saying?" cried Sarah, interrupting her brother. "Is she not as handsome, as a young girl, as she was a lovely infant? Rodolph, without knowing her, was so deeply interested in her as to take charge of her future destiny, and sent her to his farm at Bouqueval, whence we carried her off."

"Yes, thanks to your obstinacy in desiring to break all the ties of the prince's affection, in the foolish hope of one day leading him back to yourself!"

"And yet, but for this foolish hope, I should not have discovered, at the price of my life, the secret of my daughter's existence. Is it not through this woman, who had carried her off from the farm, that I have learned the infamous deceit of the notary, Ferrand?"

"It would have been better to have awaited the young creature's coming out of prison, before you sent to request the Grand Duke to come here."

"Awaited! And do I know that the salutary crisis in which I now am will last until to-morrow? Perhaps I am but momentarily sustained by my ambition only."

"What proofs have you for the prince, and will he believe you?"

"He will believe me when he reads the commencement of, the disclosure which I wrote from the dictation of that woman who stabbed me,—a disclosure of which I have, fortunately, forgotten no circumstance. He will believe me when he reads your correspondence with Madame Séraphin and Jacques Ferrand, as to the supposed death of the child; he will believe me when he hears the confession of the notary, who, alarmed at my threats, will come here immediately; he will believe me when he sees the portrait of my daughter at six years of age, a portrait which the woman told me was still a striking resemblance. So many proofs will suffice to convince the prince that I speak the truth, and to decide him as to his first impulse, which will make me almost a queen. Oh, if it were but for a day, I could die content!"

At this moment a carriage was heard to enter the courtyard.

"It is he! It is Rodolph!" exclaimed Sarah.

Thomas Seyton drew a curtain hastily aside, and replied, "Yes, it is the prince; he is just alighting from the carriage."

"Leave me! This is the decisive moment!" said Sarah, with unshaken coolness; for a monstrous ambition, a pitiless selfishness, had always been and still was the only moving spring of this woman. Even in the almost miraculous reappearance of her daughter, she only saw a means of at last arriving at the one end and aim of her whole existence.

Seyton said to her, "I will tell the prince how your daughter, believed dead, was saved. This conversation would be too dangerous for you,—a too violent emotion would kill you; and after so long a separation, the sight of the prince, the recollection of bygone times—"

"Your hand, brother!" replied Sarah. Then, placing on her impassive heart Tom Seyton's hand, she added, with an icy smile, "Am I excited?"

"No, no; not even a hurried pulsation," said Seyton, amazed. "I know not what control you have over yourself; but at such a moment, when it is for a crown or a coffin you play, your calmness amazes me!"

"And wherefore, brother? Till now, you know, nothing has made my heart beat hastily; and it will only throb when I feel the sovereign crown upon my brow. I hear Rodolph—leave me!"

When Rodolph entered the apartment, his look expressed pity; but, seeing Sarah seated in her armchair, and, as it were, full dressed, he recoiled in surprise, and his features became gloomy and mistrustful. The countess, guessing his thoughts, said to him, in a low and faint voice, "You thought to find me dying! You came to receive my last adieu!"

"I have always considered the last wishes of the dead as sacred, but it appears now as if there were some sacrilegious deceit—"

"Be assured," said Sarah, interrupting Rodolph, "be assured that I have not deceived you! I believe that I have but very few hours to live. Pardon me a last display of coquetry! I wished to spare you the gloomy symptoms that usually attend the dying hour, and to die attired as I was the first time I saw you. Alas, after ten years of separation, I see you once again! Thanks, oh, thanks! But in your turn give thanks to God for having inspired you with the thought of hearing my last prayer! If you had refused me, I should have carried my secret with me to the grave, which will now cause the joy, the happiness of your life,—joy, mingled with some sadness, happiness, mingled with some tears, like all human felicity; but this felicity you would yet purchase at the price of half the remainder of your existence!"

"What do you mean?" asked the prince, with great amazement.

"Yes, Rodolph, if you had not come, this secret would have followed me to the tomb! That would have been my sole vengeance. And yet, no, no! I shall not have the courage. Although you have made me suffer deeply, I yet must have shared with you that supreme happiness which you, more blessed than myself, will, I hope, long enjoy!"

"Madame, what does this mean?"

"When you know, you will be able to comprehend my slowness in informing you, for you will view it as a miracle from heaven; but, strange to say, I, who with a word can cause you pleasure greater than you have ever experienced, I experience, although the minutes of my life are counted, I experience an indefinable satisfaction at prolonging your expectation. And then, I know

your heart; and in spite of the fierceness of your character, I fear, without preparation, to reveal to you so incredible a discovery. The emotions of overwhelming joy have also their dangers."

"Your paleness increases, you can scarcely repress your violent agitation," said Rodolph; "all this indicates something grave and solemn."

"Grave and solemn!" replied Sarah, in an agitated voice; for, in spite of her habitual impassiveness, when she reflected on the immense effect of the disclosure she was about to make to Rodolph, she was more troubled than she believed possible; and, unable any longer to restrain herself, she exclaimed, "Rodolph, our daughter lives!"

"Our daughter!"

"Lives, I say!"

These words, the accents of truth in which they were pronounced, shook the prince to his very heart. "Our child!" he repeated, going hurriedly to the chair in which Sarah was, "our child—my daughter!"

"Is not dead, I have irresistible proof; I know where she is; to-morrow you shall see her."

"My daughter! My daughter!" repeated Rodolph, with amazement. "Can it be that she lives?" Then, suddenly reflecting on the improbability of such an event, and fearing to be the dupe of some fresh treachery on Sarah's part, he cried, "No, no, it is a dream! Impossible! I know your ambition—of what you are capable—and I see through the drift of this proposed treachery!"

"Yes, you say truly; I am capable of all—everything! Yes, I desired to abuse you; some days before the mortal blow was struck, I sought to find out some young girl that I might present to you as our daughter. After this confession, you will perhaps believe me, or, rather, you will be compelled to credit irresistible evidence. Yes, Rodolph, I repeat I desired to substitute a young and obscure girl for her whom we both deplore; but God willed that at the moment when I was arranging this sacrilegious bargain, I should be almost fatally stabbed!"

"You—at this moment!"

"God so willed it that they should propose to me to play the part of falsehood—imagine whom? Our daughter!"

"Are you delirious, in heaven's name?"

"Oh, no, I am not delirious! In this casket, containing some papers and a portrait, which will prove to you the truth of what I say, you will find a paper stained with my blood!"

"Your blood!"

"The woman who told me that our daughter was still living declared to me this disclosure when she stabbed me with her dagger."

"And who was she? How did she know?"

"It was she to whom the child was confided when very young, after she had been declared dead."

"But this woman? Can she be believed? How did you know her?"

"I tell you, Rodolph, that this is all fated—providential! Some months ago you snatched a young girl from misery, to send her to the country. Jealousy and hatred possessed me. I had her carried off by the woman of whom I have been speaking."

"And they took the poor girl to St. Lazare?"

"Where she is still."

"She is there no longer. Ah, you do not know, madame, the fearful evil you have occasioned me by snatching the unfortunate girl away from the retreat in which I had placed her; but—"

"The young girl is no longer at St. Lazare!" cried Sarah, with dismay; "ah, what fearful news is this!"

"A monster of avarice had an interest in her destruction. They have drowned her, madame! But answer! You say that—"

"My daughter!" exclaimed Sarah, interrupting Rodolph, and standing erect, as straight and motionless as a statue of marble.

"What does she say? Good heaven!" cried Rodolph.

"My daughter!" repeated Sarah, whose features became livid and frightful in their despair. "They have murdered my daughter!"

"The Goualeuse your daughter!" uttered Rodolph, retreating with horror.

"The Goualeuse! Yes, that was the name which the woman they call the Chouette used. Dead—dead!" repeated Sarah, still motionless, with her eyes fixed. "They have killed her!"

"Sarah!" said Rodolph, as pale and as fearful to look upon as the countess; "be calm,—recover yourself,—answer me! The Goualeuse,—the young girl whom you had carried off by the Chouette from Bouqueval,—was she our daughter?"

"Yes. And they have killed her!"

"Oh, no, no; you are mad! It cannot be! You do not know! No, no; you cannot tell how fearful this would be! Sarah, be firm,—speak to me calmly,—sit down,—compose yourself! There are often resemblances, appearances which deceive if we are inclined to believe what we desire. I do not reproach you; but explain yourself to me, tell me all the reasons which induced you to think this; for it cannot be,—no, no, it cannot be,—it is not so!"

After a moment's pause, the countess collected her thoughts, and said to Rodolph, in a faltering voice, "Learning your marriage, and thinking of marrying myself, I could not keep our child with me; she was then four years of age."

"But at that time I begged her of you with prayers, entreaties," cried Rodolph, in a heartrending tone, "and my letters were unanswered; the only one you wrote to me announced her death!"

"I was desirous of avenging myself of your contempt by refusing your child. It was shameful; but hear me! I feel my life ebbs from me; this last blow has overcome me!"

"No, no, I do not believe you; I will not believe you! The Goualeuse my daughter! Oh, mon Dieu! You would not have this so!"

"Listen to me! When she was four years old, my brother charged Madame Séraphin, the widow of an old servant, to bring the child up until she was old enough to go to school. The sum destined to support our child was deposited by my brother with a notary, celebrated for his honesty. The letters of this man and Madame Séraphin, addressed at the time to me and my brother, are there, in the casket. At the end of a year they wrote me word that my daughter's health was failing,—eight months afterwards that she was dead, and they sent the register of her decease. At this time Madame

Séraphin had entered the service of Jacques Ferrand, after having given our daughter over to the Chouette, through the medium of a wretch who is now at the galleys at Rochefort. I was writing down all this when the Chouette stabbed me. This paper is there also, with a portrait of our daughter when four years of age. Examine all,—letters, declaration, portrait,—and you who have seen her, the unhappy child, will judge—"

These words exhausted Sarah, and she fell fainting into her armchair.

Rodolph was thunderstruck at this disclosure. There are misfortunes so unforeseen, so horrible, that we try not to believe them until the overwhelming evidence compels us. Rodolph, persuaded of the death of Fleur-de-Marie, had but one hope,—that of convincing himself that she was not his daughter. With a frightful calmness that alarmed Sarah, he approached the table, opened the casket, and began to read the letters, examining with scrupulous attention the papers which accompanied them.

These letters, bearing the postmark, and dated, written to Sarah and her brother by the notary and Madame Séraphin, related to the infancy of Fleur-de-Marie, and the investment of the money destined for her. Rodolph could not doubt the authenticity of this correspondence.

The Chouette's declaration was confirmed by the particulars collected at Rodolph's desire, in which a felon named Pierre Tournemine, then at Rochefort, was described as the individual who had received Fleur-de-Marie from the hands of Madame Séraphin, for the purpose of giving her up to the Chouette,—the relentless tormentor of her early years,—and whom she afterwards so unexpectedly recognised when in company with Rodolph at the tapis-franc of the ogress.

The attestation of the child's death was duly drawn up and attested, but Ferrand himself had confessed to Cecily that it had merely been employed to obtain possession of a considerable sum of money due to the unfortunate infant, whose decease it so falsely recorded, and who had subsequently been drowned by his order while crossing to the Isle du Ravageur.

It was, therefore, with appalling conviction Rodolph learnt at once the double facts of the Goualeuse being his long-lost daughter, and of her having perished by a violent death. Unfortunately, everything seemed to give greater certitude to his belief, and to render further doubt impossible. Ere the prince could bring himself to place implicit credence in the self-condemnation of Jacques Ferrand, as conveyed in the notes furnished by him to Cecily, he had made the closest inquiries at Asnières, and had

ascertained that two females, one old, the other young, dressed in the garb of countrywomen, had been drowned while crossing the river to the Isle du Ravageur, and that Martial was openly accused of having committed this fresh crime.

Let us add, in conclusion, that, despite the utmost care and attention on the part of Doctor Griffon, Count de Saint-Remy, and La Louve, Fleur-de-Marie was long ere she could be pronounced out of danger, and then so extreme was her exhaustion, both of body and mind, that she had been unfit for the least conversation, and wholly unequal to making any effort to apprise Madame Georges of her situation.

This coincidence of circumstances left the prince without the smallest shadow of hope; but had such even remained, it was doomed to disappear before a last and fatal proof of the reality of his misfortune. He, for the first time, ventured to cast his eyes towards the miniature he had received. The blow fell with stunning conviction on his heart; for in the exquisitely beautiful features it revealed, rich in all the infantine loveliness ascribed to cherubic innocence, he recognised the striking portrait of Fleur-de-Marie,—her finely chiselled nose, the lofty forehead, with the small, delicately formed mouth, even then wearing an expression of sorrowing tenderness. Alas! Had not Madame Séraphin well accounted for this somewhat uncommon peculiarity in an infant's face by saying, in a letter written by her to Sarah, which Rodolph had just perused, "The child is continually inquiring for its mother, and seems to grieve very much at not seeing her." There were also those large, soft, blue eyes, "the colour of a blue-bell," as the Chouette observed to Sarah, upon recognising in this miniature the features of the unfortunate creature she had so ruthlessly tormented as Pegriotte, and as a young girl under the appellation of La Goualeuse. At the sight of this picture the violent and tumultuous emotions of the prince were lost amid a flood of mingled tears and sighs.

While Rodolph thus indulged his bitter grief, the countenance of Sarah become powerfully agitated; she saw the last hope which had hitherto sustained her of realising the ambitious dreams of her life fade away at the very moment when she had expected their full accomplishment.

All at once Rodolph raised his head, dashed away his tears, and, rising from his chair, advanced towards Sarah with folded arms and dignified, determined air. After silently gazing on her for some moments, he said:

"'Tis fair and right it should be so! I raised my sword against my father's life, and I am stricken through my own child! The parricide is worthily punished

for his sin! Then, listen to me, madame! 'Tis fit you should learn in this agonising moment all the evils which have been brought about by your insatiate ambition, your unprincipled selfishness! Listen, then, heartless and unfeeling wife, base and unnatural mother!"

"Mercy, mercy! Rodolph, pity me, and spare me!"

"There is no pity, there can be no pardon for such as you, who coldly trafficked in a love pure and sincere as was mine, with the assumed pretext of sharing a passion generous and devoted as was my own for you. There can be no pity for her who excites the son against the father, no pardon for the unnatural parent who, instead of carefully watching over the infancy of her child, abandons it to the care of vile mercenaries, in order to satisfy her grasping avarice by a rich marriage, as you formerly gratified your inordinate ambition by espousing me. No! There is no mercy, pity, or pardon for one who, like yourself, first refuses my child to all my prayers and entreaties, and afterwards, by a series of profane and vile machinations, causes her death! May Heaven's curse light on you, as mine does, thou evil genius of myself and all belonging to me!"

"He has no relenting pity in his heart! He is deaf to all my appeals! Wretched woman that I am! Oh, leave me—leave me—I beseech!"

"Nay, you shall hear me out! Do you remember our last meeting, now seventeen years ago? You were unable longer to conceal the consequences of our secret marriage, which, like you, I believed indissoluble. I well knew the inflexible character of my father, as well as the political marriage he wished me to form; but braving alike his displeasure and its results, I boldly declared to him that you were my wife before God and man, and that ere long you would bring into the world a proof of our love. My father's rage was terrible; he refused to believe in our union. Such startling opposition to his will appeared to him impossible; and he threatened me with his heaviest displeasure if I presumed again to insult his ear by the mention of such folly. I then loved you with a passion bordering on madness. Led away by your wiles and artifices, I believed your cold, stony heart felt a reciprocity of tenderness for me, and I therefore unhesitatingly replied that I never would call any woman wife but yourself. At these words his fury knew no bounds. He heaped on you the most insulting epithets, exclaiming that the marriage I talked of was null and void, and that to punish you for your presumption in daring even to think of such a thing, he would have you publicly exposed in the pillory of the city. Yielding alike to the violence of my mad passion, and the impetuosity of my disposition, I presumed to forbid him, who was at once my parent and my sovereign, speaking thus disrespectfully of one I

loved far beyond my own life, and I even went so far as to threaten him if he persisted in so doing. Exasperated at my conduct, my father struck me. Blinded by rage, I drew my sword, and threw myself on him with deadly fury. Happily the intervention of Murphy turned away the blow, and saved me from being as much a parricide in deed as I was in intention. Do you hear me, madame? A parricide! And in your defence!"

"Alas! I knew not this misfortune."

"In vain have I sought to expiate my crime. This blow to-day is sent by Heaven's avenging hand to repay my heavy crime."

"But have I not sufficiently suffered from the inveterate enmity of your father, who dissolved our marriage? Wherefore add to my misery by doubts of the sincerity of my affection for you?"

"Wherefore?" exclaimed Rodolph, darting on her looks of the most withering contempt. "Learn now my reasons, and cease to wonder at the loathing horror with which you inspire me. After the fatal scene in which I had threatened the life of my father, I surrendered my sword, and was kept in the closest confinement. Polidori, through whose instrumentality our union had been effected, was arrested; and he distinctly proved that our marriage had never been legally contracted, the minister, as well as the other persons concerned in its solemnisation, being merely creatures tutored and bribed by him; so that both you, your brother, and myself, were equally deceived. The more effectually to turn away my father's wrath from himself, Polidori did still more; he gave up one of your letters to your brother, which he had managed to intercept during a journey taken by Seyton."

"Heavens! Can it be possible?"

"Can you now account for my contempt and aversion towards you?"

"Too, too well!"

"In this letter you developed your ambitious projects with unblushing effrontery. Me you spoke of with the utmost indifference, treating me but as the blind instrument by which you should arrive at the princely station predicted for you. You expressed your opinion that my father had already lived long enough,—perhaps too long; and hinted at probabilities and possibilities too horrible to repeat!"

"Alas! All is now but too apparent. I am lost for ever!"

"And yet to protect you, I had even menaced my father's existence!"

"When he next visited me, and, without uttering one word of reproach, put into my hands your letter, every line of which more clearly revealed the black enormity of your nature, I could but kneel before him and entreat his pardon. But from that hour I have been a prey to the deepest, the most acute remorse. I immediately quitted Germany for the purpose of travelling, with the intent, if possible, of expiating my guilt; and this self-imposed task I shall continue while I live. To reward the good, to punish the evil-doer, relieve those who suffer, penetrate into every hideous corner where vice holds her court, for the purpose of rescuing some unfortunate creatures from the destruction into which they have fallen,—such is the employment I have marked out for myself."

"It is a noble and holy task,—one worthy of being performed by you."

"If I speak of this sacred vow," said Rodolph, disdainfully, "it is not to draw down your approbation or praise. But hearken to what remains to be told; I have lately arrived in France, and I wished not to let my great purpose of continual expiatory acts stand still during my sojourn in this country. While I sought then to succour those of good reputation, who were in unmerited distress, I was also desirous of knowing that class of miserable beings who are beaten down, trampled under feet, and brutalised by want and wretchedness, well knowing that timely help, a few kind and encouraging words, may frequently have power to save a lost creature from the abyss into which he is falling. In order to be an eye-witness of the circumstances under which my work of expiation would be useful, I assumed the dress and appearance of those I wished to mix with. It was during one of these exploring adventures that I first encountered—" Then, as though shuddering at the idea of so terrible a disclosure, Rodolph, after a momentary hesitation, added, "No, no; I have not courage to finish the dreadful story!"

"For the love of heaven, tell me what horror have you now to unfold?"

"You will hear it but too soon! But," added he, with sarcastic bitterness, "you seem to take so lively an interest in past events that I cannot refrain from relating to you a few events which preceded my return to France. After passing some time in my travels, I returned to Germany, filled with a spirit of obedience to my father, by whose desire I espoused a princess of Prussia. During my absence you had been banished from the Grand Duchy. Subsequently, learning your marriage with Count Macgregor, I again entreated you to allow me to have my child. To this earnest request no answer was returned; nor could my strictest inquiries ever discover whither

you had sent the unfortunate infant, for whom my father had made a handsome provision. About ten years ago I received a letter from you, stating that our child was dead. Would to God your information had been correct, and that she had indeed rendered up her innocent life at that tender age! I should then have been spared the deep, incurable anguish which must for ever embitter my life!"

"I cease now to wonder," said Sarah, in a feeble voice, "at the disgust and aversion with which I seem to have inspired you; and I feel, too surely, that I shall not survive this last blow. You are right; pride and ambition have been my ruin. Ignorant of the just causes you had to hate and despise me, my former hopes returned with greater force than ever. Our mutual widowhood inspired me with a still stronger belief in the prediction which promised me a crown; and when, by singular chance, I again found my daughter, it appeared to me as though the hand of Providence had bestowed this un hoped-for good fortune on me to further my so long cherished plans. Yes, I will confess that I went so far as to persuade myself that, spite of the aversion you entertained for me, you would bestow on me your name, and that, out of regard for your child, you would accept me as your wife, if but to elevate her to the rank to which she is entitled."

"Then let your execrable ambition be satisfied, and punished as it deserves; for, spite of the abhorrence I now hold you in, I would, out of love for my child, or, rather, from a deep pity for its early sorrows,—I would, although firmly determined always to live apart from you, by a marriage which should have legitimised my daughter, have rendered her future lot as brilliant and exalted as her past life has been wretched."

"I had not, then, deceived myself? Oh, misery! To think it is now too late!"

"Oh, I am well aware it is not your child you regret, but the loss of that rank you have so eagerly and obstinately striven to obtain. May your unfeeling and disgraceful regrets pursue you to your grave!"

"Then they will not long torment me; for I feel I shall not long survive this final ending of all my ambitious schemes."

"But ere your existence closes, it is but fair and just you should be made aware what sort of life your poor deserted child's has been. Do you recollect the night on which you and your brother followed me into a den in the Cité?"

"Perfectly! But why this question? It freezes me with horror; your looks fill me with dread!"

"As you approached this low haunt of vice, you saw—did you not?—standing at the corners of the low streets with which that neighbourhood abounds, groups of poor, unfortunate, guilty creatures, who—who—But I cannot finish the dreadful tale!" cried Rodolph, concealing his face with his hands. "I dare not proceed; my own words affright me!"

"As they do me! What more have I to learn?"

"You saw them, I ask,—did you not?" resumed Rodolph, making a powerful struggle to overcome his emotion. "You observed these base and degraded creatures, the shame and disgrace of their own sex? But did you remark among them a young girl of about sixteen years of age, lovely as an angel,—a poor child, who, amid the infamy in which she had lived during the last few weeks, still retained a look so pure, so innocent, and good that even the ruffians by whom she was surrounded called her Fleur-de-Marie? Did you observe this,—this fair, this interesting being? Answer,—answer,—tender, exemplary mother!"

"No!" answered Sarah, almost mechanically; "I did not observe the young person you speak of." But the teeth rattled in Sarah's head as she spoke, and her whole frame seemed oppressed with a vague though fearful dread of coming evil.

"Indeed!" cried Rodolph, with a sardonic smile. "Indeed! I am surprised at that! Well, I did remark, and upon the following occasion. Listen attentively to what I am about to relate! During one of the exploring excursions I before spoke of, I found myself in the Cité, not far from the den to which you followed me. A man was just going to beat one of the unfortunate creatures who herd together there; I interposed, and saved her from his brutal rage. Now then, careful, kind, and anxious mother, tell me, if you can, whom it was I saved! Can you not guess? Speak! Say your heart whispers to you who was the miserable being I found in this sink of wickedness and pollution! You know, do you not, without my assistance?"

"No, no,—I cannot say! I beseech you to go—and leave me to my thoughts!"

"Then I will tell you who the wretched, trembling creature I thus saved from brutal violence was. Her name was Fleur-de-Marie!"

"Merciful powers!"

"And is it possible that you, most irreproachable of mothers, that you cannot divine who Fleur-de-Marie was?"

"Be merciful, and kill me; but torture me not thus!"

"She was your daughter—known as the Goualeuse!" cried Rodolph, with almost frantic violence. "Yes, the helpless girl I rescued from the hands of a felon was my own, my lost child!—the offspring of Rodolph of Gerolstein! Oh, there was in this meeting with a daughter I unconsciously saved a visible interposition of the hand of Providence! It brought a blessing to the man who had striven so earnestly to succour his fellow men, and it conveyed a well-merited chastisement for the impious wretch who had dared to aim at his father's life!"

"Alas!" murmured Sarah, falling back in her armchair, and concealing her face with her hands, "my destiny is accomplished! I die, carrying with me out of the world the curse both of God and man!"

"And when," continued Rodolph, with much difficulty restraining his resentment, and vainly striving to repress the sobs which from time to time interrupted his voice, "when I had released her from the ill-usage with which she was menaced, struck with the indescribable sweetness of her voice and manner, as well as by the angelic expression of her lovely countenance, I found it impossible to abandon the interest she excited in me. I led her on to tell me the history of her life, made up of neglect, grief, and misery. With what simple eloquence did she express the yearnings of a heart that had never expanded into virtue beneath a mother's fostering care after a life of innocence, and how touchingly did she dwell on the the destitution which had led her where she was! Ah, madame, to have brought down your pride and haughtiness, you should have listened as I did while your daughter described her early years as passed in shivering beggary, soliciting charity in the streets all day, and at night, when the cold winter's wind pierced through the few rags she wore, creeping to her bed of straw strewn in the corner of a wretched garret; and when the horrible old hag who tortured her had exhausted every other means of inflicting pain on her, what do you think she did, madame? Why, wrenched out her teeth! And all this starving and desolation was experienced by your own child, while you were revelling in every sort of luxury, and indulging in ambitious dreams of sharing a crown!"

"Oh, that I could die, and so escape the direful agony I suffer!"

"Nay you have more to hear! Escaping from the hands of the Chouette, wandering about, penniless and starving, at the tender age of only ten years she was taken up as a vagabond, and as such thrown into prison. And yet, madame, that period was the happiest your poor deserted child had ever known. And each night, though surrounded by her prison walls, she gratefully thanked God that she no longer suffered from hunger, thirst, or blows. It was in a prison she passed those years so precious to the well-being of a young female, those years over which a good and affectionate

mother so carefully and anxiously watches. As her sixteenth year commenced, your daughter, instead of being surrounded by the tender solicitude of loving relatives, and enriched with all the gifts of education, had seen and known nothing more edifying or elevated than the brutal indifference of her gaolers. Yet this naturally pure-minded, beautiful, and ingenuous creature was at that dangerous moment sent forth from her safe asylum—a gaol—and left to wander unaided and unprotected in a world of which she knew so little! Unfortunate, deserted, friendless child!" continued Rodolph, giving free vent to the swelling sobs which had continually impeded his voice, "yours was, indeed, a bitter lot, thrown thus young and helpless amid the mire and pollution of a great city!

"They Took Her to Their Guilty Haunts"

Original Etching by Mercier

"Ah, madame!" cried he, addressing Sarah, "however cold, hard, and selfish your heart may be, you could not have refrained from weeping at the recital of your poor, neglected child's misery and privations! Poor, hapless girl! Sullied, but not corrupted; chaste in heart even amid the degradation into which she had fallen; for each word she uttered breathed the most unfeigned horror and disgust at the mode of life to which she was so fatally condemned. Oh, could you but have known what delicate thoughts, what noble, high-minded inspirations were betrayed in her every word and action! How good, how feeling, how innately charitable was her nature! For it was to relieve a degree of misery even greater than her own that she exhausted the small sum of money she had received on quitting her prison, and which, while it lasted, formed her only defence from the abyss of infamy into which she was afterwards plunged; for there came a time,—a hideous time, when, without employment, food, or shelter, some horrible women found her almost perishing from weakness and want of support. Under pretence of aiding her, they took her to their guilty haunts, administered intoxicating drugs, and—and—"

Rodolph could proceed no further. He uttered a distracting cry, and exclaimed, "And this was my child!"

"May Heaven's punishment be on me for what I have done!" said Sarah, hiding her face as though she feared to meet the light of day.

"Ay!" exclaimed Rodolph. "And it will assuredly cling to you all your life, and haunt even your dying pillow; for it is your neglect and abandonment of all a mother's most sacred duties which have led to all these horrors. Accursed may you ever be for your double wickedness towards your unoffending child! For even after I had succeeded in removing her from the guilt and pollution by which she was surrounded, and had placed her in a safe and peaceful asylum, you set your vile accomplices on to tear her thence! My curse be for ever on you! For it was owing to your causing her to be forcibly carried off which threw her back into the power of Jacques Ferrand."

As Rodolph pronounced this name he suddenly stopped and shuddered. The features of the prince assumed an expression of concentrated rage and hatred impossible to describe; mute and motionless he stood, as though crushed to the earth by the reflection that the murderer of his child was still in existence.

Spite of the increasing weakness of Sarah and the agitation caused by this interview with Rodolph, she was so much struck with his threatening aspect that she faintly exclaimed:

"In mercy say what fresh idea has taken possession of your mind?"

"No, no," responded Rodolph, as though speaking to himself; "till now I thought to spare this monster, believing a life of enforced charity would be to him one of never ending torment. Now I must revenge my infant child, delivered up by him to want and misery! I have to wash out the stain of my daughter's infamy, caused by his diabolical villainy and cupidity; and his blood alone will serve to wipe out that foul wrong! Yes, he dies—and by my hand!" And, with these words, the prince sprang forward to the door.

"Whither are you going?" cried Sarah, extending her supplicating hands towards Rodolph. "Oh, leave me not to die alone—"

"Alone? Oh, no! Fear not to die alone! The spectre of the innocent child, doomed by you to an early grave, will bear you company."

Exhausted and alarmed, Sarah uttered a scream, as though she really beheld the phantom of her child, exclaiming, "Forgive me! I am dying!"

"Die then, accursed woman!" shouted Rodolph, wild with fury. "Now I must have the life of your accomplice, for it was you who delivered your child to this monster!"

And hastening from the apartment, Rodolph ordered himself to be rapidly driven to the residence of Jacques Ferrand.

CHAPTER III

LOVE'S FRENZY

It was nightfall when Rodolph went to the notary's. The pavilion occupied by Jacques Ferrand was plunged in the deepest obscurity; the wind roared and the rain fell as it did on the terrible night when Cecily, before she quitted the notary's abode for ever, had excited the passions of that man to frenzy. Extended on his bed, feebly lighted up by a lamp, Jacques Ferrand was dressed in a black coat and waistcoat. One of the sleeves of his shirt was tucked up and spotted with blood; a ligature of red cloth, which was to be seen on his nervous arm, announced that he had been bled by Polidori, who, standing near his bed, leaned one hand on the couch, and seemed to watch his accomplice's features with uneasiness. Nothing could be more frightfully hideous than was Jacques Ferrand, whilst plunged in that somnolent torpor which usually succeeds violent crises. Of an ashy paleness, his face was bedewed with a cold sweat, and his closed eyelids were so swollen, so injected with blood, that they appeared like two red balls in the centre of his cadaverous countenance.

"Another such an attack and he is a dead man!" exclaimed Polidori, in a low voice. "All the writers on this subject have agreed that all who are attacked by this strange and frightful malady usually sink under it on the seventh day, and it is now six days since that infernal creole kindled the inextinguishable flame which is consuming this man." After some minutes of further meditation, Polidori left the bedside and walked slowly up and down the chamber.

The tempest was still raging without, and fell with such fury on this dilapidated house as to shake it to its centre. Despite his audacity and wickedness, Polidori was superstitious, and dark forebodings came over him; he felt an undefinable uneasiness. In order to dissipate his gloomy thoughts, he again examined Ferrand's features.

"Now," he said, leaning over him, "his eyelids are injected. It would seem as though his blood flowed thither and stagnated. No doubt his sight will now present, as his hearing did just now, some remarkable appearance! What agonies now they endure! How they vary! Oh," he added, with a bitter smile, "when nature determines on being cruel and playing the part of a tormentor, she defies all the efforts of man; and thus in this illness, caused by an erotic frenzy, she submits every sense to unheard-of, superhuman tortures."

The storm still howled without, and Polidori, throwing himself into an armchair, exclaimed, "What a night! What a night! Nothing could be worse for Jacques's present state. Yes," he continued, "the prince is pitiless, and it would have been a thousand times better for Ferrand to have allowed his head to fall upon a scaffold; better fire, the wheel, molten lead, which burns and eats into the flesh, than the miserable punishment he endures! As I see him suffer I begin to feel affright for my own fate! What will become of me? What is in reserve for me as the accomplice of Jacques? To be his gaoler will not suffice for the prince's vengeance. Perhaps a perpetual imprisonment in the prisons of Germany awaits me! But that is better than death! Yet I know that the prince's word is sacred! But I, who have so often violated all laws, human and divine, dare I invoke a sworn promise? Inasmuch as it was to my interest that Jacques should not escape, so will it be equally my interest to prolong his days. But his symptoms grow worse and worse; nothing but a miracle can save him. What is to be done? What is to be done?"

At this moment, a crash without, occasioned by the fall of a stack of chimneys, roused Jacques Ferrand, and he turned on his bed.

Polidori became more and more under the influence of the vague terror which had seized on him. "It is folly to believe in presentments," he said, in a troubled voice; "but the night seems to me very appalling!"

A heavy groan from the notary attracted Polidori's attention. "He is awaking from his torpor," he said, approaching his bed very quietly; "perhaps another crisis may ensue!"

"Polidori!" muttered Jacques Ferrand, still extended on the bed, and with his eyes closed. "Polidori, what noise was that?"

"A chimney that fell," replied Polidori, in a low voice, fearing to strike too loudly on the hearing of his accomplice. "A fearful tempest shakes the house to its foundation; it is a horrible night!"

The notary did not hear, and replied, turning away his head, "Polidori, you are not there, then?"

"Yes, yes, I am here," said Polidori, in a louder voice; "but I answered gently for fear of giving you pain."

"No; I hear you now without any pain such as I had just now, for then it seemed as if the least noise burst like thunder on my brain. And yet in the midst of it all,—of these horrible sufferings,—I distinguish the thrilling voice of Cecily, who was calling to me—"

"Still that infernal woman! But drive away these thoughts,—they will kill you."

"These thoughts are life to me, and, like my life, they resist all tortures."

"Madman that you are, it is these thoughts that cause your tortures! Your illness is your sensual frenzy, which has attained its utmost height. Once again, drive from your brain these thoughts or you will die."

"Drive away these thoughts!" cried Ferrand. "Oh, never, never! When my pains give me one moment's repose, Cecily, the demon whom I cherish and curse, rises before my eyes!"

"What incredible fury! It frightens me!"

"There,—now!" said the notary, with a harsh voice, and his eyes fixed on a dark corner of the room. "I see now the outline of an obscure and white form; there—there!" and he extended his hairy and bony finger in the direction of his sight. "There,—there she is!"

"Jacques, this is death to you!"

"Yes, I see her!" continued Ferrand, with his teeth clenched, and not replying to Polidori. "There she is! And how beautiful! How her black hair floats gracefully down her shoulders, and her small white teeth, shining between her half opened lips,—her lips so red and humid! What pearls! And how her black eyes sparkle and die! Cecily," he added, with inexpressible excitement, "I adore you!"

"Jacques, do not excite yourself with such visions!"

"It is not a vision."

"Mind, mind! Just now, you know, you imagined you heard this woman's love-songs, and your hearing was suddenly smitten with horrible agony. Mind, I say!"

"Leave me,—leave me! What is the use of hearing but to hear, of seeing but to see?"

"But the tortures which follow, miserable wretch!"

"I will brave them all for a deceit, as I have braved death for a reality; and to me this burning image is reality. Ah, Cecily, you are beautiful! Yet why

torture me thus? Would you kill me? Ah, execrable fury, cease,—cease, or I will strangle thee!" cried the notary, in delirium.

"You kill yourself, unhappy man!" exclaimed Polidori, shaking the notary violently, in order to rouse him from his excitement. In vain; Jacques continued:

"Oh, beloved queen, demon of delight, never did I see—" The notary could not finish; he uttered a sudden cry of pain and threw himself back.

"What is it?" inquired Polidori, with astonishment.

"Put out that candle—it shines too brightly. I cannot endure it—it blinds me!"

"What!" said Polidori, more and more surprised. "There is but one lamp covered with its shade, and that shines very feebly."

"I tell you, the light increases here. Now, again—again! Oh, it is too much; it is intolerable!" added Jacques Ferrand, closing his eyes with an expression of increasing suffering.

"You are mad—the room is scarcely lighted. I tell you, open your eyes and you will see."

"Open my eyes! Why, I shall be blinded by torrents of burning light, with which this room is filled. Here! There! On all sides, there are rays of fire—millions of dazzling scintillations!" cried the notary, sitting up. And then again shrieking, he lifted both his hands to his eyes: "But I am blind; this burning fire is through my closed lids,—it burns—devours me! Ah, now my hands shield me a little! But put out the light, for it throws an infernal flame!"

"It is beyond doubt now!" said Polidori. "His sight is struck with the same excess of sensitiveness as his hearing was; he is a dead man! To bleed him in this state would at once destroy him."

A fresh cry ensued, sharp and terrible, from Jacques Ferrand, which resounded in the chamber.

"Villain, put out that lamp! Its glaring beams penetrate through my hands, which they make transparent. I see the blood circulate in the net of my veins, and I try in vain to close my eyelids, for the burning lava will flow in. Oh, what torture! There are gushes as dazzling as if some one were

thrusting a red-hot iron into my eyes. Help, help!" he shrieked, twisting himself on his bed, a prey to the horrible convulsions of his extreme agony.

Polidori, alarmed at the excess of this fresh fit, suddenly extinguished the lamp, and they were both in perfect darkness. At this moment the noise of a carriage was heard at the door in the street. When the chamber had been rendered entirely dark in which Polidori and Ferrand were, the latter was somewhat relieved from his extreme pains.

"Where are you going?" said Polidori, suddenly, when he heard Jacques Ferrand rise, for the deepest obscurity reigned in the apartment.

"I am going to find Cecily!"

"You shall not go; the sight of that room would kill you!"

"Cecily awaits me up there!"

"You shall not go—I will prevent you!" said Polidori, seizing the notary by the arm.

Jacques Ferrand having reached the extremity of exhaustion, was unable to contend with Polidori, who grasped him with a powerful clutch. "What, would you prevent me from seeking Cecily?"

"Yes; and besides, there is a lamp in the next room, and you know what an effect light so recently produced on your sight!"

"Cecily is up above; she is waiting for me, and I would cross a red-hot furnace to rejoin her. Let me go! She called me her old tiger; mind you, then, for my claws are sharp!"

"You shall not go! I will sooner tie you down to your bed like a furious madman!"

"Listen, Polidori! I am not mad—I am perfectly in my senses. I know that Cecily is not really up there; but to me the phantoms of my imagination are equal to realities."

"Silence!" cried Polidori, suddenly, and listening. "I just now thought I heard a carriage stop at the door—and I was not mistaken! Now I hear a sound of voices in the courtyard."

"You want to deceive me," said Jacques; "but I am not so easily deceived."

"But, unhappy man, listen—listen! Don't you hear?"

"Let me go! Cecily is up-stairs; she calls me. Do not make me furious! And now I say to you, mind—beware!"

"You shall not go out!"

"Take care!"

"You shall not go out. It is for my interest that you should remain."

"You would hinder me from seeking Cecily, and it is my interest that you should die. There—there!" said the notary, in a gloomy tone.

Polidori uttered a cry. "Wretch! You have stabbed me in the arm. But your hand was weak—the wound is slight—and you shall not escape me."

"Your wound is mortal, for it was given by the poisoned stiletto of Cecily, which I always carried about me. Await the effects of its poison—Ah! You release me! Then now you are about to die! I was not to be hindered from going up above to find Cecily!" added Jacques, endeavouring to grope his way in darkness to the door.

"Oh," murmured Polidori, "my arm becomes benumbed—a deathlike coldness seizes on me—my knees tremble under me—my blood freezes in my veins—my head whirls around. Help, help! I die!" And he fainted.

The crash of glass doors, opened with so much violence that several panes of glass were broken to atoms, the resounding voice of Rodolph, and the noise of hastily approaching steps, seemed to reply to Polidori's cry of anguish.

Jacques Ferrand having at length discovered the lock of the door, opened it suddenly, with his dangerous stiletto in his hand. At the same instant, as menacing and formidable as the genius of vengeance, the prince entered the apartment from the other side.

"Monster!" he exclaimed, advancing towards Jacques Ferrand, "it was my daughter whom you have killed! You are going—" The prince could not conclude, but recoiled in amazement.

It would seem as if his words had been a thunderbolt to Ferrand, for, casting away his dagger, and raising both his hands to his eyes, the

unhappy wretch fell with his face to the ground, uttering a cry that was scarcely human.

To complete the phenomenon which we have attempted to describe, and the action which profound obscurity had suspended, when Jacques Ferrand entered the apartment so brilliantly lighted up, he was struck with an overwhelming vertigo, just as though he had been suddenly cast into the midst of a torrent of light as blazing as the disk of the sun. It was a fearful spectacle to see the agony of this man, who was twisting in convulsions, tearing the floor with his nails, as if he would have dug himself a hole to escape from the atrocious tortures occasioned by this powerful light. Rodolph, one of his servants, and the porter of the house, who had been compelled to guide the prince hither, were struck with horror.

In spite of his just hatred, Rodolph felt a pity for the unheard-of sufferings of Jacques Ferrand, and desired that he should be laid on the sofa. This was not effected without difficulty, for, from fear of being subjected to the direst influence of the lamp, the notary struggled violently; and when his face was covered with the full glare of the light, he uttered another shriek,—a shriek which chilled Rodolph with terror. After fresh and long torture, the phenomenon ceased by its very violence. Having reached the last bounds of suffering without death following, the visual torment ceased; but, according to the regular course of the malady, a delirious excitement followed the crisis. Jacques Ferrand became suddenly as stiffened in frame as an epileptic; his eyelids, until then obstinately closed, suddenly opened, and, instead of avoiding the light, his eyes fixed themselves on it immovably, the pupils, in a state of extraordinary dilation and fixedness, seeming phosphorescent and internally lighted up. He appeared plunged in a kind of ecstatic contemplation; his body and limbs remained at first in a state of complete immobility, his features being agitated by nervous twitches and spasms. His hideous countenance, thus contracted and twisted, had no longer any human appearance; and it appeared as if the appetites of the animal, by stifling the intelligence of the man, impressed on the features of this wretch a character absolutely bestial. Having attained the mortal point of his madness, he remembered in his delirium the words of Cecily, who had called him her tiger; gradually his reason forsook him, and he imagined he was a tiger. His half uttered, breathless words displayed the disorder of his brain, and the singular aberration that had seized on him. Gradually his limbs, until then stiff and motionless, extended; he fell from the sofa, and tried to rise and walk, but his strength failed him; and he was compelled now to crawl like a reptile, and now to drag himself along on his hands and knees,—going, coming, this way and that way, as his visions impelled or obtained possession of him. Crouched in one of the corners of the room, like

a tiger in his den, his hoarse and furious cries, his grinding of teeth, the convulsive twistings of the muscles of his face and brows, and his ardent gaze, gave him a wild and frightful resemblance to this ferocious brute.

"Tiger—tiger—tiger—that I am!" he said, in a harsh voice, and gathering himself into a heap. "Yes, tiger! What blood! In my cavern what rent carcasses—La Goualeuse—the brother of this widow—a small child, Louise's baby,—these are the carcasses, and my tigress Cecily will have her share." Then looking at his torn fingers, the nails of which had grown immensely during his illness, he added, in broken language, "Oh, my sharp nails—sharp and keen! An old tiger I am, but agile, strong, and bold; no one dares dispute my tigress Cecily with me. Ah, she calls—she calls!" he said, advancing his hideous visage and listening.

After a moment's silence he huddled himself against the wall again and continued: "No! I thought I had heard her; but she is not there. Yet I see her; oh, yes, always—always! Ah, there she is! She calls me; she roars—roars down there! I'm here—I'm here!" and Ferrand dragged himself towards the centre of the room on his hands and knees. Although his strength was exhausted, he made a convulsive leap from time to time, then paused, and listened attentively. "Where is she? I approach—she goes away. Cecily, here is your old tiger!" he cried, as, with a last effort, he arose and balanced himself on his knees. Suddenly falling back with affright, his body bending on his heels, his hair on end, his look haggard, his mouth twisted with terror, his two hands extended, he seemed to struggle with desperation with some invisible object, uttering incoherent words, and exclaiming, in broken tones, "What a bite! Help! My hands are powerless; I cannot drive away these sharp teeth! No, no! Oh! Not such eyes! Help! A serpent—a black snake—with its flat head and fiery eyes. How it looks at me! It is the fiend! Ah, he knows me—Jacques Ferrand—at church—the pious man—always at church! Go, go—cross yourself!" And the notary, raising himself a little, and leaning with one hand on the floor, endeavoured to cross himself with the other. His livid brow was bathed in cold sweat, his eyes began to lose their transparency and become dim, all the symptoms of approaching death manifested themselves.

Rodolph and the other witnesses of the scene remained as motionless and mute as if they had been under the effect of a frightful dream.

"Oh!" continued Jacques Ferrand, still half stretched on the floor, and supporting himself by one hand, "the demon vanishes. I am going to church—I am a holy man—I pray! What, no one will know it? Do you think so? No, no, tempter—be quite sure! Well, let them come—these women—all!

Yes, all—if no one finds it out! But the secret!" he continued, in a tone of exhaustion, "the secret! Ah, here they are! Three! What says this one?—I am Louise Morel! Oh, yes—Louise Morel; I know it! I am only one of the people! You think me handsome? Here—take her! What does she bring me?—her head cut off by the executioner! It looks at me, that head of death! It speaks! The livid lips move and say, 'Come—come—come!' I will not—I will not! Demon, leave me! Go—go—go! And this other woman?—ah, beautiful, beautiful!—Jacques, I am the Duchesse de Lucenay. See my angelic figure,—my smile,—my bold glance! Come, come! Yes, I come. But wait! And who is this one who turns away her face? Oh, Cecily—Cecily! Yes, Jacques, 'tis Cecily! You see the three Graces,—Louise, the duchess, and myself. Choose! Beauty of the people, patrician beauty, the savage beauty of the tropics,—and hell with us! Come—come! Hell with you? Yes!" shrieked Jacques Ferrand, again rising on his knees, and extending his arms to seize these phantoms.

This last effort was followed by a mortal throe, and he fell back again stiff and lifeless; his eyes starting from their orbits, whilst fierce convulsions were visible on his features, unnaturally distorted; a bloody foam on his lips; his voice hoarse and strangling, like that of a person in hydrophobia, for, in its last paroxysm, this fearful malady shows the same symptoms as madness. The breath of this monster was extinguished in the midst of a final and horrible vision, for he stammered forth these words, "Black night!—black spectres!—skeletons of brass, red-hot with fire! Unfold me! Their burning fingers make my flesh smoke; my marrow is scorched! Fleshless, horrid spectre! No—no! Cecily—fire—flame—agony—Cecily!"

These were Jacques Ferrand's last words, and Rodolph left the place overcome with horror.

CHAPTER IV

THE HOSPITAL

It will be remembered that Fleur-de-Marie, saved by La Louve, had been conveyed not far from the Isle du Ravageur to the country-house of Doctor Griffon, one of the surgeons of the hospital, to whom we shall now introduce the reader. This learned doctor, who had obtained from high influence his position in the hospital, considered the wards as a kind of school of experiments, where he tried on the poor the remedies and applications which he afterwards used with his rich clients.

These terrible experiments were, indeed, a human sacrifice made on the altar of science; but Doctor Griffon did not think of that. In the eyes of this prince of science, as they say in our days, the hospital patients were only a matter of study and experiment; and as, after all, there resulted from his essays occasionally a useful fact or a discovery acquired by science, the doctor showed himself as ingenuously satisfied and triumphant as a general after a victory which has been costly in soldiers.

Nothing could be more melancholy than the sombre appearance of the vast ward of the hospital, into which we now introduce the reader. The length of its high, dark walls, pierced here and there with grated windows like those of a prison, was filled with two rows of beds parallel, and faintly lighted by the sepulchral glare of a lamp hanging from the ceiling. The atmosphere is so nauseous, so heavy, that the fresh patients frequently did not become accustomed to it without danger, and this increase of suffering is a sort of tax which every newcomer invariably pays for his miserable sojourn in the hospital. In one of the beds was the corpse of a patient who had just died.

Amongst the females who did not sleep, and who had been present whilst the priest performed the last rites with the dying woman, were three persons whose names have been already mentioned in this history,—Mlle. de Fermont, the daughter of the unfortunate widow ruined by the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand; La Lorraine, the poor laundress, to whom Fleur-de-Marie had formerly given the small sum of money she had left; and Jeanne Duport, the sister of Pique-Vinaigre.

La Lorraine was a woman about twenty, with mild and regular features, but extremely pale and thin; she was consumptive to the last degree, and there was no hope of saving her. She was aware of her condition, and was slowly dying.

"There is another gone!" said La Lorraine, in a faint voice, and speaking to herself. "She will suffer no more; she is very happy!"

"She is very happy if she has no children!" added Jeanne.

"Aren't you asleep, neighbour?" asked La Lorraine. "How are you after your first night here? Last night, when you came in, they made you go to bed directly, and I dared not speak to you, because I heard you sob so."

"Yes, I cried a good deal; but I went to sleep at last, and only awoke when the noise of the doors roused me; and when the priest and the sisters came in and knelt down; I saw it was some woman who was dying, and I said a Pater and Ave for her."

"And so did I; and, as I am ill with the same complaint as she had, I could not help crying out, 'There is one who suffers no more; she is very happy!'"

"Yes, as I said, if she has no children."

"Then you have children?"

"Three!" said Pique-Vinagre's sister with a sigh. "And you?"

"I had a little girl, but I did not keep her long. The poor babe was injured before she was born,—and I was so wretched during my pregnancy! I am a washerwoman in the boats, and worked as long as I could. But everything has an end, and when my strength failed me, bread failed me also. They turned me out of my lodging; and I do not know what would have become of me if a poor woman had not taken me into a cellar, where she was hiding from her husband, who had sworn he would kill her. There I was brought to bed on the straw; but, thanks to goodness, the good woman knew a young girl as good and charitable as an angel from heaven. This young girl had a little money, and took me from the cellar, and put me in a furnished room, where she paid a month in advance, and gave me, besides, a wicker cradle for my baby, and forty francs, with a little linen besides. Thanks to her, I was enabled to resume my work."

"Kind girl! Well, and I, also, met by chance with such another, a young, hard-working sempstress. I was going to see my poor brother, who is a prisoner," said Jeanne, after a moment's hesitation, "and met this work-girl in the prison; and when she heard me tell my brother that I was not happy, she came to me and offered me all in her power, poor girl! I accepted her offer, and she gave me her address; and two days afterwards dear little Mlle. Rigolotte—she is called Rigolotte—sent me an order."

"Rigolette!" exclaimed Lorraine; "how strange! The young girl who was so generous to me often mentioned the name of Mlle. Rigolette in my hearing; they were great friends."

"Well, then," said Jeanne, smiling sadly, "since we are neighbours in bed, we should be friends like our two benefactresses."

"With all my heart! My name is Annette Gerbier, called La Lorraine, a washerwoman."

"And I am Jeanne Duport, a fringe-maker. Oh, it is so fortunate to find in this melancholy place some one not quite a stranger to you, especially when you come for the first time, and are very full of trouble. But don't let us talk of that! Tell me, Lorraine, what was the name of the young girl who was so kind to you?"

"She was called Goualeuse, and was exceedingly handsome, with light brown hair and blue eyes, so soft—oh, so soft! Unfortunately, in spite of her assistance, my poor babe died at two months old. It was so puny, it could hardly breathe!" and La Lorraine wiped a tear from her eye.

"And your husband?"

"I am not married. I washed by the day at a rich tradesman's in my country, and had always been prudent; but the master's son whispered his tales in my ear, and then—When I found in what a state I was, I dared not remain any longer in the country, and M. Jules gave me fifty francs to take me to Paris, assuring me that he would send me twenty francs every month for my lying-in; but since I left I have not had one sou, not even a message. I wrote to him once, but he sent me no answer; and I was afraid to write again, as I saw he did not wish to hear any more of me."

"At least he ought not to have forgotten you, if it was only for the sake of the child!"

"That was the reason; he was angry with me for being in the family way, because it embarrassed him. I regret my child for myself, but not on its own account, poor little darling! It must have been miserable, and have been an orphan very early, for I have not long to live."

"Oh, you ought not to have such ideas at your age. Have you been long ill?"

"Nearly three months. Why, when I had to work for myself and my child, I began too soon. The winter was very cold; I was attacked with a cold on my

chest. I lost my child at this time, too; and nursing her, I neglected myself, and then my sorrow; so that I fell into a consumption—decided—like the actress who has just died."

"There's always hope at your age!"

"The actress was only two years older than I am."

"What, was she an actress who is just dead?"

"Yes. And see what fate is! She had been as beautiful as daylight, and had money, carriages, diamonds; but, unfortunately, the smallpox disfigured her, and then came want and misery, and, at last, death in a hospital. No one ever came to see her; and yet, four or five days ago, she told me, she had written to a gentleman whom she had formerly known in her gay days, and who had been much in love with her. She wrote to him to beg him to claim her dead body, because she was wretched at the idea of thinking she would be dissected—cut in pieces."

"And did the gentleman come?"

"No. Every moment she was asking for him and perpetually saying, 'Oh, he'll come! Oh, he'll be sure to come!' And yet she died without any one coming, and what she so much dreaded will befall her poor frame. After having been rich and happy, to die so is very terrible! We, at least, only change our miseries!"

"I wish," said Lorraine, after a moment's hesitation, "I wish you would render me a service!"

"What is it?"

"If I die, as is probable, before you go from here, will you claim my body? I have the same dread as the actress, and have laid aside the small sum of money necessary to bury me."

"Oh, do not have such ideas!"

"Still promise me, all the same!"

"But let us hope the case will not happen!"

"Yes; but if it does happen—thanks to you, I shall not have the same misery as the actress."

"Poor woman! After having been rich to come to such an end!"

"The actress is not the only one in this room who has been rich."

"Who else?"

"A young girl of about fifteen or so, brought here yesterday evening. She was so weak that they were obliged to support her. The sister said that the young lady and her mother were very reputable persons, who had been ruined."

"And is her mother here, too?"

"No, the mother was too ill to be moved. The poor girl would not leave, so they took advantage of her fainting to convey her. The proprietor of a wretched lodging-house, for fear they should die in his rooms, made the report at the police station. She is there—in the bed opposite you."

"And she is fifteen? The age of my eldest girl!" And Jeanne Duport wept bitterly.

"Pardon me," said La Lorraine, "if I have given you pain unconsciously in speaking of your children! Are they, too, ill?"

"Alas! I do not know. What will become of them if I remain here for a week?"

"And your husband?"

"As we are friends together, Lorraine, I will tell you my troubles, as you have told me yours, and that will comfort me. My husband was an excellent workman, but became dissipated, and forsook me and my children, after having sold everything we possessed. I went to work; some good souls aided me, and I began to get easy again, and was bringing up my little family as well as I could, when my husband returned with a vile creature, his mistress, and again stripped me of everything; and so I had to begin all over again."

"Poor Jeanne! You could not help it."

"I ought to have separated myself from him in law,—but, as my brother says, the law is too dear! I went to see my brother one day, and he gave me three francs, which he had collected amongst the prisoners on telling his tales. So I took courage, believing my husband would not return for a very long time, as he had taken all he could from us. But I was mistaken," added

the poor creature, with a shudder; "there was my poor Catherine still to take!"

"Your daughter?"

"You will hear—you will hear! Three days ago, as I was at work with my children around me, my husband came in. I saw by his look that he had been drinking. 'I have come for Catherine,' says he. I took my daughter's arm, and I said to Duport, 'Where do you want to take her to?' 'What's that to you? She's my daughter. Let her make up her bundle and come along with me.' At these words my blood ran cold in my veins; for you must know, Lorraine, that that bad woman is still with my husband, and it makes me shudder all over to say it. But so it was; she had long been urging him to earn something by our daughter, who is young and pretty. 'Take away Catherine?' said I to Duport; 'Never! I know what that wicked woman would do with her.' 'I say,' said my husband, whose lips were white with rage, 'do not oppose me or I'll kill you!' and then he seized my daughter by the arm, saying, 'Come along, Catherine!' The poor child threw her arms around my neck, and burst into tears, exclaiming, 'I will stay with mother!' When he saw this, Duport became furious, tore my daughter from me, and hit me a blow in my stomach, which knocked me down; and when I was on the ground—he was very drunk, you may be sure—he trampled on me and hurt me dreadfully. My poor children begged for mercy on their knees,—Catherine, too; and then he said to her, swearing like a lunatic, 'If you will not come with me I'll do for your mother!' I was spitting blood; I felt half dead, and could not move an inch. But I cried to Catherine, 'Let him kill me first!' 'What, you won't be quiet?' said Duport, giving me another kick, which deprived me of all consciousness; and when I returned to myself, I found my two little boys crying bitterly."

"And your daughter?"

"Gone!" exclaimed the unhappy mother, with convulsive sobs. "Yes; gone. My other children told me that their father had beaten them and threatened to finish me. Then the poor girl was quite distracted and embraced me and her brothers, weeping dreadfully; and then my husband dragged her away. Ah, that bad woman was waiting for him on the stairs, I know!"

"And didn't you complain to the police?"

"At first I felt only grief at Catherine's departure; but I felt soon great pain in all my limbs,—I could not walk. Alas, what I had so long dreaded had happened! Yes, I told my brother that one day my husband would beat me

so that I should be obliged to go to the hospital,—and then what would become of my children? And now here I am in the hospital, and what, indeed, will become of my children? The neighbours went for the commissary, who came. I didn't like to denounce Duport, but I was obliged, in consequence of my daughter; only I said that in our quarrel about our daughter he had pushed me, that it was nothing, but I wanted my daughter Catherine because I feared the bad woman with whom my husband lived would be the ruin of her."

"Well, and what did the commissary say?"

"Why, that my husband had a right to take away his daughter, as we were not separated; that it would be a misfortune if my daughter turned out badly from evil counsels, but that they were only suppositions, after all, and that was not sufficient for a complaint against my husband. 'You have but one way—plead in the courts, demand a separation—and then the beatings your husband has given you, his behaviour with a vile woman, will be in your favour, and they will force him to restore your daughter to you; but, otherwise, he has a right to keep her with him.' 'But how can I plead when I have my children to feed?' 'What can be done?' said the clerk; 'that's the only way!'" and poor Jeanne sobbed bitterly, adding, "And he is right—that is the only way! And so, in three months, my daughter may be walking the streets, whilst if I could plead and be separated it would not happen. Alas, poor Catherine, so gentle and so affectionate!"

"Oh, you have, indeed, a bitter sorrow; and yet I was complaining!" said La Lorraine, drying her eyes. "And your other children?"

"Why, on their account, I did all I could to bear the pains I was suffering, and not go to the hospital; but I could not go on. I vomited blood three or four times a day, and a fever took away the use of my arms and legs, and I was at last unable to work. If I am quickly cured I may return to my children, if they are not first dead from hunger or locked up as beggars. Who will maintain them whilst I am here?"

"Oh, it is very terrible! Have you no kind neighbours?"

"They are as poor as myself, and have five children already. It is very hard, but they promised to do a little something for them for a week; that is all they could do. And so, cured or not cured, I must go out in a week."

"But your friend, Mademoiselle Rigolette?"

"Unfortunately, she is in the country, and going to be married, the porter said. No, I must be cured in eight days; and I asked all the doctors who spoke to me yesterday, but they laughed as they replied, 'You must ask the principal surgeon.' When will he come, Lorraine?"

"Hush! I think I hear him now. And no one is allowed to speak during his visit," replied Lorraine, in a low voice.

The daylight had appeared during the conversation of the two women. A bustle announced the arrival of Doctor Griffon, who entered the room accompanied by his friend, the Comte de Saint-Remy, who took so warm an interest in Madame de Fermont and her daughter, but was very far from expecting to find the unfortunate young lady in the hospital. As he entered the ward, the cold and harsh features of Doctor Griffon seemed to expand. Casting around him a look of satisfaction and authority, he answered the obsequious reception of the sisters by a protecting nod. The coarse and austere countenance of the old Comte de Saint-Remy was imprinted with the deepest sorrow. His ineffective attempts to find any traces of Madame de Fermont, and the ignominious baseness of the vicomte, who had preferred a life of infamy to death, overwhelmed him with grief.

"Well," said Doctor Griffon to him, with an air of triumph, "what do you think of my hospital?"

"Really," replied M. de Saint-Remy, "I do not know why I yielded to your desire; nothing is more harrowing than the sight of rooms filled with sick persons. Since I entered, my feelings have been severely distressed."

"Bah, bah! In a quarter of an hour you will think no more of it. You, who are a philosopher, will find here ample matter for observation; and besides, it would have been a shame for you, one of my oldest friends, not to have known the theatre of my glory, my labours, and seen me at work. I take pride in my profession—is that wrong?"

"No, certainly; and after your excellent care of Fleur-de-Marie, whom you have saved, I could refuse you nothing."

"Well, have you ascertained anything as to the fate of Madame de Fermont and her daughter?"

"Nothing!" replied M. de Saint-Remy, with a sigh. "And my last hope is in Madame d'Harville, who takes such deep interest in these two unfortunates; she may find some traces of them. Madame d'Harville, I hear, is expected

daily at her house; and I have written to her on the subject, begging her to reply as soon as possible."

During the conversation between M. de Saint-Remy and Doctor Griffon, several groups were formed gradually around a large table in the middle of the apartment, on which was a register in which the pupils of the hospital (who were to be recognised by their long white aprons) came in their turns to sign the attendance-sheet.

"You see, my dear Saint-Remy, that my staff is pretty considerable."

"It is indeed! But all these beds are occupied by women, and the presence of so many men must inspire them with painful confusion!"

"All these fine feelings must be left at the door, my dear Alcestis. Here we begin on the living those experiments and studies which we complete on the dead body in the amphitheatre."

"Doctor, you are one of the best and worthiest of men, and I owe you my life, and I recognise all your excellent qualities; but the practice and love of your art makes you take views of certain questions which are most revolting to me. I leave you. These are things which disgust and pain me; and I foresee that it would be a real punishment to me to be present at your visit. I will wait for you here at the table."

"What a strange person you are with these scruples! But I will not let you have quite your own way. So remain here till I come for you."

"Now, then, gentlemen," said Doctor Griffon; and he began his round, followed by his numerous auditory.

On reaching the first bed on the right hand, the curtains of which were closed, the sister said to the doctor:

"Sir, No. 1 died at half past four o'clock this morning."

"So late? It astonishes me. Yesterday morning I would not have given her the day through. Has her body been claimed?"

"No, sir."

"So much the better. It is a very fine one; we will not dissect it, but I will make a man happy." Then turning to one of the pupils, "My dear Dunoyer,

you have long desired a subject; your name is down for the first, and it is yours."

"Oh, sir, you are too good."

"I am only desirous of rewarding your zeal, my dear fellow; but mark the subject—take possession; there are so many who covet it."

As the doctor passed onwards, the pupil, with his scalpel, incised very delicately an F. and D. (his initials) on the arm of the defunct actress, in order "to take possession," as the doctor termed it. And the round continued.

"Lorraine," said Jeanne Duport, in a low voice, to her neighbour, "who is all this crowd of people with the surgeon?"

"It is pupils and students."

"Oh, will all these young men look on whilst the doctor asks me questions and examines me?"

"Alas, yes!"

"But it is in my chest that I am ill; will they examine me before all these men?"

"Yes—yes—it must be so. I cried bitterly the first time, and thought I should have died of shame. I resisted, and they threatened to send me away, and that made me so ill. Only imagine, almost naked before everybody! It is very painful."

"Before the doctor alone I can easily comprehend it is necessary, and even that is a great deal to submit to; but why before all these young men?"

"They learn and practise on us; that is why we are here,—why they admit us into the hospital."

"Ah, I understand," said Jeanne Duport, with bitterness; "they give us nothing for nothing. Yet still there are times when even that could not be. Suppose my poor girl Catherine, who is only fifteen, were to come to the hospital, would they dare with her, before so many young men, to—Oh, no! I would rather see her die at home!"

"Oh, if she came here she must make up her mind to do as the others do,—as you and I. But hold your tongue; if the poor young lady in front hears you—they say she was rich, and, perhaps, has never left her mother before,—and yet her turn comes now. Only think how confused and distressed she will be."

"I shudder when I think of her! Poor child!"

"Hush, Jeanne! Here is the doctor!" said Lorraine.

After having quickly visited several patients who presented nothing remarkable in their cases, the doctor at last came to Jeanne. At the sight of this crowd coming around her bed, anxious to see and learn, the poor creature, overcome with fear and shame, pulled the bed-clothes tightly around her. The severe and meditative countenance of the doctor, his penetrating glance, his eyebrows, always drawn down by his reflective habit, his abrupt mode of speech, impatient and quick, increased the alarm of poor Jeanne.

"A new subject!" said the doctor, as he read the placard in which was inscribed the nature of the patient's malady, and throwing on Jeanne a lengthened look of scrutiny. There was a profound silence amongst the assistants, who, in imitation of the prince of science, fixed a scrutinising glance on the patient. After an examination of several minutes, the doctor, remarking something wrong in the yellow tint of the patient's eyeball, approached her more closely, and, raising the lid with his finger, examined it silently. Then several of the students, responding to the kind of mute invitation of their professor, drew near, and gazed at Jeanne's eye with attention. The doctor then began:

"Your name?"

"Jeanne Duport," she murmured, more and more alarmed.

"Are you married?"

"Alas, yes, sir!" with a profound sigh.

"Have you any children?"

Here, instead of replying, the poor mother gave way to a flood of tears.

"It is no use crying,—answer! Have you any children?"

"Yes, sir,—two little boys, and a girl of sixteen."

Then followed a string of questions impossible to repeat, but to which Jeanne could only reply in stammering, and after many severe rebukes from the doctor. The poor woman was overwhelmed with shame, compelled as she was to reply aloud to such questions before such a numerous auditory.

The doctor, completely absorbed by scientific feelings, did not give the smallest heed to Jeanne's distress, and continued:

"How long have you been ill?"

"Four days, sir," replied Jeanne, drying her tears.

"Tell us how your illness first disclosed itself."

"Sir,—why,—there are so many persons here, that I dare not."

"Pooh! Where do you come from, my dear woman?" inquired the doctor, impatiently; "would you like to have a confessional brought? Come, come, make haste!"

"Sir, these are family matters."

"Oh, be easy, we are all family men here; a large family, too, as you see," added the prince of science, who was in very high spirits that day. "Come, come, let us have an end of this."

More and more alarmed, Jeanne, stammering and hesitating at each moment, said:

"I had—a quarrel with my husband—about the children; I mean my eldest daughter, that he wanted to take away; and I wouldn't agree, because of a wicked woman he lived with, and who might give bad advice to my daughter. So then, my husband, who was tipsy,—yes, sir,—for if not, he'd never have done it,—my husband gave me a very hard push, and I fell; and then, soon after, I began to vomit blood."

"Pooh, pooh, pooh! Your husband pushed you, and you fell; you describe it very nicely! Why, he did more than push you; he must have struck you in the stomach; perhaps trampled on you, or kicked you? Come, answer,—let's have the truth."

"Oh, sir, I assure you that he was tipsy; but for that he would never have been so wicked."

"Good or wicked, drunk or sober, it is not to the purpose, my good woman. I am not a public officer, and only want a fact accurately described. Now, were you not knocked down, and trampled under foot?"

"Yes!" said Jeanne, weeping; "and yet I never gave him any cause of complaint. I worked as long as I could, and—"

"The epigastrium must be very painful. Don't you feel great heat around that region?—uneasiness, lassitude, nausea?"

"Yes, sir. I was quite worn out when I gave up, if not, I should never have left my children; and then, my Catherine! Oh, if you—"

"Put out your tongue," said the doctor, again interrupting the patient.

This appeared so strange to Jeanne, who thought to excite the doctor's pity, that she did not reply immediately, but looked at him with alarm.

"Show me your tongue, which you know so well how to use," said the doctor, with a smile; and he pushed down Jeanne's lower jaw with the end of his finger. After having had his pupils successively, and for some time, feel and examine the subject's tongue, in order to ascertain its colour and dryness, Jeanne, overcoming her fear for a moment, said, in a tremulous voice:

"Sir, I was going to say to you, my neighbours, who are as poor as myself, have been so kind as to take care of my children for a week only, which is a great deal; so at the end of that time I must be back home again. So I beg of you, in God's name, to cure me as quickly as you can, or nearly so, that I may return to work; and I have but a week before me,—for—"

"Discoloured face,—complete state of prostration,—yet the pulse strong, quick, and regular," said the doctor, imperturbably, and pointing to Jeanne. "Remark her well, gentlemen: oppression, heat in the epigastric regions. All these symptoms certainly betoken hæmatemesis, probably complicated by hepatitis, caused by domestic troubles, as is indicated by the yellow discoloration of the eyeball. The subject has had violent blows in the regions of the epigastrium and abdomen; the vomiting blood is the necessary consequence of some organic injury to the viscera. On this point let me call your attention to a very curious, remarkably curious, feature. The post-mortem appearances of those who die of the injuries under which the subject is suffering frequently present remarkable appearances; frequently

the malady, very severe and very dangerous, carries off the patient in a few days, and then no trace of it is found."

Doctor Griffon then, throwing off the bed-clothes, nearly denuded poor Jeanne. It would be repugnant to describe the struggle of the unfortunate creature, who, in her shame, implored the doctor and his auditory. But at the threat, "You will be turned out of the hospital, if you do not submit to the established usages,"—a threat so terrible for those to whom the hospital is the sole and last refuge,—Jeanne submitted to a public scrutiny, which lasted a long time, very long, for Doctor Griffon analysed and explained every symptom; and then the most studious of the pupils declared their wish to unite practice with theory, and also examine the patient. The end of this scene was that poor Jeanne felt such extreme emotion that she fell into a nervous crisis, for which Doctor Griffon gave an extra prescription.

The round continued, and the doctor soon reached the bed of Mlle. Claire de Fermont, a victim, like her mother, to the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand.

Mlle, de Fermont, dressed in a cap of the hospital, was leaning her head languidly on the bolster of the bed. In spite of the ravages of her malady, there might be detected on her open and sweet countenance the traces of a beauty full of distinction. After a night of keen anguish, the poor girl had fallen into a kind of feverish stupor, and when the doctor and his scientific train entered the ward she was not aroused by the noise.

"Another first subject, gentlemen," said the prince of science. "Disease, a slow nervous fever; if the receiving surgeon is not mistaken in the symptoms, this is a real godsend. For a long time I have desired a slow nervous fever, for that is not an ordinary complaint amongst the poor. These affections are usually produced after severe trouble in the social position of the subject, and I need hardly add that the higher the position of the patient, the more deep is the disease. It is, moreover, a complaint the more remarkable from its peculiar characteristics. It is traced to the very remotest antiquity, and the writings of Hippocrates have no doubt reference to it. This fever, I repeat, has almost always been produced from the most violent grief, and grief is as old as the world. Yet, strange to say, before the eighteenth century, this disease was never accurately described by any author; it was Huxham, whom the science of medicine of the age so highly honours,—Huxham, I say, who first defined accurately nervous fever; and yet it is a malady of the olden time," added the doctor, jocosely. "Eh, eh, eh! It belongs to the great, antique, and illustrious family of febris, whose origin is lost in the darkness of ages. But we may be rejoicing too soon; let us see if really we have the good fortune to possess here a sample of this curious affection;

it would be doubly desirable, inasmuch as, for a very long time, I have been anxious to try the effect of the internal use of phosphorus. Yes, gentlemen," continued the doctor, hearing amongst his auditory a kind of shudder of curiosity,—"yes, gentlemen, of phosphorus; it is a singular experiment that I wish to try, and a bold one, and but audaces fortuna juvat, and the opportunity would be excellent. We will first try if the subject offers in all parts of the body, and particularly in the chest, that miliary eruption, so symptomatic according to Huxham, and you will assure yourselves, by feeling the subject, of the kind of uneven surface which this eruption produces. But do not let us sell the skin of our bear before we have killed it," added the prince of science, who was decidedly in very high spirits. And he shook Mlle. de Fermont's shoulder very gently, in order to wake her.

The young girl started and opened her large eyes, hollowed by the malady. It is impossible to describe her amaze and alarm. Whilst a crowd of men surrounded her bed, all fixing their eyes upon her, she felt the doctor's hand gliding under the quilt into her bed, in order to take her hand and feel her pulse. Mlle. de Fermont, collecting all her strength, in a cry of anguish, exclaimed:

"Mother! Help! Mother! Mother!"

By an almost providential chance, at the moment when the cries of Mlle. de Fermont made the old Count de Saint-Remy spring from his chair, for he recognised the voice, the door of the apartment opened, and a young lady, dressed in mourning, entered very hastily, accompanied by the governor of the hospital; this lady was the Marquise d'Harville.

"I beg of you, sir," she said to him, "to lead me to Mlle. de Fermont."

"Be so kind as to follow me," he replied, respectfully; "the young lady is in No. 17."

"Unhappy girl! Here—here!" said Madame d'Harville, drying her tears. "Ah, this is really frightful!"

The marquise, preceded by the governor, rapidly approached the group assembled beside the bed of Mlle. de Fermont, when they heard these words uttered with indignation:

"I tell you it is infamous murder; you will kill her, sir!"

"But, my dear Saint-Remy, do pray hear me!"

"I repeat, sir, that your conduct is atrocious! I consider Mlle. de Fermont as my daughter, and I forbid you going near her; I will have her immediately removed hence."

"But, my dear friend, it is a case of slow nervous fever, very rare; I am desirous of trying phosphorus. It is a unique occasion. Promise me, at least, that I shall have the care of her, and take her where you like, since you are determined to deprive us of so valuable a clinical subject."

"If you were not a madman, you would be a monster!" replied the count.

Clémence listened to these words with increasing anguish, but the crowd was so dense around the bed that the governor was obliged to say, in a loud voice:

"Make way, if you please, for the Marquise d'Harville, who has come to see No. 17."

At these words, the pupils made way with equal haste and respectful admiration when they saw Clémence's lovely face, which was radiant with so much emotion.

"Madame d'Harville!" exclaimed the Count de Saint-Remy, pushing the doctor rudely aside, and going hastily towards Clémence. "Ah, it is God who sends one of his angels here! Madame, I knew you took an interest in these two unfortunate beings, and, more happy than me, you have found them, whilst it was chance only that led me hither, to be present at a scene of unparalleled barbarity. Unhappy child! See, madame; and you, gentlemen, in the name of your sisters and daughters, have pity, I entreat, on a girl of sixteen, and leave her alone with madame and these good sisters; when she recovers her senses, I will have her conveyed hence."

"Very well, let it be so; I will sign her discharge!" exclaimed the doctor; "but I will not lose sight of her; she is a subject of mine, and I will attend her, do what you will. I'll not risk the phosphorus, I promise that; but I will pass my nights, if needs be, as I passed them with you, ungrateful Saint-Remy, for this fever is as curious as yours was; they are two sisters, who have an equal right to my interest."

"Confound the man! Why has he so much science?" said the count, knowing that he could not confide the young girl to more able hands.

"Eh! It is simple enough," said the doctor, in a whisper. "I have a great deal of science because I study, because I experimentalise, because I risk and

practise a great deal on my subjects; and so, old fellow, I shall still have my slow nervous fever,—eh?"

"Yes; but is it safe to move this young girl?"

"Certainly."

"Then, for the love of heaven, disappear with your train!"

"Come, gentlemen," said the prince of science, "we shall be deprived of a precious study; but I will make my reports on it to you." And Doctor Griffon, with his suite, continued his round, leaving M. de Saint-Remy and Madame d'Harville with Mlle. de Fermont.

During this scene, Mlle. de Fermont, still in a swoon, had been attended to by Clémence and the two nuns. Saint-Remy said in a low tone to Clémence:

"And the mother of this unhappy girl, madame?"

The marchioness replied, in a voice deeply affected:

"She has no longer a mother, sir. I learnt yesterday only, on my return, the address of Madame de Fermont, and her dying condition; at one o'clock in the morning I went to her with a medical man. Ah, sir, what a fiction! It was misery in all its horror! And no hope of saving the poor mother, whose last words were, 'My daughter!'"

"What a death! Good heaven! And she so tender, so devoted a mother,—it is frightful!"

"I will watch her until she can be moved," said Clémence, "and, when she can be removed, I will take her with me."

"Ah, madame, bless you for what you say and do!" said M. de Saint-Remy. "But excuse me for not having before mentioned my name to you, I am the Comte de Saint-Remy; Madame de Fermont's husband was my most intimate friend. I live at Angers, and left that city from uneasiness at not receiving any news of these two noble and excellent women; they had until then lived in that city, and were said to be completely ruined, which was the more terrible as until then they had lived in ease and plenty."

"Ah, sir! you do not know all; Madame de Fermont was shamefully robbed."

"By her notary, perhaps? I had my suspicions."

"That man was a monster, sir! Alas! that was not the only crime he committed; but fortunately," said Clémence, with excitement, as she thought of Rodolph, "a providential genius had compelled him to do justice, and I was enabled to close Madame de Fermont's eyes, assuring her as to the future provision for her daughter; thus her death was rendered less cruel."

"I understand; knowing her daughter to have your support henceforth, my poor friend died more tranquil."

"Not only is my interest excited for ever towards Mlle. de Fermont, but her fortune will be restored to her."

"Her fortune! The notary—"

"Has been compelled to refund the money. This man had caused the assassination of Madame de Fermont's brother, in order to make it appear that the unhappy man had committed suicide, after having dissipated his sister's fortune; but he has now placed the sum in the hands of the worthy curé of Bonne-Nouvelle, and it will be given to Mlle. de Fermont. The infamous wretch has committed another murder equally infamous!"

"What mean you, madame?"

"But a few days since he got rid of an unfortunate young girl, whom he had an interest in drowning, assured that her death would be attributed to accident."

M. de Saint-Remy started, looked at Madame d'Harville with surprise, as he recollected Fleur-de-Marie, and exclaimed:

"Ah, madame, what a singular coincidence! This young girl they sought to drown—"

"In the Seine, near Asnières, as I am told."

"'Tis she! 'Tis she!" cried Saint-Remy.

"Of whom do you speak, sir?"

"Of the young girl whom this monster sought to drown. Do you know her, madame?"

"Poor dear! I love her tenderly. Ah, if you knew, sir, how lovely, how prepossessing she was! But tell me what you mean."

"Doctor Griffon and I gave her the first assistance."

"First assistance to her! And in what way?"

"At the Isle du Ravageur, where she was saved."

"Saved! Fleur-de-Marie saved?"

"By a worthy creature, who, at the risk of her life, saved her from the Seine. But what ails you, madame?"

"Ah, sir, I fear to believe in such good fortune; but, I pray of you, tell me what is the appearance of this young girl?"

"Singularly beautiful!"

"Large, blue eyes,—light brown hair?"

"Yes, madame."

"And when she was drowned, there was an elderly woman with her?"

"It was only yesterday she was well enough to speak, and she is still very weak; she said an elderly woman accompanied her."

"Praised be Heaven!" said Clémence, clasping her hands with fervour; "I can now tell him that his protégée still lives! What joy for him who, in his last letter, spoke to me of this poor child with such bitter regrets! Excuse me, sir, but you know not how happy your intelligence renders me, and will make a person who, more than myself, has loved and protected Fleur-de-Marie. But, for mercy's sake, tell me, where is she at this moment?"

"Near Asnières, in the house of one of the surgeons of this hospital, Doctor Griffon; she was taken there, and has had every attention."

"And is she out of danger?"

"Yes, madame, but only during the last two or three days, and to-day she will be permitted to write to her protector."

"Oh, I will undertake to do that, sir; or, rather, I shall have the pleasure of taking her to those who, believing her dead, regret her so bitterly!"

"I can understand those regrets, madame, for it is impossible to see Fleur-de-Marie without being charmed with her grace and sweetness. The woman who saved her, and has since watched her night and day as she would an infant, is a courageous and devoted person, but of a disposition so excitable that she has been called La Louve."

"I know La Louve," said the marquise, smiling as she thought of the pleasure she had in store for the prince. What would have been her ecstasy, had she known she was the daughter he believed dead that she was about to restore to Rodolph! Then, addressing the nun who had given some spoonfuls of a draught to Mlle. de Fermont, she said, "Well, sister, is she recovering?"

"Not yet, madame, she is so weak. Poor, young thing! One can scarcely feel her pulse beat."

"I will wait, then, until she is sufficiently restored to be put into my carriage; but tell me, sister, amongst these unfortunate patients, do you know any who particularly deserve interest and pity, and to whom I could be useful before I leave the hospital?"

"Ah, madame, Heaven has sent you here!" said the sister. "There," and she pointed to the bed of Pique-Vinaigre's sister, "is a poor woman much to be pitied, and very bad; she only came in when quite exhausted, and is past all comfort, because she has been obliged to abandon her two small children, who have no other support in the world. She said just now to the doctor that she must go out, cured or not, in a week, because her neighbours had promised to take care of her children for that time only and no longer."

"Take me to her bed, I beg of you, sister," said Madame d'Harville, rising and following the nun.

Jeanne Duport, who had scarcely recovered from the violent shock which the investigations of Doctor Griffon had caused her, had not remarked the entrance of Madame d'Harville; what, then, was her astonishment, when the marquise, lifting up the curtains of her bed, and looking at her with great pity and kindness, said:

"My good woman, do not be uneasy about your children, I will take care of them; so only think of getting well, that you may go to them."

Poor Jeanne thought she was in a dream, she could only clasp her hands in speechless gratitude, and gaze on her unknown benefactress.

"Once again assure yourself, my worthy woman, and have no uneasiness," said the marquise, pressing in her small and delicate white hands the burning hand of Jeanne Duport; "and, if you prefer it, you shall leave the hospital this very day and be nursed at home; everything shall be done for you, so that you need not leave your children; and, if your lodging is unhealthy or too small, you shall have one found that is more convenient and suitable, so that you may be in one room and your children in another; you shall have a good nurse, who will watch them whilst she attends to you, and when you entirely recover, if you are out of work, I will take care that

you are provided for until work comes, and I will also take care of your children for the future."

"Ah, what do I hear?" said Jeanne Duport, all trembling and hardly daring to look her benefactress in the face. "Why are so many kindnesses showered on me? It is not possible! I leave the hospital, where I have wept and suffered so much, and not leave my children again! Have a nurse! Why, it is a miracle!"

"It is no miracle, my good woman," said Clémence, much affected. "What I do for you," she added, blushing slightly at the remembrance of Rodolph, "is inspired by a generous spirit, who has taught me to sympathise with misfortune, and it is he whom you should thank."

"Ah, madame, I shall ever bless you!" said Jeanne, weeping.

"Well, then, you see, Jeanne," said Lorraine, much affected, "there are also amongst the rich Rigolettes and Goualeuses with good hearts."

Madame d'Harville turned with much surprise towards Lorraine when she heard her mention the two names.

"Do you know La Goualeuse and a young workwoman called Rigolette?" she inquired of Lorraine.

"Yes, madame; La Goualeuse—good little angel!—did for me last year, according to her small means, what you are going to do for Jeanne. Yes, madame, and it does me good to say and repeat it to everybody, La Goualeuse took me from a cellar in which I had been brought to bed on the straw, and—dear, good girl!—placed me and my child in a room where there was a good bed and a cradle; La Goualeuse spent the money from pure charity, for she scarcely knew me, and was poor herself. But how good it was! Was it not, madame?" said Lorraine.

"Yes, yes; charity from the poor to the poor is great and holy!" said Clémence, with her eyes moistened by soft tears.

"It was the same with Mademoiselle Rigolette, who, according to her little means as a sempstress," said Lorraine, "some days ago offered her kind services to Jeanne."

"How singular!" said Clémence to herself, more and more affected, for each of these two names, Goualeuse and Rigolette, reminded her of a noble action of Rodolph. "And you, my child, what can I do for you?" she said to Lorraine; "I could wish that the names you pronounce with so much gratitude should also bring you good fortune."

"Thank you, madame," said Lorraine, with a smile of bitter resignation. "I had a child, it is dead; I am in a decline and past all hope."

"What a gloomy idea! At your age there is always hope."

"Oh, no, madame, I saw a consumptive patient die last night. Yet as you are so good, a great lady like you must be able to do anything."

"Tell me, what do you wish?"

"Since I have seen the actress who is dead so distressed at the idea of being cut in pieces after her death, I have the same fear. Jeanne had promised to claim my body, and have me buried."

"Ah, this is horrible!" said Clémence, shuddering. "Be tranquil, although I hope the time is far distant, yet, when it comes, be assured that your body shall rest in holy ground."

"Oh, thank you—thank you, madame!" exclaimed Lorraine. "Might I beg to kiss your hand?"

Clémence presented her hand to the parched lips of Lorraine.

Half an hour afterwards, Madame d'Harville, who had been painfully affected by Lorraine's condition, accompanied by M. de Saint-Remy, took with her the young orphan, from whom she concealed her mother's death.

The same day, Madame d'Harville's man of business, after having obtained favourable particulars respecting Jeanne Duport's character, hired for her some large and airy rooms, and the same evening she was conveyed to her new residence, where she found her children and a nurse. The same individual was instructed to claim and inter the body of Lorraine when she died. After having conveyed Mlle. de Fermont to her own house, Madame d'Harville started for Asnières with M. de Saint-Remy, in order to go to Fleur-de-Marie, and take her to Rodolph.

CHAPTER V

HOPE

Spring was approaching, and already the sun darted a more genial warmth, the sky was blue and clear, while the balmy air seemed to bring life and breath upon its invigorating wings. Among the many sick and suffering who rejoiced in its cheering presence was Fleur-de-Marie, who, leaning on the arm of La Louve, ventured to take gentle exercise in the little garden belonging to Doctor Griffon's house; the vivifying rays of the sun, added to the exertion of walking, tinged the pale, wasted countenance of La Goualeuse with a faint glow that spoke of returning convalescence. The dress she had worn when rescued from a watery grave had been destroyed in the haste with which the requisite attempts had been made for her resuscitation, and she now appeared in a loose wrapping dress of dark blue merino, fastened around her slender waist by worsted cord of the same colour as the robe.

"How cheering the sun shines!" said she to La Louve, as she stopped beneath a thick row of trees, planted beside a high gravelled walk facing the south, and on which was a stone bench. "Shall we sit down and rest ourselves here a few minutes?"

"Why do you ask me?" replied La Louve, almost angrily; then taking off her nice warm shawl, she folded it in four, and, kneeling down, placed it on the ground, which was somewhat moist from the extreme shelter afforded by the overhanging trees, saying, as she did so, "Here, put your feet on this."

"Oh, but La Louve!" said Fleur-de-Marie, perceiving too late the kind intention of her companion, "I cannot suffer you to spoil your beautiful shawl in that way."

"Don't make a fuss about nothing; I tell you the ground is cold and moist. There, that will do." And, taking the tiny feet of Fleur-de-Marie, she forcibly placed them on her shawl.

"You spoil me terribly, La Louve."

"It is not for your good behaviour, if I do; always trying to oppose me in everything I try to do for your good. Are you not very much tired? We have been walking more than half an hour; I heard twelve o'clock just strike from Asnières."

"I do feel rather weary, but still the walk has done me good."

"There now—you were tired, and yet could not tell me so!"

"Pray don't scold me; I assure you I was not conscious of my weariness until I spoke. It is so delightful to be able to walk out in the air, after being confined by sickness to your bed, to see the trees, the green fields, and the beautiful country again, when you had given up all hope of ever enjoying that happiness, or of feeling the warm beams of the sun fill you with strength and hope!"

"Certainly, you were desperately ill, and for two days we despaired of your life. I don't mind telling you, now the danger is over."

"Only imagine, La Louve, that, when I found myself in the water, I could not help thinking of a very bad, wicked woman, who used to torment me when I was young, and frighten me by threatening to throw me to the fishes that they might eat me, and, even after I had grown up, she wanted to drown me; and I kept thinking that it was my destiny to be devoured by fishes, and that it was no use to try and escape from it."

"Was that really your last idea when you believed yourself perishing?"

"Oh, no!" replied Fleur-de-Marie, with enthusiasm; "when I believed I was dying, my last thought was for him whom I so reverence, and to whom I owe so much, and, when I came to myself after you had saved me, my first thought was of him likewise."

"It is a pleasure to render you any service, you think so much of it."

"No, La Louve; the pleasure consists in falling asleep with our grateful recollection of kind acts, and remembering them upon waking!"

"Ah, you would induce people to go through fire and water to serve you! I'm sure I would, for one."

"I can assure you that one of the causes which made me thankful for life was the hope of being able to advance your happiness. Do you recollect the castles in the air we used to build at St. Lazare?"

"Oh, as for that, there is time enough to think about that."

"How delighted I should be, if the doctor would only allow me to write a few lines to Madame Georges, I am sure she must be so very uneasy; and so must M. Rodolph, too," added Fleur-de-Marie, pensively sighing. "Perhaps they think me dead."

"As those wretches do who were set on to murder you!"

"Then you still believe my falling into the water was not an accident?"

"Accident! Yes, one of the Martial family's accidents;—mind, when I say that, you must bear in mind that my Martial is not at all like the rest of his relations, any more than François and Amandine."

"But what interest could they have had in my death?"

"I don't care for that; the Martials are such a vile set that they would murder any one, provided they were well paid for it. A few words the mother let drop when my man went to see her in prison prove that."

"Has he really been to see that dreadful woman?"

"Yes; and he tells me there is no hope of pardon for herself, Calabash, or Nicholas. A great many things have been discovered against them; and all the judges and those kind of people say they want to make a public example of them, to frighten others from doing such things."

"How very shocking for nearly a whole family to perish in this way."

"And they certainly will, unless, indeed, Nicholas manages to make his escape; he is in the same prison with a monstrous ruffian whom they call the Skeleton, and this man is getting up a plot to escape with several of his companions. Nicholas sent to tell Martial of this, by a prisoner who was discharged from prison the other day, for I must tell you, my man had been weak enough to go and see his brother in La Force; so, encouraged by this visit, that hateful wretch Nicholas sent to tell my man that he might effect his escape at any minute, and that his brother was to send money and clothes to disguise himself in, ready for him, to Father Micou's."

"Ah, your Martial is so kind-hearted, I'm sure he will do it!"

"A fig for such kind-heartedness! I call it downright foolery to help the very man who tried to take his life. No, no, Martial shall do no such thing; quite enough if he does not tell of the scheme for breaking out of prison, without furnishing clothes and money, indeed. Besides, now you are out of danger, myself, Martial, and the two children are about to start on our rambles over France in search of work, and, depend upon it, we never mean to set our feet in Paris again. Martial found it quite galling enough to be called the son of a man who was guillotined; how, then, could he endure being taunted with the disgraceful ends of all his family?"

"Well, but, at least, you will defer your departure till I have been enabled to see and speak with M. Rodolph; you have returned to virtue, and I promised you a reward if you would but forsake evil ways, and I wish to keep my word. You saved me from death, and, not satisfied with that, have nursed me with the tenderest care during my severe illness."

"Suppose I did; well, it would seem as though I had done the little good in my power for the sake of gain, were I to allow you to ask your friends for anything for me! No, no; I say again, I am more than repaid in seeing you safe and likely to do well."

"My kind Louve, make yourself perfectly easy; it shall not be said that you were influenced by interested motives, but that I was desirous of proving my gratitude to you."

"Hark!" said La Louve, hastily rising, "I fancy I hear the sound of a carriage coming this way; yes—yes, there it is! Did you observe the lady who was in it?"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, "I fancy I recognised a young and beautiful lady I saw at St. Lazare."

"Then she knows you are here, does she?"

"I cannot tell you whether she does or no, but one thing is very certain, that she is acquainted with the person I have so often mentioned to you, who, if he pleases, and I hope that he will please, can realise all those schemes of happiness we used to build when in prison."

"What about getting a gamekeeper's place for my man?" asked La Louve, with a sigh; "and a cottage in the middle of the woods for us all to live in? Oh, no! That is too much like what we read of in fairy tales, and quite impossible ever to happen to a poor creature like myself."

Quick steps were heard advancing rapidly from behind the trees, and in a minute François and Amandine (who, thanks to the kind consideration of the Count de Saint-Remy, had been permitted to remain with La Louve, during her attendance on La Goualeuse) presented themselves, quite out of breath, exclaiming:

"La Louve, here is a beautiful lady come along with M. de Saint-Remy to see Fleur-de-Marie, and they want to see her directly!"

At the same moment, Madame d'Harville, accompanied by M. de Saint-Remy, appeared from the side of the walk, the impatience of the former not allowing her to wait the arrival of Fleur-de-Marie. Directly the marquise saw her, she ran and embraced her, exclaiming:

"My poor dear child! What happiness does it not afford me to find you thus in life and safety, when I believed you dead!"

"Be assured, madame," answered Fleur-de-Marie, as she gracefully and modestly returned the affectionate pressure of Madame d'Harville, "that I have equal pleasure in seeing again one whose former kindness has made so deep an impression on my heart!"

"Ah, you little imagine the joy and rapture with which the intelligence of your existence will be welcomed by those who have so bitterly bewailed your supposed loss!"

Fleur-de-Marie, taking La Louve, who had withdrawn to a distance from the affecting scene, by the hand, and presenting her to Madame d'Harville, said:

"Since, madame, my benefactors are good enough to take so lively an interest in my welfare and preservation, permit me to solicit their kindness and favour for my companion, who saved my life at the expense of her own."

"Make yourself perfectly easy on that score, my child; your friends will amply testify to the worthy La Louve how fully they appreciate the service they well know she has rendered you, and that 'tis to her they owe the delight of seeing you again."

Confused and blushing, La Louve ventured neither to reply nor raise her eyes towards Madame d'Harville, so completely did the presence of that dignified person abash and overpower her. Yet, at hearing her very name pronounced, La Louve could not restrain an exclamation of astonishment.

"But we have not a minute to lose," resumed the marquise. "I am dying with impatience to carry off Fleur-de-Marie, and I have a cloak and warm shawl for her in the carriage. So come, my child, come!" Then, addressing the count, she said, "May I beg of you to give my address to this brave woman, that she may be enabled to come to-morrow to say good-bye to Fleur-de-Marie? That will oblige you to pay us a visit," continued Madame d'Harville, speaking to La Louve.

"Depend upon my coming, madame," replied the person addressed. "Since it is to bid adieu to La Goualeuse, I should be grieved, indeed, if I were to miss that last pleasure."

A few minutes after this conversation, Madame d'Harville and La Goualeuse were on the road to Paris.

After witnessing the frightful death by which Jacques Ferrand atoned for the heinous offences of his past life, Rodolph had returned home deeply agitated and affected. After passing a long and sleepless night, he sent to summon Sir Walter Murphy, in order to relieve his overcharged heart by confiding to this tried and trusty friend the overwhelmingly painful discovery of the preceding evening relative to Fleur-de-Marie. The honest squire was speechless with astonishment; he could well understand the death-blow this must be to the prince's best affections, and as he contemplated the pale, careworn countenance of his unhappy friend, whose red, swollen eyes and convulsed features amply bespoke the agony of his mind, he ransacked his brain for some gleam of comfort, and his invention for words of hope and comfort.

"Take courage, my lord," said he at last, drying his eyes, which, spite of all his accustomed coolness, he had not been able to prevent from overflowing, "take courage; yours is indeed an infliction, one that mocks at all vain attempts at consolation; it is deep, lasting, and incurable!"

"You are right; what I felt yesterday seems as nothing to my sense of misery to-day."

"Yesterday, my lord, you were stunned by the blow that fell on you, but as your mind dwells more calmly on it, so does the future seem more dark and dispiriting. I can but say, rouse yourself, my lord, to bear it with courage, for it is beyond all attempts at consolation."

"Yesterday the contempt and horror I felt for that woman,—whom may the Great Being pardon, before whose tribunal she now stands,—mingled with surprise, disgust, and terror, occasioned by her hideous conduct, repressed those bursts of despairing tenderness I can no longer restrain in your sympathising presence, my faithful friend. I fear not to indulge the natural emotions of my heart, and my hitherto pent-up tears may now freely vent themselves. Forgive my weakness, and excuse my thus cowardly shrinking from the trial I am called upon to endure, but it seems to have riven my very heart-strings, and to have left me feeble as an infant! Oh, my child! My

loved, my lost child! Long must these scalding tears flow ere I can forget you!"

"Ah, my lord, weep on, for your loss is indeed irreparable!"

"What joy to have atoned to her for all the wretchedness with which her young days have been clouded! What bliss to have unfolded to her the happy destiny that was to recompense her for all her past sorrows! And, then, I should have used so much care and precaution in opening her eyes to the brilliant lot that was to succeed her miserable youth, for the tale, if told too abruptly, might have been too much for her delicate nerves to sustain; but, no, I would by degrees have revealed to her the history of her birth, and prepared her to receive me as her father!"

Then, again bursting into an agony of despair, Rodolph continued: "But what avails all that I would have done, when I am tortured by the cruel reflection that, when I had my child all to myself during the ill-fated day I conducted her to the farm, when she so innocently displayed the rich treasures of her pure and heavenly nature, no secret voice whispered to me that in her I beheld my cherished and lamented daughter? I might have prevented this dreadful calamity by keeping her with me instead of sending her to Madame Georges. Oh, if I had, I should have been spared my present sufferings, and needed only to have opened my arms and folded her to my heart as my newly found treasure,—more really great and noble by the beauty of her heart and mind, and perhaps more worthy to fill the station to which I should raise her, than if she had always been reared in opulence and with a knowledge of her rank! I alone am to blame for her death; but mine is an accursed existence. I seem fated to trample on every duty,—a bad son and a bad father!"

Murphy felt that grief such as Rodolph's admitted of no ordinary consolation. He did not therefore attempt to interrupt its violence by any hackneyed phrases or promises of comfort he well knew could never be realised.

After a long silence, Rodolph resumed, in an agitated voice:

"I cannot stay here after what has happened. Paris is hateful to me; I will quit it to-morrow."

"You are quite right in so doing, my lord."

"We will go by a circuitous route, and I will stop at Bouqueval as I pass, that I may spend some few hours alone with my sad thoughts, in the chamber

where my poor child enjoyed the only peaceful days she was ever permitted to taste. All that was hers shall be carefully collected together,—the books from which she studied, her writings, clothes, even the very articles of furniture and hangings of the chamber; I will make a careful sketch of the whole, and when I return to Gerolstein I will construct a small building containing the fac-simile of my poor child's apartment, with all that it contained, to be erected in the private ground in which stands the monument built by me in memory of my outraged parent; there I will go and bewail my daughter. These two funeral mementos will for ever remind me of my crime towards my father, and the punishment inflicted on me through my own child."

After a fresh silence, Rodolph said, "Let all be got ready for my departure to-morrow."

Anxious, if possible, to create if but a momentary change of ideas in the prince's mind, Murphy said, "All shall be prepared, my lord, according to your desire; only you appear to have forgotten that to-morrow is fixed for the celebration of the marriage of Rigolette with the son of Madame Georges, and that the ceremony was to take place at Bouqueval. Not contented with providing for Germain as long as he lives, and liberally endowing his bride, you also promised to be present to bestow the hand of your young protégée on her lover."

"True, true,—I did engage to do so; but I confess I have not sufficient courage to venture in a scene of gaiety. I cannot, therefore, visit the farm to-morrow, for to join in the wedding festivities is impossible."

"Perhaps the scene might serve to calm your wounded feelings, with the thought that, if miserable yourself, you have made others happy."

"No, my friend, no! Grief is ever selfish, and loves to indulge itself in solitude. You shall supply my place to-morrow; and beg of Madame Georges to collect together all my poor child's possessions; then when the room is fitly arranged, you will have an exact copy taken of it, and cause it to be sent to me in Germany."

"And will you not even see Madame d'Harville, my lord, ere you set out on your journey?"

At the recollection of Clémence, Rodolph started; his affection for her burned as steadfastly and sincerely as ever, but, for the moment, it seemed buried beneath the overwhelming grief which oppressed him. The tender sympathy

of Madame d'Harville appeared to him the only source of consolation; but, the next instant, he rejected the idea of seeking consolation in the love of another as unworthy his paternal sorrow.

"No, my kind friend, I shall not see Madame d'Harville previously to quitting Paris. I wrote to her a few days since, telling her of the death of Fleur-de-Marie, and the pain it had caused me. When she learns that the ill-fated girl was my long-lost daughter, she will readily understand that there are some griefs, or rather fatal punishments, it is requisite to endure alone."

A gentle knock was heard at the door at this minute. Rodolph, with displeasure at the interruption, signed for Murphy to ascertain who it was. The faithful squire immediately rose, and, partly opening the door, perceived one of the prince's aides-de-camp, who said a few words in a low tone, to which Murphy replied by a motion of the head, and, returning to Rodolph, said, "Have the goodness, my lord, to excuse me for an instant! A person wishes to see me directly on business that concerns your royal highness."

"Go!" replied the prince.

Scarcely had the door closed on Murphy, than Rodolph, covering his face with his hands, uttered a heavy groan.

"What horrible feelings possess me!" cried he. "My mind seems one vast ocean of gall and bitterness; the presence of my best and most faithful friend is painful to me; and the recollection of a love pure and elevated as mine distresses and embarrasses me. Last night, too, I was cowardly enough to learn the death of Sarah with savage joy. I felicitated myself on being free from an unnatural being like her, who had caused the destruction of my child; I promised myself the horrible satisfaction of witnessing the mortal agonies of the wretch who deprived my child of life. But I was baffled of my dear revenge. Another cruel punishment!" exclaimed he, starting with rage from his chair. "Yet although I knew yesterday as well as to-day that my child was dead, I did not experience such a whirlwind of despairing, self-accusing agony as now rends my soul; because I did not then recall to mind the one torturing fact that will for ever step in between me and consolation. I did not then recall the circumstance of my having seen and known my beloved child, and, moreover, discovered in her untold treasures of goodness and nobleness of character. Yet how little did I profit by her being at the farm! Merely saw her three times—yes, three times—no more! when I might have beheld her each day—nay, have kept her ever beside me. Oh, that will be my unceasing punishment, my never-ending reproach and torture,—to think I had my daughter near me, and actually sent her from me! Nor,

though I felt how deserving she was of every fond care, did I even admit her into my presence but three poor distant times."

While the unhappy prince thus continued to torment himself with these and similar reflections, the door of the apartment suddenly opened and Murphy entered, looking so pale and agitated that even Rodolph could not help remarking it; and rising hastily, he exclaimed:

"For heaven's sake, Murphy, what has happened to you?"

"Nothing, my lord."

"Yet you are pale!"

"'Tis with astonishment."

"Astonishment at what?"

"Madame d'Harville."

"Madame d'Harville! Gracious heaven! Some fresh misfortune?"

"No, no, my lord—indeed, nothing unfortunate has occurred. Pray compose yourself! She is—in the drawing-room—"

"Here—in my house? Madame d'Harville here? Impossible!"

"My lord, I told you the surprise had quite overpowered me!"

"Tell me what has induced her to take such a step! Speak, I conjure you! In heaven's name, explain the reason for her acting so contrary to her usually rigid notions!"

"Indeed, my lord, I know nothing. But I cannot even account to myself for the strange feelings that come over me."

"You are concealing something from me!"

"No, indeed, my lord; on the honour of a man, I know only what the marquise said to me."

"And what did she say?"

"'Sir Walter,' said she, with an unsteady voice, though her countenance shone with joy, 'no doubt you are surprised at my presence here; but there

are some circumstances so imperative as to leave no time to consider the strict rules of etiquette. Beg of his royal highness to grant me an immediate interview of a few minutes only in your presence, for I know well that the prince has not a better friend than yourself. I might certainly have requested him to call on me, but that would have caused at least an hour's delay; and when the prince has learned the occasion of my coming, I am sure he will feel grateful to me for not delaying the interview I seek for a single instant.' And as she uttered these words, her countenance wore an expression that made me tremble all over."

"But," returned Rodolph, in an agitated tone, and, spite of all his attempts at retaining his composure, being even paler than Murphy himself, "I cannot guess what caused your emotion; there must be something beyond those words of Madame d'Harville's to occasion it."

"I pledge you my honour if there be I am wholly ignorant of it; but I confess those few words from Madame la Marquise seemed quite to bewilder me. But even you, my lord, are paler than you were."

"Am I?" said Rodolph, supporting himself on the back of his chair, for he felt his knees tremble under him.

"Nay, but, my lord, you are quite as much overcome as I was. What ails you?"

"Though I die in making the effort," exclaimed the prince, "it shall be done. Beg of Madame d'Harville to do me the honour to walk in."

By a singular and sympathetic feeling this extraordinary and wholly unexpected visit of Madame d'Harville had awakened in the breasts of Murphy and Rodolph the same vague and groundless hope, but so senseless did it seem that neither was willing to confess it to the other.

Madame d'Harville, conducted by Murphy, entered the apartment in which was the prince.

CHAPTER VI

THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER

Ignorant of Fleur-de-Marie's being the prince's daughter, Madame d'Harville, in the fullness of her delight at restoring to him his protégée, had not reckoned upon its being necessary to observe any particular precaution in presenting her young companion, whom she merely left in the carriage until she had ascertained whether Rodolph chose to make known his real name and rank to the object of his bounty, and to receive her at his own house; but perceiving the deep alteration in his features, and struck with the visible gloom which overspread them, as well as the marks of recent tears so evident in his sunken eye, Clémence became alarmed with the idea that some fresh misfortune, greater than the loss of La Goualeuse would be considered, had suddenly occurred. Wholly losing sight, therefore, of the original cause of her visit, she anxiously exclaimed:

"For heaven's sake, my lord, what has happened?"

"Do you not know, madame? Then all hope is at an end! Alas! your earnest manner, the interview so unexpectedly sought by you, all made me believe—"

"Let me entreat of you not to think for a moment of the cause of my visit; but, in the name of that parent whose life you have preserved, I adjure you to explain to me the cause of the deep affliction in which I find you plunged. Your paleness, your dejection, terrify me. Oh, be generous, my lord, and relieve the cruel anxiety I suffer."

"Wherefore should I burden your kind heart with the relation of woes that admit of no relief?"

"Your words, your hesitation, but increase my apprehensions. Oh, my lord, I beseech you tell me all! Sir Walter, will you not take pity on my fears? For the love of heaven explain the meaning of all this! What has befallen the prince?"

"Nay," interrupted Rodolph, in a voice that vainly struggled for firmness, "since you desire it, madame, learn that since I acquainted you with the death of Fleur-de-Marie I have learned she was my own daughter."

"Your daughter!" exclaimed Clémence, in a tone impossible to describe. "Fleur-de-Marie your daughter!"

"And when just now you desired to see me, to communicate tidings that would fill me with joy,—pardon and pity the weakness of a parent half distracted at the loss of his newly-found treasure!—I ventured to hope—But no,—no,—I see too plainly I was mistaken! Forgive me, my brain seems wandering, and I scarce know what I say or do."

And then sinking under the failure of this last fond imagination of his heart, and unable longer to struggle with his black despair, Rodolph threw himself back in his chair and covered his face with his hands, while Madame d'Harville, astonished at what she had just heard, remained motionless and silent, scarcely able to breathe amid the conflicting emotions which took possession of her mind; at one instant glowing with delight at the thoughts of the joy she had it in her power to impart, then trembling for the consequences her explanation might produce on the overexcited mind of the prince.

Both these reflections were, however, swallowed up in the enthusiastic gratitude which she felt in the consideration that to her had been deputed the happiness not only of announcing to the grief-stricken father that his child still lived, but that the unspeakable rapture of placing that daughter in her parent's arms was likewise vouchsafed to her.

Carried away by a burst of pious thankfulness, and wholly forgetting the presence of Rodolph and Murphy, Madame d'Harville threw herself on her knees, and, clasping her hands, exclaimed, in a tone of fervent piety and ineffable gratitude:

"Thanks, thanks, my God, for this exceeding goodness! Ever blessed be thy gracious name for having permitted me to be the happy bearer of such joyful tidings,—to wipe away a father's tears by telling him his child lives to reward his tenderness!"

Although these words, pronounced with the sincerest fervour and holy ecstasy, were uttered almost in a whisper, yet they reached the listening ears of Rodolph and his faithful squire; and as Clémence rose from her knees, the prince gazed on her lovely countenance, irradiated as it was with celestial happiness and beaming with more than earthly beauty, with an expression almost amounting to adoration.

Supporting herself with one hand, while with the other she sought to still the rapid beating of her heart, Madame d'Harville replied by a sweet smile and an affirmative inclination of the head to the eager, soul-searching look of Rodolph, a look wholly beyond our poor powers to describe.

"And where is she?" exclaimed the prince, trembling like a leaf.

"In my carriage."

But for the intervention of Murphy, who threw himself before Rodolph with the quickness of lightning, the latter would have rushed to the vehicle.

"Would you kill her, my lord?" exclaimed the squire, forcibly retaining the prince.

"She was merely pronounced convalescent yesterday," added Clémence; "therefore, as you value her safety, do not venture to try the poor girl's strength too far."

"You are right," said Rodolph, scarcely able to restrain himself sufficiently to follow this prudent advice, "you are quite right. Yes, I will be calm,—I will not see her at present; I will wait until her first emotions have subsided. Oh, 'tis too much to endure in so short a space of time!" Then addressing Madame d'Harville, he said, in an agitated tone, while he extended to her his hand, "I feel that I am pardoned, and that you are the angel of forgiveness who brings me the glad tidings of my remission."

"Nay, my lord, we do but mutually requite our several obligations. You preserved to me my father, and Heaven permits me to restore your daughter at a time you bewailed her as lost. But I, too, must beg to be excused for the weakness which resists all my endeavours to control it; the sudden and unexpected news you have communicated to me has quite overcome me, and I confess I should not have sufficient command over myself to go in quest of Fleur-de-Marie,—my emotion would terrify her."

"And by what means was she preserved?" exclaimed Rodolph; "and whose hand snatched her from death? I am most ungrateful not to have put these questions to you earlier."

"She was rescued from drowning by a courageous female, who snatched her from a watery grave just as she was sinking."

"Do you know who this female was?"

"I do; and to-morrow she will be at my house."

"The debt is immense!" rejoined the prince; "but I will endeavour to repay it."

"Heaven must have inspired me with the idea of leaving Fleur-de-Marie in the carriage," said the marquise. "Had I brought her in with me the shock must have killed her."

"Now, then," said the prince, who had been for some minutes occupied in endeavouring to subdue his extreme agitation, "I can promise you, my kind friends, that I have my feelings sufficiently under control to venture to meet my—my—daughter. Go, Murphy, and fetch her to my longing arms."

Rodolph pronounced the word daughter with a tenderness of voice and manner impossible to describe.

"Are you quite sure you are equal to the trying scene, my lord?" inquired Clémence; "for we must run no risks with one in Fleur-de-Marie's delicate state."

"Oh, yes,—yes! Be under no alarm! I am too well aware of the dangerous consequences any undue emotion would occasion my child; be assured I will not expose her to anything of the sort. But go—go—my good Murphy; I beseech you hasten to bring her hither."

"Don't be alarmed, madame," said the squire, who had attentively scrutinised the countenance of the prince; "she may come now without danger. I am quite sure that his royal highness will sufficiently command himself."

"Then go—go—my faithful friend; you are keeping me in torments."

"Just give me one minute, my lord," said the excellent creature, drying the moisture from his eyes; "I must not let the poor thing see I have been crying. There, there—that will do! I should not like to cross the antechamber looking like a weeping Magdalen." So saying, the squire proceeded towards the door, but suddenly turning back, he said, "But, my lord, what am I to say to her?"

"Yes, what had he better say?" inquired the prince of Clémence.

"That M. Rodolph wishes to see her,—nothing more."

"Oh, to be sure! How stupid of me not to think of that! M. Rodolph wishes to see her,—capital, excellent!" repeated the squire, who evidently partook of Madame d'Harville's nervousness, and sought to defer the moment of his embassy by one little pretext and the other. "That will not give her the least

suspicion, not the shadow of a notion what she is wanted for. Nothing better could have been suggested."

But still Murphy stirred not.

"Sir Walter," said Clémence, smiling, "you are afraid!"

"Well, I won't deny it!" said the squire. "And, spite of my standing six feet high, I feel and know I am trembling like a child."

"Then take care, my good fellow!" said Rodolph. "You had better wait a little longer if you do not feel quite sure of yourself."

"No, no, my lord; I have got the upper hand of my fears this time!" replied Murphy, pressing his two herculean fists to his eyes. "I know very well that at my time of life it is ridiculous for me to show such weakness! I'm going, my lord, don't you be uneasy!" So saying, Murphy left the room with a firm step and composed countenance.

A momentary silence followed his departure, and then, for the first time, Clémence remembered she was alone with the prince, and under his roof. Rodolph drew near to her, and said, with an almost timid voice and manner:

"If I select this day—this hour—to divulge to you the dearest secret of my heart, it is that the solemnity of the present moment may give greater weight to that I would impart, and persuade you to believe me sincere, when I assure you I have loved you almost from the hour I first beheld you. While obstacles stood in the way of my love I studiously concealed it; but you are now free to hear me declare my affection, and to ask you to become a mother to the daughter you restore to me."

"My lord," cried Madame d'Harville, "what words are these?"

"Oh, refuse me not," said Rodolph, tenderly; "let this day decide the happiness of my future life."

Clémence had also nourished a deep and sincere passion for the prince; and his open, manly avowal of a similar feeling towards herself, made under such peculiar circumstances, transported her with joy, and she could but falter out in a hesitating voice:

"My lord, 'tis for me to remind you of the difference of our stations, and the interests of your sovereignty."

"Permit me first to consider the interest of my own heart, and that of my beloved child. Oh, make us both happy by consenting to be mine! So that I who, but a short time since, owned no blessed tie, may now proudly indulge in the idea of having both a wife and daughter; and give to the sorrowing child who is just restored to my arms the delight of saying, 'My father—my mother—my sister!'—for your sweet girl would become mine also."

"Ah, my lord," exclaimed Clémence, "my grateful tears alone can speak my sense of such noble conduct!" Then suddenly checking herself, she added, "I hear persons approaching, my lord; your daughter comes."

"Refuse me not, I conjure you!" responded Rodolph, in an agitated and suppliant tone. "By the love I bear you, I beseech you to make me happy by saying, 'Our daughter comes!'"

"Then be it our daughter, if such is your sincere wish," murmured Clémence, as Murphy, throwing open the door, introduced Fleur-de-Marie into the salon.

The astonished girl had, upon entering the immense hôtel from the spacious portico under which she alighted from the marquise's carriage, first crossed an anteroom filled with servants dressed in rich liveries; then a waiting-room, in which were other domestics belonging to the establishment, also wearing the magnificent livery of the house of Gerolstein; and lastly, the apartment in which the chamberlain and aides-de-camp of the prince attended his orders.

The surprise and wonder of the poor Goualeuse, whose ideas of splendour were based on the recollection of the farm at Bouqueval, as she traversed those princely chambers glittering with gold, silver, paintings, and mirrors, may easily be imagined.

Directly she appeared, Madame d'Harville ran towards her, kindly took her hand, and throwing her arm around her waist, as though to support her, led her towards Rodolph, who remained supporting himself by leaning one arm on the chimneypiece, wholly incapable of advancing a single step.

Having consigned Fleur-de-Marie to the care of Madame d'Harville, Murphy hastily retreated behind one of the large window curtains, not feeling too sure of his own self-command.

At the sight of him who was, in the eyes of Fleur-de-Marie, not only her benefactor but the worshipped idol of her heart, the poor girl, whose delicate

frame had been so severely tried by illness, became seized with a universal trembling.

"Compose yourself, my child!" said Madame d'Harville. "See, there is your kind M. Rodolph, who has been extremely uneasy on your account, and is most anxious to see you."

"Oh, yes—uneasy, indeed!" stammered forth Rodolph, whose breast was wrung with anguish at the sight of his child's pale, suffering looks, and, spite of his previous resolution, the prince found himself compelled to turn away his head to conceal his deep emotion.

"My poor child!" said Madame d'Harville, striving to divert the attention of Fleur-de-Marie, "you are still very weak!" and, leading her to a large gilded armchair, she made her sit down, while the astonished Goualeuse seemed almost to shrink from touching the elegant cushions with which it was lined. But she did not recover herself; on the contrary, she seemed oppressed. She strove to speak, but her voice failed her, and her heart reproached her with not having said one word to her venerated benefactor of the deep gratitude which filled her whole soul.

At length, at a sign from Madame d'Harville, who, leaning over Fleur-de-Marie, held one of the poor girl's thin, wasted hands in hers, the prince gently approached the side of the chair, and now, more collected, he said to Fleur-de-Marie, as she turned her sweet face to welcome him:

"At last, my child, your friends have recovered you, and be sure it is not their intention ever to part with you again. One thing you must endeavour to do, and that is to banish for ever from your mind all your past sufferings."

"Yes, my dear girl," said Clémence, "you can in no way so effectually prove your affection for your friends as by forgetting the past."

"Ah, M. Rodolph, and you, too, madame, pray believe that if, spite of myself, my thoughts do revert to the past, it will be but to remind me that but for you that wretched past would still be my lot."

"But we shall take pains to prevent such mournful reminiscences ever crossing your mind. Our tenderness will not allow you time to look back, my dear Marie," said Rodolph; "you know I gave you that name at the farm."

"Oh, yes, M. Rodolph, I well remember you did. And Madame Georges, who was so good as even to permit me to call her mother, is she quite well?"

"Perfectly so, my child; but I have some most important news for you. Since I last saw you some great discoveries have been made respecting your birth. We have found out who were your parents, and your father is known to us."

The voice of Rodolph trembled so much while pronouncing these words that Fleur-de-Marie, herself deeply affected, turned quickly towards him, but, fortunately, he managed to conceal his countenance from her.

A somewhat ridiculous occurrence also served at this instant to call off the attention of the Goualeuse from too closely observing the prince's emotion,—the worthy squire, who still remained behind the curtain, feigning to be very busily occupied in gazing upon the garden belonging to the hôtel, suddenly blew his nose with a twanging sound that reëchoed through the salon; for, in truth, the worthy man was crying like a child.

"Yes, my dear Marie," said Clémence, hastily, "your father is known to us—he is still living."

"My father!" cried La Goualeuse, in a tone of tender delight, that subjected the firmness of Rodolph to another difficult test.

"And some day," continued Clémence,— "perhaps very shortly, you will see him. But what will, no doubt, greatly astonish you, is that he is of high rank and noble birth."

"And my mother, shall I not see her, too, madame?"

"That is a question your father will answer, my dear child. But tell me, shall you not be delighted to see him?"

"Oh, yes, madame," answered Fleur-de-Marie, casting down her eyes.

"How much you will love him when you know him!" said Clémence.

"A new existence will commence for you from that very day, will it not, Marie?" asked the prince.

"Oh, no, M. Rodolph," replied Fleur-de-Marie, artlessly; "my new existence began when you took pity on me, and sent me to the farm."

"But your father loves you fondly—dearly!" said the prince.

"I know nothing of my father, M. Rodolph; but to you I owe everything in this world and the next."

"Then you love me better, perhaps, than you would your father?"

"Oh, M. Rodolph, I revere and bless you with all my heart! For you have been a saviour and preserver to me both of body and soul," replied La Goualeuse, with a degree of fervour and enthusiasm that overcame her natural diffidence.

"When this kind lady was so good as to visit me in prison, I said to her, as I did to every one else, 'Oh, if you have any trouble, only let M. Rodolph know it, and he will be sure to relieve you.' And when I saw any person hesitating between good and evil, I used to advise them to try and be virtuous, telling them M. Rodolph always found a way to punish the wicked. And to such as were far gone in sin, I said, 'Take care, M. Rodolph will recompense you as you deserve.' And even when I thought myself dying, I felt comfort in persuading myself that God would pity and pardon me, since M. Rodolph had deigned to do so."

Carried away by her intense feelings of gratitude and reverence for her benefactor, Fleur-de-Marie broke through her habitual timidity; while thus expressing herself a bright flush coloured her pale cheeks, while her soft blue eyes, raised towards heaven as though in earnest prayer, shone with unusual brilliancy.

A silence of some seconds succeeded to this burst of enthusiasm, while the spectators of the scene were too deeply affected to attempt a reply.

"It seems, then, my dear child," said Rodolph, at length, "that I have almost usurped your parent's place in your affections?"

"Indeed, M. Rodolph, I cannot help it! Perhaps it is very wrong in me to prefer you as I do, but I know you, and my father is a stranger to me." Then letting her head fall on her bosom, she added, in a low, confused manner, "And besides, M. Rodolph, though you are acquainted with the past, you have loaded me with kindness; while my father is ignorant of—of—my shame,—and may, probably, regret, when he does know, having found an unfortunate creature like myself. And then, too," continued the poor girl, with a shudder, "madame tells me he is of high birth; how, then, can he look upon me without shame and aversion?"

"Shame!" exclaimed Rodolph, drawing himself up with proud dignity; "no, no, my poor child, your grateful, happy father will raise you to a position so great, so brilliant, that the richest and highest in the land shall behold you with respect. Despise and blush for you!—never! You shall take your place

among the first princesses of Europe, and prove yourself worthy of the blood of queens which flows in your veins."

"My lord! My lord!" cried Clémence and Murphy at the same time, equally alarmed at the excited manner of Rodolph, and the increasing paleness of Fleur-de-Marie, who gazed on her father in silent amazement.

"Ashamed of you!" continued he. "Oh, if ever I rejoiced in my princely rank it is now that it affords me the means of raising you from the depths to which the wickedness of others consigned you. Yes, my child! My long-lost, idolised child! In me behold your father!" And utterly unable longer to repress his feelings, the prince threw himself at the feet of Fleur-de-Marie, and covered her hand with tears and caresses.

"Thanks, my God," exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, passionately clasping her hands, "for permitting me to indulge that love for my benefactor with which my heart was filled. My father! Oh, blessed title, that enables me to love him even as I—" And unable to bear up against the suddenness of the disclosure, Fleur-de-Marie fell fainting in the prince's arms.

Murphy rushed to the waiting-room, and shouted vehemently:

"Send for Doctor David directly! Directly, do you hear? For his royal highness,—no—no, for some one who is suddenly taken ill here."

"Wretch that I am!" exclaimed Rodolph, sobbing almost hysterically at his daughter's feet, "I have killed her! Marie, my child, look up! It is your father calls you! Forgive—oh, forgive my precipitancy—my want of caution in disclosing to you this happy news! She is dead! God of heaven! Have I then but found her to see her torn from me for ever?"

"Calm yourself, my lord," said Clémence, "there is no danger, depend upon it. The colour returns to her cheeks; the surprise overcame her."

"But so recently risen from a bed of sickness that surprise may kill her! Unhappy man that I am, doomed for ever to misery and suffering!"

At this moment the negro doctor, David, entered the room in great haste, holding in one hand a small case filled with phials, and in the other a paper he handed to Murphy.

"David!" exclaimed Rodolph, "my child is dying! I once saved your life, repay me now by saving that of my daughter."

Although amazed at hearing the prince speak thus, David hurried to Fleur-de-Marie, whom Madame d'Harville was supporting in her arms, examined her pulse and the veins of her temples, then turning towards Rodolph, who in speechless agony was awaiting his decree, he said:

"Your royal highness has no cause for alarm; there is no danger."

"Can it be true? Are you quite sure she will recover?"

"Perfectly so, my lord; a few drops of ether administered in a glass of water is all that is requisite to restore consciousness."

"Thanks, thanks, my good, my excellent David!" cried the prince, in an ecstasy of joy. Then addressing Clémence, Rodolph added, "Our daughter will be spared to us."

Murphy had just glanced over the paper given him by David; suddenly he started, and gazed with looks of terror at the prince.

"Yes, my old and faithful friend," cried Rodolph, misinterpreting the expression of Murphy's features, "ere long my daughter will enjoy the happiness of calling the Marquise d'Harville mother."

"Yesterday's news," said Murphy, trembling violently, "was false."

"What say you?"

"The report of the death of the Countess Macgregor, my lord, is unfounded; her ladyship had undergone a severe crisis of her illness, and had fallen into a state of insensibility, which was mistaken by those around her for death itself, and from hence originated the account of her having expired; but to-day hopes are entertained of her ultimate recovery."

"Merciful heavens! Can this be possible?" exclaimed the prince, filled with sudden alarm; while Clémence, who understood nothing of all this, looked on with undisguised astonishment.

"My lord," said David, still occupied with Fleur-de-Marie, "there is no need of the slightest apprehension respecting this young lady, but it is absolutely necessary she should be in the open air; this chair might be easily rolled out on the terrace, by opening the door leading to the garden; she would then immediately recover consciousness."

Murphy instantly ran to open the glass door, which led to a broad terrace, then, aided by David, he gently rolled the armchair on to it.

"Alas!" cried Rodolph, as soon as Murphy and David were at a distance, "you have yet to learn that the Countess Sarah is the mother of Fleur-de-Marie; and I believed her dead."

A few moments of profound silence followed; Madame d'Harville became deadly pale, while an icy coldness seemed to chill her heart.

"Let me briefly explain," continued Rodolph, in extreme agitation, mingled with bitter sarcasm, "that this ambitious and selfish woman, caring for nothing but my rank and title, contrived, during my extreme youth, to draw me into a secret marriage, which was afterwards annulled. Being desirous of contracting a second marriage, the countess occasioned all the misfortunes of her unhappy child, by abandoning her to the care of mercenary and unprincipled people."

"Now I can account for the repugnance you manifested towards her."

"And you may likewise understand why she so bitterly pursued you, and had twice so nearly effected your destruction by her infamous slanders. Still a prey to her insatiate ambition, she hoped, by separating me from any other attachment, to draw me a second time within her snares. And this heartless woman still exists."

"Nay, nay, my lord, that tone of bitter regret is not worthy of you, any more than the feeling which dictated it."

"You do not know the wretchedness she has already caused me; and even now that I had dared to dream of happiness, and looked forward to obtaining in you the comfort and solace of my life, as well as a mother for my newly recovered child, this woman again crosses my path, and, like the spirit of evil, dashes the cup from my lips ere it is tasted."

"Come, come, my lord," said poor Clémence, striving to look cheerful, though her tears flowed fast, spite of all her efforts to restrain them, "take courage, you have a great and holy duty to perform. But just now, when impelled by a natural burst of paternal affection, you said that the future destiny of your daughter should be happy and prosperous as her past life had been the reverse, that you would elevate her in the eyes of the world even more than she had been sunken and depressed. To do this you must legitimise her birth, and the only means by which that can be achieved is by espousing the Countess Macgregor."

"Never, never! That would be to reward the perjury, selfishness, and unbridled ambition of the unnatural mother of my poor child. But Marie shall not suffer by my resolution. I will publicly acknowledge her, you will kindly take her under your protection, and, I venture to hope, afford her a truly maternal shelter."

"No, my lord, you will not act thus! You will not permit the cloud of doubt or mystery to hang over the birth of your daughter. The Countess Sarah is descended from an ancient and noble family; such an alliance is, certainly, disproportionate for you, but still is an honourable one; it will effectually legitimise your daughter, and whatever may be her future destiny, she will have cause to boast of her father, and openly declare who was her mother."

"But think not I can or will resign you! It were easier to lay down my life than surrender the blessed hope of dividing my time and affection between two beings I so dearly love as yourself and my daughter."

"Your child will still remain to you, my lord. Providence has miraculously restored her to you; it would be sore ingratitude on your part to deem your happiness incomplete."

"You could not argue thus if you loved as I love."

"I will not undeceive you, great as is your error; on the contrary, I would have you persist in that belief, it will make the task I recommend less painful to you."

"But if you really loved me,—if you suffered as bitterly and severely as I do at the thoughts of my marrying another, you would be wretched as I am. What will console you for our separation?"

"My lord, I shall try to find solace in the discharge of my charitable duties,—duties I first learned to love and practise from your counsels and suggestions, and which have already afforded me so much consolation and sweet occupation."

"Hear me, I beseech you,—since you tell me it is right, I will marry this woman; but the sacrifice once accomplished, think not I will remain a single hour with her, or suffer her to behold my child; thus Fleur-de-Marie will lose in you the best and tenderest of mothers."

"But she will still retain the best and tenderest of fathers. By your marriage with the Countess Sarah she will be the legitimate daughter of one of

Europe's sovereign princes, and, as you but just now observed, my lord, her position will be as great and splendid as it has been miserable and obscure."

"You are then pitilessly determined to shut out all hope from me? Unhappy being that I am!"

"Dare you style yourself unhappy,—you so good, so just, so elevated in rank, as well as in mind and feeling? Who so well and nobly understand the duty of self-denial and self-sacrifice? When but a short time since you bewailed your child's death with such heartfelt agony, had any one said to you, 'Utter the dearest wish of your soul and it shall be accomplished,' you would have cried, 'My child—my daughter! Restore her to me in life and health!' This unexpected blessing is granted you, your daughter is given to your longing arms, and yet you style yourself miserable! Ah, my lord, let not Fleur-de-Marie hear you, I beseech you!"

"You are right," said Rodolph, after a long silence, "such happiness as I aspired to would have been too much for this world, and far beyond my right even to dream of. Be satisfied your words have prevailed,—I will act according to my duty to my daughter, and forget the bleeding wound it inflicts on my own heart. But I am not sorry I hesitated in my resolution, since I owe to it a fresh proof of the perfection of your character."

"And is it not to you I owe the power of struggling with personal feelings and devoting myself to the good of others? Was it not you who raised and comforted my poor depressed mind, and encouraged me to look for comfort where only it could be found? To you, then, be all the merit of the little virtue I may now be practising, as well as all the good I may hereafter achieve. But take courage, my lord, bear up, as becomes one of your firm, right-minded nature. Directly Fleur-de-Marie is equal to the journey, remove her to Germany; once there, she will benefit so greatly by the grave tranquillity of the country that her mind and feelings will be soothed and calmed down to a placidity and gentle enjoyment of the present, while the past will seem but as a troubled dream."

"But you—you?"

"Ah, I may now confess with joy and pride that my love for you will be, as it were, a shield of defence from all snares and temptations,—a guardian angel that will preserve me from all that could assail me in body or mind. Then I shall write to you daily. Pardon me this weakness, 'tis the only one I shall allow myself; you, my lord, will also write to me occasionally, if but to give me intelligence of her whom once, at least, I called my daughter," said

Clémence, melting into tears at the thoughts of all she was giving up, "and who will ever be fondly cherished in my heart as such; and when advancing years shall permit me fearlessly and openly to avow the regard which binds us to each other, then, my lord, I vow by your daughter that, if you desire it, I will establish myself in Germany, in the same city you yourself inhabit, never again to quit you, but so to end a life which might have been passed more agreeably, as far as our earthly feelings were concerned, but which shall, at least, have been spent in the practice of every noble and virtuous feeling."

"My lord," exclaimed Murphy, entering with eagerness, "she whom Heaven has restored to you has regained her senses. Her first word upon recovering consciousness was to call for you. 'My father!—my beloved father!' she cried, 'oh, do not take me from him!' Come to her, my lord, she is all impatience again to behold you!"

A few minutes after this Madame d'Harville quitted the prince's hôtel, while the latter repaired in all haste to the house of the Countess Macgregor, accompanied by Murphy, Baron de Graün, and an aide-de-camp.

CHAPTER VII

THE MARRIAGE

From the moment in which she had learnt from Rodolph the violent death of Fleur-de-Marie, Sarah had felt crushed and borne down by a disclosure so fatal to all her ambitious hopes. Tortured equally by a too late repentance, she had fallen into a fearful nervous attack, attended even by delirium; her partially healed wound opened afresh, and a long continuation of fainting fits gave rise to the supposition of her death. Yet still the natural strength of her constitution sustained her even amid this severe shock, and life seemed to struggle vigorously against death.

Seated in an easy chair, the better to relieve herself from the sense of suffocation which oppressed her, Sarah had remained for some time plunged in bitter reflections, almost amounting to regrets, that she had been permitted to escape from almost certain death.

Suddenly the door of the invalid's chamber opened, and Thomas Seyton entered, evidently struggling to restrain some powerful emotion. Hastily waving his hand for the countess's attendants to retire, he approached his sister, who seemed scarcely to perceive her brother's presence.

"How are you now?" inquired he.

"Much the same; I feel very weak, and have at times a most painful sensation of being suffocated. Why was I not permitted to quit this world during my late attack?"

"Sarah," replied Thomas Seyton, after a momentary silence, "you are hovering between life and death,—any violent emotion might destroy you or recall your feeble powers and restore you to health."

"There can be no further trial for me, brother!"

"You know not that—"

"I could now even hear that Rodolph were dead without a shock. The pale spectre of my murdered child—murdered through my instrumentality, is ever before me. It creates not mere emotion, but a bitter and ceaseless remorse. Oh, brother, I have known the feelings of a mother only since I have become childless."

"I own I liked better to find in you that cold, calculating ambition, that made you regard your daughter but as a means of realising the dream of your whole existence."

"That ambition fell to the ground, crushed for ever beneath the overwhelming force of the prince's reproaches. And the picture drawn by him of the horrors to which my child had been exposed awakened in my breast all a mother's tenderness."

"And how," said Seyton, hesitatingly and laying deep emphasis on each word he uttered, "if by a miracle, a chance, an almost impossibility, your daughter were still living, tell me how you would support such a discovery."

"I should expire of shame and despair!"

"No such thing! You would be but too delighted at the triumph such a circumstance would afford to your ambition; for had your daughter survived, the prince would, beyond a doubt, have married you."

"And admitting the miracle you speak of could happen, I should have no right to live; but so soon as the prince had bestowed on me the title of his consort, my duty would have been to deliver him from an unworthy spouse, and my daughter from an unnatural mother."

The perplexity of Thomas Seyton momentarily increased. Commissioned by Rodolph, who was waiting in an adjoining room, to acquaint Sarah that Fleur-de-Marie still lived, he knew not how to proceed. So feeble was the state of the countess's health, that an instant might extinguish the faint spark that still animated her frame; and he saw that any delay in performing the nuptial rite between herself and the prince might be fatal to every hope. Determined to legitimise the birth of Fleur-de-Marie by giving every necessary formality to the ceremony, the prince had brought with him a clergyman to perform the sacred service, and two witnesses in the persons of Murphy and Baron de Graün. The Duc de Lucenay and Lord Douglas, hastily summoned by Seyton, had arrived to act as attesting witnesses on the part of the countess.

Each moment became important, but the remorse of Sarah, mingled as it was with a maternal tenderness that had entirely replaced the fiery ambition that once held sway in her breast, rendered the task of Seyton still more difficult. He could but hope that his sister deceived either herself or him, and that her pride and vanity would rekindle in all their former brightness at the prospect of the crown so long and ardently coveted.

"Sister," resumed Seyton, in a grave and solemn voice, "I am placed in a situation of cruel perplexity. I could utter one word of such deep importance that it might save your life or stretch you a corpse at my feet."

"I have already told you nothing in this world can move me more."

"Yes, one—one event, my sister."

"And what is that?"

"Your daughter's welfare."

"I have no longer a child,—she is dead!"

"But if she were not?"

"Cease, brother, such useless suppositions,—we exhausted that subject some minutes since. Leave me to unavailing regrets!"

"Nay, but I cannot so easily persuade myself that if, by some almost incredible chance, some unhopd-for aid, your daughter had been snatched from death, and still lived—"

"I beseech you talk not thus to me,—you know not what I suffer."

"Then listen to me, sister, while I declare that, as the Almighty shall judge you and pardon me, your daughter lives!"

"Lives! said you? My child lives?"

"I did, and truly so; the prince, with a clergyman and the necessary witnesses, awaits in the adjoining chamber; I have summoned two of our friends to act as our witnesses. The desire of your life is at length accomplished, the prediction fulfilled, and you are wedded to royalty!"

As Thomas Seyton slowly uttered the concluding part of his speech, he observed, with indescribable uneasiness, the want of all expression in his sister's countenance, the marble features remained calm and imperturbable, and her only sign of attending to her brother's words was a sudden pressure of both hands to her heart, as if to still its throbbing, or as though under the influence of some acute pain, while a stifled cry escaped her trembling lips as she fell back in her chair. But the feeling, whatever it was, soon passed away, and Sarah became fixed, rigid, and tranquil, as before.

"Sister!" cried Seyton, "what ails you? Shall I call for assistance?"

"Tis nothing! Merely the result of surprise and joy at the unhopd-for tidings you have communicated to me. At last, then, the dearest wish of my heart is accomplished!"

"I was not mistaken," thought Seyton, "ambition still reigns paramount in her heart, and will carry her in safety through this trial. Well, sister," said he, aloud, "what did I tell you?"

"You were right," replied she, with a bitter smile, as she penetrated the workings of her brother's thoughts, "ambition has again stifled the voice of maternal tenderness within me!"

"You will live long and happily to cherish and delight in your daughter."

"Doubtless I shall, brother. See how calm I am!"

"Ah, but is your tranquillity real or assumed?"

"Feeble and exhausted, can you imagine it possible for me to feign?"

"You can now understand the difficulty I felt in breaking this news to you?"

"Nay, I marvel at it, knowing as you did the extent of my ambition. Where is the prince?"

"He is here."

"I would fain see and speak with him before the ceremony." Then, with affected indifference, she added, "And my daughter is also here, as a matter of course?"

"She is not here at present; you will see her by and by."

"True, there is no hurry; but send for the prince, I entreat of you."

"Sister, I know not why, but your manner alarms me, and there is a strangeness in your very looks as well as words!"

And Seyton spoke truly. The very absence of all emotion in Sarah inspired him with a vague and indefinable uneasiness; he even fancied he saw her eyes filled with tears she hastily repressed. But unable to account for his own suspicions, he at once quitted the chamber.

"Now, then," said Sarah, "if I may but see and embrace my daughter, I shall be satisfied. I fear there will be considerable difficulty in obtaining that happiness; Rodolph will refuse me, as a punishment for the past. But I must and will accomplish my longing desire! Oh, yes! I cannot—will not be denied! But the prince comes!"

Rodolph entered, and carefully closed the door after him. Addressing Sarah in a cold, constrained manner, he said:

"I presume your brother has told you all?"

"He has!"

"And your ambition is satisfied."

"Quite—quite satisfied?"

"Every needful preparation for our marriage has been made; the minister and attesting witnesses are in the next room."

"I know it."

"They may enter, may they not, madame?"

"One word, my lord. I wish to see my daughter."

"That is impossible!"

"I repeat, my lord, that I earnestly desire to see my child."

"She is but just recovering from a severe illness, and she has undergone one violent shock to-day; the interview you ask might be fatal to her."

"Nay, my lord, she may be permitted to embrace her mother without danger to herself."

"Why should she run the risk? You are now a sovereign princess!"

"Not yet, my lord; nor do I intend to be until I have embraced my daughter!"

Rodolph gazed on the countess with unfeigned astonishment.

"Is it possible," cried he, "that you can bring yourself to defer the gratification of your pride and ambition?"

"Till I have indulged the greater gratification of a mother's feelings. Does that surprise you, my lord?"

"It does indeed!"

"And shall I see my daughter?"

"I repeat—"

"Have a care, my lord,—the moments are precious,—mine are possibly numbered! As my brother said, the present trial may kill or cure me. I am now struggling, with all my power, with all the energy I possess, against the exhaustion occasioned by the discovery just made to me. I demand to see my daughter, or otherwise I refuse the hand you offer me, and, if I die before the performance of the marriage ceremony, her birth can never be legitimised!"

"But Fleur-de-Marie is not here; I must send for her."

"Then do so instantly, and I consent to everything you may propose; and as, I repeat, my minutes are probably numbered, the marriage can take place while they are conducting my child hither."

"Although 'tis a matter of surprise to hear such sentiments from you, yet they are too praiseworthy to be treated with indifference. You shall see Fleur-de-Marie; I will write to her to come directly."

"Write there—on that desk—where I received my death-blow!"

While Rodolph hastily penned a few lines, the countess wiped from her brows the cold damps that had gathered there, while her hitherto calm and unmovable features were contracted by a sudden spasmodic agony, which had increased in violence from having been so long concealed. The letter finished, Rodolph arose and said to the countess:

"I will despatch this letter by one of my aides-de-camp; she will be here in half an hour from the time my messenger departs. Shall I, upon my return to you, bring the clergyman and persons chosen to witness our marriage, that we may at once proceed?"

"You may,—but no, let me beg of you to ring the bell; do not leave me by myself; let Sir Walter despatch the letter, and then return with the clergyman."

Rodolph rang; one of Sarah's attendants answered the summons.

"Request my brother to send Sir Walter Murphy here," said the countess, in a faint voice. The woman went to perform her mistress's bidding. "This marriage is a melancholy affair, Rodolph," said the countess, bitterly, "I mean as far as I am concerned; to you it will be productive of happiness." The prince started at the idea. "Nay, be not astonished at my prophesying happiness to you from such a union; but I shall not live to mar your joys."

At this moment Murphy entered.

"My good friend," said the prince, "send this letter off to my daughter. Colonel —— will be the bearer of it, and he can bring her back in my carriage; then desire the minister and all concerned in witnessing the marriage ceremony to assemble in the adjoining room."

"God of mercy!" cried Sarah, fervently clasping her hands as the squire disappeared, "grant me strength to fold my child to my heart! Let me not die ere she arrives!"

"Alas! why were you not always the tender mother you now are?"

"Thanks to you, at least, for awakening in me a sincere repentance for the past, and a hearty desire to devote myself to the good of those whose happiness I have so fearfully disturbed! Yes, when my brother told me, a short time since, of our child's preservation,—let me say our child, it will not be for long I shall require your indulgence,—I felt all the agony of knowing myself irrecoverably ill, yet overjoyed to think that the birth of our child would be legitimised; that done, I shall die happy!"

"Do not talk thus."

"You will see I shall not deceive you again; my death is certain."

"And you will die without one particle of that insatiate ambition which has been your return! By what fatality has your repentance been delayed till now?"

"Though tardy, it is sincere; and I call Heaven to witness that, at this awful moment, I bless God for removing me from this world, and that I am spared the additional misery of living, as I am aware I should have been a weight and burden to you, as well as a bar to your happiness elsewhere. But can you pardon me? For mercy's sake, say you do! Do not delay to speak forgiveness and peace to my troubled spirit until the arrival of my child, for

in her presence you would not choose to pronounce the pardon of her guilty mother. It would be to tell her a tale I would fain she never knew. You will not refuse me the hope that, when I am gone, my memory may be dear to her?"

"Tranquillise yourself, she shall know nothing of the past."

"Rodolph, do you too say I am forgiven! Oh, forgive me—forgive me! Can you not pity a creature brought low as I am? Alas, my sufferings might well move your heart to pity and to pardon!"

"I do forgive you from my innermost soul!" said the prince, deeply affected.

The scene was most heartrending. Rodolph opened the folding-doors, and beckoned in the clergyman with the company assembled there, that is to say, Murphy and Baron de Graün as witnesses on the part of Rodolph, and the Duc de Lucenay and Lord Douglas on the part of the countess; Thomas Seyton followed close behind. All were impressed with the awful solemnity of the melancholy transaction, and even M. de Lucenay seemed to have lost his usual petulance and folly.

The contract of marriage between the most high and powerful Prince Gustave Rodolph, fifth reigning Duke of Gerolstein, and Sarah Seyton of Halsburg, Countess Macgregor, which legitimised the birth of Fleur-de-Marie, had been previously drawn up by Baron de Graün, and, being read by him, was signed by the parties mentioned therein, as well as duly attested by the signature of their witnesses.

Spite of the countess's repentance, when the clergyman, in a deep solemn voice, inquired of Rodolph whether his royal highness was willing to take Sarah Seyton of Halsburg, Countess Macgregor, for his wife, and the prince had replied in a firm, distinct voice, "I will," the dying eyes of Sarah shone with unearthly brilliancy, an expression of haughty triumph passed over her livid features,—the last flash of expiring ambition.

Not a word was spoken by any of the spectators of this mournful ceremony, at the conclusion of which the four witnesses, bowing with deep but silent respect to the prince, quitted the room.

"Brother," said Sarah, in a low voice, "request the clergyman to accompany you to the adjoining room, and to have the goodness to wait there a moment."

"How are you now, my dear sister?" asked Seyton. "You look very pale."

"Nay," replied she, with a haggard smile, "fear not for me; am I not Grand Duchess of Gerolstein?" Left alone with Rodolph, Sarah murmured in a feeble and expiring voice, while her features underwent a frightful change, "I am dying; my powers are exhausted! I shall not live to kiss and bless my child!"

"Yes, yes, you will. Calm yourself; she will soon be here."

"It will not be! In vain I struggle against the approach of Death. I feel too surely his icy hand upon me; my sight grows dim; I can scarcely discern even you."

"Sarah!" cried the prince, chafing her damp, cold hands with his. "Take courage, she will soon be here; she cannot delay much longer!"

"The Almighty has not deemed me worthy of so great a consolation as the presence of my child!"

"Hark, Sarah! Methinks I hear the sound of wheels. Yes, 'tis she,—your daughter comes!"

"Promise me, Rodolph, she shall never know the unnatural conduct of her wretched but repentant mother," murmured the countess, in almost inarticulate accents.

The sound of a carriage rolling over the paved court was distinctly heard, but the countess had already ceased to recognise what was passing around her, her words became more indistinct and incoherent. Rodolph bent over her with anxious looks; he saw the rising films of death veil those beautiful eyes, and the exquisite features grow sharp and rigid beneath the touch of the king of terrors.

"Forgive me,—my child! Let me—see—my—child! Pardon—at least! And—after—death—the honours—due—to my—rank—" she faintly said, and these were the last articulate words she uttered,—the one, fixed, dominant passion of her life mingled, even in her last moments, with the sincere repentance she expressed and, doubtless, felt. Just at that awful moment Murphy entered.

"My lord," cried he, "the Princess Marie is arrived!"

"Let her not enter this sad apartment. Desire Seyton to bring the clergyman hither." Then pointing to Sarah, who was slowly sinking into her last

moments, Rodolph added, "Heaven has refused her the gratification of seeing her child!"

Shortly after that the Countess Sarah Macgregor breathed her last.

CHAPTER VIII

BICÊTRE

A fortnight had elapsed since Sarah's death, and it was mid-Lent Sunday. This date established, we will conduct the reader to Bicêtre, an immense building, which, though originally designed for the reception of insane persons, is equally adapted as an asylum for seven or eight hundred poor old men, who are admitted into this species of civil invalid hospital when they have reached the age of seventy years, or are afflicted with severe infirmities.

The entrance to Bicêtre is by a large court, planted with high trees, and covered in the centre by a mossy turf, intersected with flower beds duly cultivated. Nothing can be imagined more healthful, calm, or cheerful than the promenade thus devoted to the indigent old beings we have before alluded to. Around this square are the spacious and airy dormitories, containing clean, comfortable beds; these chambers form the first floor of the building, and immediately beneath them are the neatly kept and admirably arranged refectories, where the assembled community of Bicêtre partake of their common meal, excellent and abundant in its kind, and served with a care and attention that reflects the highest praise on the directors of this fine institution.

In conclusion of this short notice of Bicêtre, we will just add that at the period at which we write the building also served as the abode of condemned criminals, who there awaited the period of their execution.

It was in one of the cells belonging to the prison that the Widow Martial and Calabash were left to count the hours till the following day, on which they were to suffer the extreme penalty of the law.

Nicholas, the Skeleton, and several of the same description of ruffians had contrived to escape from La Force the very night previous to the day on which they were to have been transferred to Bicêtre.

Eleven o'clock had just struck as two fiacres drew up before the outer gate; from the first of which descended Madame Georges, Germain, and Rigolette, and from the second Louise Morel and her mother. Germain and Rigolette had now been married for some fifteen days.

We must leave the reader to imagine the glow of happiness that irradiated the fair face of the grisette, whose rosy lips parted but to smile, or to lavish fond words upon Madame Georges, whom she took every occasion of calling

"her dear mother." The countenance of Germain expressed a more calm and settled delight. With his sincere affection for the merry-hearted being to whom he was united was mingled a deep and grateful sense of the kind and disinterested conduct of Rigolette towards him when in prison, although the charming girl herself seemed to have completely forgotten all about it, and even when Germain spoke of those days she would entreat him to change the subject, upon the plea of finding all such recollections so very dull and dispiriting. Neither would the pretty grisette substitute a bonnet for the smart little cap worn before her marriage, and certainly never was humility and avoidance of pretension better rewarded; for nothing could have been invented more becoming to the piquant style of Rigolette's beauty than the simple cap à la paysanne, trimmed with a large orange-coloured rosette at each side, contrasting so tastefully with the long tresses of her rich dark hair, now worn in long hanging curls; for, as she said, "she could now allow herself to take a little pains with her appearance."

The fair bride wore a handsome worked muslin collar, while a scarf, of similar colour to the trimmings of her cap, half concealed her graceful, pliant figure, which, notwithstanding her having leisure to adorn herself, was still unfettered by the artificial restraints of stays; although the tight gray silk dress she wore fitted without a fold or a crease over her lightly rounded bosom, resembling the beautiful statue of Galatea in marble. Madame Georges beheld the happiness of the newly married pair with a delight almost equal to their own.

As for Louise Morel, she had been set at liberty after undergoing a most searching investigation, and when a post-mortem examination of her infant had proved that it had come to its death by natural means; but the countenance of the poor victim of another's villainy had lost all the freshness of youth, and bore the impress of deep sorrow, now softened and subdued by gentleness and resignation. Thanks to Rodolph, and the excellent care that had been taken of her through his means, the mother of Louise, who accompanied her, had entirely recovered her health.

Madame Georges having informed the porter at the lodge that she had called by the desire of one of the medical officers of the establishment, who had appointed to meet herself and the friends by whom she was accompanied at half past eleven o'clock, she was requested to choose whether she would await the doctor within doors or in the large square before the building; determining to do the latter, and supporting herself on the arm of her son, while the wife of Morel walked beside her, she sauntered along the shady alleys that bordered this delightful spot, Louise and Rigolette following them.

"How very glad I am to see you again, dear Louise," said the bride. "When we came to fetch you on our arrival from Bouqueval, I wanted to run up-stairs to you, but my husband would not let me; he said I should tire myself, so I stayed in the coach, and that is the reason why we meet now for the first time since—"

"You so kindly came to console me in prison, Mlle. Rigolette," cried Louise, deeply affected. "You are so feeling for all in trouble, whether of body or mind!"

"In the first place, my dear Louise," replied the grisette, hastily interrupting praises that were to her oppressive, "I am not Mlle. Rigolette any longer, but Madame Germain. I do not know whether you heard—"

"That you were married? Oh, yes, I did. But pray let me thank you as you deserve."

"Ah, but Louise," persisted Madame Germain, "I am quite sure you have not learnt all the particulars; how my marriage is all owing to the generosity of him who was at once the protector and benefactor of yourself and family, Germain, his mother, and my own self."

"Ah, yes, M. Rodolph,—we bless his name morning and evening. When I came out of prison the lawyer who had been to see me from time to time, by M. Rodolph's order, told me that, thanks to the same kind friend who had already interested himself so much for us, M. Ferrand (and here at the very mention of the name an involuntary shudder passed over the poor girl's frame) had settled an annuity on my poor father and myself,—some little reparation for the wrongs he had done us. You are aware that my poor dear father is still confined here, though still improving in health."

"And I also know that the kind doctor who has appointed our being here to-day even hopes your dear parent may be enabled to return with you to Paris; he thinks that it will be better to take some decided steps to throw off this malady, and that the unexpected presence of persons your father was in the daily habit of seeing may produce the most favourable effects,—perhaps cure him; and that is what I think will be the case."

"Ah, mademoiselle, I dare not hope for so much happiness."

"Madame Germain, my dear Louise, if it is all the same to you; but to go on with what I was telling you, you have no idea, I am sure, who M. Rodolph really is?"

"Yes, I have,—the friend and protector of all who are unhappy."

"True, but that is not all. Well, as I see you really are ignorant of many things concerning our benefactor, I will tell you all about it."

Then addressing her husband, who was walking before her with Madame Georges, she said, "Don't walk so very fast, Germain, you will tire our mother!" And, with a look of proud satisfaction, she said, turning to Louise, "Does not he deserve to have a good wife? See how attentive he is to his mother! He certainly is very handsome, too,—a thousand times more so than Cabrion, or M. Girandeaup, the travelling clerk! You remember him, don't you, Louise?"

"Talking of Cabrion puts me in mind to ask you whether M. Pipelet and his wife have arrived yet? The doctor wished them to come here to-day with us, because your father has talked much about them during his wanderings."

"No, they are not here at present, but they will not be long. When we called for them they had already set out."

"And then as for being punctual in keeping an appointment, M. Pipelet is as exact as a clock to the hour and minute! But let me tell you a little more about my marriage and M. Rodolph. Only think, Louise, it was he who sent me with the order for Germain's liberation! You can imagine our delight at quitting that horrid prison. Well, we went home to my room, and there Germain and I together prepared a nice little bit of dinner; but, bless you! we might just as well have spared ourselves the trouble, for, after it was ready, neither of us could eat a bit for joy. When evening came Germain left me, promising to return the next day.

"Well, at five o'clock next morning, I got up and sat down to my work, for I was terribly behindhand with it. As eight o'clock struck some one knocked at the door; who should it be but M. Rodolph! Directly I saw him, I began to thank him from the bottom of my heart for all he had done for Germain and myself. He would not allow me to proceed. 'My kind neighbour,' said he, 'I wish you to give this letter to Germain, who will soon be here. Then you will take a fiacre, and proceed without delay to a small village, near Ecouen, called Bouqueval. Once there, inquire for Madame Georges; and I wish you all imaginable pleasure from your trip.' 'M. Rodolph,' I said, 'pray excuse me, but that will make me lose another day's work and I have already got two to make up for.' 'Make yourself perfectly easy, my pretty neighbour,' said he, 'you will find plenty of work at Madame Georges's, I promise you; she will prove an excellent customer, I have no doubt, and I have particularly

recommended you to her.' 'Oh, that alters the case, M. Rodolph, then I'm sure I shall be but too glad to go.' 'Adieu, neighbour,' said M. Rodolph. 'Good-bye,' cried I, 'and many thanks for so kindly recommending me.'

"When Germain came, I told him all about it; so as we were quite sure M. Rodolph would not send us upon any foolish errand, we set off as blithe as birds. Only imagine, Louise, what a surprise awaited us on our arrival! I declare I can scarcely think of it without tears of happiness coming into my eyes. We went to the very Madame Georges you see walking before us, and who should she turn out to be but the mother of Germain!"

"His mother?"

"Yes, his own very mother, from whom he had been taken when quite a baby! You must try to fancy their mutual joy! Well, when Madame Georges had wept over her son, and embraced and gazed at him a hundred times, my turn came to be noticed.

"No doubt M. Rodolph had written something very favourable about me, for, clasping me in her arms, she said, 'She was acquainted with my conduct towards her son.' 'Then, mother,' interposed Germain, 'it only rests with you to ask her, and Rigolette will be your child as well as I.' 'And I do ask her to be my daughter with all my heart,' replied his mother, 'for you will never find a better or a prettier creature to love as your wife.'

"So there I was quite at home, in such a sweet farm, along with Germain, his mother, and my birds; for I had taken the poor, little, dear things with me, just to hear how delightedly they would sing when they found themselves in the country. The days passed like a dream. I did only just what I liked,—helped Madame Georges, walked about with Germain, and danced and sung like a wild thing.

"Well, our marriage was fixed to take place on yesterday fortnight; the evening before, who should arrive but a tall, elderly, bald-headed gentleman, who looked so kind; and he brought me a *corbeille de mariage* from M. Rodolph. Only think, Louise, what a beauty it must have been,—made like a large rosewood box, with these words written in letters of gold, on medallion of blue china, 'Industry and Prudence—Love and Happiness.' And what do you suppose this charming box contained? Why, a number of lace caps similar to the one I have now on, pieces for gowns, gloves, ornaments, a beautiful shawl, and this pretty scarf. Oh, I thought I should lose my senses with delight! But that is not all. At the bottom of the box I found a handsome pocketbook, with these words written on a bit of paper affixed to

it, 'From a friend to a friend.' Inside were two folded papers, one addressed to Germain, and the other to me. In that addressed to Germain was an order for his appointment as director of a bank for the poor with a salary of four thousand francs a year; while he found under the envelope, directed to me, a money order for forty thousand francs on the treasury,—yes, that's the word; it was called my marriage portion.

"I did not like to take so large a sum, but Madame Georges said to me, 'My dear child, you both can and must accept it, as a recompense for your prudence, industry, and devotion to those who were in misfortune; for did you not run the risk of injuring your health, and probably deprive yourself of your only means of support, by sitting up all night at work, in order to make up for the time you spent in attending to others?'"

"Oh, that is quite true," exclaimed Louise, with fervour. "I do not think there is any one upon earth who would have done all that you have done, Mademoi—Madame Germain!"

"There's a good girl, she has learned her lesson at last! Well, I said to the elderly gentleman that I did not merit such a reward, that what little I had done was purely because it afforded me pleasure. To which he answered, 'That makes no difference; M. Rodolph is immensely rich, and he sends you this dowry as a mark of his friendship and esteem, and your refusal of it would pain him very much indeed. He will himself be present at your marriage, and then he will compel you to take it.'"

"What a blessing that so charitable a person as M. Rodolph should be possessed of such riches!"

"Of course it is! But I haven't told you all yet. Oh, Louise, you never can guess who and what M. Rodolph turns out to be; and to think of my making him carry large parcels for me! But have a little patience, you will hear about it directly.

"The night before the marriage the elderly gentleman came again very late, and in great haste,—it was to tell us that M. Rodolph was ill, and could not attend the wedding, but that his friend, the bald-headed gentleman, would take his place. And then only, my dear Louise, did we learn that our benefactor was—guess what—a prince! A prince, do I say? Bless you, ever so much higher than that! A royal highness!—a reigning duke!—a sort of a second-rate king! Germain explained all about his rank to me!"

"M. Rodolph a prince!—a duke!—almost a king!"

"Just think of that, Louise! And imagine my having asked him to help me to clean my room! A pretty state of confusion it threw me into when I recollected all that, and how free I had spoken to him! So of course you know when I found that he was as good as a king, I did not dare refuse his gracious wedding present.

"Well, my dear, when we had been married about a week, M. Rodolph sent us word that he should be glad if Germain, his mother, and myself would pay him a wedding visit; so we did. I can tell you my heart beat as though it would come through my side! Well, we stopped at a fine palace in the Rue Plumet, and were ushered into a number of splendid apartments, filled with servants in liveries, all covered with gold lace, gentlemen in black, with silver chains around their necks and swords by their sides, officers in rich uniforms, and all sorts of gay looking people. The rooms we passed through were all gilt, and filled with such beautiful things they quite dazzled my eyesight only to look at them.

"At last we got to the apartment where the bald-headed old gentleman was sitting, with a quantity of grand folks, all covered with gold lace and embroidery. Well, when our elderly friend saw us, he rose and conducted us to an adjoining room, where we found M. Rodolph—I mean the prince—dressed so simply, and looking so good and kind—just like the M. Rodolph we first knew—that I did not feel at all frightened at the recollection of how I had set him to pin my shawl for me, mend my pens, and walked with him arm in arm in the street, just like two equals, as, certainly, then I thought we were."

"Oh, I should have trembled like a leaf if I had been you!"

"Well, I did not mind it at all, he smiled so encouragingly; and, after kindly welcoming Madame Georges, he held out his hand to Germain, and then said, smilingly, to me, 'Well, neighbour, and how are "Papa Crétu" and "Ramonette?"' (Those were the names I called my birds by. Was it not kind of him to recollect them?)

"'I feel quite sure,' added he, 'that yourself and Germain can sing as merry songs as your birds.' 'Yes, indeed, my lord,' replied I (Madame Georges had taught me as we came along how I was to address the prince), 'we are as happy as it is possible to be, and our happiness is the greater because we owe it to you.'

"'Nay, nay, my good child,' said he, 'you may thank your own excellent qualities and that of Germain for the felicity you enjoy,' etc. I need not go on

with that part of the story, Louise, because it would oblige me to repeat all the charming praises I received; and, certainly, I cannot recollect ever doing more than my strict duty, though the prince was pleased to think differently.

"Well, we all came away more sorrowful than we went, for we found it was to be our farewell visit to our benefactor, he being about to return to Germany. Whether or not he has gone I cannot tell you, but, absent or present, our most grateful remembrance and respectful esteem will ever attend him.

"I forgot to tell you that a dear, good girl I knew when we were both in prison together had been living at the farm with Madame Georges; it seems my young friend had, fortunately, found a friend in M. Rodolph, who had placed her there. But Madame Georges particularly cautioned me not to say a word on the subject to the prince, who had some reason for desiring it should not be talked about,—no doubt because he could not bear his benevolent deeds should be known. However, I learnt one thing that gave me extreme pleasure, that my sweet Goualeuse had found her parents, and that they had taken her a great, great way from Paris; I could not help feeling grieved, too, that I had not been able to wish her good-bye before she went.

"But forgive me, dear Louise, for being so selfish as to keep talking to you of every one's happiness when you have so much reason to be sorrowful yourself."

"Had my child but been spared to me," said poor Louise, sadly, "it would have been some consolation to me; for how can I ever hope to find any honest man who would make me his wife, although I have got money enough to tempt any one."

"For my part, Louise, I feel quite sure that one of these days I shall see you happily married to a good and worthy partner, who will pity you for your past troubles, and love and esteem you for the patience with which you endured them."

"Ah, Madame Germain, you only say so to try and comfort me; but whether you really believe what you say or no, I gratefully feel and thank you for your kindness. But who are these? I declare, M. and Madame Pipelet! How very gay he looks; so different from the sad, dejected appearance he always wore, while M. Cabrion was tormenting him as he did!"

Louise was right. Pipelet advanced in high spirits, and as though treading on air; on his head he wore the well-known bell-crowned hat, a superb grass-green coat adorned his person, while a white cravat, with embroidered

ends, was folded around his throat, in such a manner as to permit the display of an enormous collar, reaching nearly up to his eyes, and quite concealing his cheeks. A large, loose waistcoat, of bright buff, with broadmaroon-coloured stripes, black trousers, somewhat short for the wearer, snowy white stockings, and highly polished shoes completed his equipment.

Anastasie displayed a robe of violet-coloured merino, tastefully contrasted with a dark blue shawl. She proudly exhibited her freshly curled Brutus wig to the gaze of all she met, while her cap was slung on her arm by its bright green strings, after the manner of a reticule.

The physiognomy of Alfred—ordinarily so grave, thoughtful, and dejected—was now mirthful, jocund, and hilarious. The moment he caught a glimpse of Rigolette and Louise, he ran towards them, exclaiming in his deep, sonorous voice, "Delivered! Gone!"

"How unusually joyful you seem, M. Pipelet," said Rigolette. "Do pray tell us what has occasioned such a change in your appearance!"

"Gone! I tell you, mademoiselle,—or, rather, madame, as I may, do, and ought to say, now that, like my Anastasie, you are tied up for life."

"You are very polite, M. Pipelet; but please to tell me who has gone?"

"Cabron!" responded M. Pipelet, inspiring and respiring the air with a look of indescribable delight, as though relieved of an enormous weight; "he has quitted France for ever—for a perpetuity! At length he has departed, and I am myself again."

"Are you quite sure he has gone?"

"I saw him with my eyes ascend the diligence, en route for Strasburg with all his luggage and baggage; that is to say, a hat-case, a maul-stick, and a box of colours."

"What is my old dear chattering about?" cried Anastasie, as she came puffing and panting to the spot where the little group were assembled; "I'll be bound he was giving you the history of Cabron's going off—I'm sure he has talked of nothing else all the way we came."

"Because I'm half wild with delight; I seem to have got into another world,—such a lightness has come over me. A little while ago my hat used to seem as though loaded with lead, and as if it pressed forwards in spite of me; now

I seem as though borne on the breeze towards the firmament, to think that he is gone—actually set out—and never to return!"

"Yes, the blackguard is off at last!" chimed in Madame Pipelet.

"Anastasie," cried her husband, "spare the absent! Happiness calls for mercy and forbearance on our parts. I will obey its dictates, and merely allow myself to remark that Cabrion was a—a—worthless scoundrel!"

"But how do you know that he has gone to Germany?" inquired Rigolette.

"By a friend of our 'king of lodgers.' Talking of that dear man, you haven't heard that, owing to the handsome manner in which he recommended us, Alfred has been appointed house-porter to a sort of charitable bank, established in our house by a worthy Christian, who wishes, like M. Rodolph, to do all the good he can?"

"Ah!" replied Rigolette. "And, perhaps, you don't know, either, that my dear Germain is appointed manager of this same bank? All owing to the kind intervention of M. Rodolph."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Madame Pipelet, "all our good luck comes together; and I'm sure I'm heartily glad we shall keep old friends and acquaintances around us. I hate fresh faces, for my part. I'm certain I would not change my old duck of a husband even for your young handsome one, Madame Germain."

"But to go back to Cabrion. Only imagine a bald-headed, stout, elderly gentleman, coming to tell us of Alfred's new situation, and at the same time inquiring if a talented artist of the name of Cabrion did not once lodge in the house with us. Oh, my poor darling! Directly Cabrion's name was mentioned down went the boot he was mending, and if I had not caught him he would have swooned away. But, fortunately, the bald gentleman added, 'This young painter has been engaged by a very wealthy person to do some work, which will occupy him for years, and he may, very probably, establish himself in another country.' In confirmation of which the old gentleman gave my Alfred the date of Cabrion's departure, with the address of the office from which he started."

"And I had the unhopd-for satisfaction of reading on the ticket, 'M. Cabrion, artist in painting, departs for Strasburg, and further, by the company's diligence.' The hour named was for this morning. I need not say I was in the inn yard with my wife."

"And there we saw the rascal take his seat on the box beside the driver."

"Just as the vehicle was set in motion Cabrion perceived me, turned around, and cried, 'Yours for ever! I go to return no more.' Thank heaven! The loud blast of the guard's horn nearly drowned these familiar and insulting words, as well as any others he might have intended to utter. But I pity and forgive the wretched man,—I can afford to be generous, for I am delivered from the bane and misery of my life."

"Depend upon it, M. Pipelet," said Rigolette, endeavouring to restrain a loud fit of laughter,— "depend upon it, you will see him no more. But listen to me, and I will tell you something I am sure you are ignorant of and which it will be almost difficult for you to credit. What do you think of our M. Rodolph not being what we took him for, but a prince in disguise,—a royal highness!"

"Go along with you!" said Anastasie. "That is a joke!"

"Oh, but really," cried Rigolette, "I am not joking; it is as true as—as—that I am married to my dear Germain."

"Goodness gracious me!" exclaimed Anastasie. "My king of lodgers a royal highness! Oh, dear, here's a pretty go! And I asked him to mind the lodge for me. Oh, pardon! Pardon! Pardon!" And then, carried away by the excess of her reverence and regret for having so undervalued a prince, though a disguised one, Madame Pipelet placed her cap on her head, as though she imagined herself in the presence of royalty.

Alfred, on the contrary, manifested his respect for royalty in a manner diametrically the reverse of the form adopted by his wife. Snatching off his hat, that hat which had never before been seen to quit his head, he commenced bowing to empty space, as though standing in the presence of the august personage he apostrophised, while he exclaimed, "Have I, then, been honoured by a visit from royalty? Has my poor lodge been so far favoured? And to think of his illustrious eyes having seen me in my bed, when driven thither by the vile conduct of Cabrion!"

At this moment Madame Georges, turning around, cried out:

"My children, the doctor comes."

Doctor Herbin, the individual alluded to, was a man of about the middle age, with a countenance expressive of great kindness and benevolence, united to extreme skill and penetration in discovering the extent of malady with which his unfortunate patients were affected. His voice, naturally harmonious,

assumed a tone of gentle suavity when he spoke to the poor lunatics; who, however bereft of reason, seemed always to listen with peculiar delight to his soft, soothing words, which frequently had the effect of subduing the invariable irritability attendant on this fearful complaint. M. Herbin had been among the first to substitute, in his treatment of madness, sympathy and commiseration for the frightful remedies ordinarily employed. He abandoned the coercive system, so repugnant to every principle of humanity, for kind words, conciliating looks, and a ready attention to every request that could reasonably be granted. He banished chains, whips, drenching with cold water, and even solitary confinement, except in cases of urgent necessity.

"Monsieur," said Madame Georges, addressing the doctor, "I have ventured hither with my son and daughter, although personally unknown to M. Morel; but my interest in his unfortunate state made me desirous of witnessing the experiment you are about to make to restore his reason. You have every hope of succeeding, have you not?"

"I certainly reckon much, madame, on the good effects likely to be produced by the sight of his daughter and the persons he has been in the constant habit of seeing."

"When my husband was arrested," said Morel's wife, pointing to Rigolette, "our kind young friend here was nursing me and my children."

"And my father knew M. Germain quite well," said Louise; then directing the attention of M. Herbin to Alfred and Anastasie, she added, "Monsieur and madame here were porters at the house, and assisted our family to the utmost of their ability."

"I am greatly obliged to you, my worthy friend," said the doctor, addressing Alfred, "for quitting your occupation to come hither; but I see by your amiable countenance that you have cheerfully sacrificed your time to visit your poor lodger here."

"Sir-r!" replied Pipelet, gravely bowing. "Men should help each other in this sublunary world, and remember that all are brothers; added to which your unfortunate patient was the very cream and essence of an honest man, and therefore do I respect him."

"If you are not afraid, madame," said Doctor Herbin to Madame Georges, "of the sight of the poor creatures here, we will cross some of the yards leading to that part of the building where I have deemed it advisable to remove

Morel, instead of allowing him to accompany the others to the farm as usual."

"The farm!" exclaimed Madame Georges. "Have you a farm here?"

"Your surprise is perfectly natural, madame. Yes, we have a farm, the produce of which is most serviceable to the establishment, although entirely worked by the patients."

"Is it possible? Can you make these lunatics work, and allow them to be at liberty while they do so?"

"Certainly; exercise, the calm tranquillity of the fields, with the aspect of nature, are among our most certain means of cure. Only one keeper goes with them, and we have rarely had an instance of any patient endeavouring to get away; they are delighted to be employed, and the trifling reward they gain serves still to improve their condition, by enabling them to purchase different little indulgences. But we have reached the gate conducting to one of these courts." Then perceiving a slight appearance of alarm on the countenance of Madame Georges, the doctor added, "Lay aside all apprehension, madame; in a very few minutes you will feel as tranquil as I do myself."

"I follow you, sir. Come, my children."

"Anastasie," whispered Pipelet, "when I think that, had the persecutions of that odious Cabrion continued, your poor dear Alfred might have become mad, like the unhappy wretches we are about to behold, clad in the most wild and singular state, chained up by the middle, or confined in dens like the wild beasts in the 'Jardin des Plantes—'"

"Oh, bless your dear old heart, don't talk of such a thing! La! I've heard say that them as has gone mad for love are for all the world like born devils directly they see a woman; dashing against the bars of their dens, and making all sorts of horrid noises, till the keepers are forced to flog them till they drop, or else turn great taps of water on their heads before they can quiet them."

"Anastasie," rejoined Pipelet, gravely, "I desire you will not go too close to these dreadful creatures, an accident so soon happens."

"Besides," answered Anastasie, with a tone of sentimental melancholy, "poor things, I have no business to show myself just for the sake of tantalising them. 'Tis woman's beauty and fascination reduces them to this horrid

state. I declare I feel a cold shudder creep over me as I reflect that, perhaps, if I had refused to make you a happy man, Alfred, you might at this very minute be raving mad for love, and shut up in one of these dens, roaring out the moment you caught sight of a woman; while as it is, my poor old duck is glad to get out of the way of the naughty females that will be trying to make him notice them."

"'Tis true, my modesty is easily alarmed. But, Anastasie, the door opens, I tremble with dread of what we are about to witness; no doubt the most hideous looking people, and all sorts of dreadful noises, rattling of chains, and grinding of teeth."

The door being opened admitted them into a long courtyard, planted with rows of trees, under which benches were placed. On each side was a well-constructed and spacious portico, or covered stone terrace, with which a range of large, airy cells communicated. A number of men, all alike clad in a gray dress, were walking, talking, or conversing in this pleasant retreat, while others were seated on the benches, enjoying the refreshing shade and fresh open air.

At the sight of Doctor Herbin a number of the unfortunate lunatics pressed around him, with every manifestation of joy and delight, extending to him their hands with an expression of grateful confidence, to which he cordially responded, by saying:

"Good day—good day, my worthy fellows! I am glad to see you all so well and happy."

Some of the poor lunatics, too far from the doctor to be able to seize his hand, ventured, with a sort of timid hesitation, to offer theirs to the persons who were with him.

"Good morning, friends," said Germain, shaking hands in a manner so cordial as to fill the unfortunate beings with happiness.

"Are these the mad patients?" inquired Madame Georges.

"Nearly the worst belonging to the establishment," answered the doctor, smiling; "they are permitted to be together during the day, but at night they are locked up in the cells you see there."

"Can it be possible that these men are really mad! But when are they violent?"

"Generally at the first outbreak of their malady, when they are brought here. After a short time the soothing treatment they experience, with the society of their companions, calms and amuses them, so that their paroxysms become milder and less frequent, until at length, by the blessing of God, they recover their senses."

"What are those individuals talking so earnestly about?" inquired Madame Georges. "One of them seems referring to a blind man, who, in addition to the loss of sight, seems likewise deprived of speech and reason. Have you such a one among your patients, or is the existence of this person but a mere coinage of the brain?"

"Unhappily, madame, it is a fact but too true, and the history connected with it is a most singular one. The blind man concerning whom you inquire was found in a low haunt in the Champs Elysées, in which a gang of robbers and murderers of the worst description were apprehended; this wretched object was discovered, chained in the midst of an underground cave, and beside him lay stretched the dead body of a woman, so horribly mutilated that it was wholly impossible to attempt to identify it. The man himself was hideously ugly, his features being quite destroyed by the application of vitriol. He has never uttered a single word since he came hither; whether his dumbness be real or affected I know not, for, strange to say, his paroxysms always occur during the night, and when I am absent, so as to baffle all conjecture as to his real situation; but his madness seems occasioned by violent rage, the cause of which we cannot find out, for, as I before observed, he never speaks or utters an articulate sound. But here he is."

The whole of the party accompanying the doctor started with horror at the sight of the Schoolmaster, for he it was, who merely feigned being dumb and mad to procure his own safety. The dead body found beside him was that of the Chouette, whom he had murdered, not during a paroxysm of madness, but while under the influence of such a burning fever of the brain as had produced the fearful dream he had dreamed the night he passed at the farm of Bouqueval.

After his apprehension in the vaults of the tavern in the Champs Elysées, the Schoolmaster had awakened from his delirium to find himself a prisoner in one of the cells of the Conciergerie, where mad persons are temporarily placed under restraint. Hearing all about him speak of him as a raving and dangerous lunatic, he resolved to continue to enact the part, and even feigned absolute dumbness for the purpose of avoiding the chance of any questions being attempted to be put to him.

His scheme succeeded. When removed to Bicêtre he affected occasional fits of furious madness, taking care always to select the night for these outrageous bursts, the better to escape the vigilant eye of the head surgeon; the house doctor, hastily summoned, never arriving in time to witness either the beginning or ending of these attacks.

The few of his accomplices who knew either his name, or the fact of his having escaped from the galleys at Rochefort, were ignorant of what had become of him; and even if they did, what interest could they have in denouncing him? Neither would it have been possible to establish his identity—burnt and mutilated as he was—with the daring felon of Rochefort. He hoped, therefore, by continuing to act the part of a madman, to be permitted to abide permanently at Bicêtre; such was now the only desire of the wretch, unable longer to indulge his appetite for sinful and violent deeds.

During the solitude in which he lived in Bras Rouge's cellar, remorse gradually insinuated itself into his strong heart; and, cut off from all communication with the outer world, his thoughts fled inwards, and presented him with ghastly images of those he had destroyed, till his brain burned with its own excited torture.

And thus this miserable creature, still in the full vigour and strength of manhood, before whom were, doubtless, long years of life, and enjoying the undisturbed possession of his reason, was condemned to linger out the remainder of his days as a self-imposed mute, and in the company of fools and madmen; or if his imposition was discovered, his murderous deeds would conduct him to a scaffold, or condemn him to perpetual banishment among a set of villains, for whom his newly awakened penitence made him feel the utmost horror.

The Schoolmaster was sitting on a bench; a mass of grizzled, tangled locks hung around his huge and hideous head; leaning his elbow on his knee, he supported his cheek in his hand. Spite of his sightless eyes and mutilated features, the revolting countenance still expressed the most bitter and overwhelming despair.

"Dear mother," observed Germain, "what a wretched looking object is this unfortunate blind man!"

"The Schoolmaster Was Sitting on a Bench"

Original Etching by Porteau

"Oh, yes, my son!" answered Madame Georges; "it makes one's heart ache to behold a fellow creature so heavily afflicted. I know not when anything has so completely shocked me as the sight of this deplorable being."

Scarcely had Madame Georges given utterance to these words than the Schoolmaster started, and his countenance, even despite its cicatrised and disfigured state, became of an ashy paleness. He rose and turned his head in the direction of Madame Georges so suddenly that she could not refrain from faintly screaming, though wholly unsuspecting of who the frightful creature really was; but the Schoolmaster's ear had readily detected the voice of his wife, and her words told him she was addressing her son.

"Mother!" inquired Germain, "what ails you? Are you ill?"

"Nothing, my son; but the sudden movement made by that man terrified me. Indeed, sir," continued she, addressing the doctor, "I begin to feel sorry I allowed my curiosity to bring me hither."

"Nay, dear mother, just for once to see such a place cannot hurt you!"

"I tell you what, Germain," interposed Rigolette, "I don't feel very comfortable myself; and I promise you neither your mother nor I will desire to come here again—it is too affecting!"

"Nonsense! You are a little coward! Is she not, M. le Docteur?"

"Why, really," answered M. Herbin, "I must confess that the sight of this blind lunatic affects even me, who am accustomed to such things."

"What a scarecrow, old ducky! Isn't he?" whispered Anastasie; "but, la! to my eyes every man looks as hideous as this dreadful blind creature in comparison with you, and that is why no one can ever boast of my having granted him the least liberty,—don't you see, Alfred?"

"I tell you what, Anastasie," replied Pipelet, "I shall dream of this frightful figure. I know he will give me an attack of nightmare. I won't eat tripe for supper till I have quite forgot him."

"And how do you find yourself now, friend?" asked the doctor of the Schoolmaster; but he asked in vain, no attempt was made to reply. "Come, come!" continued the doctor, tapping him lightly on the shoulder, "I am sure you hear what I say; try to make me a sign at least, or speak,—something tells me you can if you will!"

But the only answer made to this address was by the Schoolmaster suddenly drooping his head, while from the sightless eyes rolled a tear.

"He weeps!" exclaimed the doctor.

"Poor creature!" murmured Germain, in a compassionate tone.

The Schoolmaster shuddered; again he heard the voice of his son, breathing forth commiseration for his wretched, though unknown parent.

"What is the matter?" inquired the doctor; "what is it grieves you?"

But, without taking any notice of him, the Schoolmaster hid his face with his hands.

"We shall make nothing of him," said the doctor. Then, perceiving how painfully this scene appeared to affect Madame Georges, he added, "Now, then, madame, we will go to Morel, and, if my expectations are fulfilled, you will be amply rewarded for the pain you have felt hitherto, in witnessing the joy of so good a husband and father in being restored to his family."

With these words the doctor, followed by the party that had accompanied him, proceeded on his way, leaving the Schoolmaster a prey to his own distracting thoughts, the most bitter of which was the certainty of having heard his son's voice, and that of his wife, for the last time. Aware of the just horror with which he inspired them, the misery, shame, and affright with which they would have heard the disclosure of his name made him prefer a thousand deaths to such a revelation. One only, but great, consolation remained in the certainty of having awakened the pity of his son; and, with this thought to comfort him, the miserable being determined to endure his sufferings with repentance and submission.

"We are now about to pass by the yard appropriated to the use of the idiot patients," said the doctor, stopping before a large grated door, through which the poor idiotic beings might be seen huddled together, with every appearance of the most distressing imbecility.

Spite of Madame Georges's recent agitation, she could not refrain from casting a glance through the railing.

"Poor creatures!" said she, in a gentle, pitying voice; "how dreadful to think their sufferings are hopeless! for I presume there is no remedy for such an affliction as theirs?"

"Alas, none, madame!" replied the doctor. "But I must not allow you to dwell too long on this mournful picture of human misery. We have now arrived at the place where I expect to find Morel, whom I desired should be left entirely alone, in order to produce a more startling effect in the little project on which I build my hopes for his restoration to reason."

"What idea principally occupies his mind?" asked Madame Georges.

"He believes that if he cannot earn thirteen hundred francs by his day's work, in order to pay off a debt contracted with one Ferrand, a notary, his daughter will perish on a scaffold."

"That man Ferrand was, indeed, a monster!" exclaimed Madame Georges; "poor Louise Morel and her father were not the only victims to his villainy, he has persecuted my son with the bitterest animosity."

"I have heard the whole story from Louise," replied the doctor. "Happily the wretch can no more wring your hearts with agony. But be so good as to await me here while I go to ascertain the state of Morel." Then, addressing Louise, he added, "You must carefully watch for my calling out 'Come!' Appear instantly; but let it be alone. When I call out 'Come!' for the second time, the rest of the party may make their appearance."

"Alas, sir, my heart begins to fail me!" replied Louise, endeavouring to suppress her tears. "My poor father! What if the present trial fail!"

"Nay, nay, keep up your courage! I am most sanguine of success in the scheme I have long meditated for the restoration of your father's reason. Now, then, all you have to do for the present is carefully to attend to my directions." So saying, the doctor, quitting his party, entered a small chamber, whose grated window looked into the garden.

Thanks to rest, care, sufficiency of nourishing diet, Morel was no longer the pale, careworn, haggard creature that had entered those walls; the tinge of health began to colour his before jaundiced cheek, but a melancholy smile, a fixed, motionless gaze, as though on some object for ever present to his mental view, proved too plainly that Reason had not entirely resumed her empire over him.

When the doctor entered, Morel was sitting at a table, imitating the movements of a lapidary at his wheel.

"I must work," murmured he, "and hard, too. Thirteen hundred francs! Ay, thirteen hundred is the sum required, or poor Louise will be dragged to a

scaffold! That must not be! No, no, her father will work—work—work! Thirteen hundred francs! Right!"

"Morel, my good fellow," said the doctor, gently advancing towards him, "don't work so very hard; there is no occasion now, you know that you have earned the thirteen hundred francs you required to free Louise. See, here they are!" and with these words the doctor laid a handful of gold on the table.

"Saved! Louise saved!" exclaimed the lapidary, catching up the money, and hurrying towards the door; "then I will carry it at once to the notary."

"Come!" called out the doctor, in considerable trepidation, for well he knew the success of his experiment depended on the manner in which the mind of the lapidary received its first shock.

Scarcely had the doctor pronounced the signal than Louise sprang forwards, and presented herself at the door just as her father reached it. Bewildered and amazed, Morel let fall the gold he clutched in his hands, and retreated in visible surprise. For some minutes he continued gazing on his daughter with a stupefied and vacant stare, but by degrees his memory seemed to awaken, and, cautiously approaching her, he examined her features with a timid and restless curiosity.

Poor Louise, trembling with emotion, could scarcely restrain her tears; but a sign from the doctor made her exert herself to repress any manifestation of feeling calculated to disturb the progress of her parent's thoughts.

Meanwhile Morel, bending over his daughter, and peering, with uneasy scrutiny, into her countenance, became very pale, pressed his hands to his brows, and then wiped away the large damp drops that had gathered there. Drawing closer and closer to the agitated girl, he strove to speak to her, but the words expired on his lips. His paleness increased, and he gazed around him with the bewildered air of a person awakening from a troubled dream.

"Good, good!" whispered the doctor to Louise; "now, when I say 'Come,' throw yourself into his arms and call him 'father!'"

The lapidary, pressing his two hands on his breast, again commenced examining the individual before him from head to foot, as if determined to satisfy his mind as to her identity. His features expressed a painful uncertainty, and, instead of continuing to watch the features of his daughter, he seemed as if trying to hide himself from her sight, saying, in a low, murmuring, broken tone:

"No, no! It is a dream! Where am I? It is impossible! I dream,—it cannot be she!" Then, observing the gold strewn on the floor, he cried, "And this gold! I do not remember,—am I then awake? Oh, my head is dizzy! I dare not look,—I am ashamed! She is not my Louise!"

"Come!" cried the doctor, in a loud voice.

"Father! Dearest father!" exclaimed Louise. "Do you not know your child,—your poor Louise?" And as she said these words she threw herself on the lapidary's neck, while the doctor motioned for the rest of the group to advance.

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed Morel, while Louise loaded him with caresses. "Where am I? What has happened to me? Who are all these persons? Oh, I cannot—dare not believe the reality of what I see!"

Then, after a short silence, he abruptly took the head of Louise between his two hands, gazed earnestly and searchingly at her for some moments, then cried, in a voice tremulous with emotion, "Louise?"

"He is saved!" said the doctor.

"My dear Morel,—my dear husband!" exclaimed the lapidary's wife, mingling her caresses with those of her daughter.

"My wife! My child and wife both here!" cried Morel.

"Pray don't overlook the rest of your friends, M. Morel," said Rigolette, advancing; "see, we have all come to visit you at once!"

"I for one am delighted to renew my acquaintance with the worthy M. Morel," said Germain, coming forward and extending his hand.

"And your old acquaintances at the lodge beg that they may not be overlooked," chimed in Anastasie, leading Alfred up to the astonished and delighted lapidary. "You know us, don't you, M. Morel,—the Pipelets—the hearty old Pipelets, and your everlasting friends? Come, pluck up courage, and look about you, M. Morel! Hang it all, Daddy Morel, here's a happy meeting! May we see many such! Ail-l-l-ez donc!"

"M. Pipelet and his wife! Everybody here! It seems to me so long since—but—but no matter—'tis you, Louise, my child—'tis you, is it not?" exclaimed he, joyfully pressing his daughter in his arms.

"Oh, yes, my dearest father, 'tis your own poor Louise! And there is my mother; here are all our kind friends. You will never quit us more, never know sorrow or care again, and henceforward we shall all be happy and prosperous!"

"Happy? Let me try and recollect a little of past things. I seem to have a faint recollection of your being taken to prison—and—and then, Louise, all seems a blank and confusion here," continued Morel, pressing his hand to his temples.

"Never mind all that, dearest father! I am here and innocent,—let that comfort and console you."

"Stay, stay! That note of hand I gave! Ah, now I remember it all!" cried the lapidary, with shuddering horror. Then, in a voice of assumed calmness, he said, "And what has become of the notary?"

"He is dead, dearest father," murmured Louise.

"Dead? He dead? Then indeed I may hope for happiness! But where am I? How came I here? How long have I left my home, and wherefore was I brought hither? I have no recollection of any of these things!"

"You were extremely ill," said the doctor, "and you were brought here for air and good nursing. You have had a severe fever, and been at times a little lightheaded."

"Yes, yes, I recollect now; and when I was taken ill I remember I was talking with my daughter, and some other person,—who could it be? Ah, now I know!—a kind, good man, named M. Rodolph, who saved me from being arrested. Afterwards, strange to say, I cannot recall a single circumstance."

"Your illness was attended with an entire absence of memory," said the doctor.

"And in whose house am I now?"

"In that of your friend, M. Rodolph," interposed Germain, hastily; "it was thought that country air would be serviceable to you, and promote your recovery."

"Excellent!" said the doctor, in a low tone; then speaking to a keeper who stood near him, he said, "Send the coach around to the garden-gate to

prevent the necessity of taking our recovered patient through the different courts, filled with those less fortunate than himself."

As frequently occurs in cases of madness, Morel had not the least idea or recollection of the aberration of intellect under which he had suffered.

Shortly afterwards, Morel, with his wife and daughter, ascended the fiacre, attended also by a surgeon of the establishment, who, for precaution's sake, was charged to see him comfortably settled in his abode ere he left him; and in this order, and followed by a second carriage, conveying their friends, the lapidary quitted Bicêtre without entertaining the most remote suspicion of ever having entered it.

"And do you consider this poor man effectually cured?" asked Madame Georges of the doctor, as he led her to the coach.

"I hope so, at least; and I wished to leave him wholly to the beneficial effects of rejoining his family, from whom it would now be almost dangerous to attempt to separate him; added to which, one of my pupils will remain with him and give the necessary directions for his regimen and treatment. I shall visit him myself daily, until his cure is confirmed, for not only do I feel much interested in him, but he was most particularly recommended to me when he first came here by the chargé d'affaires of the Grand Duke of Gerolstein."

A look of intelligence was exchanged between Germain and his mother.

Much affected with all they had seen and heard, the party now took leave of the doctor, reiterating their gratification at having been present during so gratifying a scene, and their grateful acknowledgments for the politeness he had shown them in conducting them over the establishment.

As the doctor was reëntering the house, he was met by one of the superior officers of the place, who said to him,—

"Ah, my dear M. Herbin, you cannot imagine the scene I have just witnessed; it would have afforded an inexhaustible fund of reflection for so skilful an observer as yourself."

"To what do you allude?"

"You are aware that we have here two females, a mother and a daughter, who are condemned to death, and that their execution is fixed for to-morrow. Well, in my life, I never witnessed such a cool indifference as that displayed by the mother; she must be a female fiend!"

"You allude to the Widow Martial, I presume; what fresh act of daring has she committed?"

"You shall hear. She had requested permission to share her daughter's cell until the final moment arrived; her wish was complied with. Her daughter, far less hardened than her parent, appeared to feel contrition as the hour of execution approached, while the diabolical assurance of the old woman seemed, if possible, to augment. Just now the venerable chaplain of the prison entered their dungeon to offer to them the consolations of religion. The daughter was about to accept them, when the mother, without for one instant losing her coolness or frigid self-possession, began to assail the chaplain with such insulting and derisive language that the venerable priest was compelled to quit the cell, after trying in vain to induce the violent and unmanageable woman to listen to one word he said.

"It is a fearful fact connected with this family that a sort of depravity seems to pervade it. The father was executed, a son is now in the galleys, a second has only escaped a public and disgraceful end by flight; while the eldest son and two young children have alone been able to resist this atmosphere of moral contagion.

"What a singular circumstance connected with this double execution it is that the day of mid-Lent should have been selected. At seven o'clock tomorrow, the hour fixed, the streets will be filled with groups of masqueraders, who, having passed the night at the different balls and places of entertainment beyond the barriers, will be just returning home; added to which, at the place of execution, the Barrière St. Jacques, the noise of the revels still being kept up in honour of the carnival can be distinctly heard."

The following morning's sun rose bright and cloudless. At four o'clock in the morning various troops of soldiers surrounded the approaches to Bicêtre.

We shall now return to Calabash and her mother in their dungeon.

CHAPTER IX

THE TOILET

The condemned cell of Bicêtre was situated at the end of a gloomy passage, into which a trifling portion of light and air was admitted by means of small gratings let into the lower part of the wall. The cell itself would have been wholly dark but for a kind of wicket, let into the upper part of the door, which opened into the corridor before mentioned.

In this wretched dungeon, whose crumbling ceiling, damp, mouldy walls, and stone-paved floor struck a death-chill like that of the grave, were confined the Widow Martial, and her daughter Calabash.

The harsh, angular features of the widow stood out amidst the imperfect light of the place, cold, pale, and immovable as those of a marble statue. Deprived of the use of her hands, which were fastened beneath her black dress by the strait-waistcoat of the prison, formed of coarse gray cloth and tightly secured behind her, she requested her cap might be taken off, complaining of an oppression and burning sensation in her head; this done, a mass of long, grizzled hair fell over her shoulders.

Seated at the side of her bed, she gazed earnestly and fixedly at her daughter, who was separated from her by the width of the dungeon, and, wearing like her mother the customary strait-waistcoat, was partly reclining and partly supporting herself against the wall, her head bent forward on her breast, her eye dull and motionless, and her breathing quick and irregular. From time to time a convulsive tremor rattled her lower jaw, while her features, spite of their livid hue, remained comparatively calm and tranquil.

Within the cell, and immediately beneath the wicket of the entrance door, was seated an old, gray-headed soldier, whose rough, sunburnt features betokened his having felt the scorch of many climes, and borne his part in numerous campaigns. His duty was to keep constant watch over the condemned prisoners.

"How piercing cold it is here!" exclaimed Calabash; "yet my eyes burn in my head, and I have a burning, quenchless thirst!" Then addressing the bald-headed veteran, she said, "Water! Pray give me a drink of water!"

The old soldier filled a cup of water from a pitcher placed near him, and held it to her lips. Eagerly swallowing the draught, she bowed her head in token of thankfulness, and the soldier proceeded to offer the same beverage to the mother.

"Would you not like to moisten your lips?" asked he, kindly.

With a rough, repulsive gesture, she intimated her disinclination, and the old man sat down again.

"What's o'clock?" inquired Calabash.

"Nearly half past four," replied the soldier.

"Only three hours!" replied Calabash, with a sinister and gloomy smile. "Three hours more! And then—" She could proceed no further.

The widow shrugged up her shoulders. Her daughter divined her meaning, and said, "Ah, mother, you have so much more courage than I have,—you never give way, you don't."

"Never!"

"I see it, and I know you too well to expect it. You look at this moment as calm and collected as if we were sitting sewing by our own fireside. Ah! those happy days are gone,—gone forever!"

"Folly! Why prate thus?"

"Nay, mother, I cannot bear to rest shut up with my own wretched thoughts! It relieves my heart to talk of bygone times, when I little expected to come to this."

"Mean, cowardly creature!"

"I know I am a coward, mother. I am afraid to die! Every one cannot boast of your resolution. I do not possess it. I have tried as much as I could to imitate you. I refused to listen to the priest because you did not like it. Still I may have been wrong in sending the holy man away; for," added the wretched creature, with a shudder, "who can tell what is after death? Mother, do you hear me? After, I say! And it only wants—"

"Exactly three hours, and you will know all about it!"

"How can you speak so indifferently on such a dreadful subject? Yet true enough; in three short hours, we who now sit talking to each other, who, if at liberty, should ail nothing, but be ready to enjoy life, must die. Oh, mother, can you not say one word to comfort me?"

"Be bold, girl, and die as you have lived, a true Martial!"

"You should not talk thus to your daughter," interposed the old soldier, with a serious air; "you would have acted more like a parent had you allowed her to listen to the priest when he came."

Again the widow contemptuously shrugged her shoulders, and, without deigning to notice the soldier further than by bestowing on him a look of withering contempt, she repeated to Calabash:

"Pluck up your courage, my girl, and let the world see that women have more courage than men, with their priests and cowardly nonsense!"

"General Leblond was one of the bravest officers of the regiment he belonged to. Well, this dauntless man fell at the siege of Saragossa, covered with wounds, and his last expiring act was to sign himself with the cross," said the veteran. "I served under him. I only tell you this to prove that to die with a prayer on our lips is no sign of cowardice!"

Calabash eyed the bronzed features of the speaker with deep attention. The scarred and weather-beaten countenance of the old man told of a life passed in scenes of danger and of death, encountered with calm bravery. To hear those wrinkled lips urging the necessity of prayer, and associating religion with the memory of the good and valiant, made the miserable, vacillating culprit think that, after all, there could be no cowardice in recommending one's soul to the God who gave it, and breathing a repentant supplication for the past.

"Alas, alas!" cried she. "Why did I not attend to what the priest had to say to me? It could not have done me any harm, and it might have given me courage to face that dreadful afterwards, that makes death so terrible."

"What! Again?" exclaimed the widow, with bitter contempt. "'Tis a pity time does not permit of your becoming a nun! The arrival of your brother Martial will complete your conversion; but that honest man and excellent son will think it sinful to come and receive the last wishes of his dying mother!"

As the widow uttered these last words, the huge lock of the prison was heard to turn with a loud sound, and then the door to open.

"So soon!" shrieked Calabash, with a convulsive bound. "Surely the time here is wrong,—it cannot be the hour we were told! Oh, mother! Mother! Must we die at least two hours before we expected?"

"So much the better if the executioner's watch deceives me! It will put an end to your whining folly, which disgraces the name you bear!"

"Madame," said an officer of the prison, gently opening the door, "your son is here,—will you see him?"

"Yes," replied the widow, without turning her head.

Martial entered the cell, the door of which was left open that those without in the corridor might be within hearing, if summoned by the old soldier, who still remained with the prisoners.

Through the gloom of the corridor, lighted only by the faint beams of the early morning, and the dubious twinkling of a single lamp, several soldiers and gaolers might be seen, the former standing in due military order, the later sitting on benches.

Martial looked as pale and ghastly as his mother, while his features betrayed the mental agony he suffered at witnessing so afflicting a sight. Still, spite of all it cost him, as well as the recollection of his mother's crimes and openly expressed aversion for himself, he had felt it imperatively his duty to come and receive her last commands. No sooner was he in the dungeon than the widow, fixing on him a sharp, penetrating look, said, in a tone of concentrated wrath and bitterness, with a view to rouse all the evil passions of her son's mind:

"Well, you see what the good people are going to do with your mother and sister!"

"Ah, mother, how dreadful! Alas, alas! Have I not warned you that such would be the end—"

Interrupting him, while her lips became blanched with rage, the widow exclaimed:

"Enough! 'Tis sufficient that your mother and sister are about to be murdered, as your father was!"

"Merciful God!" cried Martial. "And to think that I have no power to prevent it! 'Tis past all human interference. What would you have me do? Alas! Had you or my sister attended to what I said, you would not now have been here."

"Oh, no doubt!" returned the widow, with her usual tone of savage irony. "To you the spectacle of mine and your sister's sufferings is a matter of delight to your proud heart; you can now tell the world without a lie that your mother is dead,—you will have to blush for her no more!"

"Had I been wanting in my duty as a son," answered Martial, indignant at the unjust sarcasms of his mother, "I should not now be here."

"You came but from curiosity! Own the truth if you dare!"

"No, mother! You desired to see me, and I obeyed your wish."

"Ah, Martial," cried Calabash, unable longer to struggle against the agonising terror she endured, "had I but listened to your advice, instead of being led by my mother, I should not be here!" Then losing all further control of herself, she exclaimed, "'Tis all your fault, accursed mother! Your bad example and evil counsel have brought me to what I am!"

"Do you hear her?" said the widow, bursting into a fiendish laugh. "Come, this will repay you for the trouble of paying us a last visit! Your excellent sister has turned pious, repents of her own sins, and curses her mother!"

Without making any reply to this unnatural speech, Martial approached Calabash, whose dying agonies seemed to have commenced, and, regarding her with deep compassion, said:

"My poor sister! Alas, it is now too late to recall the past!"

"It is never too late to turn coward, it seems!" cried the widow, with savage excitement. "Oh, what a race you are! Happily Nicholas has escaped; François and Amandine will slip through your fingers; they have already imbibed vice enough, and want and misery will finish them!"

"Oh, Martial," groaned forth Calabash, "for the love of God, take care of those two poor children, lest they come to such an end as mother's and mine!"

"He may watch over them as much as he likes," cried the widow, with settled hatred in her looks, "vice and destitution will have greater effect than his words, and some of these days they will avenge their father, mother, and sister!"

"Your horrible expectations, mother, will never be fulfilled," replied the indignant Martial; "neither my young brother, sister, nor self have anything

to fear from want. La Louve saved the life of the young girl Nicholas tried to drown, and the relations of the young person offered us either a large sum of money or a smaller sum and some land at Algiers; we preferred the latter, and to-morrow we quit Europe, with the children, for ever."

"Is that absolutely true?" asked the widow of Martial, in a tone of angry surprise.

"Mother, when did I ever tell you a falsehood?"

"You are doing so now to try and put me into a passion!"

"What, displeased to learn that your children are provided for?"

"Yes, to find that my young wolves are to be turned into lambs, and to hear that the blood of father, mother, and sister have no prospect of being avenged!"

"Do not talk so—at a moment like this!"

"I have murdered, and am murdered in my turn,—the account is even, at any rate."

"Mother, mother, let me beseech you to repent ere you die!"

Again a peal of fiendish laughter burst from the pallid lips of the condemned woman.

"For thirty years," cried she, "have I lived in crime; would you have me believe that thirty years' guilt is to be repented of in three days, with the mind disturbed and distracted by the near approach of death? No, no, three days cannot effect such wonders; and I tell you, when my head falls its last expression will be rage and hatred!"

"Brother, brother," ejaculated Calabash, whose brain began to wander, "help, help! Take me from hence," moaned she in an expiring voice; "they are coming to fetch me—to kill me! Oh, hide me, dear brother, hide me, and I will love you ever more!"

"Will you hold your tongue?" cried the widow, exasperated at the weakness betrayed by her daughter. "Will you be silent? Oh, you base, you disgraceful creature! And to think that I should be obliged to call myself your parent!"

"Mother," exclaimed Martial, nearly distracted by this horrid scene, "will you tell me why you sent for me?"

"Because I thought to give you heart and hatred; but he who has not the one cannot entertain the other. Go, coward, go!"

At this moment a loud sound of many footsteps was heard in the corridor; the old soldier looked at his watch.

A rich ray of the golden brightness, which marked the rising of that day's sun, found its way through the loopholes in the walls, and shed a flood of light into the very midst of the wretched cell, rendered now completely illumined by means of the opening of the door at the opposite end of the passage to that in which the condemned cell was situated. In the midst of this blaze of day appeared two gaolers, each bearing a chair; an officer also made his appearance, saying to the widow in a voice of sympathy:

"Madame, the hour has arrived."

The mother arose on the instant, erect and immovable, while Calabash uttered the most piercing cries. Then four more persons entered the cell; four of the number, who were very shabbily dressed, bore in their hands packets of fine but very strong cord. The taller man of the party was dressed in black, with a large cravat; he handed a paper to the officer. This individual was the executioner, and the paper a receipt signifying his having received two females for the purpose of guillotining them. The man then took sole charge of these unhappy creatures, and, from that moment, was responsible for them.

To the wild terror and despair which had first seized Calabash, now succeeded a kind of stupefaction; and so nearly insensible was she that the assistant executioners were compelled to seat her on her bed, and to support her when there; her firmly closed jaws scarcely enabled her to utter a sound, but her hollow eyes rolled vacantly in their sockets, her chin fell listlessly on her breast, and, but for the support of the two men, she would have fallen forwards a lifeless, senseless mass.

After having bestowed a last embrace on his wretched sister, Martial stood petrified with terror, unable to speak or move, and as though perfectly spellbound by the horrible scene before him.

The cool audacity of the widow did not for an instant forsake her; with head erect, and firm, collected manner, she assisted in taking off the strait-

waistcoat she had worn, and which had hitherto fettered her movements; this removed, she appeared in an old black stuff dress.

"Where shall I place myself?" asked she, in a clear, steady voice.

"Be good enough to sit down upon one of those chairs," said the executioner, pointing to the seats arranged at the entrance of the dungeon.

With unfaltering step, the widow prepared to follow the directions given her, but as she passed her daughter she said, in a voice that betokened some little emotion:

"Kiss me, my child!"

But as the sound of her mother's voice reached her ear, Calabash seemed suddenly to wake up from her lethargy, she raised her head, and, with a wild and almost frenzied cry, exclaimed:

"Away! Leave me! And if there be a hell, may it receive you!"

"My child," repeated the widow, "let us embrace for the last time!"

"Do not approach me!" cried the distracted girl, violently repulsing her mother; "you have been my ruin in this world and the next!"

"Then forgive me, ere I die!"

"Never, never!" exclaimed Calabash; and then, totally exhausted by the effort she had made, she sank back in the arms of the assistants.

A cloud passed over the hitherto stern features of the widow, and a moisture was momentarily visible on her glowing eyeballs. At this instant she encountered the pitying looks of her son. After a trifling hesitation, during which she seemed to be undergoing some powerful internal conflict, she said:

"And you?"

Sobbing violently, Martial threw himself into his mother's arms.

"Enough!" said the widow, conquering her emotion, and withdrawing herself from the close embrace of her son; "I am keeping this gentleman waiting," pointing to the executioner; then, hurrying towards a chair, she resolutely

seated herself, and the gleam of maternal sensibility she had exhibited was for ever extinguished.

"Do not stay here," said the old soldier, approaching Martial with an air of kindness. "Come this way," continued he, leading him, while Martial, stupefied by horror, followed him mechanically.

The almost expiring Calabash having been supported to a chair by the two assistants, one sustained her all but inanimate form, while the other tied her hands behind with fine but excessively strong whipcord, knotted into the most inextricable meshes, while with a cord of the same description he secured her feet, allowing her just so much liberty as would enable her to proceed slowly to her last destination. The widow having borne a similar pinioning with the most imperturbable composure, the executioner, drawing from his pocket a pair of huge scissors, said to her with considerable civility:

"Be good enough to stoop your head, madame."

Yielding immediate obedience to the request, the widow said:

"We have been good customers to you; you have had my husband in your hands, and now you have his wife and daughter!"

Without making any reply, the executioner began to cut the long gray hairs of the prisoner very close, especially at the nape of the neck.

"This makes the third time in my life," continued the widow, with a dismal smile, "that I have had my head dressed by a professor: when I took my first communion the white veil was arranged; then on my marriage, when the orange-flowers were placed there; and upon the present occasion; upon my word, I hardly know which became me most. You cannot guess what I am thinking of?" resumed the widow, addressing the executioner, after having again contemplated her daughter.

But the man made her no sort of answer, and no sound was heard but that of the scissors, and the sort of convulsive and hysterical sob that occasionally escaped from Calabash.

At this moment a venerable priest approached the governor, and addressed him in a low, earnest voice, the import of which was to express his desire to make another effort to rescue the souls of the condemned.

"I was thinking that at five years old my daughter, whose head you are going to cut off, was the prettiest child I ever saw, with her fair hair and red

cheeks. Who that saw her then would have said that—" She was silent for a moment, and then said, with a burst of indescribable laughter, "What a farce is destiny!"

At this moment the last of her hair was cut off.

"I have done, madame," said the executioner, politely.

"Many thanks; and I recommend my son Nicholas to you," said the widow; "you will cut off his hair some day." A turnkey came in and said a few words to her in a low tone. "No,—I have already said no!" she answered, angrily.

The priest hearing these words, and seeing any further interference useless, immediately withdrew.

"Madame, we are all ready to go. Will you take anything?" inquired the executioner, civilly.

"No, I thank you; this evening I shall take a mouthful of earth." And after this remark the widow rose firmly. Her hands were tied behind her back, and a rope was also attached to each ankle, allowing her sufficient liberty to walk. Although her step was firm and resolute, the executioner and his assistant offered to support her; but she turned to them disdainfully, and said, "Do not touch me, I have a steady eye and a firm foot, and they will hear on the scaffold whether or not I have a good voice." Calabash was carried away in a dying state.

After having traversed the long corridor, the funereal cortège ascended a stone staircase, which led to an exterior court, where was a picquet of gens-d'armes, a hackney-coach, and a long, narrow carriage with a yellow body, drawn by three post-horses, who were neighing loudly.

"We shall not be full inside," said the widow, as she took her seat.

The two vehicles, preceded and followed by the picquet of gens-d'armes, then quitted the outer gate of Bicêtre, and went quickly towards the Boulevard St. Jacques.

CHAPTER X

MARTIAL AND THE CHOURINEUR

Before we proceed we have a few words to say as to the acquaintance recently established between the Chourineur and Martial.

When Germain had left the prison, the Chourineur proved very easily that he had robbed himself; and making a statement of his motive for this singular mystification to the magistrate, he was set at liberty, after having been severely admonished.

Desirous of recompensing the Chourineur for this fresh act of devotion, Rodolph, in order to realise the wishes of his rough protégé, had lodged him in the hôtel of the Rue Plumet, promising that he should accompany him on his return to Germany.

The Chourineur's blind attachment to Rodolph was like that of a dog for his master. When, however, the prince had found his daughter, all was changed, and, in spite of his warm gratitude for the man who had saved his life, he could not make up his mind to take with him to Germany the witness of Fleur-de-Marie's fallen state; yet, determined to carry out the Chourineur's wishes, he sent for him, and told him that he had still another service to ask of him. At this the Chourineur's countenance brightened up; but he was greatly distressed when he learned that he must quit the hôtel that very day, and would not accompany the prince to Germany.

It is useless to mention the munificent compensations which Rodolph offered to the Chourineur,—the money he intended for him, the farm in Algeria, anything he could desire. The Chourineur was wounded to the heart, refused, and (perhaps for the first time in his life) wept. Rodolph was compelled to force his presents on him.

Next day the prince sent for La Louve and Martial, and inquired what he could do for them. Remembering what Fleur-de-Marie had told him of the wild taste of La Louve and her husband, he proposed to the hardy couple either a considerable sum of money, or half the sum and land in full cultivation adjoining the farm he had bought for the Chourineur, believing that by bringing them together they would sympathise, from their desire to seek solitude, the one in consequence of the past, and the other from the crimes of his family.

He was not mistaken. Martial and La Louve accepted joyfully; and then, talking the matter over with the Chourineur, they all three rejoiced in the

prospects held out to them in Algeria. A sincere good feeling soon united the future colonists. Persons of their class judge quickly of each other, and like one another as speedily.

The Chourineur accompanied his new friend Martial to the Bicêtre and awaited him in the hackney-coach, which conducted them back to Paris after Martial, horror-struck, had left the dungeon of his mother and sister.

The countenance of the Chourineur had completely changed; the bold expression and jovial humour which usually characterised his harsh features had given way to extreme dejection; his voice had lost something of its coarseness; a grief of heart, until then unknown to him, had broken down his energetic temperament. He looked kindly at Martial, and said:

"Courage! You have done all that good intentions could do; it is ended. Think now of your wife, and the children whom you have prevented from becoming criminals like their father and mother. To-night we leave Paris never to return to it, and you will never again hear of what so much distresses you now."

"True—true! But, after all, they are my sister and mother!"

"Yes; but when things must be, we must submit!" said the Chourineur, checking a deep sigh.

After a moment's silence, Martial said, kindly, "And I ought, in my turn, to try and console you who are so sad. My wife and I hope that when we have left Paris this will cease."

"Yes," said the Chourineur, with a shudder, "if I leave Paris!"

"Why, we go this evening!"

"Yes,—you do; you go this evening!"

"And have you changed your intention, then?"

"No! Yet, Martial, you'll laugh at me; but yet I will tell you all. If anything happens to me it will prove that I am not deceived. When M. Rodolph asked if we would go to Algeria together, I told you my mind at once, and also what I had been."

"Yes, you did; let us mention it no more. You underwent your punishment, and are now as good as any one. But, like myself, I can imagine you would like to go and live a long way off, instead of living here, where, however honest we may be, they might at times fling in your teeth a misdeed you have atoned for and repented, and, in mine, my parents' crimes, for which I am by no means responsible. The past is the past between us, and we shall never reproach each other."

"With you and me, Martial, the past is the past; but, you see, Martial, there is something above,—I have killed a man!"

"A great misfortune, assuredly; but, at the moment, you were out of your senses,—mad. And besides, you have since saved the lives of other persons, and that will count in your favour."

"I'll tell you why I refer to my misdeed. I used to have a dream, in which I saw the sergeant I killed. I have not had it for a long time until last night, and that foretells some misfortune for to-day. I have a foreboding that I shall not quit Paris."

"Oh, you regret at leaving our benefactor! The thought of coming with me to the Bicêtre agitated you; and so your dream recurred to you."

The Chourineur shook his head sorrowfully and said, "It has come to me just as M. Rodolph is going to start,—for he goes to-day. Yesterday I sent a messenger to his hôtel, not daring to go myself. They sent me word that he went this morning at eleven o'clock by the barrier of Charenton, and I mean to go and station myself there to try and see him once more,—for the last time!"

"He seems so good that I easily understand your love for him."

"Love for him!" said the Chourineur, with deep and concentrated emotion.

"Yes, yes, Martial,—to lie on the earth, eat black bread, be his dog, to be where he was, I asked no more. But that was too much,—he would not consent."

"He has been very generous towards you!"

"Yet it is not for that I love him, but because he told me I had heart and honour. Yes, and that at a time when I was as fierce as a brute beast. And he made me understand what was good in me, and that I had repented, and, after suffering great misery, had worked hard for an honest livelihood, although all the world considered me as a thorough ruffian,—and so, when M. Rodolph said these words to me, my heart beat high and proudly, and from this time I would go through fire and water to serve him."

"Why, it is because you are better than you were that you ought not to have any of those forebodings. Your dream is nothing."

"We shall see. I shall not try and get into any mischief, for I cannot have any worse misfortune than not to see again M. Rodolph, whom I hoped never again to leave. I should have been in my way, you see, always with him, body and soul,—always ready. Never mind, perhaps he was wrong,—I am only a worm at his feet; but sometimes, Martial, the smallest may be useful to the greatest."

"One day, perhaps, you may see him."

"Oh, no; he said to me, 'My good fellow, you must promise never to seek nor see me,—that will be doing me a service.' So, of course, Martial, I promised; and I'll keep my word, though it is very hard."

"Once at Algeria, you will forget all your vexations."

"Yes, yes; I'm an old trooper, Martial, and will face the Bedouins."

"Come, come, you'll soon recover your spirits. We'll farm and hunt together, and live together, or separate, just as you like. We'll bring up the children like honest people, and you shall be their uncle,—for we are brothers, and

my wife is good at heart; and so we'll be happy, eh?" And Martial extended his hand to the Chourineur.

"So we will, Martial," was the reply; "and my sorrow will kill me, or I shall kill my sorrow."

"It will not kill you. We shall pass our days together; and every evening we will say, 'brother, thanks to M. Rodolph,'—that shall be our prayer to, him."

"Martial, you comfort me."

"Well, then, that is all right; and as to that stupid-dream, you will think no more of it, I hope?"

"I'll try."

"Well, then, you'll come to us at four o'clock; the diligence goes at five."

"Agreed. But I will get out here and walk to the barrier at Charenton, where I will await M. Rodolph, that I may see him pass."

The coach stopped, and the Chourineur alighted.

CHAPTER XI

THE FINGER OF PROVIDENCE

The Chourineur had forgotten that it was the day after mid-Lent, and was consequently greatly surprised at the sight, at once hideous and singular, which presented itself to his view when he arrived at the exterior boulevard, which he was traversing to reach the barrier of Charenton.

He found himself suddenly in the thickest of a dense throng of people, who were coming out of the cabarets of the Faubourg de la Glacière, in order to reach the Boulevard St. Jacques, where the execution was to take place.

Although it was broad daylight, there was still heard the noisy music of the public-houses, whence issued particularly the loud echoes of the cornets-à-piston. The pencil of Callot, of Rembrandt, or of Goya is requisite to limn the strange, hideous, and fantastical appearance of this multitude.

Almost all of them, men, women, and children, were attired in old masquerade costumes. Those who could not afford this expense had on their clothes rags of bright colours. Some young men were dressed in women's clothes, half torn and soiled with mud. All their countenances, haggard from debauchery and vice, and furrowed by intoxication, sparkled with savage delight at the idea that, after a night of filthy orgies, they should see two women executed on the scaffold prepared for them.

The foul and fetid scum of the population of Paris,—this vast mob—was formed of thieves and abandoned women, who every day tax crime for their daily bread, and every evening return to their lairs with their vicious spoils.

The crowd entirely choked up the means of circulation, and, in spite of his gigantic strength, the Chourineur was compelled to remain almost motionless in the midst of this compact throng. He was, however, willing to remain so, as the prince would not pass the barrier of Charenton until eleven o'clock, and it was not yet seven; and he had a singular spectacle before him.

In a large, low apartment, occupied at one end by musicians, surrounded by benches and tables laden with the fragments of a repast, broken plates, empty bottles, etc., a dozen men and women, in various disguises and half drunk, were dancing with the utmost excitement that frantic and obscene dance called La Chahut.

Amongst the dissipated revellers who figured in this saturnalia, the Chourineur remarked two couples who obtained the most overwhelming applause, from the revolting grossness of their attitudes, their gesticulations, and their language. The first couple consisted of a man disguised as a bear, and nearly covered with a waistcoat and trousers of black sheepskin. The head of the animal, being too troublesome to carry, had been replaced by a kind of hood with long hair, which entirely covered his features; two holes for his eyes, and a long one for his mouth, allowed him to see, speak, and breathe.

This man—one of the prisoners escaped from La Force (amongst whom were Barbillon and the two murderers arrested at the ogress's at the tapis-franc, at the beginning of this recital)—this man so masked was Nicholas Martial, the son and brother of the two women for whom the scaffold was prepared but a few paces distant.

Induced into this act of atrocious insensibility and infamous audacity by one of his associates, this wretch had dared with this disguise to join in the last revels of the carnival. The woman who danced with him, dressed as a vivandière, wore a round leather cap with ragged ribands, a kind of bodice of threadbare red cloth, ornamented with three rows of brass buttons, a green skirt, and trousers of white calico. Her black hair fell in disorder all about her head, and her haggard and swollen features evinced the utmost effrontery and immodesty. The vis-à-vis of these dancers were no less disgusting.

The man, who was very tall, and disguised as Robert Macaire, had so begrimed his features with soot that it was impossible to recognise him, and, besides, a large bandage covered his left eye; the white of the right eye being thus the more heightened, rendered him still more hideous. The lower part of the Skeleton's countenance (for it was he) disappeared in a high neckcloth made of an old red shawl.

Wearing an old, white, napless hat with a crushed side, dirty, and without a crown, a green coat in rags, and tight mulberry-coloured pantaloons, patched in every direction, and tied around the instep with pieces of packthread, this assassin outraged the most outré and revolting attitudes of the Chahut, darting from right to left, before and behind, his lanky limbs as hard as steel, and twisting and twining, and springing and bounding with such vigour and elasticity, that he seemed set in motion by steel springs.

A worthy coryphée of this filthy saturnalia, his lady partner, a tall and active creature with impudent and flushed features, attired en débardeur, wore a

flat cap on one side of a powdered wig with a thick pigtail, a waistcoat and trousers of worn green velvet, adjusted to her shape by an orange scarf, with long ends flowing down her back.

A fat, vulgar, coarse woman, the brutal ogress of the tapis-franc, was seated on one of the benches, holding on her knees the plaid cloaks of this creature and the vivandière, whilst they were rivalling the bounds, and jumps, and gross postures of the Skeleton and Nicholas Martial.

Amongst the other dancers there was a lame boy, dressed like a devil, by means of a black net vest, much too large for him, red drawers, and a green mask hideous and grotesque. In spite of his infirmity, this little monster was wonderfully agile, and his precocious depravity equalled, if it could not exceed, that of his detestable companions, and he gambolled as impudently as any of them before a fat woman, dressed as a shepherdess, who excited her partner the more by her shouts of laughter.

No charge having been raised against Tortillard (our readers have recognised him), and Bras Rouge having been for the while left in prison, the boy, at his father's request, was reclaimed by Micou, the receiver of the passage of the Brasserie, who had not been denounced by his accomplices.

As secondary figures in this picture, let imagination conceive all there is of the lowest, most shameful, and most monstrous, in this idle, wanton, insolent, rapacious, atheistical, sanguinary assemblage of infamy, which is most hostile to social order, and to which we would call the attention of all thinking persons as our recital draws to a close.

Excited by the shouts of laughter and the cheers of the mob assembled around the windows, the actors in the infamous dance cried to the orchestra for a finale galop. The musicians, delighted to reach the end of their labours, complied with the general wish, and played a galoppade with the utmost energy and rapidity. At this the excitement redoubled; the couples encircled each other and dashed away, following the Skeleton and his partner, who led off their infernal round amidst the wildest cries and acclamations.

The crowd was so thick, so dense, and the evolutions so multiplied and rapid, that these creatures, inflamed with wine, exercise, and noise, their intoxication became delirious frenzy, and they soon ceased to have space for their movements. The Skeleton then cried, in a breathless voice, "Look out at the door! We will go out on to the boulevard."

"Yes, yes!" cried the mob at the windows; "a galop as far as the Barrière St. Jacques!"

"The two 'mots' will soon be here."

"The headsman cuts double! How funny!"

"Yes, with a cornet-à-piston accompaniment."

"I'll ask the widow to be my partner."

"And I the daughter."

"Death to the informers!"

"Long live the prigs and lads of steel!" cried the Skeleton in a voice of thunder, as he and the dancers, forcing their way in the midst of the mass, set the whole body in motion; and then were heard cries, and imprecations, and shouts of laughter, which had nothing human in their sound.

Suddenly this uproar reached its height by two fresh incidents. The vehicle which contained the criminals, accompanied by its escort of cavalry, appeared at the angle of the boulevard, and then all the mob rushed in that direction, shouting and roaring with ferocious delight.

At this moment, also, the crowd was met by a courier coming from the Boulevard des Invalides, and galloping towards the Barrière de Charenton. He was dressed in a light blue jacket with yellow collar, with a double row of silver lace down the seams, but, as a mark of deep mourning, he wore black breeches and high boots; his cap also, with a broad band of silver, was encircled with crape, and on the winkers of his horse were the arms of Gerolstein.

He walked his horse, his advance becoming every moment more difficult, and he was almost obliged to stop when he found himself in the midst of the sea of people we have described. Although he called to them, and moved his horse with the greatest caution, cries, abuse, and threats were soon directed against him.

"Does he want to ride us down, that vagabond?"

"He's got lots o' silver on his precious body!" cried Tortillard.

"If he comes against us we'll make him alight and strip the 'tin' off his jacket to go to the melter's," said Nicholas.

"And we'll take the seams out of your carcase if you are not careful, you cursed jockey!" added the Skeleton, addressing the courier and seizing the bridle of his horse,—for the crowd was so dense that the ruffian had given up his idea of dancing to the barrier.

The courier, who was a powerful and resolute fellow, said to the Skeleton, lifting the handle of his whip, "If you do not let go my bridle I'll lay my whip over you. Let me pass; my lord's carriage is coming close behind. Let me go forward, I say."

"Your lord!" said the Skeleton; "what is your lord to me? I'll slit his weasand if I like! I never did for a lord; I should like to try my hand."

"There are no more lords now. Vive la Chartel!" shouted Tortillard; and as he said so he whistled a verse of the "Parisienne," and clinging to one of the courier's legs nearly drew him out of his saddle. A blow with the handle of his whip on Tortillard's head punished his insolence; but the populace instantly attacked the courier, who in vain spurred his horse,—he could not advance a step.

Dismounted, amidst the shouts of the mob, he would have been murdered but for the arrival of Rodolph's carriage, which took off the attention of these wretches.

The prince's travelling carriage, drawn by four horses, had for some time past advanced at only a foot pace, and one of the two footmen had got down from the rumble and was walking by the side of the door, which was very low; the postilions kept crying out to the people, and went forward very cautiously.

Rodolph was dressed in deep mourning, as was also his daughter, one of whose hands he held in his own, looking at her with affection. The gentle and lovely face of Fleur-de-Marie was enclosed in a small capot of black crape, which heightened the dazzling brilliancy of her skin and the beautiful hue of her lovely brown hair; and the azure of this bright day was reflected in her large eyes, which had never been of more transparent and softened blue. Although her features wore a gentle smile, and expressed calmness and happiness when she looked at her father, yet a tinge of melancholy, and sometimes of undefinable sadness, threw its shadow over her countenance when her eyes were not fixed on her father.

At this moment the carriage came amongst the crowd and began to slacken its pace. Rodolph lowered the window, and said in German to the lackey who was walking by the window, "Well, Frantz, what is the meaning of this?"

"Monseigneur, there is such a crowd that the horses cannot move."

"What has this assemblage collected for?"

"Monseigneur, there is an execution going on."

"Ah, frightful!" said Rodolph, throwing himself back in his carriage.

"What is it, my dear father?" asked Fleur-de-Marie with uneasiness.

"Nothing—nothing, dearest."

"Only listen,—these threatening cries approach us! What can it be?"

"Desire them to reach Charenton by another road," said Rodolph.

"Monseigneur, it is too late, the crowd has stopped the horses."

The footman could say no more. The mob, excited by the savage encouragement of the Skeleton and Nicholas, suddenly surrounded the carriage, and, in spite of the threats of the postilions, stopped the horses, and Rodolph saw on all sides threatening, furious countenances, and above them all the Skeleton, who came to the door of the carriage.

"Take care, my dear father!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, throwing her arms around Rodolph's neck.

"Oh, you are the 'my lord,' are you?" said the Skeleton, thrusting his hideous head into the carriage.

Had it not been for his daughter's presence, Rodolph would have given way to the natural impetuosity of his character at this insolence; but he controlled himself, and coolly replied:

"What do you want, and why do you stop my carriage?"

"Because we choose," said the Skeleton. "Each in his turn. Yesterday you trampled on the mob, and to-day the mob will crush you if you stir."

"Father, we are lost!" murmured Fleur-de-Marie.

"Take courage, love! I understand," replied the prince; "it is the last day of the carnival,—these fellows are tipsy; I will get rid of them."

"I say, my 'covey,' come, get out, and your 'mot' with you!" cried Nicholas; "why should you trample upon a parcel of poor people!"

"You seem to have drunk a good deal, and to desire to drink more," said Rodolph; "here, take this, and do not delay my carriage any longer," and he threw out his purse, which Tortillard caught.

"Oh, what, you are going to travel, eh? Well, then, you've got your pockets well lined, no doubt. Come, shell out, my blade, or I'll have your life." And he opened the door suddenly.

Rodolph's patience was exhausted. Alarmed for Fleur-de-Marie, whose alarm increased every moment, and believing that a display of vigour would daunt the wretch, whom he believed to be only drunk, he sprung from the carriage, intending to seize the Skeleton by the throat. The latter suddenly receded, and then, drawing a long knife-dirk from his pocket, rushed at Rodolph. Fleur-de-Marie, seeing the dirk raised to stab her father, gave a shriek, sprung from the carriage, and threw her arms around him.

Her father's life must have been sacrificed but for the Chourineur, who at the commencement of this tumult, having recognised the livery of the prince, had contrived, by superhuman efforts, to reach the Skeleton; and at the moment when that ruffian menaced the prince with his knife the Chourineur seized on his arm with one hand, and, with the other grasping his collar, threw him backwards.

Although surprised, and from behind too, the Skeleton turned around, and, recognising the Chourineur, cried, "What! the man in the gray blouse from La Force? This time, then, I'll do for you!" and rushing furiously at the Chourineur, he plunged his knife in his breast. The Chourineur staggered, but did not fall. The crowd kept him on his legs.

"The guard! Here come the guard!" exclaimed several voices in alarm.

At these words, and at the sight of the murder of the Chourineur, all this dense crowd, fearing to be compromised in the assassination, dispersed as if by magic, and fled in every direction; the Skeleton, Nicholas, Martial, and Tortillard amongst the earliest.

When the guard came up, guided by the courier (who had escaped when the crowd had let him go to surround the prince's carriage), there only remained

in this sad scene, Rodolph, his daughter, and the Chourineur, bathed in his blood. The two servants of the prince had seated him on the ground, with his back to a tree.

All this passed more quickly than it can be described, and at a few paces from the guinguette from which the Skeleton and his band had issued.

The prince, pale and agitated, held in his arms Fleur-de-Marie, half fainting, whilst the postilions were repairing the harness broken in the scuffle.

"Quick!" said the prince to his servants engaged in aiding the Chourineur, "convey this poor fellow to the cabaret; and you," he added, turning to the courier, "get on the box, and gallop back for Doctor David at the hôtel; you will find him there, as he does not leave until eleven o'clock."

The carriage went away at a great speed, and the two servants conveyed the Chourineur to the low apartment in which the orgies had taken place; several of the women were still there.

"My poor, dear child!" said Rodolph, to his daughter, "let me take you to some room in this place where you can await me, for I cannot abandon this brave fellow, who has again saved my life."

"Oh, my dearest father, I entreat you do not leave me!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, with alarm, and seizing Rodolph's arm. "Do not leave me alone! I should die with fright! Where you go I will go!"

"But this frightful spectacle?"

"Yes, thanks to this worthy man, you still live for me, my father, and therefore allow me to join you in thanking and consoling him."

The prince's perplexity was very great. His daughter evinced so much just fear of remaining alone in a room in this low haunt that he made up his mind to allow her to enter with him into the apartment, where they found the Chourineur.

The mistress of the tavern and many of the women who had remained (and amongst whom was the ogress of the tapis-franc) had hastily laid the wounded man on a mattress, and then stanching and binding his wound with napkins. The Chourineur opened his eyes as Rodolph entered. At the sight of the prince his features, pale with approaching death, became animated. He smiled painfully, and said in a low voice:

"Ah, M. Rodolph, it was very fortunate I was there!"

"Brave and devoted as ever!" said the prince, in an accent of despair. "Again you have saved my life!"

"I was going to the barrier of—Charenton—to try and see you go by—see you for the last time. Fortunately—I was unable to get in for the crowd—besides—it was—to happen—I told Martial so—I had a presentiment."

"A presentiment?"

"Yes, M. Rodolph—the dream—of the sergeant—last night."

"Oh, try and forget such ideas! Let us hope the wound is not mortal."

"Oh, yes, the Skeleton struck home! Never mind—I told Martial that a worm of the earth like me—might sometimes be useful—to a great lord—like you."

"But my life—I owe my life again to you!"

"We are quits, M. Rodolph. You told me—that I had—heart and honour. That word, you see—oh, I am choking! Sir, without—my asking—do me the honour—to give me your hand—I feel I am sinking."

"No, no! Impossible!" exclaimed the prince, bending towards the Chourineur, and clasping in his hands the icy hand of the dying man, "no—you will live—you will live!"

"M. Rodolph, there is something, you see, above—I killed—with a blow of a knife—I die from the blow of a knife!" said the Chourineur, who was sinking fast.

At this moment his eyes turned towards Fleur-de-Marie, whom he had not before perceived. Amazement was depicted on his dying features; he made a movement, and said:

"Ah!—the Goualeuse!"

"Yes, my daughter, who blesses you for having preserved her father!"

"She—your daughter—here? That reminds me of how our acquaintance began—M. Rodolph—and the blows—with the fist; but this blow with a knife will be the last—last blow. I slashed—and in my turn am slashed—stabbed. It is just." He heaved a deep sigh—his head fell back—he was dead.

The sound of horses without was heard; Rodolph's carriage had met that of Murphy and David, who, in their desire to rejoin the prince, had anticipated the hour fixed for their departure.

"David," said Rodolph, wiping his eyes, and pointing to the Chourineur, "is there no hope?"

"None, monseigneur," replied the doctor, after a moment's examination.

During this moment there passed a mute and terrible scene between Fleur-de-Marie and the ogress, whom Rodolph had not observed. When the Chourineur had uttered the name of La Goualeuse, the ogress had raised her head and looked at Fleur-de-Marie. The horrid hag had already recognised Rodolph; he was called monseigneur—he called La Goualeuse his daughter. Such a metamorphosis astounded the ogress, who obstinately fixed her stupid, wondering eyes on her former victim.

Fleur-de-Marie, pale and overcome, seemed fascinated by her gaze. The death of the Chourineur, the unexpected appearance of the ogress, which came to awaken more painfully than ever the remembrance of her former degradation, appeared to her a sinister presage. From this moment, Fleur-de-Marie was struck with one of those presentiments which, in dispositions like hers, have most frequently an irresistible influence.

A few days after these events and Rodolph and his daughter quitted Paris for ever.

EPILOGUE

CHAPTER I

GEROLSTEIN

Prince Henry of Herkaüsen-Oldenzaal to the Count Maximilian Kaminetz.

OLDENZAAL, 25th August, 1840.

I am just arrived from Gerolstein, where I have passed three months with the grand duke and his family. I expected to find a letter announcing your arrival at Oldenzaal, my dear Maximilian. Judge of my surprise—of my regret, on hearing that you will be detained in Hungary for several weeks.

For more than four months I have been unable to write to you, not knowing where to direct my letters, thanks to your original and adventurous manner of travelling. You had, however, formally promised me at Vienna that you would be at Oldenzaal the first of August; I must then give up the pleasure of seeing you, and yet I have never had greater need of pouring forth my sorrows to you, Maximilian, my oldest friend, for although we are both of us still very young, our friendship is of long standing, as it dates from our childhood.

What shall I say to you? During the last three months a complete revolution has taken place in me. I am at one of those moments that decide the existence of a man. Judge, then, how necessary your presence and your advice are to me. But you will not long be wanting, whatever motives you have for remaining in Hungary. Come! Come! I entreat of you, Maximilian, for I stand in need of you to console me, and I cannot go to seek you. My father, whose health is daily declining, has summoned me from Gerolstein. Each day makes so great an alteration in him that it is impossible for me to leave him.

I have so much to say that I shall become tedious, but I must relate to you the most important—the most romantic incident of my life. Why were you not there, my friend? Why were you not there? For three months my heart has been a prey to emotions equally sweet and sorrowful, and I was alone—I was alone. Sympathise with me, you who know the sensibility of my heart, you who have seen my eyes filled with tears at the simple recital of a noble or generous action, at the simple sight of a splendid sunset—of the sky studded with bright stars.

Do you recollect last year, on our excursion to the ruins of Oppenfeld, on the shore of the vast lake, our reveries during that evening, so full of calm, of poesy, and of peace? Strange contrast! It was three days before that bloody duel, in which I would not accept you for my second, for I should have suffered too much for you had I been wounded before your eyes,—the duel in which, for a dispute at play, my second unhappily killed the young Frenchman, the Comte de Saint-Remy.

Apropos, do you know what has become of the dangerous siren whom M. de Saint-Remy brought with him to Oppenfeld, and whose name was, I think, Cecily David?

You will doubtless, my friend, smile with pity at seeing me thus losing myself amongst idle recollections of the past, instead of coming at once to the grave disclosures that I have announced my intention of making; but, in spite of myself, I delay the time from moment to moment. I know how severe you are, and I am fearful of being blamed. Yes, blamed; because, instead of acting with reflection and prudence (prudence of one and twenty, alas!), I have acted foolishly, or, rather, I have not acted at all as—I have suffered myself to be carried away by the stream that urged me on, and it is only since my return from Gerolstein that I have been awakened from the enchanting vision that has lulled me to sleep for the last three months, and this awaking has been a sorrowful one.

Now, my friend, my dear Maximilian, I take courage. Hear me indulgently; I begin with fear and trembling—I dare not look at you, for when you read these lines, how grave and stern will your face become, stoic that you are!

After having obtained leave of absence for six months, I left Vienna, and remained some time with my father. His health was then good, and he advised me to visit my aunt, the Princess Juliana, superior of the abbey of Gerolstein. I think I have already told you that my grandfather was cousin-german to the present duke's grandfather, and the Duke Gustavus Rodolph, thanks to this relationship, had always treated my father and myself as his cousins.

You also know, I think, that during a long stay the prince made recently in France my father was left at the head of the affairs of the duchy. It is not any feeling of ostentatious pride, as you well know, Maximilian, that makes me recapitulate all these circumstances, but to explain to you the causes of the extreme intimacy that existed between the grand duke and myself during my stay at Gerolstein.

Do you recollect that last year, after our voyage on the banks of the Rhine, we heard that the prince had found and married, in extremis, the Countess Macgregor, in order to legitimise the daughter he had had by her by a previous and secret marriage, afterwards annulled, because it had been contracted against the consent of the late grand duke?

This young girl, thus formally recognised, this charming Princess Amelie, of whom Lord Dudley, who had seen her at Gerolstein about a year ago, spoke to us with an enthusiasm that we suspected of exaggeration, strange chance! who would have said then—

But although you have doubtless penetrated my secret, let me pursue the progress of events.

The convent of Ste. Hermangeld, of which my aunt is abbess, is scarcely a quarter of a league from Gerolstein, for the gardens of the abbey touch the outskirts of the town. A charming house, perfectly isolated from the cloisters, had been placed at my disposal by my aunt, who has, as you know, the affection of a mother for me. The day of my arrival she informed me a grand drawing-room would be held the next day, as the grand duke was going formally to announce his intended marriage with La Marquise d'Harville, who had just arrived at Gerolstein with her father, the Comte d'Orbigny.

The duke was blamed by some for not having sought an alliance with some royal house, but others, and amongst them my aunt, congratulated him on having chosen, instead of a marriage of ambition, a young and lovely woman to whom he was deeply attached, and who belonged to one of the first families in France. You know, too, that my aunt has always had the greatest regard for the grand duke, and has always appreciated his fine qualities.

"My dear child," said she to me, speaking of the drawing-room, to which I was going the next day,— "my dear child, the most astonishing sight you will see to-morrow will be the pearl of Gerolstein."

"Of whom are you talking, my dear aunt?"

"Of the Princess Amelie."

"The grand duke's daughter? Lord Dudley spoke of her at Vienna with warmth we suspected of exaggeration."

"At my age and in my position," replied my aunt, "people do not exaggerate, so you can trust to my judgment, and I assure you I never knew any one

more enchanting than the Princess Amelie. I would speak of her beauty were it not for an indefinable charm she possesses, superior even to her beauty. From the first day that the grand duke presented me to her, I felt myself irresistibly drawn towards her; and I am not the only person. The Archduchess Sophia is at Gerolstein, and is the most proud and haughty princess I know."

"Very true, aunt; her irony is terrible, very few persons escape from her sarcasms; at Vienna every one dreaded her. Can the Princess Amelie have found favour in her eyes?"

"The other day she came here after visiting the asylum placed under the princess's direction. 'Do you know,' said this redoubtable archduchess to me, 'that if I resided long with the grand duke's daughter I should become quite harmless, so contagious is her goodness!'"

"Why, my cousin must be an enchantress!" said I, laughing, to my aunt.

"Her most powerful charm, at least in my eyes," replied my aunt, "is the mixture of sweetness, modesty, and dignity that I have told you of, and which gives a most touching expression to her face."

"Indeed, aunt, modesty is a rare quality in a princess so young, so beautiful, and so happy."

"Reflect that the princess is still more deserving of praise for her modesty, as her elevation is so very recent."

"In her interview with you, aunt, did the princess make any reference to her early life?"

"No; but when, notwithstanding my advanced age, I addressed her with the respect due to her rank, since her royal highness is the grand duke's daughter, her ingenuous confusion, mingled with gratitude and veneration for me, quite overpowered me; for her reserve, full of dignity and affability, proved to me that her present elevation did not make her forget her past life, and that she accorded to my age what I accorded to her rank."

"It must require," said I, "the most perfect tact to observe those nice differences."

"My dear boy, the more I see of the princess, the more I congratulate myself on my first impression. Since she has been here the number of charitable acts she has done is incredible, and that with a reflection and a judgment

that in a person of her age quite surprises me. Judge yourself. At her request the grand duke has founded at Gerolstein an establishment for orphans of five or six years, and for young girls (who are either orphans or abandoned by their parents) of the age of sixteen, that age so fatal to those who are not protected against the temptations of vice or the pressure of want.

"The good sisters of my convent teach and direct the children of this asylum. During my visits there I have had ample opportunities of judging of the adoration that these poor, unfortunate creatures have for the princess. Every day she spends several hours at this place, which is placed under her protection, and I repeat that it is not merely gratitude and respect that the children and nuns feel towards the princess, it almost amounts to fanaticism."

"The princess must be an angel," said I to my aunt.

"An angel, indeed!" replied she, "for you cannot conceive with what touching kindness she treats her young protégées. I have never seen the susceptibility of misfortune meet with more delicate sympathy. You would think some irresistible attraction drew the princess towards this class of unfortunates. Will you believe it? she, the daughter of a sovereign, only addresses these poor children as 'my sisters!'"

At these last words of my aunt I confess I felt my eyes fill with tears. Do you not also admire the admirable and pious conduct of this young princess?

"Since the princess," said I, "is so marvellously gifted, I shall be greatly embarrassed when I am presented to her to-morrow. You know how timid I am; you know, also, that elevation of character imposes upon me more than high birth, so that I am certain to appear both stupid and embarrassed to-morrow; so I make up my mind to that beforehand."

"Come, come!" said my aunt, smiling, "she will take pity upon you, the more readily as you are not quite a stranger to her."

"I am not a stranger to her, aunt?"

"Certainly not."

"How so?"

"You recollect that when at the age of sixteen you left Oldenzaal, to travel with your father through Russia and England, I had your portrait painted in the costume you wore at the first bal costumé the late duchess gave?"

"Yes, aunt, the costume of a German page of the sixteenth century."

"Our famous painter, Fritz Mocker, whilst he painted a faithful likeness of you, not only produced a page of that century, but even the style of the pictures of that time.

"Some days after her arrival at Gerolstein, the Princess Amelie, who had come with her father to visit me, remarked your portrait, and asked what was that charming picture of olden times. Her father smiled, and said, 'This is the portrait of a cousin of ours, who would be, were he now alive (as you see by his dress), some three hundred years old, but who, although very young, made himself remarkable for his courage and goodness of heart; has he not bravery in his eyes and goodness in his smile?'"

Do not, I entreat you, Maximilian, shrug your shoulders with disdain at seeing me write these puerile details of myself, which are, alas, necessary to my story.

"The Princess Amelie," continued my aunt, "deceived by this innocent pleasantry, after a long examination of your portrait, joined with her father in praising the amiable and determined expression of your face. Some time after, when I went to Gerolstein, she questioned me playfully about 'her cousin of the olden time.'

"I then explained the trick to her, and told her that the handsome page of the sixteenth century was really the Prince Henry d'Herkaüsen-Oldenzaal, a young man of one and twenty, captain in the guards of his majesty the Emperor of Austria, and in every other respect than the costume very like his picture. At these words the princess," continued my aunt, "blushed and became serious, and has never since spoken of the picture. However, you see that you are not quite a stranger to your cousin; so take courage, and maintain the reputation of your portrait."

This conversation took place, as I have already told you, the evening previous to the day on which I was to be presented to the princess my cousin. I left my aunt, and returned to my own apartments.

You have often told me, my dear Maximilian, that I was totally free from vanity; I must therefore trust to that to prevent my appearing vain during this recital.

As soon as I was alone I reflected with a secret satisfaction that the Princess Amelie, after seeing my portrait, painted five or six years ago, had inquired after "her cousin of the olden time."

Nothing could be more absurd than to build the slightest hope on so trivial a circumstance, I acknowledge; but I always treat you with the most perfect confidence, and I acknowledge that this trifling circumstance delighted me.

No doubt the praise I had just heard bestowed on the princess by so grave and austere a person as my aunt, by raising her in my estimation, rendered this circumstance more agreeable.

Why should I tell you? The hopes I conceived from this trifling event were so mad that, now that I look back more calmly on the past, I ask myself how I could have indulged in ideas that must have ended in my destruction.

Although related to the grand duke, and always treated by him with the greatest kindness, yet it was impossible to entertain the slightest hope of a marriage with the princess; even had she returned my affection it would still have been impossible. Our family holds an honourable position, but it is poor when compared with the grand duke, the richest prince of the German confederation; and besides, I was only one and twenty, a simple captain in the guards, without any reputation or any position. Never could the grand duke think of me as a suitor for his daughter.

All these reflections ought to have saved me from a passion I did not as yet feel, but of which I had a strange presentiment.

Alas! I rather gave way to fresh puerilities; I wore on my finger a ring that Thecla (the countess of whom I have so often spoken) had given me, although this souvenir of a boyish love could not have much embarrassed me. I sacrificed it to my new flame, and, opening the window, I cast the ring into the waves of the river that flowed beneath.

I have no need to tell you what a night I passed, you can imagine; I knew the princess was very beautiful; I sought to picture to myself her features, her air, her manner, her figure, the sound of her voice; and thinking of my portrait which she had noticed I recollected that the artist had flattered me excessively, and I contrasted the picturesque dress of a page of the sixteenth century with the simple uniform of a captain of the Austrian guards.

But amidst all these absurd ideas some generous thoughts crossed my mind, and I was overcome,—yes, overcome by the recollection of the

tenderness of the princess for those poor girls whom she always terms "my sisters."

The next day the hour for the reception came. I tried on several uniforms one after another, found them all to fit me very ill, and departed very dissatisfied with myself.

Although Gerolstein is only a quarter of a league from Ste. Hermangeld, during the short journey all the childish ideas that had so occupied me during the night had given place to one sad and grave thought.

An invincible presentiment told me I was approaching one of the crises of my life. A magical inspiration revealed to me that I was about to love, to love as a man loves but once in his life; and, as if to complete my misfortunes, this love, as loftily as deservedly bestowed, was doomed to be unhappy.

You do not know the grand ducal palace of Gerolstein. In the opinion of every one who has visited the capitals of Europe, there is, with the exception of Versailles, no royal residence that has a more regal and imposing appearance.

If at this time I speak of this, it is because, thinking over them, I wonder how they did not recall me to myself; for the Princess Amelie was the daughter of the sovereign of this palace, these guards, and of these riches.

You arrived at the palace by the marble court; so called, because, with the exception of a drive for the carriages, it is paved with variegated marble, forming the most magnificent mosaics, in the centre of which is a basin of breccia antique, into which a stream of water flows from a porphyry vase.

This court of honour is surrounded by a row of beautiful marble statues, holding candelabras of gilt bronze, from which sprung brilliant jets of gas. Alternately with these statues are the Medicean vases, raised on richly sculptured pedestals, and filled with rose laurels, whose leaves shine in the lights with a metallic lustre.

The carriages stopped at the foot of the double staircase leading to the peristyle of the palace. At the foot of this staircase were stationed on guard, mounted on their black horses, two soldiers of the regiment of the guards of the grand duke. You would have been struck with the stern and warlike appearance of these two giants, whose cuirasses and helmets, made like those of the ancients, without crest or plume, sparkled in the sun.

These soldiers wore blue coats with yellow collars, buckskin breeches, and jack-boots. To please you who are so fond of military details, I add, that at the top landing of the staircase were stationed, as sentinels, two grenadiers of the foot-guards of the duke. Their uniform, with the exception of the colour of the coat and facings, resembles, I am told, that of Napoleon's grenadiers.

After traversing the vestibule, where the porters of the duke were stationed, halberd in hand, I ascended a splendid staircase of white marble, which opened upon a portico, ornamented with jasper columns, and surmounted by a painted and gilt cupola. There were two long files of domestics.

I then entered the guard-room, at the door of which I found a chamberlain and an aide-de-camp, whose duty it was to present to his royal highness those persons who were entitled to this honour. My relationship, though distant, procured me a special presentation. An aide-de-camp preceded me into a long gallery, filled with gentlemen in full court dress or uniform, and splendidly attired ladies.

Whilst I passed through this brilliant assembly, I heard here and there remarks that augmented my embarrassment. Every one admired the angelic beauty of the Princess Amelie, the charming appearance of the Marquise d'Harville, and the imperial air of the Archduchess Sophia, who, recently arrived from Munich with the Archduke Stanislaus, was about to depart for Warsaw; but whilst rendering their just tribute of admiration to the lofty bearing of the duchess and to the charms of the Marquise d'Harville, every one agreed that nothing could exceed the loveliness of the Princess Amelie.

As I approached the spot where the grand duke and the princess were I felt my heart beat more and more violently. At the moment that I entered the salon (I forgot to tell you there was a concert and ball at court) the famous Liszt sat down to the piano, and instantly the most profound silence succeeded to the conversation that was going on. I waited in the embrasure of a door until Liszt had finished the piece he was playing with his accustomed taste.

It was then that I saw the Princess Amelie for the first time.

I must tell you all that passed, for I feel an indescribable pleasure in writing it.

Picture to yourself a large salon furnished with regal splendour, brilliantly lighted up, and hung with crimson silk, embroidered with wreaths of flowers

in gold. In the first row, on large gilt chairs, sat the Archduchess Sophia with Madame d'Harville on her left, and the Princess Amelie on her right. Behind them stood the duke in the uniform of colonel of the guards. He seemed scarcely thirty, and the military uniform set off his fine figure and noble features. Beside him was the Archduke Stanislaus in the uniform of a field-marshal; then came the princess's maids of honour, the ladies of the grand dignitaries of the court, and then the dignitaries themselves.

I need scarcely tell you that the Princess Amelie was less conspicuous by her rank than by her extraordinary beauty. Do not condemn me without reading this description of her. Although it falls far short of the reality, you will understand my adoration. You will understand that as soon as I saw her I loved her; and that the suddenness of my passion can only be equalled by its violence and its eternity.

The Princess Amelie was dressed in a plain white watered silk dress, and wore, like the archduchess, the riband of the imperial order of St. Nepomucenus recently sent to her by the empress. A diadem of pearls surrounded her head, and harmonised admirably with two splendid braids of fair hair that shaded her delicate cheeks. Her arms, whiter than the lace that ornamented them, were half hidden in long gloves, reaching nearly to her elbow.

Nothing could be more perfect than her figure, nothing more charming than her foot in its satin slipper. At the moment when I saw her her beaming blue eyes wore a pensive expression. I do not know whether some serious thought came over her, or whether she was impressed with the grave melody of the piece Liszt was playing; but the expression of her countenance seemed to me full of sweetness and melancholy.

Never can I express my feelings at that moment. All that my aunt had related of her goodness crossed my mind.

Smile if you will, but my eyes became full of tears when I saw this young girl, so beautiful and so idolised by such a father, seem so melancholy and pensive.

You know how scrupulously etiquette and the privileges of rank are observed by us. Thanks to my title and my relationship to the grand duke, the crowd in the midst of which I stood gradually fell back, and I found myself left almost alone in the embrasure of the door. It was, no doubt, owing to this circumstance that the princess, awaking from her reverie, perceived, and no doubt recognised me, for she started and blushed.

She had seen my portrait at my aunt's, and recognised me; nothing could be more simple. The princess's eyes did not rest upon me an instant, but that look threw me into the most violent confusion. I felt my cheeks glow, I cast down my eyes, and did not venture to raise them for some time. When I dared at last to steal a glance at the princess she was speaking in a low tone to the archduchess, who seemed to listen to her with the most affectionate interest.

Liszt having paused for a few moments between the pieces he was playing, the grand duke took the opportunity of expressing his admiration. On returning to his place he perceived me, nodded kindly to me, and said something to the archduchess, fixing his eyes on me at the same time. The duchess, after looking at me a moment, turned to the duke, who smiled and said something to his daughter that seemed to embarrass her, for she blushed again. I was on thorns; but, unfortunately, etiquette forbade my leaving my place until the concert was over.

As soon as the concert was finished I followed the aide-de-camp; he conducted me to the grand duke, who deigned to advance a few steps towards me, took me by the arm, and said to the Archduchess Sophia:

"Permit me to present to your royal highness my cousin, Prince Henry of Herkaüsen-Oldenzaal."

"I have seen the prince at Vienna, and meet him here with pleasure," replied the duchess, before whom I inclined myself respectfully.

"My dear Amelie," continued the prince, addressing his daughter, "this is Prince Henry, your cousin, the son of one of my most valued friends, Prince Paul, whom I greatly lament not seeing here to-day."

"Pray, monseigneur, inform the prince that I equally regret his absence, for I am always delighted to know any of my father's friends."

I had not until then heard the princess's voice, and I was struck with its intense sweetness.

"I hope, my dear Henry, you will stay some time with your aunt," said the grand duke. "Come and see us often about three o'clock en famille; and if we ride out you must accompany us. You know how great an affection I have always felt for you, for your noble qualities."

"I cannot express my gratitude for your royal highness's kindness."

"Well, to prove it," said the grand duke, smiling, "engage your cousin for the second quadrille; the first belongs to the archduke."

"Will your royal highness do me the honour?" said I to my cousin.

"Oh, call each other cousin, as in the good old times," replied the duke, laughing. "There should be no ceremony between relations."

"Will you dance with me, cousin?"

"Yes, cousin," replied the princess.

I cannot tell how much I felt the touching kindness of the grand duke, and how bitterly I reproached myself for yielding to an affection the prince would never authorise.

I vowed inwardly that nothing should induce me to acquaint my cousin with my affection, but I feared my emotion would betray me.

I had leisure for these reflections whilst my cousin danced the first quadrille with the Archduke Stanislaus. Nothing was more suited to display the graces of the princess's person than the slow movements of the dance. I anxiously awaited my turn; and I succeeded in concealing my emotion when I led her to the quadrille.

"Does your royal highness sanction my calling you cousin?" said I.

"Oh, yes, cousin, I am always delighted to obey my father."

"I rejoice in this familiarity, since I have learnt from my aunt to know you."

"My father has often spoken of you, cousin; and what may, perhaps, astonish you," added she, timidly, "I also knew you by sight; for one day the Abbess of Ste. Hermangeld, your aunt, for whom I have the greatest respect, showed me your picture."

"As a page of the sixteenth century?"

"Yes, cousin; and my father was malicious enough to tell me that it was an ancestor of ours, and spoke so highly of his courage and his other qualities that our family ought to be proud of their descent from him."

"Alas, cousin, I fear my resemblance to my portrait is not great!"

"You are mistaken, cousin," said the princess. "For at the end of the concert I recognised you immediately, in spite of the difference of costume." Then, wishing to change the conversation, she added, "How charmingly M. Liszt plays!—does he not?"

"Yes. How attentively you listened to him!"

"Because there is to me a double charm in music without words. Not only you hear the execution, but you can adapt your thoughts to the melody. Do you understand me?"

"Perfectly; your own thoughts become words to the air."

"Yes, you quite comprehend me," said she, with a gesture of satisfaction. "I feared I could not express what I felt just now."

"I thank God, cousin," said I, smiling, "you can have no words to set to so sad an air."

I know not whether my question was indiscreet or whether she had not heard me, but suddenly she exclaimed, pointing out to me the grand duke, who crossed the room with the archduchess on his arm, "Cousin, look at my father, how handsome he is! how noble! how good! Every one looks at him as if they loved him more than they feared him."

"Ah," cried I, "it is not only here he is beloved. If the blessing of his people be transmitted to their posterity, the name of Rodolph of Gerolstein will be immortal."

"To speak thus is to be, indeed, worthy of his attachment."

"I do but give utterance to the feelings of all present; see how they all hasten to pay their respects to Madame d'Harville!"

"No one in the world is more worthy of my father's affections than Madame d'Harville."

"You are more capable than any one of appreciating her, as you have been in France."

Scarcely had I pronounced these words than the princess cast down her eyes, and her features assumed an air of melancholy; and when I led her back to her seat the expression of them was still the same. I suppose that my allusion to her stay in France recalled the death of her mother.

In the course of the evening a circumstance occurred which you may think too trivial to mention, perhaps, but which evinces the extraordinary influence this young girl universally inspires. Her bandeau of pearls having become disarranged, the Archduchess Sophia, who was leaning on her arm, kindly readjusted the ornament upon her brow. Knowing, as we do, the hauteur of the archduchess, such condescension is almost inconceivable.

The next morning I was invited, together with a few other persons, to be present at the marriage of the grand duke with Madame la Marquise d'Harville. I had never seen the princess so radiant and happy.

Some days after the duke's marriage I had a long interview with him. He questioned me about my past life, my future career. He gave me the most admirable advice, the kindest encouragement. So much so that the idea crossed my mind that he had perceived my love and wished to bring me to confess it.

But this idea was soon dispelled. The prince concluded by telling me that the great wars were over, that I ought to avail myself of my name, my connections, the education I had received, and my father's friendship with the Prince de M——, prime minister of the emperor, in order to follow a diplomatic instead of a military career. In a word, he offered me his sovereign protection to facilitate my entry in the career he proposed to me.

I thanked him for his offers with gratitude, and added that I felt the weight of his advice and would follow it.

I at first visited the palace very seldom; but, thanks to the duke's reiterated invitations, I was soon there almost every day. We lived in the peaceful retirement resembling that of some English mansions. When the weather permitted we rode out with the duke, the duchess, and the grand personages of the court.

When we were forced to remain at home we sang, and I accompanied the grand duchess and my cousin, who had the sweetest and most expressive voice I ever heard. At other times we inspected the magnificent picture galleries and museums, and the library of the prince, who is one of the most accomplished men in Europe. I often dined at the palace, and on the opera nights I accompanied the duke's family to the theatre.

Could this intimacy have lasted for ever I should have been happy, perhaps, but I reflected that I should be summoned to Vienna by my duties. I

reflected, also, that the duke would soon think of finding a suitable alliance for his daughter.

My cousin remarked this change in me. The evening before I quitted Gerolstein she told me she had for several days remarked my abstracted manner. I endeavoured to evade this question, saying that my approaching departure was the cause.

"I can scarcely believe it," replied she. "My father treats you like a son; every one loves you. It would be ingratitude if you were unhappy."

"Alas!" said I, unable to restrain my emotion, "it is grief I am a prey to!"

"Why, what has happened?"

"Just now, cousin, you have told me your father treated me like a son, and that every one loved me; and yet, ere long, I must quit Gerolstein. It is this that grieves me."

"And are the recollections of those you have left as nothing?"

"Doubtless; but time brings so many changes."

"There are affections, at least, that are unchangeable; such as that of my father for you, such as that I feel for you. When you are once brother and sister you never forget each other," added she, looking up, her large blue eyes full of tears.

I was on the point of betraying myself; however, I controlled my feelings in time.

"Do you think then, cousin," said I, "that when I return in a few years this affection will continue?"

"Why should it not?"

"Because you will be probably married; you will have other duties to perform, and you will forget your poor brother."

This was all that passed; I know not if she was offended at these words, or whether she was like myself grieved at the changes the future must bring; but, instead of answering me, she was silent for a moment, then, rising hastily from her seat, her face pale and altered, she left the room, after

having looked for a few seconds at the embroidery of the young Countess d'Oppenheim, one of her maids of honour.

The same evening I received a second letter from my father, urging me to return. The next morning I took leave of the grand duke. He told me my cousin was unwell, but that he would make my adieux; he then embraced me tenderly, renewed his promises of assistance, and added that, whenever I had leave of absence, nothing would give him greater pleasure than to see me at Gerolstein.

Happily, on my arrival, I found my father better; still confined to his bed, and very weak, it is true, but out of danger. Now that you know all, Maximilian, tell me, what can I do?

Just as I finished this letter, my door opened, and, to my great surprise, my father, whom I believed to be in bed, entered; he saw the letter on the table.

"To whom are you writing so long a letter?" said he, smiling.

"To Maximilian, father."

"Oh," said he, with an expression of affectionate reproach, "he has all your confidence! He is very happy!"

He pronounced these last words in so sorrowful a tone that I held out the letter to him, almost without reflection, saying:

"Read it, father."

My friend, he has read all! After having remained musing some time he said to me:

"Henry, I shall write and inform the grand duke of all that passed during your stay at Gerolstein."

"Father, I entreat you not!"

"Is what you have written to Maximilian scrupulously true?"

"Yes."

"Do you love your cousin?"

"I adore her; but—"

My father interrupted me.

"Then, in that case, I shall write to the grand duke and demand her hand for you."

"But, father, such a demand will be madness on my part!"

"It is true; but still, in making this demand, I shall acquaint the prince with my reasons for making it. He has received you with the greatest kindness, and it would be unworthy of me to deceive him. He will be touched at the frankness of my demand, and, though he refuse it, as he certainly will, he will yet know that, should you ever again visit Gerolstein, you cannot be on the same familiar terms with the princess."

You know that, although so tenderly attached to me, my father is inflexible in whatever concerns his duty; judge, then, of my fears, of my anxiety.

I hastily terminate this long letter, but I will soon write again. Sympathise with me, for I fear I shall go mad if the fever that preys on me does not soon abate. Adieu, adieu! Ever yours,

HENRY D'H.-O.

We will now conduct the reader to the palace of Gerolstein, inhabited by Fleur-de-Marie since her return from France.

CHAPTER II

THE PRINCESS AMELIE

The apartment of Fleur-de-Marie (we only call her the Princess Amelie officially) had been by Rodolph's orders splendidly furnished. From the balcony of the oratory the two towers of the Convent of Ste. Hermangeld were visible, which, embosomed in the woods, were in their turn overtopped by a high hill, at the foot of which the abbey was built.

One fine summer's morning Fleur-de-Marie gazed listlessly at this splendid landscape; her hair was plainly braided, and she wore a high, white dress with blue stripes; a large muslin collar was fastened around her throat by a small blue silk handkerchief, of the same hue as her sash.

Seated in a large armchair of carved ebony, she leant her head on her small and delicately white hand. Fleur-de-Marie's attitude and the expression of her face showed that she was a prey to the deepest melancholy.

At this instant a female of a grave and distinguished appearance entered the room, and coughed gently to attract Fleur-de-Marie's attention. She started from her reverie, and, gracefully acknowledging the salutation of the newcomer, said:

"What is it, my dear countess?"

"I come to inform your royal highness that the grand duke will be here in a few minutes, and, also, to ask a favour of you."

"Ask it, you know how happy I am to oblige you."

"It concerns an unhappy creature who had unfortunately quitted Gerolstein before your royal highness had founded the asylum for orphans and children abandoned by their parents."

"What do you wish I should do for her?"

"The father went to seek his fortune in America, leaving his wife and daughter to gain a precarious subsistence. The mother died, and this poor girl, then only sixteen, was seduced and abandoned. She fell lower and lower, until at length she became, like so many others, the opprobrium of her sex."

Fleur-de-Marie turned red and shuddered. The countess, fearing she had wounded the delicacy of the princess by the mention of this girl's condition, replied:

"I pray your royal highness to pardon me; I have, doubtless, shocked you by speaking of this wretched creature, but her repentance seemed so sincere that I ventured to plead for her."

"You were quite right. Pray continue," said Fleur-de-Marie, subduing her emotion. "Every fault is worthy of pity when followed by repentance."

"After two years passed in this wretched mode of existence she repented sincerely, and came back to Gerolstein. She chanced to lodge in the house of a good and pious widow; encouraged by her kindness, the poor creature told her all her sad story, adding that she bitterly regretted the faults of her early life, and that all she desired was to enter some religious house, where by prayer and penitence she might atone for her sins. She is only eighteen, very beautiful, and possesses a considerable sum of money, which she wishes to bestow on the convent she enters."

"I undertake to provide for her," said Fleur-de-Marie; "since she repents, she is worthy of compassion; her remorse must be more bitter in proportion as it is sincere."

"I hear the grand duke," said the lady in waiting, without remarking Fleur-de-Marie's agitation; and, as she spoke, Rodolph entered, holding a large bouquet of roses in his hand.

At the sight of the prince the countess retired, and scarcely had she left the apartment than Fleur-de-Marie threw herself into her father's arms, and leant her head on his shoulder.

"Good morning, love," said Rodolph, pressing her to his heart. "See what beautiful roses; I never saw finer ones." And the prince made a slight motion as if to disengage himself from her and look at her, when, seeing her weeping, he threw down the bouquet, and, taking her hands, cried:

"You are weeping! What is the matter?"

"Nothing, dear father," said Fleur-de-Marie, striving to smile.

"My child," replied Rodolph, "you are concealing something from me; tell me, I entreat you, what thus distresses you. Never mind the bouquet."

"Oh, you know how fond I am of roses; I always was! Do you recollect," added she, "my poor little rose-tree? I have preserved the pieces of it so carefully!"

At this terrible allusion, Rodolph cried:

"Unhappy child! Is it possible that, in the midst of all the splendour that surrounds you, you think of the past? Alas! I hoped my tenderness had made you forget it."

"Forgive me, dear father; I did not mean what I said. I grieve you."

"I grieve, my child, because I know how painful it is for you thus to ponder over the past."

"Dear father, it is the first time since I have been here."

"The first time you have mentioned it, but not the first time you have thought of it; I have for a long time noticed your sadness, and was unable to account for it. My position was so delicate, though I never told you anything, I thought of you constantly. When I contracted my marriage, I thought it would increase your happiness. I did not venture to hope you would quite forget the past; but I hoped that, cherished and supported by the amiable woman whom I had chosen for my wife, you would look upon the past as amply atoned for by your sufferings. No matter what faults you had committed, they have been a thousand times expiated by the good you have done since you have been here."

"Father!"

"Oh, let me tell you all, since a providential chance has brought about this conversation I at once desired and dreaded! I would, to secure your happiness, have sacrificed my affection for Madame d'Harville and my friendship for Murphy, had I thought they recalled the past to you."

"Oh, their presence, when they know what I was, and yet love me so tenderly, seems a proof of pardon and oblivion to me! I should have been miserable if for my sake you had renounced Madame d'Harville's hand."

"Oh, you know not what sacrifice Clémence herself would have made, for she was aware of the full extent of my duties to you!"

"Duties to me! What have I done to deserve so much goodness?"

"Until the moment that Heaven restored you to me, your life had been one of sorrow and misery, and I reproach myself with your sufferings as if I had caused them, and when I see you happy, it seems to me I am forgiven. My only wish, my sole aim, is to render you as happy as you were before unhappy, to exalt you as you have been abased, for the last trace of your humiliation must disappear when you see the noblest in the land vie with each other who shall show you most respect."

"Respect to me! Oh, no! It is to my rank and not to myself they show respect."

"It is to you, dear child,—it is to you!"

"You love me so much, dear father, that every one thinks to please you by showing me respect."

"Oh, naughty child!" cried Rodolph, tenderly kissing his daughter; "she will not cede anything to my paternal pride."

"Is not your pride satisfied at my attributing the kindness I receive to you only?"

"No, that is not the same thing; I cannot be proud of myself, but of you. You are ignorant of your own merits; in fifteen months your education has been so perfected that the most enthusiastic mother would be proud of you."

At this moment the door of the salon opened, and Clémence, grand duchess of Gerolstein, entered, holding a letter in her hand.

"Here, love, is a letter from France," said she to Rodolph; "I brought it myself, because I wished to bid good-morrow to my dear child, whom I have not yet seen to-day."

"This letter arrives most opportunely," said Rodolph. "We were speaking of the Past; that monster we must destroy, since he threatens the repose of our child."

"Is it possible that these fits of melancholy we have so often remarked—"

"Were occasioned by unhappy recollections; but now that we know the enemy we shall destroy him."

"From whom is this letter?" asked Clémence.

"From Rigolette, Germain's wife."

"Rigolette?" cried Fleur-de-Marie. "Oh, I am so glad!"

"Do you not fear that this letter may serve to awaken fresh recollections?" said Clémence, in a low tone to Rodolph.

"On the contrary, I wish to destroy these recollections, and I shall, doubtless, find arms in this letter, for Rigolette is a worthy creature, who appreciated and adored our child."

Rodolph then read the following letter aloud:

"BOUQUEVAL FARM, August 15, 1841.

"Monseigneur:—I take the liberty of writing to you to communicate a great happiness which has occurred to us, and to ask of you another favour,—of you, to whom we already owe so much, or rather to whom we owe the real paradise in which we live, myself, my dear Germain, and his good mother. It is this, monseigneur: For the last ten days I have been crazy with joy, for ten days ago I was confined with such a love of a little girl, which I say is the image of Germain, he says it is exactly like me, and our dear mother says it is like us both; the fact is, it has beautiful blue eyes like Germain, and black curly hair like mine."

"Good, worthy people, they deserve to be happy!" said Rodolph. "If ever there was a couple well matched it is they."

"But really, monseigneur, I must ask your pardon for this chatter. Your ears must often tingle, monseigneur, for the day never passes that we do not talk of you, when we say to each other how happy we are, how happy we were, for then your name naturally occurs. Excuse this blot, monseigneur; but, without thinking of it, I had written Monsieur Rodolph, as I used to say formerly, and then I scratched it out. I hope you will find my writing improved as well as my spelling, for Germain gives me lessons, and I do not make those long ugly scrawls I used to do when you mended my pens."

"I must confess," said Rodolph, with a smile, "that my little protégée makes a mistake, and I am sure Germain is more frequently employed in kissing the hand of his scholar than in directing it."

"My dear duke, you are unjust," said Clémence, looking at the letter; "it is rather a very large hand, but very legible."

"Why, yes, she has really improved," observed Rodolph; "it would in former days have taken eight pages to contain what she now writes in two." And he continued:

"It is quite true, you know, monseigneur, that you used to mend my pens, and when we think of it, we two Germans, we feel quite ashamed when we recollect how free from pride you were. Ah, I am again chattering instead of saying what we wish to ask of you, monseigneur; for my husband unites with me, and it is very important, for we attach a great deal to it, as you will see. We entreat of you, monseigneur, to have the goodness to choose for us and give us a name for our dear little daughter; this has been the wish of the godfather and godmother,—and who do you think they are, monseigneur? Two persons whom you and the Marquise d'Harville have taken from misery and made very happy, as happy as we are. They are Morel, the lapidary, and Jeanne Duport, a worthy creature whom I met in prison when I went there to visit my dear Germain, and whom the marquise afterwards took out of the hospital.

"And now, monseigneur, you must know why we have chosen M. Morel for godfather, and Jeanne Duport for godmother. We said it would be one way of again thanking M. Rodolph for all his kindness, to have, as godfather and godmother for our little one, worthy persons who owe everything to him and the marchioness; whilst, at the same time, Morel and Jeanne Duport are the worthiest people breathing, they are of our own class in life, and besides, as we say with Germain, they are our kinsfolk in happiness, for, like us, they are of the family of your protégés."

"Really, my dear father, this idea is most delightful and excellent!" said Fleur-de-Marie; "to take for godfather and godmother persons who owe everything to you and my dear second mother!"

"Yes, indeed, dearest," said Clémence; "and I am deeply touched at their remembrance."

"And I am very happy to find that my favours have been so well bestowed," said Rodolph, continuing his letter.

"With the money you gave him, Morel has now become a jewel broker, and earns enough to bring up his family very respectably. Poor Louise, who is a very good girl, is going, I believe, to be married to a very worthy young man, who loves and respects her as he ought to do, for she has been unfortunate, but not guilty, and Louise's husband that is to be is perfectly sensible of this."

Rodolph laid great stress on these last words, looked at his daughter for a moment, and then continued:

"I must add, monseigneur, that Jeanne Duport, through the generosity of the marquise, has been separated from her husband, that bad man who beat her and took everything from her; she has now her eldest daughter with her: they keep a small trimming shop, and are doing very well. Germain writes to you regularly, monseigneur, every month, on the subject of the Bank for Mechanics out of Work and Gratuitous Loans; there are scarcely any sums in arrear, and we find already the good effects of it in this quarter. Nine, at least, poor families can support themselves in the dead season of work without sending their clothes and bedding to the pawnbroker's. And when work comes in, it does one's heart good to see the haste with which they return the money lent, and they bless you for the loans so serviceably advanced.

"Yes, monseigneur, they bless you; for, although you say you did nothing in this but appoint Germain, and that an unknown did this great benefit, we must always, suppose it was you who founded it, as it appears to us the most natural idea. There is, besides, a most famous trumpet to repeat that it is you who are the real benefactor. This trumpet is Madame Pipelet, who repeats to every one that it could be no one but her king of lodgers (excuse her, M. Rodolph, but she always calls you so) who established such a charitable institution, and her old darling Alfred is of the same opinion; he is so proud and contented with his post as porter to the bank that he says all the tricks of M. Cabrion would not have the slightest effect on him now.

"Germain has read in the newspapers that Martial, a colonist of Algeria, has been mentioned with great praise for the courage he had shown in repulsing, at the head of the settlers, an attack of plundering Arabs, and that his wife, as intrepid as himself, had been slightly wounded by his side, where she handled her musket like a real grenadier; since this time, says the newspaper, she has been called Madame Carabine.

"Excuse this long letter, monseigneur, but I think you will not be displeased to hear from us news of all those whose benefactor you have been. I write to you from the farm at Bouqueval, where we have been since the spring with our good mother. Germain leaves us in the morning for his business, and returns in the evening. In the autumn we shall return to Paris.

"It is so strange, M. Rodolph, that I, who could never endure the country, am now so fond of it; I suppose it is because Germain likes it so very much.

"As to the farm, M. Rodolph, you who know, no doubt, where the good little Goualeuse is, will perhaps tell her that we very often think of her as one of the dearest and gentlest creatures in the world; and that, for myself, I never think of my own happy condition without saying to myself, since M. Rodolph was also the M. Rodolph of dear Fleur-de-Marie, that, no doubt, she is by his kindness as happy as we are, and that makes one feel still more happy. Ah, how I chatter! What will you say to all this? But you are so good, and then, you know, it is your fault if I go on as long and as merrily as Papa Crétu and Ramonette, who no longer have a chance with me in singing. You will not refuse our request, will you, monseigneur? If you will give a name to our dear little child, it will seem to us that it will bring her good fortune, like a lucky star.

"If I conclude by saying to you, M. Rodolph, that we try to give every assistance in our power to the poor, it is not to boast, but that you may know that we do not keep to ourselves all the happiness you have given to us; besides, we always say to those we succour: 'It is not us whom you should thank and bless; it is M. Rodolph, the best, most generous person in the world.'

"Adieu, monseigneur! And pray believe that when our dear little child begins to lisp, the first word she shall utter will be your name, M. Rodolph, and the next those you wrote on the basket which contained your generous wedding presents to me, 'Labour and discretion, honour and happiness.' Thanks to these four words, our love and our care, we hope, monseigneur, that our child will be always worthy to pronounce the name of him who has been our benefactor, and that of all the unfortunates he ever knew—Forgive me, monseigneur, but I cannot finish without the big tears in my eyes, but they are tears of happiness. Excuse all errors, if you please; it is not my fault, but I cannot see very clearly, and I scribble.

"I have the honour to be, monseigneur, your respectful and most grateful servant,

"RIGOLETTE GERMAIN.

"P.S. Ah, monseigneur, in reading my letter over again, I see I have often written M. Rodolph, but you will excuse me, for you know, monseigneur, that under any and every name we respect and bless you alike."

"Dear little Rigolette!" said Clémence, affected by the letter; "how full of good and right feeling is her letter!"

"It is, indeed!" replied Rodolph. "She has an admirable disposition, her heart is all that is good; and our dear daughter appreciates her as we do," he added, addressing Fleur-de-Marie, when, struck by her pale countenance, he exclaimed, "But what ails you, dearest?"

"Alas! what a painful contrast between my position and that of Rigolette. 'Labour and discretion, honour and happiness,' these four words declare all that my life has been, all that it ought to have been,—a young, industrious, and discreet girl, a beloved wife, a happy mother, an honoured woman, such is her destiny; whilst I—"

"What do you say?"

"Forgive me, my dear father; do not accuse me of ingratitude. But in spite of your unspeakable tenderness and that of my second mother, in spite of the splendour with which I am surrounded, in spite of your sovereign power, my shame is incurable. Nothing can destroy the past. Forgive me, dear father. Until now I have concealed this from you; but the recollection of my original degradation drives me to despair—kills me—"

"Clémence, do you hear?" cried Rodolph, in extreme distress. "Oh, fatality—fatality! Now I curse my fears, my silence. This sad idea, so long and deeply rooted in her mind, has, unknown to us, made fearful ravages; and it is too late to contend against this sad error. Oh, I am indeed wretched!"

"Courage, my dearest!" said Clémence to Rodolph. "You said but now that it is best to know the enemy that threatens us. We know now the cause of our child's sorrow, and will triumph over it, because we shall have with us reason, justice, and our excessive love for her."

"And then she will see, too, that her affliction, if it be, indeed, incurable, will render ours incurable," said Rodolph.

After a protracted silence, during which Fleur-de-Marie appeared to recover herself, she took Rodolph's and Clémence's hands in her own, and said in a voice deeply affected, "Hear me, beloved father, and you my best of mothers. God has willed it, and I thank him for it, that I should no longer conceal from you all that I feel. I must have done so shortly, and told you what I will now avow, for I could not longer have kept it concealed."

"Ah, now I comprehend!" ejaculated Rodolph, "and there is no longer any hope for her."

"I hope in the future, my dear father, and this hope gives me strength to speak thus to you."

"And what can you hope for the future, poor child, since your present fate only causes you grief and torment?"

"I will tell you; but before I do so let me recall to you the past, and confess before God, who hears me, what I have felt to this time."

"Speak—speak—we listen!" was Rodolph's reply.

"As long as I was in Paris with you, my dearest father, I was so happy that such days of bliss cannot be paid for too dearly by years of suffering. You see I have at least known happiness."

"For some days, perhaps."

"Yes, but what pure and unmingled happiness! The future dazzled me,—a father to adore, a second mother to cherish doubly, for she replaced mine, whom I never knew. Then—for I will confess all—my pride was roused in spite of myself. So greatly did I rejoice in belonging to you. If then I sometimes thought vaguely of the past, it was to say to myself, 'I, formerly so debased, am the beloved daughter of a sovereign prince, whom everybody blesses and reveres; I, formerly so wretched, now enjoy all the splendours of luxury, and an existence almost royal.' Alas! my father, my good fortune was so unlooked for, your power surrounded me with so much brilliancy, that I was, perhaps, excusable in allowing myself to be thus blinded."

"Excusable! Nothing could be more natural, my angelic girl. What was there wrong in being proud of a rank which was your own, in enjoying the advantages of a position to which I had restored you? I remember at this time you were so delightfully gay, and said to me in accents I never can again hope to hear, 'Dearest father, this is too, too much happiness!' Unfortunately it was these recollections that begat in me this deceitful security."

"Do you remember, my father," said Fleur-de-Marie, unable to overcome a shudder of horror, "do you remember the terrible scene that preceded our departure from Paris when your carriage was stopped?"

"Yes," answered Rodolph; in a tone of melancholy. "Brave Chourineur! after having once more saved my life—he died—there, before our eyes."

"Well, my father, at the moment when that unhappy man expired, do you know whom I saw looking steadfastly at me? Ah, that look—that look! it has haunted me ever since!" added Fleur-de-Marie, with a shudder.

"What look? Of whom do you speak?" cried Rodolph.

"Of the ogress of the tapis-franc!" answered Fleur-de-Marie.

"That monster! You saw her!—and where?"

"Did you not see her in the tavern where the Chourineur died? She was amongst the women who surrounded us."

"Ah, now," said Rodolph, in a tone of despair, "I understand. Struck with horror as you were at the murder of the Chourineur, you must have imagined that you saw something prophetic in the sinister rencontre!"

"Yes, indeed, father, it was so. At the sight of the ogress I felt a death-like shiver, and it seemed that under her scowl my heart, which, until then, had been light, joyous, bounding, was instantly chilled to ice. Yes, to meet that woman at the very instant when the Chourineur died, saying, 'Heaven is just!' it seemed to me as a rebuke from Providence for my proud forgetfulness of the past, which I was hereafter to expiate by humility and repentance."

"But the past was forced on you, and you are not responsible for that in the sight of God!"

"You were driven to it—overcome—my poor child!"

"Once precipitated into the abyss in spite of yourself, and unable to quit it in spite of your remorse and despair, through the atrocious recklessness of the society of which you were a victim, you saw yourself for ever chained to this den, and it required that chance should throw you in my way to rescue you from such thralldom."

"Then, too, my child, your father says you were the victim and not the accomplice of this infamy," said Clémence.

"But yet, my mother, I have known this infamy!" replied Fleur-de-Marie, in a tone of deepest grief. "Nothing can destroy these fearful recollections,—they pursue me incessantly, not as formerly, in the midst of the peaceful inhabitants of the farm, or the fallen women who were my companions in St. Lazare, but they pursue me even in this palace, filled with the élite of

Germany; they pursue me even to my father's arms, even to the steps of his throne!" And Fleur-de-Marie burst into an agony of tears.

Rodolph and Clémence remained silent in presence of this fearful expression of unextinguishable remorse; they wept, too, for they perceived that their consolations were vain.

"Since then," continued Fleur-de-Marie, drying her tears, "I say to myself every moment in the day, with bitter shame, 'I am honoured, revered, and the most eminent and venerated persons surround me with respect and attention. In the eyes of a whole court the sister of an emperor has deigned to fasten my bandeau on my forehead, and I have lived in the mire of the Cité, familiar with thieves and murderers.' Forgive me, dearest father, but the more elevated my position, the more deeply sensitive have I been to the deep degradation into which I had fallen; and at every homage paid me I feel myself guilty of profanation, and think it sacrilege to receive such attentions, knowing what I have been; and then I say to myself, 'If God should please that the past were all known, with what deserved scorn would she be treated whom now they elevate so high! What a just and fearful punishment!'"

"But, poor girl, my wife and I know the past; we are worthy of our rank, and yet we cherish you."

"Because you feel for me the tenderness of a father and mother."

"But remember all the good you have done since your residence here, and the excellent and holy institution you have founded for orphans and poor forsaken girls! Then, too, the affection which the worthy abbess of Ste. Hermangeld evinces towards you, ought not that to be attributed to your unfeigned piety?"

"Whilst the praises of the abbess of Ste. Hermangeld refer only to my present conduct, I accept it without scruple; but when she cites my example to the noble young ladies who have taken vows in the abbey, I feel as if I were the accomplice of an infamous falsehood."

After a long silence Rodolph resumed, with deep melancholy:

"I see it is unavailing to persuade you! Reasoning is impotent against a conviction the more steadfast as it is derived from a noble and generous feeling. The contrast of your past and present position must be a perpetual punishment; forgive me for saying so, my beloved one!"

"Forgive you! And for what, my dear father?"

"For not having foreseen your excessive susceptibility, which, from the delicacy of your heart, I should have anticipated. And yet what could I have done? It was my duty solemnly to recognise you as my daughter; yet I was wrong—wrong to be too proud of you! I should have concealed my treasure, and lived in retirement with Clémence and you, instead of raising you high, so high that the past would disappear as I hoped from your eyes."

Several knocks were heard at this moment, which interrupted the conversation. Rodolph opened the door, and saw Murphy, who said:

"I beg your your royal highness's pardon for thus disturbing you, but a courier from the Prince of Herkaüsen-Oldenzaal has just arrived with this letter, which he says is very important, and must be delivered immediately to your royal highness."

"Thanks, good Murphy. Do not go away," said Rodolph, with a sigh, "I shall want you presently." And the prince, closing the door, remained a moment in the ante-room to read the letter which Murphy had brought him, and which was as follows:

"My Lord:—Trusting that the bonds of relationship existing between us, as well as the friendship with which you have ever honoured me, will excuse the boldness of the step I am about to take, I will at once enter upon the purport of my letter, dictated as it is by a conscientious desire to act as becomes the man your highness deigns to style his friend.

"Fifteen months have now elapsed since you returned from France, bringing with you your long-lost daughter, whom you so happily discovered living with that mother from whom she had never been parted, and whom you espoused when in extremis, in order to legitimise the Princess Amelie.

"Thus ennobled, of matchless beauty, and, as I learn from my sister, the abbess of Ste. Hermangeld, endowed with a character pure and elevated as the princely race from which she springs, who would not envy your happiness in possessing such a treasure?

"I will now candidly state the purport of my letter, although I should certainly have been the bearer of the request it contains, were it not that a severe indisposition detains me at Oldenzaal.

"During the time my son passed at Gerolstein he had frequent opportunities of seeing the Princess Amelie, whom he loves with a passionate but carefully concealed affection. This fact I have considered it right to acquaint you with, the more especially as, after having received and entertained my son as

affectionately as though he had been your own, you added to your kindness by inviting him to return, as quickly as his duties would allow, to enjoy that sweet companionship so precious to his heart; and it is probable that my apprising you of this circumstance may induce you to withdraw your intended hospitality to one who has presumed to aspire to the affections of your peerless child.

"I am perfectly well aware that the daughter of whom you are so justly proud might aspire to the first alliance in Europe, but I also know that so tender and devoted a parent as yourself would not hesitate to bestow the hand of the Princess Amelie on my son, if you believed by so doing her happiness would be secured.

"It is not for me to dwell upon Henry's merits,—you have been graciously pleased to bestow your approval on his conduct thus far, and I venture to hope he will never give you cause to change the favourable opinion you have deigned to express concerning him.

"Of this be assured, that whatever may be your determination, we shall bow in respectful and implicit submission to it, and that I shall never be otherwise than your royal highness's most humble and obedient servant,

"GUSTAVE PAUL,

"Prince of Herkaüsen-Oldenzaal."

After the perusal of this letter Rodolph remained for some time sad and pensive; then a gleam of hope darting across his mind, he returned to his daughter, whom Clémence was most tenderly consoling.

"My dear child," said he, as he entered, "you yourself observed that this day seemed destined to be one of important discoveries and solemn explanations, but I did not then think your words would be so strikingly verified as they seem likely to be."

"Dear father, what has happened?"

"Fresh sources of uneasiness have arisen."

"On whose account?"

"On yours, my child. I fear you have only revealed to us a portion of your griefs."

"Be kind enough to explain yourself," said Fleur-de-Marie, blushing.

"Then hearken to me, my beloved child. You have, perhaps, good cause to fancy yourself unhappy. When, at the commencement of our conversation, you spoke of the hopes you still entertained, I understood your meaning, and my heart seemed broken by the blow with which I was menaced, for I read but too clearly that you desired to quit me for ever, and to bury yourself in the eternal seclusion of a cloister. My child, say, have I not divined your intentions?"

"If you would consent," murmured forth Fleur-de-Marie, in a faint, gasping voice.

"Would you, then, quit us?" exclaimed Clémence.

"The abbey of Ste. Hermangeld is in the immediate neighbourhood of Gerolstein, and I should frequently see yourself and my father."

"Remember, my child, that vows such as you would take are not to be recalled. You are scarcely eighteen years of age, and one day you may—possibly—"

"Oh, think not I should ever regret my choice! There is no rest or peace for me save in the solitude of a cloister. There I may be happy, if you and my second mother will but continue to me your affection."

"The duties and consolations of a religious life," said Rodolph, "might, certainly, if not cure, at least alleviate the anguish of your lacerated and desponding mind, and although your resolution will cost me dear, I cannot but approve of it."

"Rodolph!" cried the astonished Clémence, "do I hear aright? Is it possible you—"

"Allow me more fully to explain myself," replied Rodolph. Then addressing his daughter, he said, "But before an irrevocable decision is pronounced, it would be well to ascertain if nothing more suitable, both to your inclinations and our own, could be found for you than the life of a nun."

Fleur-de-Marie and Clémence started at Rodolph's words and manner, while, fixing an earnest gaze on his daughter, the prince said, abruptly:

"What think you, my child, of your cousin, Prince Henry?"

The brightest blush spread over the fair face of Fleur-de-Marie, who, after a momentary hesitation, threw herself weeping in her father's arms.

"Then you love him, do you not, my darling child?" cried Rodolph, tenderly pressing her hands. "Fear not to confide the truth to your best friends."

"Alas!" replied Fleur-de-Marie, "you know not what it has cost me to conceal from you the state of my heart! Had you questioned me on the subject, I would gladly have told you all, but shame closed my lips, and would still have done so, but for your inquiry into the nature of my feelings."

"And have you any suspicion that Henry is aware of your love?"

"Gracious heavens, dearest father!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, shrinking back in terror, "I trust not!"

"Do you believe he returns your affection?"

"Oh, no, no! I trust he does not! He would suffer too deeply."

"And what gave rise to the love you entertained for your cousin?"

"Alas, I know not! It grew upon me almost unconsciously. Do you remember a portrait of a youth dressed as a page, in the apartments of the Abbess de Ste. Hermangeld?"

"I know; it was the portrait of Henry."

"Believing the picture to be of distant date, I one day in your presence remarked upon the extreme beauty of the countenance, when you jestingly replied that it was the likeness of an ancestor who, in his youth, had displayed an extraordinary share of sense, courage, and every estimable quality; this strengthened my first impression, and frequently after that day I used to delight in recalling to my mind the fine countenance and noble features of one I believed to have been long numbered with the dead. By degrees these reveries began to form one of my greatest pleasures, and many an hour have I passed gazing, amid smiles and tears, on one I fondly hoped I might be permitted to know and to love in another world. For in this," continued poor Fleur-de-Marie, with a most touching expression, "I well know I am unworthy to aspire to the love of any one but you, my kind, indulgent parents."

"I can now understand the nature of the reproof you once gave me for having misled you on the subject of the portrait."

"Conceive, dearest father, what was my confusion when I learnt from the superior that the portrait was a living subject,—that of her nephew! My trouble was extreme, and earnestly did I endeavour to erase from my heart all the fond associations connected with that picture. In vain! the pertinacity with which I strove to forget but riveted the impression I had received; and, unfortunately, dear father, you rendered the task of forgetting more difficult, by continually eulogising the heart, disposition, and principles of Prince Henry."

"You loved him, then, my child, from merely seeing his likeness and hearing his praises?"

"Without positively loving him, I felt myself attracted towards him by an irresistible impulse, for which I bitterly reproached myself; my only consolation was the thought that no person knew my fatal secret. For how could I presume to love? How excuse my ingratitude in not contenting myself with the tenderness bestowed on me by you, my father, and you, also, dearest mother? In the midst of all these conflicting feelings I met my cousin, for the first time, at a ball given by you to the Archduchess Sophia; his resemblance to the portrait too well assured me it was he; and your introducing Prince Henry to me as a near relative afforded me ample opportunities of discovering that his manners were as captivating as his mind was cultivated."

"It is easy to conceive, then, that a mutual passion sprung up between you! Indeed, he won upon my regard ere I was aware of the ground he had gained; he spoke of you so admiringly, yet so respectfully."

"You had yourself praised him so highly."

"Not more than he deserved. It is impossible to possess a more noble nature, or a more generous and elevated character."

"I beseech you, dearest father, to spare me the fresh trial of hearing him thus praised by you. Alas! I am already wretched enough."

"Go on, my child. I have a reason in thus extolling your cousin—I will explain hereafter. Proceed."

"Though aware of the danger of thus daily associating with my cousin, I felt unable to withdraw myself from the pleasure his society afforded me; nor, spite of my implicit reliance on your indulgence, dear father, durst I disclose my fears to you. I could then only redouble my efforts to conceal my unfortunate attachment, and—shall I confess?—there were moments when,

forgetting the past, I gave myself up to all the dear delights of a friendship hitherto unknown to me. But the departure of Prince Henry from your court tore the veil from my eyes, and showed me how truly and ardently I loved him, though not with a sister's love, as I had made myself believe. I had resolved to open my heart entirely to you on this subject," continued Fleur-de-Marie, whose strength seemed utterly exhausted by her long confession, "and then to ask you what remained for one so every way unfortunate but to seek the repose of a cloister."

"Then, dearest daughter, let me answer the question ere you have put it, by saying there is a prospect as bright and smiling awaits your acceptance, as that you propose is cheerless and gloomy."

"What mean you?"

"Now, then, listen to me. It was impossible for an affection as great as mine to be blinded to the mutual affection subsisting between yourself and your cousin; my penetration also quickly discovered that his passion for you amounted to idolatry; that he had but one hope, one desire on earth,—that of being loved by you. At the time I played off that little joke respecting the portrait, I had not the least expectation of Henry's visiting Gerolstein. When, however, he did come, I saw no reason for changing the manner in which I had always treated him, and I therefore invited him to visit us on the same terms of friendly relationship he had hitherto done. A very little time had elapsed ere Clémence and myself saw plainly enough the cause of his frequent visits, or the mutual delight you felt in each other's society. Then mine became a difficult task.

"On the one hand, I rejoiced as a father that one so every way worthy of you should have won your affection; then on the other hand, my poor dear child, your past misfortunes forbade me to encourage the idea of uniting you to your cousin, to whom I several times spoke in a manner very different to the tone I should have adopted, had I contemplated bestowing on him your hand.

"Thus placed in a position so delicate, I endeavoured to preserve a strict neutrality, discouraging Prince Henry's attentions by every means in my power, and yet manifesting towards himself the same paternal kindness with which I had always treated him; and besides, my poor girl, after a life of so much unhappiness as yours, I could not bring myself suddenly to tear away the innocent pleasure you appeared to feel in the company of your cousin. It was something to see you even temporarily happy and cheerful,

and even now your acquaintance with Prince Henry may be the means of securing your future tranquillity."

"Dear father, I understand you not."

"Prince Paul, Henry's father, has just sent me this letter. While considering such an alliance as an honour too great to aspire to, he solicits your hand for his son, who, he states, is inspired with a passion for you."

"Dearest father!" cried Fleur-de-Marie, concealing her face with her hands, "do you forget?"

"I forget nothing,—not even that to-morrow you enter a convent, where, besides, being for ever lost to me, you will pass the remainder of your days in tears and austerity. If I must part with you, let it be to give you to a husband who will love you almost as tenderly as your father."

"Married!—and to him, father! You cannot mean it!"

"Indeed I do; but on one condition: that directly after your marriage has been celebrated here, without pomp or parade, you shall depart with your husband for some tranquil retreat in Italy or Switzerland, where you may live unknown, and merely pass for opulent persons of middle rank. And my reason for attaching this proviso to my consent is because I feel assured that, in the bosom of simple and unostentatious happiness, you would by degrees forget the hateful past, which is now only more painfully contrasted with the pomp and ceremony by which you are surrounded."

"Rodolph is right," said Clémence. "With Henry for your companion, and happy in each other's affection, past sorrows will soon be forgotten."

"And as I could not wholly part with you, Clémence and I would pay you a visit each year. Then when time shall have healed your wounded spirit, my poor child, and present felicity shall have effaced all recollections of the past, you will return to dwell among us, never more to part."

"Forget the past in present happiness!" murmured Fleur-de-Marie.

"Even so, my child," replied Rodolph, scarcely able to restrain his emotion at seeing his daughter's scruples thus shaken.

"Can it be possible," cried Fleur-de-Marie, "that such unspeakable felicity is reserved for me? The wife of Henry. And one day to pass my life between

him—yourself—and my second mother!" continued she, more subdued by the ineffable delight such a picture created in her mind.

"All—all that happiness shall be yours, my precious child!" exclaimed Rodolph, fondly embracing Fleur-de-Marie. "I will reply at once to Henry's father that I consent to the marriage. Comfort yourself with the certainty that our separation will be but short; the fresh duties you will take upon yourself in a wedded life will serve to drive away all past retrospections and painful reminiscences; and should you yourself be a mother, you will know and feel how readily a parent sacrifices her own regrets and griefs to promote the happiness of her child."

"A mother! I a mother!" exclaimed Fleur-de-Marie, with bitter despair, awakening at that word from the sweet illusion in which her memory seemed temporarily lulled. "Oh, no! I am unworthy to bear that sacred name! I should expire of shame in the presence of my own child, if indeed I could survive the horrible disclosures I must necessarily make to its father of my past life! Oh, never—never!"

"My child, for pity's sake, listen to me!"

Pale and beautiful amidst her deep distress, Fleur-de-Marie arose with all the majesty of incurable sorrow, and, looking earnestly at Rodolph, she said, "We forget that, ere Prince Henry made me his wife, he should be acquainted with the past!"

"No, no, my daughter," replied Rodolph, "I had by no means forgotten what he both ought to know and shall learn of the melancholy tale."

"Think you not that I should die, were I thus degraded in his eyes?"

"And he will also admit and feel," added Clémence, "that if I style you my daughter, he may, without fear or shame, safely call you his wife."

"Nay, dearest mother, I love Prince Henry too truly to bestow on him a hand that has been polluted by the touch of the ruffians of the Cité."

A short time after this painful scene, the following announcement appeared in the Official Gazette of Gerolstein:

"The taking of the veil by the most high and mighty Princess Amelie of Gerolstein took place yesterday in the Abbey of Ste. Hermangeld, in the presence of the reigning grand duke and all his court. The vows of the novice were received by the right reverend and illustrious Lord Charles Maximus,

Archbishop of Oppenheim; Monseigneur Annibal André, one of the princes of Delphes and Bishop of Ceuta, in partibus infidelium, and apostolic nuncio, bestowed the salutation and papal benediction. The sermon was preached by the most reverend Seigneur Pierre d'Asfeld, canon of the Chapter of Cologne, and count of the Holy Roman Empire. Veni Creator Optime!"

CHAPTER III

THE VOWS

Rodolph to Clémence.

GEROLSTEIN, 12th January, 1842.

Your assurance that your father is better induces me to hope you will be enabled to return here with him shortly. I dreaded that at Rosenfeld, situated in the midst of the woods, he would be exposed to the piercing cold of our rigorous winters, but, unfortunately, his fondness for hunting rendered all our advice useless.

I entreat you, Clémence, as soon as your father can bear the motion of the carriage, quit that country and this habitation, only fit for those Germans of an iron frame whose race has now disappeared.

The ceremony of our poor child's taking the vows is fixed for to-morrow, the thirteenth of January, the fatal day on which I drew my sword on my father! Alas! I thought too soon I was forgiven! The hope of passing my life with you and my child made me forget that it was she who had been punished up to the present time, and that my punishment was to come. And it is come, when, six months ago, she disclosed the double torture she suffered,—her incurable shame for the past, and her hopeless passion for Henry.

These two sentiments became, by a fatal logic, the cause of her fixed resolve to take the veil. You know that we could not conceal from her that, had we been in her place, we should have pursued the same noble and courageous course she has adopted. How could we answer those humble words, "I love Prince Henry too much to give him a hand that has been touched by the bandits of the Cité!"

I have seen her this morning, and though she seemed less pale than usual, though she said she did not suffer, yet her health gives me the most mortal alarm.

Alas! This morning, when I saw beneath the veil those noble features, I could not refrain from thinking how beautiful she looked the day of our marriage; it seemed that our happiness was reflected on her face.

As I told you, I saw her this morning. She does not know that to-morrow the Princess Juliana resigns her abbatical dignity, and that she has been unanimously chosen to succeed her.

Since the beginning of her novitiate there has been but one opinion of her piety, her charity, and the exactitude with which she fulfils all the rules of the order; she even exaggerates their austerity. She exercises in the convent that authority she exercised everywhere, but of which she herself is ignorant. She confessed to me this morning that she is not so absorbed by her religious duties as to forget the past.

"I accuse myself, dear father," said she, "because I cannot help reflecting that, had Heaven pleased to spare me the degradation that has stained my life, I might have lived happily with you and my husband. Spite of myself, I reflect on this, and on what passed in the Cité. In vain I beseech Heaven to deliver me from these temptations,—to fill my heart with himself; but he does not hear my prayers, doubtless because my life has rendered me unworthy of communion with him."

"But," cried I, clinging to this faint glimmer of hope, "it is not yet too late; your novitiate is only over to-day; you are yet free. Renounce this austere life, dwell again with us, and our tenderness shall soften your grief."

Shaking her head sorrowfully, she replied:

"The cloister is, indeed, solitary for me, accustomed as I have been to your tender care; doubtless cruel recollections come over me, but I am consoled by the knowledge that I am performing my duty. I know that everywhere else I should be liable to be placed in that position in which I have already suffered so much. Your daughter shall do what she ought to do, suffer what she ought to suffer."

Without founding any great hopes on this interview, I yet said to myself, "She can renounce the cloister. But as she is determined, I can but repeat her words, 'God alone can offer me a refuge worthy of himself.'" Adieu, dear Clémence! It consoles me to see you grieve with me, for I can say 'our' child without egotism in my sufferings. Often this thought lightens my sorrow, for you are left to me, and what is left to Fleur-de-Marie? Adieu again; return soon.

R.

ABBEY OF STE. HERMANGELD.

Four o'clock in the morning.

Reassure yourself, Clémence! Thank God, the danger is over, but the crisis was terrible!

Last evening, agitated by my thoughts, I recollected the paleness and languor of my poor child, and that she was obliged to pass almost all the night in the church in prayer.

I sent Murphy and David to demand the Princess Juliana's permission to remain until the morrow in the mansion that Henry occupied usually; thus my child would have prompt assistance, and I prompt intelligence, in case that her strength failed under this rigorous, I will not say cruel, obligation to pass the whole of a cold winter's night in the church.

"In the Church in Prayer"

Original Etching by Mercier

I wrote to Fleur-de-Marie that, whilst I respected her religious exercises, I besought her to watch in her cell and not in the church. This was her reply:

"My dear Father:—I thank you for this fresh proof of your tenderness, but be not alarmed, I am sufficiently strong to perform my duty. Your daughter must be guilty of no weakness. The rule orders it, I must submit. Should it cause me some physical sufferings, how joyfully shall I offer them to God! Adieu, dear father! I cannot say I pray for you, because whenever I pray to Heaven I cannot help remembering you in my prayers. You have been to me on earth what God will be, if I merit it, in heaven. Bless your child, who will be to-morrow the spouse of Heaven.

"SISTER AMELIE."

This letter, in some measure, reassured me; however I had, also, a vigil to keep. At nightfall I went to a pavilion I had built, near my father's monument, in expiation of this fatal night.

About one o'clock I heard Murphy's voice. He came from the convent in order to inform me that, as I had feared, my unhappy child, spite of her resolution, had not had sufficient strength to accomplish this barbarous custom.

At eight o'clock in the evening Fleur-de-Marie knelt and prayed until midnight, but, overpowered by her emotion and the intense cold, she fainted; two nuns instantly raised her, and bore her to her cell. David was instantly summoned, and Murphy came to me. I hastened to the convent, where the abbess assured me that my daughter's swoon, from which she had recovered, had been caused only by her weakness, but that David

feared that my presence might seriously affect her. I feared they were preparing me for something more dreadful, but the superior said:

"I assure you, monseigneur, the princess is in no danger; the restorative the doctor has given her has greatly recruited her strength."

David soon returned. She was better, but had insisted upon continuing her vigil, consenting only to kneel upon a cushion.

"She is in the church, then?" cried I.

"Yes, monseigneur, but she will quit it in a quarter of an hour."

I entered the church, and, by the faint light of a lamp, I saw her kneeling and praying fervently. Three o'clock struck; two sisters, seated in the stalls, advanced and spoke to her; she crossed herself, rose, and traversed the choir with a firm step, and yet as she passed the lamp she seemed to me deathly pale. I remain at the abbey until the ceremony be over. I think now it is useless to send this letter incomplete. I will forward it to-morrow, with all the details of this sad day. Adieu, dearest!—I am heart-broken—pity!

R.

THE LAST CHAPTER

THE THIRTEENTH OF JANUARY

Rodolph to Clémence.

The thirteenth of January! Now a doubly sinister anniversary! Dearest, we have lost her for ever! All is over,—ended all. It is true, then, that there is a horrid pleasure in relating a terrible grief.

Yesterday I was complaining of the necessity that kept you from me; to-day, Clémence, I congratulate myself that you are not here,—you would have suffered too much. This morning I was in a light slumber, and was awakened by the sound of bells. I started in affright; it seemed to me a funereal sound,—a knell! In fact, our daughter is dead,—dead to us! And from to-day, Clémence, you must begin to wear her mourning in your heart, a heart always so maternally disposed towards her. Whether our child be buried beneath the marble of the tomb or the vault of the cloister, what is the difference to us? Hardly eighteen years of age, yet dead to the world!

At noon the profession took place, with solemn pomp, and I was present, concealed behind the curtains of our pew. I felt, but even with greater intensity, all the poignant emotion we underwent at her novitiate. How strange! She is adored! And they believe, universally, that she was attracted to a religious life by an irresistible vocation; and yet whilst they believed it was a happy event for her, an overwhelming sadness weighed down the spectators. There appeared in the very air, as it were, a doleful foreboding, and it was founded, if only half realised.

The profession terminated, they led our child into the chapter-room, where the nomination of the new abbess was to take place, and, thanks to my sovereign privilege, I went into this room to await Fleur-de-Marie's return to the choir. She soon entered; her emotion and weakness were so excessive that two of the sisters supported her. I was alarmed, less at her paleness and the great change in her features, than at the peculiar expression of her smile, which seemed to me imprinted with a kind of secret satisfaction.

Clémence, I say to you, perhaps we may very soon require all our courage,—I feel within myself that our child is mortally smitten. May Heaven grant that I am deceived, and may my presentiments arise only from the despairing sadness which this melancholy spectacle has inspired!

Fleur-de-Marie entered the chapter-room, all the stalls were filled by the nuns. She went modestly to place herself last on the left-hand side, still leaning on the arm of one of the sisters, for she yet appeared very weak.

The Princess Juliana was seated at the end of the apartment, with the grand prioress on one side and another dignitary on the other, holding in her hand the golden crozier, the symbol of abbatial authority. There was profound silence; and then the lady abbess rose, took the crozier in her hand, and said, in a voice of great emotion:

"My dear daughters, my great age compels me to confide to younger hands this emblem of my spiritual power," and she pointed to the crozier. "I am authorised by a bull of our holy father; I will, therefore, present to the benediction of monseigneur the Archbishop of Oppenheim, and to the approbation of his royal highness the grand duke our sovereign, whosoever of my dear daughters shall be pointed out by you to succeed me. Our grand prioress will inform you of the result of the election, and she who has been chosen will receive my crozier and ring."

I did not take my eyes off my daughter. Standing up in her stall, her two hands folded over her bosom, her eyes cast down, and half covered by her white veil and the long folds of her black gown, she was pensive and motionless, not supposing for a moment that she would herself be elected, as this fact had been communicated by the abbess to no one but myself.

The grand prioress took a book and read:

"Each of our dear sisters having been, according to the rule, requested a week since to place her vote in the hands of our holy mother, and keep her choice secret until this moment, in the name of our holy mother I declare to you, my dear, dear sisters, that one of you has, by her exemplary piety, merited the unanimous suffrages of the community, and that she is our sister Amelie, the most noble and puissant Princess of Gerolstein."

At these words a murmur of pleased surprise and satisfaction went around the apartment; the eyes of all the nuns were fixed on my daughter with an expression of tender sympathy, and, in spite of my painful forebodings, I was myself deeply touched at this nomination, which, done isolatedly and secretly, had yet presented such an affecting unanimity.

The abbess continued, in a serious and loud voice:

"My dear daughters, if it be, indeed, Sister Amelie whom you think the most worthy and most deserving of you all,—if it be she whom you recognise as

your spiritual superior, let each of you reply to me in turn, my dear daughters."

And each nun replied in a clear voice:

"Freely and voluntarily I have chosen, and I do choose, Sister Amelie for my holy mother and superior."

Overcome by inexpressible emotion, my poor child fell on her knees, clasped her hands, and remained so until each vote was declared. Then the abbess, placing the crozier and the ring in the hands of the grand prioress, advanced towards my daughter to take her hand and conduct her to the abbatial seat.

"Rise, my dear daughter," said the abbess; "come and assume the place that belongs to you. Your virtues, and not your rank, have obtained for you the position you have gained."

Fleur-de-Marie, trembling, advanced a few steps, and said:

"Pardon me, holy mother, but I would speak to my sisters."

"Then first place yourself, my dear child, in your abbatial seat," said the princess; "it is from thence your voice shall be heard."

"That place, holy mother, never can be mine!" replied Fleur-de-Marie, in a low and tremulous voice.

"What mean you, my dear daughter?"

"So high a dignity was not made for me, holy mother."

"But the wishes of all your sisters call you to it."

"Permit me, holy mother, to make here, on my knees, a solemn confession; and my sisters will see, and you, also, holy mother, that the humblest condition is not humble enough for me."

"This arises from your modesty, my dear child," said the superior, with kindness, believing that the unhappy girl was giving way to a feeling of overdelicacy.

But I divined the confession Fleur-de-Marie was about to make, and, greatly alarmed, I exclaimed, in a voice of entreaty:

"My child, I conjure thee—"

It is impossible, my dearest Clémence, to describe the look which Fleur-de-Marie gave me. In an instant she understood all, and saw how deeply I should share in the shame of this horrible revelation. She comprehended that after such a confession they might accuse me of falsehood, for I had always made it out that Fleur-de-Marie had never left her mother. At this reflection the poor dear child thought she would be guilty of the blackest ingratitude towards me; she had not power to continue, but bowed down her head, overcome—overwhelmed.

"Again I assure you, my dear child," said the abbess, "your modesty deceives you. The unanimity of the choice of your sisters proves how worthy you are to replace me. It is not the princess—it is Sister Amelie who is elected. For us your life began on the day when you first put foot in this house of the Lord, and it is this exemplary and holy life that we recompense. I will say more, my dear daughter; if before you entered this retreat your life had been as wrong as it has been, on the contrary, pure and praiseworthy, the heavenly virtues of which you have given me an example since your abode here would expiate and ransom, in the eyes of the Lord, any past life, however culpable. And now, my dear daughter, judge if your modesty ought not to be reassured."

These words of the abbess were, as you may think, my Clémence, the more precious for Fleur-de-Marie, as she believed the past ineffaceable. Unfortunately, this scene had deeply moved her, and, although she affected calmness and serenity, I saw that her features altered in a most distressing manner.

"I believe I have convinced you, my dear daughter," said the Princess Juliana; "and you will not cause so great a grief to your sisters as to refuse this mark of their confidence and affection?"

"No, holy mother," she said, with an expression which struck me, and in a voice more and more feeble, "I think now I may accept; but as I feel myself fatigued and in pain, if you will permit it, holy mother, the ceremony of the consecration shall not take place for a few days."

"As you wish, my dear daughter; but in the meanwhile, until your dignity is blessed and consecrated, take this ring, come to your place, and our dear sisters will do you homage according to our rules."

And the superior, putting the pastoral ring on Fleur-de-Marie's finger, led her to the abbatial seat. It was a simple and touching sight. Supported on one side by the grand prioress, bearing the golden crozier, and on the other by the Princess Juliana, each of the sisters, as she passed by, made obeisance to our child, and respectfully kissed her hand. But judge of my affright when she swooned before the procession of the sisters was terminated. David had not quitted the convent, and he hastened to the abbess's apartment, whither we had conveyed her, and then attended to her.

The superior having returned to close the sitting of the chapter, I remained alone with my daughter. After looking at me for some time, she said:

"My dear father, can you forget my ingratitude? Can you forget that at the moment when I was about to make my painful confession—when you implored me—"

"Silence! I beseech you!"

"And I did not reflect," she continued, with bitterness, "that, in telling in the face of all the world from what an abyss of depravity you had rescued me, I revealed a secret which you had preserved out of tenderness to me! It would have been to accuse you publicly—you, my father—of a dissimulation, which you only resigned yourself to to assure me a brilliant and honoured existence! Can you ever forgive me?"

Instead of replying, I pressed my lips on her forehead; she felt my tears flow. Having kissed my hands many times, she said:

"Now I feel better, and, as now I am dead to the world, I should like to make a few bequests in favour of several persons; but as all I have comes from you, do you authorise me, dearest father?"

"Say, dearest, and I will do all you desire."

"I should wish my beloved mother to keep always in the little boudoir in which she usually sits my embroidery-frame, with the work I began."

"It shall be so, love; your apartment is as when you left it. Clémence will be deeply touched by your thought of her."

"As for you, dear father, take, I pray, my large ebony armchair, in which I have thought of—reflected upon so much."

"I will put it beside my own, in my own private closet, and will imagine I see you in it every day, where you have so often sat," I said, unable to repress my tears.

"And now I would leave some souvenirs to those who took so much interest in me when I was unhappy. To Madame Georges I would give the writing-desk I have lately used; she taught me to write originally, so the gift will be very appropriate," she said, with her sweet smile. "As to the venerable curé of Bouqueval, who instructed me in religion, I intend for him the beautiful crucifix in my oratory."

"Very well, my dearest child."

"I should like to send my bandeau of pearls to my good little Rigolette; it is a simple ornament which she may wear in her beautiful black hair. And as you know where Martial and La Louve are in Algeria, I should like to send to the brave woman who saved my life my gold enamelled cross. These different keepsakes, dearest father, I would have sent to them 'from Fleur-de-Marie.'"

"I will do all you wish,—I will not forget one."

"I am sure you will not, dearest father."

"Is there no other person present to your memory?"

The dear child understood me, and pressed my hand, whilst a slight blush tinged her pale cheeks as I said, "He is better—out of danger."

"And his father?"

"Better as his son is better. And what will you give to Henry? A souvenir from you will be a consolation so dear and precious!"

"My father, offer him my prie-Dieu. Alas! I have often watered it with my tears when begging from Heaven for strength to forget Henry, as I was unworthy of his love."

"How happy it will make him to see that you have had one thought of him!"

"As to the asylum for the orphans and young girls abandoned by their parents, I should wish, my dear father, that—"

Here Rodolph's letter was broken off by these words, almost illegible:

"Clémence, Murphy will conclude this letter! I am lost,—bereft of sense! Ah, the thirteenth of January!"

At the end of this letter Murphy had written as follows:

Madame:—By the order of his royal highness I complete this sorrowful recital. The two letters of monseigneur will have prepared your royal highness for the overwhelming news I have to communicate. Three hours since, whilst monseigneur was writing to your royal highness, I was waiting in the antechamber for a letter to be despatched by a courier, when suddenly I saw the Princess Juliana enter in the greatest consternation.

"Where is his royal highness?" she said to me, in an agitated voice.

"Writing to the grand duchess," I replied.

"Sir Walter," she said, "you must inform monseigneur of a terrible event. You are his friend,—you should tell him; from you the blow may be less terrible!"

I understood all, and thought it most prudent to charge myself with the distressing intelligence. The superior having added that the Princess Amelie was sinking gradually, and that monseigneur must hasten to receive his daughter's last sigh, I went into the duke's room, who saw how pale I was.

"You have some bad news for me?"

"Terrible, monseigneur! But courage! Courage!"

"Ah, my forebodings!" he exclaimed; and, without adding a word, he ran to the cloisters. I followed him.

From the apartment of the superior, the Princess Amelie had been conveyed to her cell, after her last interview with monseigneur. One of the sisters watched over her, and at the end of an hour she perceived that the Princess Amelie's voice, who spoke to her at intervals, was weaker, and more and more oppressed. The sister hastened to inform the superior, who sent for Doctor David, who administered a cordial; but it was useless, the pulse was scarcely perceptible. He saw with despair that the reiterated emotions having probably exhausted the little strength of the Princess Amelie, there was not a hope of saving her left. Monseigneur arrived at this moment. The Princess Amelie had just received the last sacrament; a slight degree of consciousness remained. In one hand, crossed over her chest, she held the remains of her little rose-tree.

Monseigneur fell on his knees at the foot of the bed, and sobbed, "My child! My beloved child!" in a voice of piercing agony. The Princess Amelie heard him, turned her head a little towards him, opened her eyes, tried to smile, and said, in a faint voice, "My dearest father, pardon!—Henry, too!—and my beloved mother!—pardon!"

These were her last words. After a slight struggle of one hour, she rendered her soul to God.

When his daughter had breathed her last sigh, monseigneur did not say a word; his calmness and silence were frightful. He closed the eyelids of the princess, kissed her forehead several times, took piously from her hands the relics of the little rose-tree, and left the cell. I followed him, and he returned to the house outside the cloister, when, showing me the letter he had commenced writing to your royal highness, and to which he in vain endeavoured to add a few words, for his hand trembled too convulsively, he said to me, "I cannot write! I am crushed! My senses are gone! Write to the grand duchess that I have no longer a daughter!"

I have executed the orders of monseigneur. May I be allowed, as his old servant, to entreat your royal highness to hasten your return as soon as the health of M. d'Orbigny will permit? Nothing but the presence of your royal highness can calm monseigneur's despair. He will watch his daughter's remains every night until the day when she is to be buried in the grand-ducal chapel.

I have accomplished my sad task, madame. Deign, to excuse the incoherence of this letter, and to receive the expression of respectful devotion with which I have the honour to be

Your royal highness's most obedient servant,

WALTER MURPHY.

On the evening before the funeral of the Princess Amelie, Clémence arrived at Gerolstein with her father. Rodolph was not alone on the day of Fleur-de-Marie's interment.

THE END.