Alexandre Dumas

The Mesmerists Victim

A PUBLIC DOMAIN BOOK

FICTION

THE MESMERIST'S VICTIM.

BY

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C

T

On the thirteenth of May, 1770, Paris celebrated the wedding of the Dauphin or Prince Royal Louis Aguste, grandson of Louis XV. still reigning, with Marie-Antoinette, Archduchess of Austria.

The entire population flocked towards Louis XV. Place, where fireworks were to be let off. A pyrotechnical display was the finish to all grand public ceremonies, and the Parisians were fond of them although they might make fun.

The ground was happily chosen, as it would hold six thousand spectators. Around the equestrian statue of the King, stands were built circularly to give a view of the fireworks, to be set off at ten or twelve feet elevation.

The townsfolk began to assemble long before seven o'clock when the City Guard arrived to keep order. This duty rather belonged to the French Guards, but the Municipal government had refused the extra pay their Commander, Colonel, the Marshal Duke Biron, demanded, and these warriors in a huff were scattered in the mob, vexed and quarrelsome. They sneered loudly at the tumult, which they boasted they would have quelled with the pike-stock or the musket-butt if they had the ruling of the gathering.

The shrieks of the women, squeezed in the press, the wailing of the children, the swearing of the troopers, the grumbling of the fat citizens, the protests of the cake and candy merchants whose goods were stolen, all prepared a petty uproar preceding the deafening one which six hundred thousand souls were sure to create when collected. At eight at evening, they produced a vast picture, like one after Teniers, but with French faces.

About half past eight nearly all eyes were fastened on the scaffold where the famous Ruggieri and his assistants were putting the final touches to the matches and fuses of the old pieces. Many large compositions were on the frames. The grand bouquet, or shower of stars, girandoles and squibs, with which such shows always conclude, was to go off from a rampart, near the Seine River, on a raised bank.

As the men carried their lanterns to the places where the pieces would be fired, a lively sensation was raised in the throng, and some of the timid drew back, which made the whole waver in line.

Carriages with the better class still arrived but they could not reach the stand to deposit their passengers. The mob hemmed them in and some persons objected to having the horses lay their heads on their shoulder.

Behind the horses and vehicles the crowd continued to increase, so that the conveyances could not move one way or another. Then were seen with the audacity of the city-bred, the boys and the rougher men climb upon the wheels and finally swarm upon the footman's board and the coachman's box.

The illumination of the main streets threw a red glare on the sea of faces, and flashed from the bayonets of the city guardsmen, as conspicuous as a blade of wheat in a reaped field.

About nine o'clock one of these coaches came up, but three rows of carriages were before the stand, all wedged in and covered with the sightseers. Hanging onto the springs was a young man, who kicked away those who tried to share with him the use of this locomotive to cleave a path in the concourse. When it stopped, however, he dropped down but without letting go of the friendly spring with one hand. Thus he was able to hear the excited talk of the passengers.

Out of the window was thrust the head of a young and beautiful girl, wearing white and having lace on her sunny head.

"Come, come, Andrea," said a testy voice of an elderly man within to her, "do not lean out so, or you will have some rough fellow snatch a kiss. Do you not see that our coach is stuck in this mass like a boat in a mudflat? we are in the water, and dirty water at that; do not let us be fouled."

"We can't see anything, father," said the girl, drawing in her head: "if the horse turned half round we could have a look through the window, and would see as well as in the places reserved for us at the governor's."

"Turn a bit, coachman," said the man.

"Can't be did, my lord baron," said the driver; "it would crush a dozen people."

"Go on and crush them, then!"

"Oh, sir," said Andrea.

"No, no, father," said a young gentleman beside the old baron inside.

"Hello, what baron is this who wants to crush the poor?" cried several threatening voices.

"The Baron of Taverney Redcastle--I," replied the old noble, leaning out and showing that he wore a red sash crosswise.

Such emblems of the royal and knightly orders were still respected, and though there was grumbling it was on a lessening tone.

"Wait, father," said the young gentleman, "I will step out and see if there is some way of getting on."

"Look out, Philip," said the girl, "you will get hurt. Only hear the horses neighing as they lash out."

Philip Taverney, Knight of Redcastle, was a charming cavalier and, though he did not resemble his sister, he was as handsome for a man as she for her sex.

"Bid those fellows get out of our way," said the baron, "so we can pass."

Philip was a man of the time and like many of the young nobility had learnt ideas which his father of the old school was incapable of appreciating.

"Oh, you do not know the present Paris, father," he returned. "These high-handed acts of the masters were all very well formerly; but they will hardly go down now, and you would not like to waste your dignity, of course."

"But since these rascals know who I am---- "

"Were you a royal prince," replied the young man smiling, "they would not budge for you, I am afraid; at this moment, too, when the fireworks are going off."

"And we shall not see them," pouted Andrea.

"Your fault, by Jove--you spent more than two hours over your attire," snarled the baron.

"Could you not take me through the mob to a good spot on your arm, brother?" asked she.

"Yes, yes, come out, little lady," cried several voices; for the men were struck by Mdlle. Taverney's beauty: "you are not stout, and we will make room for you."

Andrea sprang lightly out of the vehicle without touching the steps.

"I think little of the crackers and rockets, and I will stay here," growled the baron.

"We are not going far, father," responded Philip.

Always respectful to the queen called Beauty, the mob opened before the Taverneys, and a good citizen made his wife and daughter give way on a bench where they stood, for the young lady. Philip stood by his sister, who rested a hand on his shoulder. The young man who had "cut behind" the carriage, had followed them and he looked with fond eyes on the girl.

"Are you comfortable, Andrea?" said the chevalier; "see what a help good looks are!"

"Good looks," sighed the strange young man; "why, she is lovely, very lovely. She is lovelier here, in Parisian costume, than when I used to see her on their country place, where I was but Gilbert the humble retainer on my lord Baron's lands.'"

Andrea heard the compliment; but she thought it came not from an acquaintance so far as a dependent could be the acquaintance of a young lady of title, and she believed it was a common person who spoke.

Infinitely proud, she heeded it no more than an East Indian idol troubles itself about the adorer who places his tribute at its feet.

Hardly were the two young Taverneys established on and by the bench than the first rockets serpentined towards the clouds, and a loud "Oh!" was roared by the multitude henceforth absorbed in the sight.

Andrea did not try to conceal her impressions in her astonishment at the unequalled sight of a population

cheering with delight before a palace of fire. Only a yard from her, the youth who had named himself as Gilbert, gazed on her rather than at the show, except because it charmed her. Every time a gush of flame shone on her beautiful countenance, he thrilled; he could fancy that the general admiration sprang from the adoration which this divine creature inspired in him who idolized her.

Suddenly, a vivid glare burst and spread, slanting from the river: it was a bomshell exploding fiercely, but Andrea merely admired the gorgeous play of light.

"How splendid," she murmured.

"Goodness," said her brother, disquieted, "that shot was badly aimed for it shoots almost on the level instead of taking an upward curve. Oh, God, it is an accident! Come away--it is a mishap which I dreaded. A stray cracker has set fire to the powder on the bastion. The people are trampling on each other over there to get away. Do you not hear those screams--not cheers but shrieks of distress. Quick, quick, to the coach! Gentlemen, gentlemen, please let us through."

He put his arms around his sister's slender waist, to drag her in the direction of her father. Also made uneasy by the clamor, the danger being evident though not distinguished yet by him, he put his head out of the window to look for his dear ones.

It was too late!

The final display of fifteen thousand rockets-burst, darting off in all directions, and chasing the spectators like those squibs exploded in the bull-fighting ring to stir up the bull.

At first surprised but soon frightened, the people drew back without reflection. Before this invincible retreat of a hundred thousand, another mass as numerous gave the same movement when squeezed to the rear. The wooden work at the bastion took fire; children cried, women tossed their arms; the city guardsmen struck out to quiet the brawlers and re-establish order by violence.

All these causes combined to drive the crowd like a waterspout to the corner where Philip of Taverney stood. Instead of reaching the baron's carriage as he reckoned, he was swept on by the resistless tide, of which no description can give an idea. Individual force, already doubled by fear and pain, was increased a hundredfold by the junction of the general power.

As Philip dragged Andrea away, Gilbert was also carried off by the human current: but at the corner of Madeline Street, a band of fugitives lifted him up and tore him away from Andrea, in spite of his struggles and yelling.

Upon the Taverneys charged a team of runaway horses. Philip saw the crowd part; the smoking heads of the animals appeared and they rose on their haunches for a leap. He leaped, too, and being a cavalry officer, captain in the Dauphiness's Dragoons, knew how to deal with them. He caught the bit of one and was lifted with it.

Andrea saw him flung and fall; she screamed, threw up her arms, was buffeted, reeled, and in an instant was tossed hence alone, like a feather, without the strength to offer resistance.

Deafening calmor, more dreadful than shouts of battle, the horses neighing, the clatter of the vehicles on the pavement cumbered with the crippled, and livid glare of the burning stands, the sinister flashing of swords which some of the soldiers had drawn, in their fury and above the bloody chaos, the bronze statue gleaming with the light as it presided over the carnage--here was enough to drive the girl mad.

She uttered a despairing cry; for a soldier in cutting a way for himself in the crowd had waved the dripping blade over her head. She clasped her hands like a shipwrecked sailor as the last breaker swamps him, and gasping "God have mercy" fell.

Yet to fall here was to die.

One had heard this final, supreme appeal. It was Gilbert who had been snaking his way up to her. Though the same rush bent him down, he rose, seized the soldier by the throat and upset him.

Where he felled him, lay the white-robed form: he lifted it up with a giant's strength.

When he felt this beautiful body on his heart, though it might be a corpse, a ray of pride illuminated his face.

The sublime situation made him the sublimation of strength and courage extreme; he dashed with his

burden into the torrent of men. This would have broken a hole through a wall. It sustained him and carried them both. He just touched the ground with his feet, but her weight began to tell on him. Her heart beat against his.

"She is saved," he said, "and I have saved her," he added, as the mass brought up against the Royal Wardrobe Building, and he was sheltered in the angle of masonry.

But looking towards the bridge over the Seine, he did not see the twenty thousand wretches on his right, mutilated, welded together, having broken through the barrier of the carriages and mixed up with them as the drivers and horses were seized with the same vertigo.

Instinctively they tried to get to the wall against which the closest were mashed.

This new deluge threatened to grind those who had taken refuge here by the Wardrobe building, with the belief they had escaped. Maimed bodies and dead ones piled up by Gilbert. He had to back into the recess of the gateway, where the weight made the walls crack.

The stifled youth felt like yielding; but collecting all his powers by a mighty effort, he enclasped Andrea with his arms, applying his face to her dress as if he meant to strangle her whom he wished to protect.

"Farewell," he gasped as he bit her robe in kissing it.

His eyes glancing about in an ultimate call to heaven, were offered a singular vision.

A man was standing on a horseblock, clinging by his right hand to an iron ring sealed in the wall: while with his left he seemed to beckon an army in flight to rally.

He was a tall dark man of thirty, with a figure muscular but elegant. His features had the mobility of Southerners', strangely blending power and subtlety. His eyes were piercing and commanding.

As the mad ocean of human beings poured beneath him he cast out a word or a cabalistic token. On these, some individual in the throng was seen to stop, fight clear and make his way towards the beckoner to fall in at his rear. Others, called likewise, seemed to recognize brothers in each other, and all lent their hands to catch still more of the swimmers in this tide of life. Soon this knot of men were formed into the head of a breakwater, which divided the fugitives and served to stay and stem the rush.

At every instant new recruits seemed to spring out of the earth at these odd words and weird gestures, to form the backers of this wondrous man.

Gilbert nerved himself. He felt that here alone was safety, for here was calm and power.

A last flicker of the burning staging, irradiated this man's visage and Gilbert uttered an outcry of surprise.

"I know who that is," he said, "he visited my master down at Taverney. It is Baron Balsamo. Oh, I care not if I die provided she lives. This man has the power to save her."

In perfect self-sacrifice, he raised the girl up in both hands and shouted:

"Baron Balsamo, save Andrea de Taverney!"

Balsamo heard this voice from the depths; he saw the white figure lifted above the matted beings; he used the phalanx he had collected to cover his charge to the spot. Seizing the girl, still sustained by Gilbert though his arms were weakening, he snatched her away, and let the crowd carry them both afar.

He had not time to turn his head.

Gilbert had not the breath to utter a word. Perhaps, after having Andrea aided, he would have supplicated assistance for himself; but all he could do was clutch with a hand which tore a scrap of the dress of the girl. After this grasp, a last farewell, the young man tried no longer to struggle, as though he were willing to die. He closed his eyes and fell on a heap of the dead.

C

T

To great tempests succeeds calm, dreadful but reparative.

At two o'clock in the morning a wan moon was playing through the swift-driving white clouds upon the fatal scene where the merry-makers had trampled and buried one another in the ditches.

The corpses stuck out arms lifted in prayers and legs broken and entangled, while the clothes were ripped and the faces livid.

Yellow and sickening smoke, rising from the burning platforms on Louis XV. Place, helped to give it the aspect of a battlefield.

Over the bloody and desolate spot wandered shadows which were the robbers of the dead, attracted like ravens. Unable to find living prey, they stripped the corpses and swore with surprise when they found they had been forestalled by rivals. They fled, frightened and disappointed as soldier's bayonets at last appeared, but among the long rows of the dead, robbers and soldiers were not the solely moving objects.

Supplied with lanterns prowlers were busy. They were not only curious, but relatives and parents and lovers who had not had their dear ones come home from the sightseeing. They came from the remotest parts for the horrible news had spread over Paris, mourning as if a hurricane had passed over it, and anxiety was acted out in these searches.

It was muttered that the Provost of Paris had many corpses thrown into the river from his fears at the immense number lost through his want of foresight. Hence those who had ferreted about uselessly, went to the river and stood in it knee-deep to stare at the flow; or they stole with their lanterns into the by-streets where it was rumored some of the crippled wretches had crept to beg help and at least flee the scene of their misfortune.

At the end of the square, near the Royal Gardens, popular charity had already set up a field hospital. A young man who might be identified as a surgeon by the instruments by his side, was attending to the wounded brought to him. While bandaging them he said words rather expressing hatred for the cause of their injuries than pity for the effect. He had two helpers, robust reporters, to whom he kept on shouting:

"Let me have the poor first. You can easily pick them out for they will be badly dressed and most injured."

At these words, continually croaked, a young gentleman with pale brow, who was searching among the bodies with a lantern in his hand, raised his head.

A deep gash on his forehead still dropped red blood. One of his hands was thrust between two buttons of his coat to support his injured arm; his perspiring face betrayed deep and ceaseless emotion.

Looking sadly at the amputated limbs which the operator appeared to regard with professional pleasure, he said:

"Oh, doctor, why do you make a selection among the victims?"

"Because," replied the surgeon, raising his head at this reproach, "no one would care for the poor if I did not, and the rich will always find plenty to look after them. Lower your light and look along the pavement and you will find a hundred poor to one rich or noble. In this catastrophe, with their luck which will in the end tire heaven itself, the aristocrats have paid their tax as usual, one per thousand."

The gentleman held up his lantern to his own face.

"Am I only one of my class?" he queried, without irritation, "a nobleman who was lost in the throng, where a horse kicked me in the face and my arm was broken by my falling into a ditch. You say the rich and noble are looked after--have I had my wounds dressed?"

"You have your mansion and your family doctor; go home, for you are able to walk."

"I am not asking your help, sir; I am seeking my sister, a fair girl of sixteen, no doubt killed, alas! albeit she is not of the lower classes. She wore a white dress and a necklace with a cross. Though she has a residence and a doctor, for pity's sake! answer me if you have seen her?"

"Humanity guides me, my lord," said the young surgeon with feverish vehemence proving that such ideas had long been seething within his bosom; "I devote myself to mankind, and I obey the law of her who is my goddess when I leave the aristocrat on his deathbed to run and relieve the suffering people. All the woes happened here are derived from the upper class; they come from your abuses, and usurpation; bear therefore the consequences. No lord, I have not seen your sister."

With this blasting retort, the surgeon resumed his task. A poor woman was brought to him over whose both legs a carriage had rolled.

"Behold," he pursued Philip with a shout, "is it the poor who drive their coaches about on holidays so as to smash the limbs of the rich?"

Philip, belonging to the new race who sided with Lafayette, had more than once professed the opinions which stung him from this youth: their application fell on him like chastisement. With breaking heart, he turned aloof on his mournful exploration, but soon they could hear his tearful voice calling:

"Andrea, Andrea!"

Near him hurried an elderly man, in grey coat, cloth stockings, and leaning on a cane, while with his left hand he held a cheap lantern made of a candle surrounded by oiled paper.

"Poor young man," he sighed on hearing the gentleman's wail and comprehending his anguish, "Forgive me," he said, returning after letting him pass as though he could not let such great sorrow go by without endeavoring to give some alleviation, "forgive my mingling grief with yours, but those whom the same stroke strikes ought to support one another. Besides, you may be useful to me. As your candle is nearly burnt out you must have been seeking for some time, and so know a good many places. Where do they lie thickest?"

"In the great ditch more than fifty are heaped up."

"So many victims during a festival?"

"So many?--I have looked upon a thousand dead--and have not yet come upon my sister."

"Your sister?"

"She was lost in that direction. I have found the bench where we were parted. But of her not a trace. I began to search at the bastion. The mob moved towards the new buildings in Madeleine Street. There I hunted, but there were great fluctuations. The stream rushed thither, but a poor girl would wander anywhere, with her crazed head, seeking flight in any direction."

"I can hardly think that she would have stemmed the current. We two may find her together at the corner of the streets."

"But who are you after--your son?" questioned Philip.

"No, an adopted youth, only eighteen, who was master of his actions and would come to the festival. Besides, one was so far from imagining this horrid catastrophe. Your candle is going out--come with me and I will light you."

"Thanks, you are very kind, but I shall obstruct you."

"Fear nothing, for I must be seeking, too. Usually the lad comes home punctually," continued the old man, "but I had a forerunner last evening. I was sitting up for him at eleven when my wife had the rumor from the neighbors of the miseries of this rejoicing. I waited a couple of hours in hopes that he would return, but then I felt it would be cowardly to go to sleep without news."

"So we will hunt over by the houses," said the nobleman.

"Yes, as you say the crowd went there and would certainly have carried him along. He is from the country and knows no more the way than the streets. This may be the first time he came to this place."

"My sister is country-bred also."

"Shocking sight," said the old man, before a mound of the suffocated.

"Still we must search," said the chevalier, resolutely holding out the lantern to the corpses. "Oh, here we are by the Wardrobe Stores--ha! white rags--my sister wore a white dress. Lend me your light, I entreat you, sir."

"It is a piece of a white dress," he continued, "but held in a young man's hand. It is like that she wore. Oh, Andrea!" he sobbed as if it tore up his heart.

The old man came nearer.

"It is he," he exclaimed, "Gilbert!"

"Gilbert? do you know our farmer's son, Gilbert, and were you seeking him?"

The old man took the youth's hand, it was icy cold. Philip opened his waistcoat and found that his heart was quiet. But the next instant he cried: "No, he breathes--he lives, I tell you."

"Help! this way, to the surgeon," said the old man.

"Nay, let us do what we can for him for I was refused help when I spoke to him just now."

"He must take care of my dear boy," said the old man.

And taking Gilbert between him and Taverney, they carried him towards the surgeon, who was still croaking:

"The poor first--bring in the poor, first."

This maxim was sure to be hailed with admiration from a group of lookers-on.

"I bring a man of the people," retorted the old man hotly, feeling a little piqued at this exclusiveness.

"And the women next, as men can bear their hurt better," proceeded the character.

"The boy only wants bleeding," said Gilbert's friend.

"Ho, ho, so it is you, my lord, again?" sneered the surgeon, perceiving Taverney.

The old gentleman thought that the speech was addressed to him and he took it up warmly.

"I am not a lord--I am a man of the multitude--I am Jean Jacques Rousseau."

The surgeon uttered an exclamation of surprise and said as he waved the crowd back imperiously:

"Way for the Man of Nature--the Emancipator of Humanity--the Citizen of Geneva! Has any harm befallen you?"

"No, but to this poor lad."

"Ah, like me, you represent the cause of mankind," said the surgeon.

Startled by this unexpected eulogy, the author of the "Social contract" could only stammer some unintelligible words, while Philip Taverney, seized with stupefaction at being in face of the famous philosopher, stepped aside.

Rousseau was helped in placing Gilbert on the table.

Then Rousseau gave a glance to the surgeon whose succor he invoked. He was a youth of the patient's own age, but no feature spoke of youth. His yellow skin was wrinkled like an old man's, his flaccid eyelid covered a serpent's glance, and his mouth was drawn one side like one in a fit. With his sleeves tucked up to the elbow and his arms smeared with blood, surrounded by the results of the operation he seemed rather an enthusiastic executioner than a physician fulfilling his sad and holy mission.

But the name of Rousseau seemed to influence him into laying aside his ordinary brutality. He softly opened Gilbert's sleeve, compressed the arm with a linen ligature and pricked the vein.

"We shall pull him through," he said, "but great care must be taken with him for his chest was crushed in."

"I have to thank you," said Rousseau, "and praise you--not for the exclusion you make on behalf of the poor, but for your devotion to the afflicted. All men are brothers."

"Even the rich, the noble, the lofty?" queried the surgeon, with a kindling look in his sharp eye under the drooping lid.

"Even they, when they are in suffering."

"Excuse me, but I am like you a Switzer, having been born at Neuchatel; and so I am rather democratic."

"My fellow-countryman? I should like to know your name."

"An obscure one, a modest man who devotes his life to study until like yourself he can employ it for the common-weal. I am Jean Paul Marat."

"I thank you, Marat," said Rousseau, "but in enlightening the masses on their rights, do not excite their

revengeful feelings. If ever they move in that direction, you might be amazed at the reprisals."

"Ah," said Marat with a ghastly smile, "if it should come in my time--should I see that day---- "

Frightened at the accent, as a traveler by the mutterings of a coming storm, Rousseau took Gilbert in his arms and tried to carry him away.

"Two willing friends to help Citizen Rousseau," shouted Marat; "two men of the lower order."

Rousseau had plenty to choose among; he took two lusty fellows who carried the youth in their arms.

"Take my lantern," said the author to Taverney as he passed him: "I need it no longer."

Philip thanked him and went on with his search.

"Poor young gentleman," sighed Rousseau, as he saw him disappear in the thronged streets.

He shuddered, for still rang over the bloody field he surgeon's shrill voice shouting:

"Bring in the poor--none but the poor! Woe to the rich, the noble and the high-born!"

C

T

WHILE the thousand casualties were precipitated upon each other, Baron Taverney escaped all the dangers by some miracle.

An old rake, and hardened in cynicism, he seemed the least likely to be so favored, but he maintained himself in the thick of a cluster by his skill and coolness, while incapable of exerting force against the devouring panic. His group, bruised against the Royal Storehouse, and brushed along the square railings, left a long trail of dead and dying on both flanks but, though decimated, its centre was kept out of peril.

As soon as these lucky men and women scattered upon the boulevard, they yelled with glee. Like them, Taverney found himself out of harm's reach. During all the journey, the baron had thought of nobody but his noble self. Though not emotional, he was a man of action, and in great crises such characters put Caesar's adage into practice--Act for yourself. We will not say he was selfish but that his attention was limited.

But soon as he was free on the main street, escaped from death and re-entering life, the old baron uttered a cry of delight, followed by another of pain.

"My daughter," he said, in sorrow, though it was not so loud as the other.

"Poor dear old man," said some old women, flocking round ready to condole with him, but still more to question.

He had no popular inclinations. Ill at ease among the gossips he made an effort to break the ring, and to his credit got off a few steps towards the square. But they were but the impulse of parental love, never wholly dead in a man; reason came to his aid, and stopped him short.

He cheered himself with the reasoning that if he, a feeble old man had struggled through, Andrea, on the strong arm of her brave and powerful brother, must have likewise succeeded. He concluded that the two had gone home, and he proceeded to their Paris lodging, in Coq-Heron street.

But he was scarcely within twenty paces of the house, on the street leading to a summerhouse in the gardens, where Philip had induced a friend to let them dwell, when he was hailed by a girl on the threshold. This was a pretty servant maid, who was jabbering with some women.

"Have you not brought Master Philip and Mistress Andrea?" was her greeting.

"Good heavens, Nicole, have they not come home?" cried the baron, a little startled, while the others were quivering with the thrill which permeated all the city from the exaggerated story of the first fugitives spreading.

"Why, no, my lord, no one has seen them."

"They could not come home by the shortest road," faltered the baron, trembling with spite at his pitiful line of reasoning falling to pieces.

There he stood, in the street, with Nicole whimpering, and an old valet, who had accompanied the Taverneys to town, lifting his hands to the sky.

"Oh, here comes Master Philip," ejaculated Nicole, with inexpressible terror, for the young man was alone.

He ran up through the shades of evening, desperate, calling out as soon as he saw the gathering at the house door:

"Is my sister here?"

"We have not seen her--she is not here," said Nicole. "Oh, heavens, my poor young mistress!" she sobbed.

"The idea of your coming back without her!" said the baron with anger the more unfair as we have shown how he quitted the scene of the disaster.

By way of answer he showed his bleeding face and his arm broken and hanging like a dead limb by his side.

"Alas, my poor Andrea," sighed the baron, falling, seated on a stone bench by the door.

"But I shall find her, dead or alive," replied the young man gloomily.

And he returned to the place with feverish agitation. He would have lopped off his useless arm, if he had an axe, but as it was, he tucked the hand into his waistcoat for an improvised sling.

It was thus we saw him on the square, where he wandered part of the night. As the first streaks of dawn whitened the sky, he turned homeward, though ready to drop. From a distance he saw the same familiar group which had met his eyes on the eve. He understood that Andrea had not returned, and he halted.

"Well?" called out the baron, spying him.

"Has she not returned? no news--no clew?" and he fell, exhausted, on the stone bench, while the older noble swore.

At this juncture, a hack appeared at the end of the street, lumbered up, and stopped in front of the house. As a female head appeared at the window, thrown back as if in a faint, Philip, recognizing it, leaped that way. The door opened, and a man stepped out who carried Andrea de Taverney in his arms.

"Dead--they bring her home dead," gasped Philip, falling on his knees.

"I do not think so, gentlemen," said the man who bore Andrea, "I trust that Mdlle. de Taverney is only fainted."

"Oh, the magician," said the baron, while Philip uttered the name of "the Baron of Balsamo."

"I, my lord, who was happy enough to spy Mdlle. de Taverney in the riot, near the Royal wardrobe storehouse."

But Philip passed at once from joy to doubt and said:

"You are bringing her home very late, my lord."

"You will understand my plight," replied Balsamo without astonishment. "I was unaware of the address of your sister, though your father calls me a magician, kindly remembering some little incidents occurring at your country-seat. So I had her carried by my servants to the residence of the Marchioness of Savigny, a friend who lives near the Royal Stables. Then this honest fellow--Comtois," he said, waving a footman in the royal livery to come forward, "being in the King's household and recognizing the young lady from her being attendant of the Dauphiness, gave me this address. Her wonderful beauty had made him remark her one night when the royal coach left her at this door. I bade him get upon the box, and I have the honor to bring to you, with all the respect she merits--the young lady, less ill than she may appear."

He finished by placing the lady with the utmost respect in the hands of Nicole and her father. For the first time the latter felt a tear on his eyelid, and he was astonished as he let it openly run down his wrinkled cheek.

"My lord," said Philip, presenting the only hand he could use to Balsamo, "You know me and my address. Give me a chance to repay the services you have done me."

"I have merely accomplished duty," was the reply. "I owed you for the hospitality you once favored me at Taverney." He took a few paces to depart, but retracing them, he added: "I ask pardon; but I was forgetting to leave the precise address of Marchioness Savigny; she lives in Saint Honore Street, near the Feuillant's Monastery. This is said in case Mdlle. de Taverney should like to pay her a visit."

In this explanation, exactness of details and accumulation of proofs, the delicacy touched the young lord and even the old one.

"My daughter owes her life to your lordship," said the latter.

"I am proud and happy in that belief," responded Balsamo.

Followed by Comtois, who refused the purse Philip offered, he went to the carriage and was gone.

Simultaneously, as if the departure made the swooning of Andrea cease, she opened her eyes. For a while she was dumb, and stunned, and her look was frightened.

"Heavens, have we but had her half restored--with her reason gone?" said Philip.

Seeming to comprehend the words, Andrea shook her head. But she remained mute, as if in ecstasy.

Standing, one of her arms was levelled in the direction in which Balsamo had disappeared.

"Come, come, it is high time our worry was over," said the baron. "Help your sister indoors my son."

Between the young gentleman and Nicole, Andrea reached the rear house, but walked like a somnambulist.

"Philip--father!" she uttered as speech returned to her at last.

"She knows us," exclaimed the young knight.

"To be sure I know you; but what has taken place?"

Her eyes closed in a blessed sleep this time, and Nicole carried her into her bedroom.

On going to his own room, Captain Philip found a doctor whom the valet Labrie had sent for. He examined the injured arm, not broken but dislocated, and set the bone. Still uneasy about his sister, he took the medical man to her bedside. He felt her pulse, listened to her breathing and smiled.

"Her slumber is calm and peaceful as a child's," he said. "Let her sleep on, young sir, there is nothing more to do."

The baron was sound asleep already assured about his children on whom were built the ambitious schemes which had lured him to the capital.

C

A

MORE fortunate than Andrea, Gilbert had in lieu of an ordinary practitioner, a light of medical science to attend to his ails. The eminent Dr Jussieu, a friend of Rousseau's, though allied to the Court, happened to call in the nick to be of service. He promised that the young man would be on his legs in a week.

Moreover, being a botanist like Rousseau, he proposed that on the coming Sunday they should give the youth a walk with them in the country, out Marly way. Gilbert might rest while they gathered the curious plants.

With this prospect to entice him, the invalid returned rapidly to health.

But while Rousseau believed that his ward was well, and his wife Therese told the gossips that it was due to the skill of the celebrated Dr. Jussieu, Gilbert was running the worst danger ever befalling his obstinacy and perpetual dreaming.

Gilbert was the son of a farmer on the land of Baron Taverney. The master had dissipated his revenue and sold his principal to play the rake in Paris. When he returned to bring up his son and daughter in poverty in the dilapidated manor house, Gilbert was a hanger-on, who fell in love with Nicole as a stepping-stone to becoming infatuated with her mistress. As at the fireworks, the youth never thought of anything but this mad love.

From the attic of Rousseau's house he could look down on the garden where the summerhouse stood in which Andrea was also in convalescence.

He did not see her, only Nicole carrying broth as for the invalid. The back of the little house came to the yard of Rousseau's in another street.

In this little garden old Taverney trotted about, taking snuff greedily as if to rouse his wits--that was all Gilbert saw.

But it was enough to judge that a patient was indoors, not a dead woman.

"Behind that screen in the room," he mused, "is the woman whom I love to idolatry. She has but to appear to thrill my every limb for she holds my existence in her hand and I breathe but for us two."

Merged in his contemplation he did not perceive that in another window of an adjoining house in his street, Plastriere Street, a young woman in the widow's weeds, was also watching the dwelling of the Taverneys. This second spy knew Gilbert, too, but she took care not to show herself when he leaned out of the casement as to throw himself on the ground. He would have recognized her as Chon, the sister of Jeanne, Countess Dubarry, the favorite of the King.

"Oh, how happy they are who can walk about in that garden," raved the mad lover, with furious envy, "for there they could hear Andrea and perhaps see her in her rooms. At night, one would not be seen while peeping."

It is far from desire to execution. But fervid imaginations bring extremes together; they have the means. They find reality amid fancies, they bridge streams and put a ladder up against a mountain.

To go around by the street would be no use, even if Rousseau had not locked in his pet, for the Taverneys lived in the rear house.

"With these natural tools, hands and feet," reasoned Gilbert, "I can scramble over the shingles and by following the gutter which is rather narrow, but straight, consequently the shortest path from one point to another, I will reach the skylight next my own. That lights the stairs, so that I can get out. Should I fall, they will pick me up, smashed at her feet, and they will recognize me, so that my death will be fine, noble, romantic--superb!

"But if I get in on the stairs I can go down to the window over the yard and jump down a dozen feet where the trellis will help me to get into her garden. But if that worm-eaten wood should break and tumble me on the ground that would not be poetic, but shameful to think of! The baron will say I came to steal the fruit and he will have his man Labrie lug me out by the ear.

"No, I will twist these clotheslines into a rope to let me down straight and I will make the attempt to-night."

From his window, at dark, Gilbert was scanning the enemy's grounds, as he qualified Taverney's house-lot, when he spied a stone coming over the garden-wall and slapping up against the house-wall. But though he leaned far out he could not discry the flinger of the pebble.

What he did see was a blind on the ground floor open warily and the wide-awake head of the maid Nicole show itself. After having scrutinized all the windows round, Nicole came out of doors and ran to the espalier on which some pieces of lace were drying.

The stone had rolled on this place and Gilbert had not lost sight of it. Nicole kicked it when she came to it and kept on playing football with it till she drove it under the trellis where she picked it up under cover of taking off the lace. Gilbert noticed that she shucked the stone of a piece of paper, and he concluded that the message was of importance.

It was a letter, which the sly wench opened, eagerly perused and put in her pocket without paying any more heed to the lace.

Nicole went back into the house, with her hand in her pocket. She returned with a key which she slipped under the garden gate, which would be out in the street beside the carriage-doorway.

"Good, I understand," thought the young man: "it is a love letter. Nicole is not losing her time in town--she has a lover."

He frowned with the vexation of a man who supposed that his loss had left an irreparable void in the heart of the girl he jilted, and discovered that she had filled it up.

"This bids fair to run counter to my plans," thought he, trying to give another turn to his ill-humor. "I shall not be sorry to learn what happy mortal has succeeded me in the good graces of Nicole Legay."

But Gilbert had a level mind in some things; he saw that the knowledge of this secret gave him an advantage over the girl, as she could not deny it, while she scarcely suspected his passion for the baron's daughter, and had no clew to give body to her doubts.

The night was dark and sultry, stifling with heat as often in early spring. From the clouds it was a black gulf before Gilbert, through which he descended by the rope. He had no fear from his strength of will. So he reached the ground without a flutter. He climbed the garden wall but as he was about to descend, heard a step beneath him.

He clung fast and glanced at the intruder.

It was a man in the uniform of a corporal of the French Guards.

Almost at the same time, he saw Nicole open the house backdoor, spring across the garden, leaving it open, and light and rapid as a shepherdess, dart to the greenhouse, which was also the soldier's destination. As neither showed any hesitation about proceeding to this point, it was likely that this was not the first appointment the pair had kept there.

"No, I can continue my road," reasoned Gilbert; "Nicole would not be receiving her sweetheart unless she were sure of some time before her, and I may rely on finding Mdlle. Andrea alone. Andrea alone!"

No sound in the house was audible and only a faint light was to be seen.

Gilbert skirted the wall and reached the door left open by the maid. Screened by an immense creeper festooning the doorway, he could peer into an anteroom, with two doors; the open one he believed to be Nicole's. He groped his way into it, for it had no light.

At the end of a lobby, a glazed door, with muslin curtains on the other side, showed a glimmer. On going up this passage, he heard a feeble voice.

It was Andrea's.

All Gilbert's blood flowed back to the heart.

C

S

THE voice which made answer to the girl's was her brother Philip's. He was anxiously asking after her health.

Gilbert took a few steps guardedly and stood behind one of those half-columns carrying a bust which were the ornaments in pairs to doorways of the period. Thus in security, he looked and listened, so happy that his heart melted with delight; yet so frightened that it seemed to shrink up to a pin's head.

He saw Andrea lounging on an invalid-chair, with her face turned towards the glazed door, a little on the jar. A small lamp with a large reflecting shade placed on a table heaped with books, showed the only recreation allowed the fair patient, and illumined only the lower part of her countenance.

Seated on the foot of the chair, Philip's back was turned to the watcher; his arm was still in a sling.

This was the first time the lady sat up and that her brother was allowed out. They had not seen each other since the dreadful night; but both had been informed of the respective convalescence. They were chatting freely as they believed themselves alone and that Nicole would warn them if any one came.

"Then you are breathing freely," said Philip.

"Yes, but with some pain."

"Strength come back, my poor sister?"

"Far from it, but I have been able to get to the window two or three times. How nice the open air is--how sweet the flowers--with them it seems that one cannot die. But I am so weak from the shock having been so horrid. I can only walk by hanging on to the furniture; I should fall without support."

"Cheer up, dear; the air and flowers will restore you. In a week you will be able to pay a visit to the Dauphiness who has kindly asked after you, I hear."

"I hope so, for her Highness has been good to me; to you in promoting you to be captain in her guards, and to father, who was induced by her benevolence to leave our miserable country house.

"Speaking of your miraculous escape," said Philip, "I should like to know more about the rescue."

Andrea blushed and seemed ill at ease. Either he did not remark it or would not do so.

"I thought you knew all about it," said she; "father was perfectly satisfied.

"Of course, dear Andrea, and it seemed to me that the gentleman behaved most delicately in the matter. But some points in the account seemed obscure--I do not mean suspicious."

"Pray explain," said the girl with a virgin's candor.

"One point is very out of the way--how you were saved. Kindly relate it."

"Oh, Philip," she said with an effort, "I have almost forgotten--I was so frightened."

"Never mind--tell me what you do remember."

"You know, brother, that we were separated within twenty paces of the Royal Wardrobe Storehouse? I saw you dragged away towards the Tuileries Gardens, while I was hurled into Royale Street. Only for an instant did I see you, making desperate efforts to return to me. I held out my arms to you and was screaming, 'Philip!' when I was suddenly wrapped in a whirlwind, and whisked up towards the railings. I feared that the current would dash me up against the wall and shatter me. I heard the yells of those crushed against the iron palings; I foresaw my turn coming to be ground to rags. I could reckon how few instants I had to live, when--half dead, half crazed, as I lifted eyes and arms in a last prayer to heaven, I saw the eyes sparkle of a man who towered over the multitude and it seemed to obey him."

"You mean Baron Balsamo, I suppose?"

"Yes, the same I had seen at Taverney. There he struck me with uncommon terror. The man seems supernatural. He fascinates my sight and my hearing; with but the touch of his finger he would make me quiver all over."

"Continue, Andrea," said the chevalier, with darkening brow and moody voice.

"This man soared over the catastrophe like one whom human ills could not attain. I read in his eyes that he wanted to save me and something extraordinary went on within me: shaken, bruised, powerless and nearly dead though I was, to that man I was attracted by an invincible, unknown and mysterious force, which bore me thither. I felt arms enclasp me and urge me out of this mass of welded flesh in which I was kneaded--where others choked and gasped I was lifted up into air. Oh, Philip," said she with exaltation, "I am sure it was the gaze of that man. I grasped at his hand and I was saved."

"Alas," thought Gilbert, "I was not seen by her though dying at her feet."

"When I felt out of danger, my whole life having been centred in this gigantic effort or else the terror surpassed my ability to contend--I fainted away."

"When do you think this faint came on?"

"Ten minutes after we were rent asunder, brother."

"That would be close on Midnight," remarked the Knight of Red Castle. "How then was it you did not return home until three? You must forgive me questions which may appear to you ridiculous but they have a reason to me, dear Andrea."

"Three days ago I could not have replied to you," she said, pressing his hand, "but, strange as it may be, I can see more clearly now. I remember as though a superior will made me do so."

"I am waiting with impatience. You were saying that the man took you up in his arms?"

"I do not recall that clearly," answered Andrea, blushing. "I only know that he plucked me up out of the crowd. But the touch of his hand caused me the same shock as at Taverney, and again I swooned or rather I slept, for it was a sleep that was good."

Gilbert devoured all the words, for he knew that so far all was true.

"On recovering my senses, I was in a richly furnished parlor. A lady and her maid were by my side, but they did not seem uneasy. Their faces were benevolently smiling. It was striking half-past twelve."

"Good," said the knight, breathing freely. "Continue, Andrea, continue."

"I thanked the lady for the attentions she was giving, but, knowing in what anxiety you must all be, I begged to be taken home at once. They told me that the Count--for they knew our Baron Balsamo as Count Fenix, had gone back to the scene of the accident, but would return with his carriage and take me to our house. Indeed, about two o'clock, I heard carriage wheels and felt the same warning shiver of his approach. I reeled and fell on a sofa as the door opened; I barely could recognize my deliverer as the giddiness seized me. During this unconsciousness I was put in the coach and brought here. It is all I recall, brother."

"Thank you, dear," said Philip, in a joyful voice; "your calculations of the time agree with mine. I will call on Marchioness Savigny and personally thank her. A last word of secondary import. Did you notice any familiar face in the excitement? Such as little Gilbert's, for instance?"

"Yes, I fancy I did see him a few paces off, as you and I were driven apart," said Andrea, recollecting.

"She saw me," muttered Gilbert.

"Because, when I was seeking you, I came across the boy."

"Among the dead?" asked the lady with the shade of assumed interest which the great take in their inferiors.

"No, only wounded, and I hope he will come round. His chest was crushed in."

"Ay, against hers," thought Gilbert.

"But the odd part of it was that I found in his clenched hand a rag from your dress, Andrea," pursued Philip.

"Odd, indeed; but I saw in this Dance of Death such a series of faces, that I can hardly say whether his figured truly there or not, poor little fellow!"

"But how do you account for the scrap in his grip?" pressed the captain.

"Good gracious! nothing more easy," rejoined the girl with tranquillity greatly contrasting with the eavesdropper's frightful throbbing of the heart. "If he were near me and he saw me lifted up, as I stated, by the spell of that man, he might have clutched at my skirts to be saved as the drowning snatch at a straw."

"Ugh," grumbled Gilbert, with gloomy contempt for this haughty explanation, "what ignoble interpretation of my devotion! How wrongly these aristocrats judge us people. Rousseau is right in saying that we are worth more than they--our heart is purer and our arms stronger."

At that he heard a sound behind him.

"What, is not that madcap Nicole here?" asked Baron Taverney, for it was he who passed by Gilbert hiding and entered his daughter's room.

"I dare say she is in the garden," replied his daughter, the latter with a quiet proving that she had no suspicion of the listener; "good evening, papa."

The old noble took an armchair.

"Ha, my children, it is a good step to Versailles when one travels in a hackney coach instead of one of the royal carriages. I have seen the Dauphiness, though, who sent for me to learn about your progress."

"Andrea is much better, sir."

"I knew that and told her Royal Highness so. She is good enough to promise to call her to her side when she sets up her establishment in the Little Trianon Palace which is being fitted up to her liking."

"I at court?" said Andrea timidly.

"Not much of a court; the Dauphiness has quiet tastes and the Prince Royal hates noise and bustle. They will live domestically at Trianon. But judging what the Austrian princess's humor is, I wager that as much will be done in the family circle as at official assemblies. The princess has a temper and the Dauphin is deep, I hear."

"Make no mistake, sister, it will still be a court," said Captain Philip, sadly.

"The court," thought Gilbert with intense rage and despair, "a hight I cannot scale--an abyss into which I cannot hurl myself! Andrea will be lost to me!"

"We have neither the wealth to allow us to inhabit that palace, nor the training to fit us for it," replied the girl to her father. "What would a poor girl like me do among those most brilliant ladies of whom I have had a glimpse? Their splendor dazzled me, while their wit seemed futile though sparkling. Alas, brother, we are obscure to go amid so much light!"

"What nonsense!" said the baron, frowning. "I cannot make out why my family always try to bemean what affects me! obscure--you must be mad, miss! A Taverney Redcastle, obscure! who should shine if not you, I want to know? Wealth? we know what wealth at court is--the crown is a sun which creates the gold--it does the gilding, and it is the tide of nature. I was ruined--I become rich, and there you have it. Has not the King money to offer his servitors? Am I to blush if he provides my son with a regiment and gives my daughter a dowry? or an appanage for me, or a nice warrant on the Treasury--when I am dining with the King and I find it under my plate?"

"No, no, only fools are squeamish--I have no prejudices. It is my due and I shall take it. Don't you have any scruples, either. The only matter to debate is your training. You have the solid education of the middle class with the more showy one of your own; you paint just such landscapes as the Dauphiness doats upon. As for your beauty, the King will not fail to notice it. As for conversation, which Count Artois and Count Provence like--you will charm them. So you will not only be welcome but adored. That is the word," concluded the cynic, rubbing his hands and laughing so unnaturally that Philip stared to see if it were a human being.

But, taking Andrea's hand as she lowered her eyes, the young gentleman said:

"Father is right; you are all he says, and nobody has more right to go to Versailles Palace."

"But I would be parted from you," remonstrated Andrea.

"Not at all," interrupted the baron; "Versailles is large enough to hold all the Taverneys."

"True, but the Trianon is small," retorted Andrea, who could be proud and willful.

"Trianon is large enough to find a room for Baron Taverney," returned the old nobleman, "a man like me always finds a place"--meaning "can find a place. Any way, it is the Dauphiness's order."

"I will go," said Andrea.

"That is good. Have you any money, Philip?" asked the old noble.

"Yes, if you want some; but if you want to offer me it, I should say that I have enough as it is."

"Of course, I forgot you were a philosopher," sneered the baron. "Are you a philosopher, too, my girl, or do you need something?"

"I should not like to distress you, father."

"Oh, luck has changed since we left Taverney. The King has given me five hundred louis--on account, his Majesty said. Think of your wardrobe, child."

"Oh, thank you, papa," said Andrea, joyously.

"Oho, going to the other extreme now! A while ago, you wanted for nothing--now you would ruin the Emperor of China. Never mind, for fine dresses become you, darling."

With a tender kiss, he opened the door leading into his own room, and disappeared, saying:

"Confound that Nicole for not being in to show me a light!"

"Shall I ring for her, father?"

"No, I shall knock against Labrie, dozing on a chair. Good night, my dears."

"Good night, brother," said Andrea as Philip also stood up: "I am overcome with fatigue. This is the first time, I have been up since my accident."

The gentleman kissed her hand with respect mixed with his affection always entertained for his sister and he went through the corridor, almost brushing against Gilbert.

"Never mind Nicole--I shall retire alone. Good bye, Philip."

C

V

A SHIVER ran through the watcher as the girl rose from her chair. With her alabaster hands she pulled out her hairpins one by one while the wrapper, slipping down upon her shoulders, disclosed her pure and graceful neck, and her arms, carelessly arched over her head, threw out the lower curve of the body to the advantage of the exquisite throat, quivering under the linen.

Gilbert felt a touch of madness and was on the verge of rushing forward, yelling:

"You are lovely, but you must not be too proud of your beauty since you owe it to me--it was I saved your life!"

Suddenly a knot in the corset string irritated Andrea who stamped her foot and rang the bell.

This knell recalled the lover to reason. Nicole had left the door open so as to run back. She would come.

He wanted to dart out of the house, but the baron had closed the other doors as he came along. He was forced to take refuge in Nicole's room.

From there he saw her hurry in to her mistress, assist her to bed and retire, after a short chat, in which she displayed all the fawning of a maid who wishes to win her forgiveness for delinquency.

Singing to make her peace of mind be believed, she was going through on the way to the garden when Gilbert showed himself in a moonbeam.

She was going to scream but taking him for another, she said, conquering her fright:

"Oh, it is you--what rashness!"

"Yes, it is I--but do not scream any louder for me than the other," said Gilbert.

"Why, whatever are you doing here?" she challenged, knowing her fellow-dependent at Taverney. "But I guess--you are still after my mistress. But though you love her, she does not care for you."

"Really?"

"Mind that I do not expose you and have you thrown out," she said in a threatening tone.

"One may be thrown out, but it will be Nicole to whom stones are tossed over the wall."

"That is nothing to the piece of our mistress's dress found in your hand on Louis XV Square, as Master Philip told his father. He does not see far into the matter yet, but I may help him."

"Take care, Nicole, or they may learn that the stones thrown over the wall are wrapped in love-letters."

"It is not true!" Then recovering her coolness, she added: "It is no crime to receive a love-letter--not like sneaking in to peep at poor young mistress in her private room."

"But it is a crime for a waiting-maid to slip keys under garden doors and keep tryst with soldiers in the greenhouse!"

"Gilbert, Gilbert!"

"Such is the Nicole Virtue! Now, assert that I am in love with Mdlle. Andrea and I will say I am in love with my playfellow Nicole and they will believe that the sooner. Then you will be packed off. Instead of going to the Trianon Palace with your mistress, and coqueting with the fine fops around the Dauphiness, you will have to hang around the barracks to see your lover the corporal of the Guards. A low fall, and Nicole's ambition ought to have carried her higher. Nicole, a dangler on a guardsman!"

And he began to hum a popular song:

"In the French Guards my sweetheart marches!"

"For pity's sake, Gilbert, do not eye me thus--it alarms me."

"Open the door and get that swashbuckler out of the way in ten minutes when I may take my leave."

Subjugated by his imperious air, Nicole obeyed. When she returned after dismissing the corporal, her first lover was gone.

Alone in his attic, Gilbert cherished of his recollections solely the picture of Andrea letting down her fine tresses.

C

T

INDIFFERENT to everything since he had learnt of Andrea's going soon to the court, Gilbert had forgotten the excursion of Rousseau and his brother botanist on Sunday. He would have preferred to pass the day at his garret window, watching his idol.

Rousseau had not only taken special pains over his attire, but arrayed Gilbert in the best, though Therese had thought overalls and a smockfrock quite good enough to wander in the woods, picking up weeds.

He was not wrong for Dr. Jussieu came in his carriage, powdered, pommaded and freshened up like springtime: Indian satin coat, lilac taffety vest, extremely fine white silk stockings and polished gold buckled shoes composed his botanist's outfit.

"How gay you are!" exclaimed Rousseau.

"Not at all, I have dressed lightly to get over the ground better."

"Your silk hose will never stand the wet."

"We will pick our steps. Can one be too fine to court Mother Nature?"

The Genevan Philosopher said no more--an invocation to Nature usually shutting him up. Gilbert looked at Jussieu with envy. If he were arrayed like him, perhaps Andrea would look at him.

An hour after the start, the party reached Bougival, where they alighted and took the Chestnut Walk. On coming in sight of the summerhouse of Luciennes, where Gilbert had been conducted by Mdlle. Chon when he was picked up by her, a poor boy on the highway, he trembled. For he had repaid her succor by fleeing when she had wished to make a buffoon of him as a peer to Countess Dubarry's black boy, Zamore.

"It is nine o'clock," observed Dr. Jussieu, "suppose we have breakfast?"

"Where? did you bring eatables in your carriage?"

"No, but I see a kiosk over there where a modest meal may be had. We can herborize as we walk there."

"Very well, Gilbert may be hungry. What is the name of your inn?"

"The Trap."

"How queer!"

"The country folks have droll ideas. But it is not an inn; only a shooting-box where the gamekeepers offer hospitality to gentlemen."

"Of course you know the owner's name?" said Rousseau, suspicious.

"Not at all: Lady Mirepoix or Lady Egmont--or--it does not matter if the butter and the bread are fresh."

The good-humored way in which he spoke disarmed the philosopher who besides had his appetite whetted by the early stroll. Jussieu led the march, Rousseau followed, gleaning, and Gilbert guarded the rear, thinking of Andrea and how to see her at Trianon Palace.

At the top of the hill, rather painfully climbed by the three botanists, rose one of those imitation rustic cottages invented by the gardeners of England and giving a stamp of originality to the scene. The walls were of brick and the shelly stone found naturally in mosaic patterns on the riverside.

The single room was large enough to hold a table and half-a-dozen chairs. The windows were glazed in different colors so that you could by selection view the landscape in the red of sunset, the blue of a cloudy day or the still colder slate hue of a December day.

This diverted Gilbert but a more attractive sight was the spread on the board. It drew an outcry of admiration from Rousseau, a simple lover of good cheer, though a philosopher, from his appetite being as hearty as his taste was modest.

"My dear master," said Jussieu, "if you blame me for this feast you are wrong, for it is quite a mild set-out---- "

"Do not depreciate your table, you gormand!"

"Do not call it mine!"

"Not yours? then whose--the brownies, the fairies?" demanded Rousseau, with a smile testifying to his constraint and good nature at the same time.

"You have hit it," answered the doctor, glancing wistfully to the door.

Gilbert hesitated.

"Bless the fays for their hospitality," said Rousseau, "fall on! they will be offended at your holding back and think you rate their bounty incomplete."

"Or unworthy you gentlemen," interrupted a silvery voice at the summerhouse door, where two pretty women presented themselves arm in arm.

With smiles on their lips, they waved their plump hands for Jussieu to moderate his salutations.

"Allow me to present the Author Rousseau to your ladyship, countess," said the latter. "Do you not know the lady?"

Gilbert did, if his teacher did not, for he stared and, pale as death, looked for an exit.

"It is the first time we meet," faltered the Citizen of Geneva.

"Countess Dubarry!" explained the other botanist.

His colleague started as though on a redhot plate of iron.

Jeanne Dubarry, favorite of King Louis X. was a lovely woman, just of the right plumpness to be a material Venus; fair, with light hair but dark eyes she was witching and delightful to all men who prefer truth to fancy in feminine beauty.

"I am very happy," she said "to see and welcome under my roof one of the most illustrious thinkers of the era."

"Lady Dubarry," stammered Rousseau, without seeing that his astonishment was an offense. "So it is she who gives the breakfast?"

"You guess right, my dear philosopher," replied Jussieu, "she and her sister, Mdlle. Chon, who at least is no stranger to Friend Gilbert."

"Her sister knows Gilbert?"

"Intimately," rejoined the impudent girl with the audacity which respected neither royal ill-humor nor philosopher's quips. "We are old boon companions--are you already forgetful of the candy and cakes of Luciennes and Versailles?"

This shot went home; Rousseau dropped his arms. Habituated in his conceit to think the aristocratic party were always trying to seduce him from the popular side, he saw traitors and spies in everybody.

"Is this so, unhappy boy?" he asked of Gilbert, confounded. "Begone, for I do not like those who blow hot and cold with the same breath."

"But I ran away from Luciennes where I was locked up, and I must have preferred your house, my guide, my friend, my philosopher!"

"Hypocrisy!"

"But, M. Rousseau, if I wanted the society of these ladies, I should go with them now?"

"Go where you like! I may be deceived once but not twice. Go to this lady, good and amiable--and with this gentleman," he added pointing to Jussieu, amazed at the philosopher's rebuke to the royal pet, "he is a lover of nature and your accomplice--he has promised you fortune and assistance and he has power at court."

He bowed to the women in a tragic manner, unable to contain himself, and left the pavillion statelily, without glancing again at Gilbert.

"What an ugly creature a philosopher is," tranquilly said Chon, watching the Genevan stumble down the hill.

"You can have anything you like," prompted Jussieu to Gilbert who kept his face buried in his hands.

"Yes, anything, Gilly," added the countess, smiling on the returned prodigal.

Raising his pale face, and tossing back the hair matted on his forehead, he said in a steady voice:

"I should be glad to be a gardener at Trianon Palace."

Chon and the countess glanced at each other, and the former touched her sister's foot while she winked broadly. Jeanne nodded.

"If feasible, do it," she said to Jussieu.

Gilbert bowed with his hand on his heart, overflowing with joy after having been drowned with grief.

C

T

WHEN Louis XIV. built Versailles and perceived the discomfort of grandeur, he granted it was the sojourneying-place for a demi-god but no home for a man. So he had the Trianon constructed to be able to draw a free breath at leisure moments.

But the sword of Achilles, if it tired him, was bound to be of insupportable weight to a myrmidon. Trianon was so much too pompous for the Fifteenth Louis that he had the *Little* Trianon built.

It was a house looking with its large eyes of windows over a park and woods, with the wing of the servant's lodgings and stables on the left, where the windows were barred and the kitchens hidden by trellises of vines and creepers.

A path over a wooden bridge led to the Grand Trianon through a kitchen garden.

The King brought Prime Minister Choiseul into this garden to show him the improvements introduced to make the place fit for his grandson the Dauphin, and the Dauphiness.

Duke Choiseul admired everything and passed his comments with a courtier's sagacity. He let the monarch say the place would become more pleasant daily and he added that it would be a family retreat for the sovereign.

"The Dauphiness is still a little uncouth, like all young German girls," said Louis; "She speaks French nicely, but with an Austrian accent jarring on our ears. Here she will speak among friends and it will not matter."

"She will perfect herself," said the duke. "I have remarked that the lady is highly accomplished and accomplishes anything she undertakes."

On the lawn they found the Dauphin taking the sun with a sextant. Louis Aguste, duke of Berry, was a meek-eyed, rosy complexioned man of seventeen, with a clumsy walk. He had a more prominent Bourbon nose than any before him, without its being a caricature. In his nimble fingers and able arms alone he showed the spirit of his race, so to express it.

"Louis," said the King, loudly to be overheard by his grandson, "is a learned man, and he is wrong to rack his brain with science, for his wife will lose by it."

"Oh, no," corrected a feminine voice as the Dauphiness stepped out from the shrubbery, where she was chatting with a man loaded with plans, compass, pencil and notebook.

"Sire, this is my architect, Mique," she said.

"Have you caught the family complaint of building?"

"I am going to turn this sprawling garden into a natural one!"

"Really? why, I thought that trees and grass and running water are natural enough."

"Sire, you have to walk along straight paths between shaped boxwood trees, hewn at an angle of forty-five, to quote the Dauphin, and ponds agreeing with the paths, and star centres, and terraces! I am going to have arbors, rockeries, grottoes, cottages, hills, gorges, meadows---- "

"For Dutch dolls to stand up in?" queried the King.

"Alas, Sire, for kings and princes like ourselves," she replied, not seeing him color up, and that she had spoken a cutting truth.

"I hope you will not lodge your servants in your woods and on your rivers like Red Indians, in the natural life which Rousseau praises. If you do, only the Encyclopaedists will eulogise you."

"Sire, they would be too cold in huts, so I shall keep the out-buildings for them as they are." She pointed to the windows of a corridor, over which were the servant' sleeping rooms and under which were the kitchens.

"What do I see there?" asked the King, shielding his eyes with his hand, for he had short-sight.

"A woman, your Majesty," said Choiseul.

"A young lady who is my reading-woman," said the princess.

"It is Mdlle. de Taverney," went on Choiseul.

"What, are you attaching the Taverneys to your house?"

"Only the girl."

"Very good," said the King, without taking his eyes off the barred window out of which innocently gazed Andrea, with no idea she was watched.

"How pale she is!" remarked the Prime Minister.

"She was nearly killed in the dreadful accident of the 30th of May, my lord."

"For which we would have punished somebody severely," said Louis, "but Chancellor Seguier proved it was the work of Fate. Only that fellow Bignon, Provost of the Merchants, was dismissed--and--poor girl! he deserved it."

"Has she recovered?" asked Choiseul quickly.

"Yes, thank heaven!"

"She goes away," said the King.

"She recognized your Majesty, and fled. She is timid."

"A cheerless dwelling for a girl!"

"Oh, no, not so bad."

"Let us have a look round inside, Choiseul?"

"Your Majesty, Council of Parliament at Versailles at half-past two."

"Well, go and give those lawyers a shaking!"

And the sovereign, delighted to look at buildings, followed the Dauphiness who was delighted, also, to show her house. They passed Mdlle. de Taverney under the eaves of the little kitchen yard.

"This is my reader's room," remarked the Dauphiness. "I will show you it as a sample of how my ladies will fare."

It was a suite of anteroom and two parlors. The furniture was placed; books, a harpsichord, and particularly a bunch of flowers in a Japanese Vase, attracted the King's attention.

"What nice flowers! how can you talk of changing your garden? who the mischief supplies your ladies with such beauties? do they save any for the mistress?"

"It is very choice."

"Who is the gardener here so sweet upon Mdlle. de Taverney?"

"I do not know--Dr. Jussieu found me somebody."

The King looked round with a curious eye, and elsewhere, before departing. The Dauphin was still taking the sun.

C

T

A LONG rank of carriages filled the Forest at Marly where the King was carrying on what was called an afternoon hunt. The Master of the Buckhounds had deer so selected that he could let the one out which would run before the hounds just as long as suited the sovereign.

On this occasion, his Majesty had stated that he would hunt till four P. M.

Countess Dubarry, who had her own game in view, promised herself that she would hunt the King as steadfastly as he would the deer.

But huntsmen propose and chance disposes. Chance upset the favorite's project, and was almost as fickle as she was herself.

While talking politics with the Duke of Richelieu, who wanted by her help or otherwise to be First Minister instead of Choiseul, the countess--while chasing the King, who was chasing the roebuck--perceived all of a sudden, fifty paces off the road, in a shady grove, a broken down carriage. With its shattered wheels pointing to the sky, its horses were browsing on the moss and beech bark.

Countess Dubarry's magnificent team, a royal gift, had out-stripped all the others and were first to reach the scene of the breakdown.

"Dear me, an accident," said the lady, tranquilly.

"Just so, and pretty bad smash-up," replied Richelieu, with the same coolness, for sensitiveness is unknown at court.

"Is that somebody killed on the grass?" she went on.

"It makes a bow, so I guess *it* lives."

And at a venture Richelieu raised his own three-cocked hat.

"Hold! it strikes me it is the Cardinal Prince Louis de Rohan. What the deuce is he doing there?"

"Better go and see. Champagne, drive up to the upset carriage."

The countess's coachman quitted the road and drove to the grove. The cardinal was a handsome gentleman of thirty years of age, of gracious manners and elegant. He was waiting for help to come, with the utmost unconcern.

"A thousand respects to your ladyship," he said. "My brute of a coachman whom I hired from England, for my punishment, has spilled me in taking a short cut through the woods to join the hunt, and smashed my best carriage."

"Think yourself lucky--a French Jehu would have smashed the passenger! be comforted."

"Oh, I am philosophic, countess; but it is death to have to wait."

"Who ever heard of a Rohan waiting?"

"The present representative of the family is compelled to do it; but Prince Soubise will happen along soon to give me a lift."

"Suppose he goes another way?

"You must step into my carriage; if you were to refuse, I should give it up to you, and with a footman to carry my train, walk in the woods like a tree nymph."

The cardinal smiled, and seeing that longer resistance might be badly interpreted by the lady, he took the place at the back which the old duke gave up to him. The prince wanted to dispute for the lesser place but the marshal was inflexible.

The countess's team soon regained the lost time.

"May I ask your Eminence if you are fond of the chase again," began the lady, "for this is the first time I have seen you out with the hounds."

"I have been out before; but this time I come to Versailles to see the King on pressing business; and I went after him as he was in the woods, but thanks to my confounded driver, I shall lose the royal audience

as well as an apartment in Paris."

"The cardinal is pretty blunt--he means a love appointment," remarked Richelieu.

"Oh, no, it is with a man--but he is not an ordinary man--he is a magician and works miracles."

"The very one we are seeking, the duke and I," said Jeanne Dubarry. "I am glad we have a churchman here to ask him if he believes in miracles?"

"Madam, I have seen things done by this wizard which may not be miraculous though they are almost incredible."

"The prince has the reputation of dealing with spirits."

"What has your Eminence seen?"

"I have pledged myself to secresy."

"This is growing dark. At least you can name the wizard?"

"Yes, the Count of Fenix---- "

"That won't do--all good magicians have names ending in the round O."

"The cap fits--his other name is Joseph Balsamo."

The countess clasped her hands while looking at Richelieu, who wore a puzzled look.

"And was the devil very black? did he come up in green fire and stir a saucepan with a horrid stench?"

"Why, no! my magician has excellent manners; he is quite a gentleman and entertains one capitally."

"Would you not like him to tell your fortune, countess?" inquired the duke, well knowing that Lady Dubarry had asserted that when she was a poor girl on the Paris streets, a man had prophesied she would be a queen. This man she maintained was Balsamo. "Where does he dwell?"

"Saint Claude Street, I remember, in the Swamp."

The countess repeated the clew so emphatically that the marshal, always afraid his secrets would leak out, especially when he was conspiring to obtain the government, interrupted the lady by these words:

"Hist, there is the King!"

"In the walnut copse, yes. Let us stay here while the prince goes to him. You will have him all to yourself."

"Your kindness overwhelms me," said the prelate who gallantly kissed the lady's hand.

"But the King will be worried at not seeing you."

"I want to tease him!"

The duke alighted with the countess, as light as a schoolgirl, and the carriage rolled swiftly away to set down the cardinal on the knoll where the King was looking all about him to see his darling.

But she, drawing the duke into the covert, said:

"Heaven sent the cardinal to put us on the track of that magician who told my fortune so true."

"I met one--at Vienna, where I was run through the body by a jealous husband. I was all but dead when my magician came up and cured my wound with three drops of an elixir, and brought me to life with three more imbibed."

"Mine was a young man---- "

"Mine old as Mathusaleh, and adorned with a sounding Greek name, Althotas."

The carriage was coming back.

"I should like to go, if only to vex the King who will not dismiss Choiseul in your favor; but I shall be laughed at."

"In good company, then, for I will go with you."

At full speed the horses drew the carriage to Paris, containing the young and the old plotter.

C

A

It was six P. M.

Saint Claude Street was in the outskirts on the main road to the Bastile Prison. The house of the Count Felix, alias Baron Balsamo, was a strong building, like a castle; and besides a room used for a chemical laboratory, another study, where the sage Althotas, to whom the duke alluded, concocted his elixir of long life, and the reception rooms, an inner house, to which secret passages led, was secluded from ordinary visitors.

In a richly furnished parlor of this secret annex, the mysterious man who, with masonic signs and words, had collected his followers on Louis XV. Place, and saved Andrea upon Gilbert's appeal--he was seated by a lovely Italian woman who seemed rebellious to his entreaties. She had no voice but to reproach and her hand was raised to repulse though it was plain that he adored her and perhaps for that reason.

Lorenza Feliciani was his wife, but she railed at him for keeping her a prisoner, and a slave, and envied the fate of wild birds.

It was clear that this frail and irritable creature took a large place in his bosom if not in his life.

"Lorenza," he softly pleaded, "why do you, my darling, show this hostility and resistance? Why will you not live with one who loves you beyond expression as a sweet and devoted wife? Then would you have nothing farther to long for, free to bloom in the sunshine like the flowers and spread your wings like the birds you envy. We might go about in company where the fictitious sun, artificial light, glows on the assemblies of society. You would be happy according to your tastes and make me happy in my own way. Why will you not partake of this pleasure, Lorenza, when you have beauty to make all women jealous?"

"Because you horrify me--you are not religious, and you work your will by the black art!" replied the woman haughtily.

"Then live as you condemn yourself," he replied with a look of anger and pity; "and do not complain at what your pride earns you."

"I should not complain if you would only leave me alone and not force me to speak to you. Let me die in my cage, for I will not sing to you."

"You are mad," said Balsamo with an effort and trying to smile; "for you know that you shall not die while I am at hand to guard and heal you."

"You will not heal me on the day when you find me hanging at my window bars," she screamed.

He shuddered.

"Or stabbed to the heart by this dagger."

Pale and perspiring icily, Balsamo looked at the exasperated female, and replied in a threatening voice:

"You are right; I should not cure you, but I would revive you!"

The Italian woman uttered a shriek of terror for knowing there was no bounds to the magician's powers--she believed this--and he was saved.

A bell rang three times and at equal intervals.

"My man Fritz," said Balsamo, "notifying me that a messenger is here--in haste---- "

"Good, at last you are going to leave me," said Lorenza spitefully.

"Once again," he responded, taking her cold hand, "but for the last time. Let us dwell in pleasant union; for as fate has joined us, let us make fate our friend, not an executioner."

She answered not a word; her dead and fixed eyes seemed to seek in vacancy some thought which constantly escaped her because she had too long sought it, as the sun blinds those who wish to see the very origin of the light. He kissed her hand without her giving any token of life. As then he walked over to the fireplace, she awoke from her torper and let her gaze fall greedily upon him.

"Ha, ha," he said, "you want to know how I leave these issueless rooms so that you may escape some

day and do me harm, and my brothers of the Masonic Order by revelations. That is why you are so wide awake."

But extending his hands, with painful constraint on himself, he made a pass while darting the magnetic fluid from palm and eye upon her eyes and breast, saying imperatively:

"Sleep!"

Scarcely was the word pronounced before Lorenza bent like a lily on its stalk; her swinging head inclined and leaned on the sofa cushions; her dead white hands slid down by her sides, rustling her silky dress.

Seeing how beautiful she was, Balsamo went up to her and placed a kiss on her brow.

Thereupon her whole countenance brightened up, as if the breath from Love's own lips had dispelled the cloud; her mouth tremulously parted, her eyes swam in voluptuous tears, and she sighed like those angels may have sighed for the sons of man, when the world was young.

For an instant the mesmerist contemplated her as one unable to break off his ecstasy but as the bell rang again, he sprang to the fireplace, touched a spring to make the black plate swing aside like a door and so entered the house in Saint Claude Street.

In a parlor was a German servant confronting a man in courier's attire and in horseman's boots armed with large spurs. The vulgar visage announced one lowly born and yet his eyes were kindled with a spark of the holy fire which one superior's mind may light.

His left hand leaned on a clubhandled whip while with his right he made signs which Balsamo understood, for he tapped his forehead with his forefinger to imply the same. The postilion's hand then flew to his breast where he made a new sign which the uninitiated would have taken for undoing a button. To this the count responded by showing a ring on his finger.

"The Grand Master," muttered the envoy, bending the knee to this redoubtable token.

"Whence come you?" asked Balsamo.

"From Rouen last. I am courier to the Duchess of Grammont, in whose service the Great Copt placed me with the order to have no secrets from the Master."

"Whither go you?"

"To Versailles with a letter for the First Minister."

"Hand it to me."

The messenger gave Balsamo a letter from a leather bag strapped to his back.

"Wait, Fritz!" The German who had withdrawn, came to take "Sebastian" to the servant' hall, and he went away, amazed that the Chief knew his name.

"He knows all," remarked the servant.

Remaining alone Balsamo looked at the clear impression of the seal on the wax which the courier's glance had seemed to beg him to respect. Slowly and thoughtfully, he went upstairs to the room where he had left Lorenza in the mesmeric slumber. She had not stirred, but she was fatigued and unnerved by the inaction. She grasped his hand convulsively when offered. He took her by the hand which squeezed his convulsively and on her heart laid the letter.

"Do you see--what do I hold in my hand--can you read this letter?"

With her eyes closed, her bosom heaving, Lorenza recited the following words which the mesmerist wrote down by this wonderful dictation.

"Dear Brother: As I foresaw, my exile has brought me some good. I saw the President of the Parliament at Rouen who is on our side but timid. I pressed him in your name and, deciding, he will send the remonstrances of his friends before the week is out, to Versailles. I am off at once to Rennes, to stir up Karadeuc and Lachalotais who have gone to sleep. Our Caudebec agent was at Rouen, and I saw him. England will not pause on the road, but is preparing a smart advice for the Versailles Cabinet. X asked me if it should go and I authorized it. You will receive the very latest lampoons against Dubarry's squibs, but they will raise a town. An evil rumor has reached me that you were in disgrace but I laugh at it since you have

not written me to that effect. Still do not leave me in doubt, but write me by return of courier. Your next will find me at Caen, where I have some of our adherents to warm up. Farewell, with kisses, Your loving

"DUCHESS DE GRAMMONT."

Balsamo's forehead had cleared as the clairvoyante proceeded. "A curious document," he commented, "which would be paid for dearly. How can they write such damning things? It is always women who ruin superior men. This Choiseul could not be overthrown by an army of enemies or a multitude of intrigues, and lo! the breath of a woman crushes him while caressing. If we have a heart, and a sensitive cord in that heart, we are lost."

So saying he looked tenderly towards Lorenza who palpitated under his regard.

"Is what I think true?" he asked her.

"No," she answered, ardently; "You see that I love you too well to destroy you as a senseless and heartless woman would do."

Alas! in her mesmeric trance she spoke and felt just the contrary to what swayed her in her waking mood.

He let the arms of his enchantress interlace him till the warning bell of Fritz sounded twice.

"Two visits," he interpreted.

A violent peal finished the telegraphed phrase.

Disengaging himself from Lorenza's clasp, Balsamo left the room, the woman being still in the magnetic sleep. On the way he met the courier.

"Here is the letter. Bear it to the address. That is all."

The adept of the Order looked at the envelope and the seal, and seeing that both were intact, he manifested his joy, and disappeared in the shadows.

"What a pity I could not keep such an autograph," sighed the magician "and what a pity it cannot be placed by sure hands before the King."

"Who is there?" he asked of Fritz who appeared.

"A young and pretty lady with an old gentleman whom I do not know as they have never called before."

"Where are they?"

"In the parlor."

Balsamo walked into the room where the countess had concealed her face completely in her cloak hood; she looked like a woman of the lower middle class. The marshal, more shrinking than she, was garbed in grey like an upper servant in a good house.

"My lord count," began Dubarry, "do you know me?"

"Perfectly, my lady the countess. Will you please take a seat, and also your companion."

"My steward," said the lady.

"You are in error," said the host bowing; "this is the Duke of Richelieu, whom I readily recognize and who would be very ungrateful if he did not recall one who saved his life--I might say drew him back from among the dead."

"Oh, do you hear that, duke?" exclaimed the lady laughing.

"You, saved my life, count?" questioned Richelieu, in consternation.

"Yes, in Vienna, in 1725, when your grace was Ambassador there."

"You were not born at that date!"

"I must have been, my lord," replied Balsamo smiling, "for I met you dying, say dead, on a handbarrow with a fine swordthrust right through your midriff. By the same token, I dropped a little of my elixir on the gash--there, at the very place where you wear lace rather too rich for a steward!"

"But you are scarce over thirty, count," expostulated the duke.

"But you must see that you are facing a wizard," said the countess bursting into laughter.

"I am stupefied. In that case you would be---- "

"Oh, we wizards change our names for every generation, my lord. In 1725, the fashion for us was to end in *us*, *os* or *as*, and there is no ground for astonishment that I should have worn a name either in Greek or Latin. But, Althotas or Balsamo, or Fenix, I am at your orders, countess--and at yours, duke."

"Count, the marshal and I have come to consult you."

"It is doing me much honor, but it is natural that you should apply to me."

"Most naturally, for your prediction that I should become a queen is always trotting in my brain: still I doubt its coming true."

"Never doubt what science says, lady."

"But the kingdom is in a sore way--it would want more than three drops of the elixir which sets a duellist on his legs."

"Ay, but three words may knock a minister off his!" retorted the magician. "There, have I hit it? Speak!"

"Perfectly," replied the fair visitress trembling. "Truly, my lord duke, what do you say to all this?"

"Oh, do not be wonderstricken for so little," observed Balsamo, who could divine what troubled so the favorite and the court conspirator without any witchcraft.

"The fact is I shall think highly of you if you suggest the remedy we want," went on the marshal.

"You wish to be cured of the attacks of Choiseul?"

"Yes, great soothsayer, yes."

"Do not leave us in the plight, my lord; your honor is at stake," added the lovely woman.

"I am ready to serve you to my utmost; but I should like to hear if the duke had not some settled plan in calling."

"I grant it, my lord count--Faith! it is nice to have a man of title for wizard, it does not take us out of our class."

"Come, be frank," said the host smiling. "You want to consult me?"

"But I can only whisper it in the strictest privacy to the count because you would beat me if you overheard, countess."

"The duke is not accustomed to being beaten," remarked Balsamo, which delighted the old warrior.

"The long and the short of it is that the King is dying of tedium."

"He is no longer *amusable*, as Lady Maintenon used to say."

"Nothing in that hurts my feelings, duke," said Lady Dubarry.

"So much the better, which puts me at my ease. Well, we want an elixir to make the King merry."

"Pooh, any quack at the corner will provide such a philter."

"But we want the virtue to be attributed to this lady," resumed the duke.

"My lord, you are making the lady blush," said Balsamo. "But as we were saying just now, no philter will deliver you of Choiseul. Were the King to love this lady ten times more than at present--which is impossible--the minister would still preserve over his mind the hold which the lady has over his heart?"

"That is true," said the duke. "But it was our sole resource."

"I could easily find another."

"Easily? do you hear that, countess? These magicians doubt nothing."

"Why should I doubt when the simple matter is to prove to the King that the Duke of Choiseul betrays him--from the King's point of view, for of course the duke does not think he is betraying him, in what he does."

"And what is he doing?"

"You know as well as I, countess, that he is upholding Parliamentary opposition against the royal authority."

"Certainly, but by what means?"

"By agents who foster the movement while he warrants their impunity."

"But we want to know these agents."

"The King sees in the journey of Lady Grammont merely an exile but you cannot believe that she went for any other errand than to fan the ardent and fire the cool."

"Certainly, but how to prove the hidden aim?"

"By accusing the lady."

"But the difficulty is in proving the accusation," said the countess.

"Were it clearly proved, would the duke remain Prime Minister?"

"Surely not!" exclaimed the countess.

"This necromancer is delightful," said old Richelieu, laughing heartily as he leaned back in his chair: "catch Choiseul redhanded in treason? that is all, and quite enough, too, ha, ha, ha!"

"Would not a confidential letter do it?" said Balsamo impassibly. "Say from Lady Grammont?"

"My good wizard, if you could conjure up one!" said the countess. "I have been trying to get one for five years and spent a hundred thousand francs a year and have never succeeded."

"Because, madam, you did not apply to me. I should have lifted you out of the quandary."

"Oh, I hope it is not too late!"

"It is never too late," said Count Fenix, smiling.

"Then you have such a letter?" said the lady, clasping her hands. "Which would compromise Choiseul?"

"It would prove he sustains the Parliament in its bout with the King; eggs on England to war with France; so as to keep him indispensable: and is the enemy of your ladyship."

"I would give one of my eyes to have it."

"That would be too dear; particularly as I shall give you the letter for nothing." And he drew a piece of paper folded twice from his pocket.

"The letter you want!" And in the deepest silence the letter was read by him which he had transcribed from Lorenza's thought reading.

The countess stared as he proceeded and lost countenance.

"This is a slanderous forgery--deuce take it, have a care!" said Richelieu.

"It is the plain, literal copy of a letter from Lady Grammont on the way, by a courier from Rouen this morning, to the Duke de Choiseul at Versailles."

"The duchess wrote such an imprudent letter?"

"It is incredible, but she has done it."

The old courtier looked over to the countess who had no strength to say anything.

"Excuse me, count," she said, "but I am like the duke, hard to accept this as written by the witty lady, and damaging herself and her brother; besides to have knowledge of it one must have read it."

"And the count would have kept the precious original as a treasure," suggested the marshal.

"Oh," returned Balsamo, shaking his head gently; "that is the way with those who break open seals to read letters but not for those who can read through the envelopes. Fie, for shame! Besides, what interest have I in destroying Lady Grammont and the Choiseuls? You come in a friendly way to consult me and I answer in that manner. You want service done, and I do it. I hardly suppose you came fee in hand, as to a juggler in the street?"

"Oh, my lord!" exclaimed Dubarry.

"But who advised you, count?" asked Richelieu.

"You want to know in a minute as much as I, the sage, the adept, who has lived three thousand and seven hundred years."

"Ah, you are spoiling the good opinion we had of you," said the old nobleman.

"I am not pressing you to believe me, and it was not I who asked you to come away from the royal hunt."

"He is right, duke," said the lady visitor. "Do not be impatient with us, my lord."

"The man is never impatient who has time on his hands."

"Be so good--add this favor to the others you have done me, to tell me how you obtain such secrets?"

"I shall not hesitate, madam," said Balsamo slowly as if he were matching words with her speech, "the revelation is made to me by a bodiless Voice. It tells me all that I desire."

"Miraculous!"

"But you do not believe!"

"Honestly not, count," said the duke; "how can you expect any one to believe such things?"

"Would you believe if I told you what the courier is doing who bears this letter to the Duke of Choiseul?"

"Of course," responded the countess.

"I shall when I hear the voice," subjoined the duke.

"But you magicians and necromanciers have the privilege of seeing and hearing the supernatural."

Balsamo shot at the speaker so singular a glance that the countess thrilled in every vein and the sceptical egotist felt a chill down his neck and back.

"True," said he, after a long silence, "I alone see and hear things and beings beyond your ken: but when I meet those of your grace's rank and hight of intellect and of your beauty, fair lady, I open my treasures and share. You shall hear the mystic voice."

The countess trembled, and the duke clenched his fist not to do the same.

"What language shall it use?"

"French," faltered the countess. "I know no other and a strange one would give me too much fright."

"The French for me," said the duke. "I long to repeat what the devil says, and mark if he can discourse as correctly as my friend Voltaire."

With his head lowered, Balsamo walked over to the little parlor door which opened on the secret stairs.

"Let me shut us in so that you will be less exposed to evil influences," he explained.

Turning pale, the countess took the duke's arm.

Almost touching the staircase door, Balsamo stepped into the corner where the inner dwelling was located, and where Lorenza was, and in a loud voice uttered in Arabic the words, which we translate:

"My dear, do you hear? if so, ring the bell twice."

He watched for the effect on his auditor' faces, for they were the more touched from not understanding the speech. The bell rang twice. The countess bounded up on the sofa and the duke wiped his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Since you hear me," went on the magician in the same tongue, "push the marble knob which represents the lion's right eye in the mantelpiece of sculpture, and a panel will open. Walk through the opening, cross my room, come down the stairs, and enter the room next where I am speaking."

Next instant, a light rustle, like a phantom's flight, warned Balsamo that his orders had been understood and carried out.

"What gibberish is that? the cabalistic?" queried Richelieu to appear cool.

"Yes, my lord, used in invocations of the demons. You will understand the Voice but not what I conjure it with."

"Demons? is it the devil?"

"A superior being may invoke a superior spirit. This spirit is now in direct communication with us," he said as he pointed to the wall which seemed to end the house and had not a perceptible break in it.

"I am afraid, duke--and are not you?"

"To tell the truth I would rather be back in the battles of Mahon or before Philipsburg."

"Lady and lord, listen for you would hear," said Balsamo sternly. In the midst of solemn silence, he proceeded in French:

"Are you there?"

"I am here," replied a pure and silvery voice which penetrated the wall and tapestry so muffled as to

seem a sweet-toned bell sounded at an incalculable distance, rather than a human voice.

"Plague on it! this is growing exciting," said the duke; "and yet without red fire, the trombone, and the gong."

"It is dreadful," stammered the countess.

"Take heed of my questioning," said Balsamo. "First tell me how many persons I have with me?"

"Two, a man and a woman: the man is the Duke of Richelieu, the woman, the Countess Dubarry."

"Reading in his mind," uttered the duke; "this is pretty clever."

"I never saw the like," said the countess, trembling.

"It is well," said Balsamo; "now, read the first line of the letter which I hold."

The Voice obeyed.

Duke and countess looked at each other with astonishment rising to admiration.

"What has happened to this letter, which I wrote under your dictation?"

"It is travelling to the west and is afar."

"How is it travelling?"

"A horseman rides with it, clad in green vest, a hareskin cap and high boots. His horse is a piebald."

"Where do you see him?" asked Balsamo sternly.

"On a broad road plated with trees."

"The King's highway--but which one?"

"I know not--roads are alike."

"What other objects are on it?"

"A large vehicle is coming to meet the rider; on it are soldiers and priests---- "

"An omnibus," suggested Richelieu.

"On the side at the top is the word 'VERSAILLES.'"

"Leave this conveyance, and follow the courier."

"I see him not--he has turned the road."

"Take the turn, and after!"

"He gallops his horse--he looks at his watch---- "

"What see you in front of him?"

"A long avenue--splendid buildings--a large town."

"Go on."

"He lashes his steed; it is streaming with sweat--poor horse! the people turn to hear the ringing shoes on the stones. Ah, he goes down a long hilly street, he turns to the right, he slackens his pace, he stops at the door of a grand building."

"You must now follow with attention. But you are weary. Be your weariness dispelled! Now, do you still see the courier?"

"Yes, he is going up a broad stone staircase, ushered by a servant in blue and gold livery. He goes through rooms decorated with gold. He reaches a lighted study. The footman opens the door for him and departs."

"Enter, you! What see you?"

"The courier bows to a man sitting at a desk, whose back is to the door. He turns--he is in full dress with a broad blue ribbon crossing his breast. His eye is sharp, his features irregular, his teeth good; his age fifty or more."

"Choiseul," whispered the countess to the duke who nodded.

"The courier hands the man a letter---- "

"Say the duke--it is a duke."

"A letter," resumed the obedient Voice, "taken from a leather satchel worn on his back. Unsealing it, the

duke reads it with attention. He takes up a pen and writes on a sheet of paper."

"It would be fine if we could learn what he wrote," said Richelieu.

"Tell me what he writes," said Balsamo.

"It is fine, scrawling, bad writing."

"Read, I will it!" said the magician's imperative voice.

The auditors held their breath.

And they heard the voice say:

"DEAR SISTER: be of good heart. The crisis has passed. I await the morrow with impatience for I am going to take the offensive with all presaging decisive success. All well about the Rouen Parliament, Lord X., and the squibs. To-morrow, after business with the King, I will append a postscript to this letter and despatch by this courier."

While with his left hand Balsamo seemed to wrest out each word with difficulty, with his right he wrote the lines which Duke Choiseul was writing in Versailles.

"What is the duke doing?"

"He folds up the paper and puts it in a small pocketbook taken from the left side of his coat. He dismisses the courier, saying: 'Be at one o'clock at the Trianon gateway.' The courier bows and comes forth."

"That is so," said Richelieu: "he is making an appointment for the man to get the answer."

Balsamo silenced him with a gesture.

"What is the duke doing?"

"He rises, holding the letter he received. He goes to his couch, passes between its edge and the wall, pushes a spring which opens an iron safe in the wall, throws in the letter and shuts the safe."

"Oh, pure magic!" ejaculated the countess and the marshal, both pallid.

"Do you know all you wished?" Balsamo asked La Dubarry.

"My lord," said she, going to him, but in terror, "you have done me a service for which I would pay with five years of my life, or indeed I can never repay. Ask me anything you like."

"Oh, you know we are already in account. The time is not come to settle."

"You shall have it, were it a million---- "

"Pshaw, countess!" exclaimed the old nobleman, "you had better look to the count for a million. One who knows--who can see what he sees, might discover gold and diamonds in the bowels of the earth as he does thoughts in the mind of man."

"Nay, countess, I will give you the chance some day of acquitting yourself as regards me."

"Count," said the duke, "I am subjugated, vanquished, crushed--I believe!"

"You know you saw but that is not belief."

"Call it what you please; I know what I shall say if magicians are spoken of before me."

"My Spirit is fatigued," said Balsamo smiling: "let me release it by a magical spell. Lorenza," he pursued, but in Arabic, "I thank you, and I love you. Return to your room as you came and wait for me. Go, my darling!"

"I am most tired--make haste, Acharat!" replied the Voice, in Italian, sweeter than during the invocation. And the faint sound as of a winged creature flying was heard diminishing.

Convinced of his medium's departure in a few minutes, the mesmerist bowed profoundly but with majestic dignity to his two frightened visitors, absorbed in the flood of thoughts tumultuously overwhelming them. They got back to their carriage more like intoxicated persons than reasonable ones.

C

T

THE great clock of Versailles Palace was striking eleven when King Louis XV., coming out of his private apartments, crossed the gallery nearest and called out for the Master of Ceremonies, Duke Vrilliere. He was pale and seemed agitated, though he tried to conceal his emotion. An icy silence spread among the courtiers, among whom were included Duke Richelieu and Chevalier Jean Dubarry, a burly coarse bully, but tolerated as brother of the favorite. They were calm, affecting indifference and ignorance of what was going on.

The duke approaching was given a sealed letter for Duke Choiseul which would find him in the palace. The courtiers hung their heads while muttering, like ears of wheat when the squall whistles over them. They surrounded Richelieu while Vrilliere went on his errand, but the old marshal pretended to know no more than they, while smiling to show he was not a dupe.

When the royal messenger returned he was besieged by the inquisitive.

"Well, it was an order of exile," said he, "for I have read it. Thus it ran," and he repeated what he had retained by the implacable memory of old courtiers:

COUSIN: My discontent with your services obliges me to exile your grace to Chanteloup, where you should be in twenty-four hours. I should send you farther but for consideration of the duchess's state of health. Have a care that your conduct does not drive me to a severer measure.

The group murmured for some time.

"What did he say," queried Richelieu.

"That he was sure I found pleasure in bearing such a message."

"Rather rough," remarked Dubarry.

"But a man cannot get such a chimney-brick on his head Without crying out something," added the marshal-duke. "I wonder if he will obey?"

"Bless us, here he comes, with his official portfolio under his arm!" exclaimed the Master of Ceremonies aghast, while Jean Dubarry had the cold shivers.

Lord Choiseul indeed was crossing the courtyard, with a calm, assured look blasting with his clear glance his enemies and those who had declared against him after his disgrace. Such a step was not foreseen and his entrance into the royal privy chambers was not opposed.

"Hang it! will he coax the King over, again?" muttered Richelieu.

Choiseul presented himself to the King with the letter of exile in his hand.

"Sire, as it was understood that I was to hold no communication from your Majesty as valid without verbal confirmation, I come for that."

"This time it holds good," rejoined the King.

"Such an offensive letter holds good against a devoted servitor?"

"Against the servitor--you who received a letter in your house here, from Lady Grammont, by courier---- "

"Surely brother and sister may correspond?"

"Not with such letters--" And the monarch held out a copy of the letter dictated by Balsamo's Voice--this time made by the King's own hand. "Deny not--you have the original locked up in the iron safe in your bedroom."

Pale as a spectre the duke listened to the sovereign continuing pitilessly.

"This is not all. You have an answer for Lady Grammont in your pocketbook only waiting for its postscript to be added when you leave my presence. You see I am well informed."

The duke bowed without saying a word and staggered out of the room as though he were struck by

apoplexy. But for the open air coming on his face he would have dropped backwards; but he was a man of powerful will and recovering composure, he passed through the courtiers to enter his rooms where he burnt certain papers. A quarter of an hour following he left the palace in his coach.

The disgrace of Choiseul was a thunderbolt which set fire to France.

The Parliament which his tolerance had upheld, proclaimed that the State had lost its strongest prop. The nobility sustained him as one of their order. The clergy felt fostered by a man whose severe style made his post almost sacerdotal. The philosophical party, very numerous by this time and potent, because the most active, intelligent and learned formed it, shouted aloud when "their" Government escaped from the hands of the protector of Voltaire, the pensioner of the Encyclopedist writers and the preserver of the traditions of Lady Pompadour playing the Maccenas-in-petticoats for the newspaper writers and pamphleteers.

The masses also complained and with more reason than the others. Without deep insight they knew where the shoe pinched.

From the general point of view Choiseul was a bad minister and a bad citizen, but he was a paragon of patriotism and morality compared with the sycophants, mistresses and their parasites--particularly Lady Dubarry whom a lampoonist qualified as less to be respected than a charcoal-man's wife. To see the reins pass into the hands of the pet of a favorite made the future blacker than before.

Hence nearly everybody flocked on the road to cheer the Minister as he went away in exile.

There was a block to the traffic at the Enfer Tollbar, on the Touraine Road. A hundred carriages escorted the duke after he had got through here.

Cheers and sighs followed him, but he was too sharp not to know that there was less regret over his going than fear about those who would replace him.

On the crowded highway a postchaise came tearing and would have run down the minister but for a violent swerving of the postboy.

A head was stuck out of the chaise window at the same time as the Duke of Choiseul looked out of his.

It was the Duke of Aiguillon, nephew of Richelieu, who would probably have a place in the cabinet which the marshal duke, as the new minister, would form. No doubt he had received the cue and was hurrying to take the berth. He saluted the fallen one very lowly. The latter drew back in the coach, for in this second the sight had withered all the laurels.

At the same time, as compensation up came a carriage with the royal colors, drawn by eight horses on the Sevres branch-road, and crossing with Choiseul's equipage by chance or the block.

On the back seat was the Dauphiness with her mistress of the Household, Lady Noailles; on the front one was Andrea de Taverney.

Red with glory and delight, Choiseul leaned out and bowed lowly.

"Farewell, princess," he said in a choking voice.

"Farewell, my lord, till soon we meet again!" was the reply. The Archduchess gave an imperial smile and showed majestic disdain for court etiquet, by replying.

"Choiseul forever!" shouted an enthusiastic voice close upon these words.

Andrea turned rapidly towards the speaker, for she knew the voice.

"Room, make room there," roared the royal squires, forcing Gilbert, pale and hot with getting to the front to see into the line along the roadside ditch.

It was indeed our hero, who had in a fit of philosophical fervor, shouted for Choiseul.

C

A

AT three in the afternoon Mdlle. de Taverney came out of her rooms dressed to perform her duty as reader to the princess.

On reaching the Trianon Summerhouse she was told that her mistress was in the grounds with her architect and head-gardener. In the upper story could be heard the whizz of the turning-lathe with which the Dauphin was busy making a safety lock for a chest which he thought a great deal of.

To join the Dauphiness, Andrea crossed the garden where, although the season had come on the pale flowers were lifting their heads to catch the fleeting rays of a still paler sun. Dark came at six, and the gardeners were covering the plants from the frost with glass bells.

On the lawn at the end of a walk hedged with trimmed trees and Bengal roses, Andrea suddenly perceived one of these men who, on seeing her, rose from stooping over his spade and saluted her with more grace and politeness than a common man could do. Looking she recognized Gilbert, whom she had seen from a child on her father's estate. She blushed in spite of herself, for the presence of this ex-retainer seemed a very curious kindness of destiny.

He repeated the salute and she had to return it as she passed on. But she was too courageous and straight-forward a creature to resist a movement of the spirit and leave a question unanswered of her disturbed soul.

She retraced her steps, and Gilbert, who had lost color and was eyeing her ominously, returned to life and made a spring to arrive before her.

"How do you happen to be here, Gilbert?" she began.

"A man must live, and honestly."

"Well, you ought to be happy in such a position!"

"I am very happy indeed to be here."

"Who helped you to the place?"

"Dr. Jussieu, a patron of mine. He is a friend of another patron, the great Rousseau."

"Good luck, Gilbert," said Andrea, preparing to go.

"I hope you are better--after your accident?" ventured the young man in so quivering a voice that one could see that it came from a vibrating heart.

"Yes, thanks," she coldly answered. "It did not amount to anything."

"Why, you came near dying--the danger was dreadful," said Gilbert, at the hight of emotion.

Andrea perceived by this that it was high time that she cut short this chat in the open with a royal gardener.

"Will you not have a rose?" questioned he, shivering.

"Why, how can you offer what is not yours?" she demanded.

He looked at her surprised and overcome, but as she smiled with superciliousness, he broke off a branch of the finest rose-tree and began to pluck the flowers and cast them down with a noble coolness which impressed even this haughty Patrician girl.

She was too good and fair-dealing not to see that she had wantonly wounded the feelings of an inferior who had only been polite to her. Like all proud ones feeling guilty of a fault, she resumed her stroll without a word, although the excuse was on her lips.

"Gilbert did not speak either; he tossed aside the rose-twig and took up the spade again, bending to work but also to see Andrea go away. At the turning of the walk she could not help looking back--for she was a woman.

"Hurrah!" he said to himself; "she is not so strong as me and I shall master her yet. Overbearing with her beauty, title and fortune now rising, insolent to me because she divines that I love her, she only becomes

the more desirable to the poor workingman who still trembles as he looks upon her. Confound this trembling, unworthy of a man! but she shall pay some day for the cowardice she makes me feel. I have done enough this day in making her give in," he added. "I should have been the weaker as I love her, but I was ten times the stronger."

He repeated these words with savage delight, struck his spade deep into the ground and started to cut across the lawn to intercept the young lady at another path when he caught sight of a gentleman in the alley up which Andrea was proceeding in hopes to meet her royal mistress.

This gentleman wore a velvet suit under a cloak trimmed deeply with sable; he carried his head high; his hat was under his arm, and his left hand was on his sword. He stuck out his leg, which was well made, and threw up his ankle which was high, like a man of the finest training. On seeing him, Gilbert uttered involuntarily a low exclamation and fled through the sumach bushes like a frightened blackbird.

The nobleman spied Andrea and without quickening his measured gait he manoeuvred so as to meet her at the end of a cross-path.

Hearing the steps, she turned a little aside to let the promenader pass her and she glanced at him when he had done so.

He looked at her, and with all his eyes; he stopped to get a better view and turning round, said:

"May I ask why you are running so fast, young lady?"

At this, Andrea saw, thirty paces behind, two royal lifeguards officers, she spied the blue ribbon under the speaker's mantle, and she faltered, pale and alarmed by this encounter and accosting:

"The King!"

"I have such poor sight that I am obliged to inquire your name?" returned the monarch, approaching as she courtseyed lowly.

"I am Mdlle. de Taverney," she murmured, so confused and trembling that she hardly made herself understood.

"Oh, yes; are you making a voyage of discovery in the place?"

"I am going to join her Royal Highness, the Dauphiness, whom I am in attendance," replied Andrea more and more agitated.

"I will see you to her," said the King, "for I am going to my grand-daughter-in-law to pay her a call like a country neighbor. So, kindly accept my arm."

Andrea felt her sight dimmed and her blood boiling up in her heart. Like a dream appeared this honor to the impoverished nobleman's daughter, to be on the arm of the lord overall--a glory despaired of, an incredible favor which the whole court would covet. She made a profound courtesy so religiously shrinking that the King was obliged to return it with a bow. When Louis XV. remembered his sire, he did so in ceremonious matters: it is true that French royal attentions to the fair sex dated back to King Harry Fourth of gallant memory.

Though the King was not fond of walking, he took the longest way round to the Trianon: the two guards officers in attendance saw this as they were not any too warmly clad.

They arrived late as the Dauphiness had started, not to keep her lord and master waiting. They, too, were at the table, with Lady Noailles, nicknamed, "Lady Stickler," so rigid about etiquet was she, and the Duke of Richelieu in attendance, when the servant' voices echoed through the house:

"The King!"

At this magic word, Lady Noailles jumped up as if worked by a spring; Richelieu rose leisurely as usual; the Dauphin wiped his mouth with his napkin and stood up in his place, with his face turned to the door.

The Dauphiness moved towards the door to meet the visitor the sooner and do him the honors of the house.

Louis was still holding Andrea by the hand and only at the landing did he release her, saluting her with so long and courteous a bow that Richelieu had time to notice the grace of it, and wonder to what happy mortal it was addressed.

The Dauphiness had seen and recognized Andrea.

"Daughter," said Louis taking the Austrian's arm, "I come without ceremony to ask supper. I crossed the park and meeting Mdlle. de Taverney on the road I entreated her to keep me company."

"The Taverney girl?" muttered Richelieu, almost stunned. "By my faith, this is very lucky, for she is daughter of an old friend of mine."

"The consequence is that, instead of scolding the young lady for being late, I shall thank her for having brought your Majesty," said the Dauphiness pleasantly.

Red as the cherries garnishing a dish on the table, Andrea bowed without replying.

"Deuce take me but she is very lovely," thought Richelieu, "and that old rogue Taverney never sang her up highly enough."

After receiving the bow of the Dauphin, Louis sat at table, where a place was always reserved for him. Endowed with a good appetite like his ancestors, he did honor to the spread which the steward had ready as if by magic. But while eating, the King, whose back was to the door, fidgetted as though he was looking for somebody or something.

The fact was Mdlle. de Taverney, having no fixed position in the household, had not entered the dining-room but after bowing to the Dauphin and his lady, went into the sitting-room where she was wont to read to her mistress.

The Dauphiness guessed whom her royal relative was looking for.

"Lieut. Coigny," she said to a young officer behind the King: "Will you please request Mdlle. de Taverney to come here. With the leave of Lady Noailles we will derogate from the regulations to-night."

In another instant, Andrea came in, trembling as she could not understand this accumulation of favors.

"Find a place there, by the Dauphiness," said the Dauphin.

She went upon the raised platform for the Royalties, and had what seemed the audacity to sit within one step of Lady Noailles. She received such a withering glance from the latter that the poor girl recoiled at least four feet as though she had been shocked by an electrical discharge.

Louis the King smiled as he saw this.

"Why, here are things running along so smoothly," thought old Richelieu, "that there will hardly be any need of my helping them."

The King turned on the marshal who was prepared to meet his look.

"How do you do, duke?" he said; "are you still chiming in with Lady Noailles?"

"Sire, the duchess is good enough still to treat me like a whipping-post."

"I suppose you have been on the road to Chanteloup?"

"I, Sire? I have all the *cheering* news I desire from your Majesty to my house."

"What have I done for you?" asked the King, who had not expected this retort and did not like to be jested with when he had wanted to have his fun.

"Sire, your Majesty has given my nephew Aiguillon the command of the Royal Light-horse. To do that for a nobleman who has many foes, all your Majesty's energy and statecraft were required--it is almost a movement of Royalty itself against all comers."

This was at the end of the repast; the King just waited an instant before he rose. Conversation might have embarrassed him: but Richelieu did not want to release his prey. While the King was chatting with the others he worked round so dextrously as to have an opening to say:

"Sire, it is well-known that success emboldens a man."

"Are you bold, then, duke?"

"I make so bold as to ask for another boon after the many I am thanking your Majesty for: it is for an old comrade of mine, a good old friend, and one of your Majesty's best servitors. He has a son in the army. He is a young man of merit but wants the purse. An august princess has gratified him with the brevet rank of captain but he has no company to command."

"Is the princess my daughter?" asked the King.

"Yes, Sire, and the young gentleman is the son and heir of Baron Taverney."

"My father!" Andrea could not help exclaiming, "Philip? do you beg a company for my brother, Philip?"

Ashamed of her breach of etiquet in speaking without the Royals putting a question, she fell back a step, blushing and wringing her hands. The King turned to admire her blushes and emotion; then he gave the wily courtier a glance teaching him how agreeable the request was by reason of its timeliness.

"Really, the young chevalier is charming and I promised to make his fortune," struck in the Dauphiness; "How unhappy we princes are! When we have the willingness to oblige, heaven bereaves us of memory or reason. Ought I not have thought that the young gentleman might lack lucre and that the rank was a snare without the soldiers to back it?"

"Why, lady, how could your Highness have known?"

"But I did know," interrupted the Austrian, recalling the glimpse she had at the poverty-stricken abode of the Taverneys on her passing through Touraine; "and I ought to have thought of that when I gave the rank."

The King looked at the speaker's noble and open countenances: then his eyes fell on Richelieu's, also illumined by a ray of their generosity reflected.

"Duke," he whispered, "I shall be embroiled with La Dubarry. But," he proceeded aloud, turning to Andrea, "do you tell me that this will afford you pleasure?"

"I entreat it," she said, clasping her hands.

"It is granted then," said Louis. "Duke, select a good company for the young hero. I will provide the expenses if it is not fully raised and all paid for."

This good action rejoiced all the attendants. It earned the donor a heavenly smile from Andrea, and a grateful one from the same to Richelieu.

Some visitors dropped in, among them the Cardinal Prince Rohan who paid assiduous court to the Dauphiness. But the King had attention and sugary words solely for Richelieu that evening. He took the joyous old marshal with him when he left to go home. Andrea was relieved by the Dauphiness who said:

"You will want to send this good piece of news to your parent in town. You can retire."

Preceded by a lackey carrying a lantern, the young lady crossed the grounds to her part of the palace. Before her, from bush to bush, bounded what seemed a shadow in the foliage; it was Gilbert whose sparkling eyes watched her every movement. When Andrea was left at the doorway, the footman returned. Thereupon Gilbert went up to his room in the stable lofts, where his window overlooked the girl's at the corner.

He saw her call a strange waiting-woman who let the curtains fall like an impenetrable veil betwixt the beloved object and the young lover's burning gaze.

C

N

THE only guest left in the palace was Cardinal Rohan redoubting his gallantry towards the princess, who received him but cooly. As the Dauphin retired he feared it would look bad to remain, so he took leave with all the tokens of the most profound but affectionate respect.

As he was stepping into his coach, a waiting woman slipped up and all but entering the vehicle, she whispered:

"I have got it."

She put a small packet in the prince's hand, wrapped in tissue paper, and it made him start.

"Here's for you, an honorable salary," he replied, giving her a heavy purse.

Without losing time, the cardinal ordered his coachman to go on to Paris where, at the toll-bar he gave him fresh orders to drive to St. Claude Street. On the way, he had in the darkness felt the paper, and kissed it as a lover would a keepsake.

Soon after he was treading the parlor carpet of the mysterious house where La Dubarry and Duke Richelieu had been appalled by Balsamo's power. It was he who appeared to welcome the cardinal but after some delay, for which he excused himself as he had not expected visitors so late. It was nearly eleven.

"It is so, and I ask pardon, baron," said the other; "but you may remember that you told me that you could reveal certain secrets if you had a tress of the hair of the person---- "

"Of whom we spoke," interrupted the magician guardedly, as he had already caught sight of the little parcel in the simple prelate's hand. "It is very good if you have brought it."

"Shall I be able to have it again after the experiment?"

"Unless we have to test it with fire---- "

"Never mind, then, for I can get some more. Can I have the answer to-night--I am so impatient."

"I will try, my lord. At all events, midnight is the spirit' hour."

He took the packet which was a lock of hair and ran up to Lorenza's room.

"I am going to learn the secret about this dynasty," he said on the way. "The hidden design of the Supreme Architect."

Before he opened the secret door he put the medium into the magnetic sleep. Hence she who hated him when in her senses greeted him with a tender embrace. With difficulty he tore himself from her arms but it was imperative--only a child or a virgin can be used to the utmost extent for clairvoyance. It was hard to tell which was more painful to the poor mesmeriser, the abuse of the Italian wife when awake or her caresses when asleep.

Putting the paper in her hand, he asked:

"Can you tell me whose hair this is?"

She laid it on her breast and on her forehead, for it was there she saw though her eyes were open.

"It comes from an illustrious head."

"Is she going to be happy?"

"So far, no cloud hovers over her."

"Though she is married?"

"Yes, she is married, but, like me, she is still a virgin--purer than I, for I love my husband."

"Fatality!" muttered the wizard. "Thank you, Lorenza, I know all I wanted."

He kissed her, put the hair carefully in his pocket, and cutting a small tress from the Italian's head, he burnt it in a candle. The ashes, wrapped in the paper, he gave to the cardinal when with him once more. On the way down stairs he awakened Lorenza.

"The oracle says that you may hope, prince," said Balsamo.

"It said that?" cried the ravished prince.

"Your highness may conclude so, as it said that she does not love her husband."

"Joy!" said Rohan.

"I had to burn the lock to obtain the verdict by the essence," explained the necromancer, "but here are the ashes which I scrupulously preserved for each grain is worth a thousand."

"Thank you, my lord; I shall never be able to repay you."

"Do not let us speak of that. One piece of advice, though: Do not wash the ashes down with wine as some lovers do; it is a mistaken course for it might make your love incurable and turn the object cold."

"I shall take care not to do that," said the prelate; "Farewell, count!"

Twenty minutes after, his carriage crossed that of Duke Richelieu, which it almost upset into one of the pits where they were excavating for a house, much building going on.

"Why, prince!" cried the older peer, with a smile.

"Hush, duke!" replied Rohan, laying a finger on his lips.

And away they were carried in opposite directions.

Richelieu was going to Baron Taverney's residence in Coq-Heron Street.

The baron was seated before a dying fire, lecturing Nicole, or rather, chucking her under her pretty chin.

"But I am dying of weariness here, master," she protested with wanton swinging of her hips in protest, "it was promised me that I should go to the palace with my mistress."

It was at this point that the old rake fondled her, no doubt to cheer her up.

"Here I am between four ugly walls," she went on wailing her fate: "no society--not enough air to breathe. But at Trianon, I should have people around me, and see luxury--stare and be stared at."

"Fie, little Nicole!"

"Oh, I am only a woman like the rest of us."

"No, you are more tempting than the rest," said the old reprobate. "I only wish I were younger and rich again for your sake."

At this juncture the door-bell rang and startled the master and maid.

"Run and see who can come at half-past eleven, girl."

Nicole went out and through the passage by the house on the other street, and through the door which she left open. Richelieu saw a shadow of military aspect flit. This shadow and the face of Nicole, lighted up by her candle, enabled the old noble to read her character at a glance.

"Our old scamp of a Taverney spoke about his daughter, but he never breathed a word about the pretty maid," he muttered.

"The Duke of Richelieu!" Nicole announced, not without a flutter of the heart, for the lady-killer was notorious.

It produced such a sensation on the baron that he got up and went to the door without believing his ears.

"Do you know what has brought me," said the duke, giving hat and cane to Nicole to be more at ease in a chair. "Or rather what I have brought my old brother-officer? why, the company you asked the other day for your son. The King has just given it. I refused to act then for I was likely to be the Prime Minister but now that I have declined the post I can ask a favor. Here it is."

"Such bounty on your part---- "

"Pooh! it is the natural outcome of my duty as a friend. But mark that the King does this more to spite Lady Dubarry than to oblige me. He knows that your son offended the Lady by quarreling with her bully of a brother on the highway. That is why she takes me in off-dudgeon at present."

"You want me to believe that you serve me to spite the Dubarry woman?"

"Have it so. By the way, you have a daughter as well as a son."

"Yes."

"She is sixteen, fair as Venus, and---- "

"You have seen her?"

"At Trianon, where I passed the evening with her---- and the King and I talked about her by the hour together. Are you vexed at this?"

"Certainly not; but the King is accused of having---- "

"Bad morals? is that what you were about to say?"

"Lord forbid! I would not speak ill of his Majesty, who has the right to have any kind of morality he likes."

"What is the meaning of your astonishment, then? do you intend to assert that Mdlle. de Taverney is not an accomplished beauty and that consequently the King has not the right to look at her with an admiring eye?"

Taverney simply shrugged his shoulders and fell into a brown study, watched by Richelieu's pitilessly prying eye.

"All right! I guess what you would say if you spoke aloud," continued the marshal, "to wit that the King is habituated to bad company. That he likes the mud, as they say; but would be all the better if he turned from salacious talk, libertine glances, and the common woman's jests to remark this treasure of grace and charm of every kind--the nobly-born young lady with chaste affections and modest bearing---- "

"You are truly a great man, duke, for you have guessed aright," answered Taverney.

"It is tantamount to saying that it is high time for our master no longer to force us, nobles, peers and companions of the King of France, to kiss the base and harpy hand of a courtesan of the Dubarry type. Time that he danced to our piping, and that after falling from the Marchioness of Chateauroux, who was fit to be a duchess, to the Pompadour, who was the daughter and wife of a cook, then from her to Dubarry, and from her again to some kitchen wench or dairymaid. It is humiliating to us, baron, who wear coronets round our helmets, to bend our heads to such jades."

"Ah, here be truths well spoken," said Taverney, "and it is clear that a void is made at court by these low fashions."

"With no queen, no ladies; with no ladies, no courtiers; and the commoners are on the throne in Jeanne Vaubernier, now Dubarry, a seamstress at Paris."

"Granting things stand so, yet---- "

"There is a fine position at present. I tell you, my lord, for a woman of wit to rule France---- "

"Not a doubt of it, but the post is held," said Taverney with a throbbing heart.

"A woman," pursued the marshal, "who, without vice, would have the far-reaching views, calculation and boldness of these vixens; one who would so adorn her fortune that she would be spoken of after the monarchy ceased to exist. Has your daughter brightness and sense?"

"Yes."

"And she is lovely, of the charming and voluptuous turn so pleasing men; with that virginal flower of candor which imposes respect on women themselves. You must take care of your treasure, my old friend."

"You speak of her with an animation which---- "

"Why, I am madly in love with her and would marry her to-morrow if I could get rid of my seventy-four years. But is she well off? has she the luxury round her which so fair a blossom deserves? Nay, my dear baron, this evening she went to her lodgings, without a maid, or footman, and one of the Dauphin's henchmen carried a lantern before her--it looked like some girls of middleclass life."

"How can one help it when not rich?"

"Rich or not, Taverney, you must have a waiting-maid for her."

"I know she ought to have one," sighed the old noble.

"Why, what is this sprightly Abigail who opened the door to me," said Richelieu, "cunning and pretty, on my word!"

"She is her maid but I dared not send her to the palace."

"I wonder why, when she seems cut out for the part?"

"Have you looked on her face and not noticed the resemblance to--come here, Nicole!"

Nicole came quickly for she was listening at the door. The duke took her by both hands and held her between his knees; but she was not daunted by the great lord's impertinent gaze and was not put out for an instant.

"By Jove, you are right, there is a resemblance," he said.

"You know to whom, and how impossible it is to risk the rise of my house on some ugly trick of chance. Is it the thing that this little down-at-the-heel hussy Nicole should look like the highest head in France?"

"Pish!" exclaimed Nicole, tartly, as she disengaged herself to reply more easily to her master, "is it a fact that the hussy does so closely resemble the illustrious lady? Has she the low shoulder, quick eye, round leg and dimpled arm of the hussy? In any case, my lord, if you run me down, it is not because you can have any hope to catch me!" She finished in anger which made her red and consequently splendid in beauty.

The duke caught her again and said as he gave her a look full of caresses and promises:

"Baron, to my idea, Nicole has not her like at court. As for the touch of likeness, we will manage about that. Pretty Nicole has admirable light hair and nose and eyebrows quite imperial--but in a quarter of an hour before a toilet glass these blemishes will disappear, as the baron reckons them such. Nicole, my dear, do you want to go to the palace?"

"Oh, don't I though!" cried the girl with all her greedy soul in the words.

"You shall go, my pet: and make a fortune there, without doing any harm to the advancement of others. Trot away, little one; the rest does not concern you. A word with you, my lord."

"I venture to urge you to send some one to wait upon your daughter," said the duke when alone with his friend, "because she must make a brave show and the King is not afraid of beauty-guards with knowing phizzes. Besides, I know how the wind blows."

"Let Nicole go to the Trianon, since you think it will please the King," replied Taverney with his pimp's smile.

"Write to your daughter that a maid named Nicole is coming. Another than Nicole would not fill the place so well. On my honor, I believe so."

The baron wrote a note which he handed to Richelieu.

"I will give the instructions to Nicole, who is intelligent."

The baron smiled.

"So you will trust her with me?"

"Do what you can."

"You are to come with me, miss, and quick," said the duke.

Without waiting for the baron's consent, Nicole got her clothes together in five minutes and as light as if she flew, she darted upon the box beside the ducal driver. The tempter took leave of his friend, who reiterated his thanks for the service rendered Philip of Redcastle. Neither said a word about Andrea; there was no need between them.

C

O

AT ten in the morning, Andrea was writing to her father to inform him of the happy news which Richelieu had already communicated to him.

Her room, in the corridor of the chapel, was not grand for a rival princess's lady of attendance but it was a delightful abode for one who liked repose and solitude.

Andrea had obtained permission to breakfast in her rooms whenever she liked; this was a precious boon as it gave her the mornings to herself. She could read or go out for a saunter in the park, and come home without being annoyed by lord or lackey.

Suddenly a tapping at the door, discreetly given, aroused her attention. She raised her head as the door opened, and uttered a slight cry of astonishment as the radiant face of Nicole appeared from the little antechamber.

"Good morning, mistress! yes, it is I," said the girl, with a merry courtsey which was not free from apprehension, knowing her lady's character.

"You--what wind brings you?" replied Andrea, laying down her pen to talk.

"I was forgotten, but I have come. The baron said I was to do so," said Nicole, bending the black eyebrows which Richelieu's hair-dye had made; "you would not turn me back, when I only wanted to please my mistress. This is what one gets for loving her betters!" sighed the girl, with an attempt to squeeze a tear out of her fine eyes.

The reproach had enough feeling in it to touch Andrea.

"My child, I am waited on here, and I cannot think of charging the Dauphiness with an additional mouth."

"Not when it is not so large a one?" questioned the maid, pouting the rosebud mouth in argument, with a winsome smile.

"No matter, your presence here is impossible on account of your likeness---- "

"Why, have you not looked on my face? it has been altered by a fine old nobleman who came to see master and tell him of Master Philip's getting a company of soldiers from the King. As he saw master was sorrowing about you being alone, he heard the reason and said that nothing was easier than to change light to dark. He took me to his house where his valet turned me out as you behold me."

"You must love me," said Andrea smiling, "to come and be a prisoner shut up with me in this palace."

"The rooms are not lively," said Mdlle. Legay, after a swift glance round them, "but you will not be always mewed up here."

"I may not, but you will not go out for the promenade with the princess, the parties, cardplay, and social gatherings; your place would be here to die of weariness."

"Oh, there must be a peep at something through the windows. If one can see out, others can see me. That is good enough for Nicole--do not fret about me."

"Nicole, I cannot do it without express order."

The maid drew a letter from the baron from her tucker which settled the dispute. It was thus conceived:

"MY DEAR ANDREA: I know, and it has been remarked, that you do not hold the station at the Trianon which your birth entitles you to do: you lack a maid and a pair of lackeys as I do twenty thousand a year; but in the same way as I content myself with a thousand, you must shift with one maid--so take Nicole who will do you all the service requisite. She is active, intelligent and devoted; she will quickly pick up the tone and manners of the palace; take care not to stimulate but enchain her good-will to yourself. Keep her and do not fear that you are depriving me. A good friend gives me the advice that his Majesty, who has the kindness to think of us and to remark you on sight, will not let you want for the proper outfit for your appearance at court. Bear this in mind as of the highest importance. YOUR AFFECTIONATE FATHER."

This threw the reader into painful perplexity. Poverty was pursuing her into her new prosperity, and making that a blemish which she considered merely an annoyance. She was on the point of angrily breaking her pen, and tearing the commenced letter in order to reproach her father with such an outburst of disinterested philosophical denial as Philip would have freely signed. But she seemed to see her father's ironical smile when he should read this masterpiece and away fled her intention. So she answered with the following record of what was passing:

"FATHER: Nicole has just arrived and I receive her as you desire it; but what you write on the subject, drives me to despair. Am I less ridiculous with this little rustic girl as waiting-woman than alone among these rich ladies waited on hand and foot? Nicole will be miserable at my humiliation for servants smile or frown as their masters are looked upon. She will dislike me. As for the notice of his Majesty, allow me to tell you, father, that the King has too much intelligence to try to make a great lady of one so unfitted, and too much good nature to notice or comment on my poverty--far from it to want to change it into ease which your title and services would legitimatise in everybody's eyes."

It must be confessed that this candid innocence and noble pride mated the astuteness and corruption of her tempters.

Andrea spoke no more against Nicole but kept her. She confined herself to her corner so as to remind one of the Persian's roseleaf floated on the goblet of rosewater brimfull, to prove that a superfluous joy may be added to perfect content.

When Nicole was left to herself she made a survey of the neighborhood. This did not promise much fun. But at an upper window over the stables she caught a glimpse of a man's face which made her have recourse to a scheme to draw it out. She hid behind the curtains of the window left wide open.

She had to wait some time, but at length appeared a young man's head; timid hands rested on the window-sill, and a face rose with caution.

Nicole nearly fell back flat on her two shoulders for it was Gilbert, her former companion on the manor of Taverney.

Unfortunately he had seen her, and he disappeared. He would rather have seen old Nick himself.

"What use now is my foolish discovery of which I was so proud? In Paris my knowledge that Nicole had a sweetheart whom she let into her master's house gave me a hold on her. But out here, she has hold on me."

Serving as lash to his hate, all his self-conceit boiled his blood with extreme vehemence. He felt sure that war was declared between him and the maid; but as he was a prudent youth who could be politic, he wanted to open hostilities in his own way and at his own time.

Watching night and day for a week, without showing himself again, Gilbert at last caught sight of the plume of the guards corporal which was familiar to him. It was indeed that of Corporal Beausire, the trooper who had followed the court from Paris to the Trianon.

Nicole played the coldly cruel for a while but in the end accorded Corporal Beausire an appointment. Gilbert followed the loving pair on the shady avenue leading to Versailles. He felt the ferocious delight of a tiger on a trail. He counted their steps, and sighs; he learnt by heart what they whispered to each other; and the result must have made him happy for he went up to his garret singing. Not only had he ceased to be afraid of Nicole but he impudently showed himself at the window.

She was taking up "a ladder" in a lace mitten of her mistress at her window, but she looked up on hearing him singing a song of their old times in the country when he was courting her.

She made a sour face which proclaimed her enmity. But Gilbert met it with so meaning a smile and his song and mien were so taunting that she lowered her head and colored up.

"She has understood me," said Gilbert; "this is quite enough."

Indeed she had the audacity to creep to his room door, but he had the prudence to deny her entrance, dangerous as was the temptation.

It was only after many a mine and counter-mine that at last chance made them meet at the chapel door.

"Good evening, Gilbert: are you here?"

"Oh, Nicole, good evening--so you've come to Trianon?"

"As you see, our young lady's maid still."

"And I our Master's gardener's-man."

Whereupon she dropped an elaborate courtsey which won his bow like a courtier's; and they went their ways. But each was but pretending for, Gilbert, following the girl, saw her once more go to meet a man in one of the shady walks.

It was dark but Gilbert noticed that this was not the trooper; rather an elderly man, with a lofty air and dainty tread spite of age. Going nearer and passing under his nose with audacity he recognized him as the Duke of Richelieu.

"Plague take her! after the corporal a Marshal of France--Nicole is aiming high in the army!" he said.

C

T

WHILE all these petty plots were going on at Trianon amid the trees and flowers, making things lively for the people of that trifling world, the vast plots of the capital, threatening tempests, were unfolding their black wings over the Temple of Themis, as they said in those high-flown days.

The Parliaments, degenerate remnant of old French opposition to royalty, had recovered the art of hating under the capricious reign of Louis XV., and since they felt danger impending when their shield, Choiseul, was removed, they prepared to conjure it away.

The appointment of the Duke of Aiguillon, ex-Governor of Brittany, to the command of the Light Cavalry, thanks to Lady Dubarry's influence over the King, was, to quote Jean Dubarry, "a smack in the face" for the Third Estate, from Feudality.

How would they take it?

Lawyers and politicians were keen-sighted gentlemen and where most folks are perplexed, they see clearly.

They resolved: "The Parliamentary Court will deliberate on the conduct of the ex-Governor of Brittany and give its opinion."

The King parried this thrust by intimating to the peers and princes that they must not go to the Parliament session to take part in the discussion, as far as Duke Aiguillon was concerned.

Already unpopular, the Duke of Aiguillon was discouraged and sat in a state of torpor at the impending overthrow when his uncle, the Duke of Richelieu, was announced. He ran to welcome him with all the more eagerness as he had been trying to meet him lately without the old fox being discoverable.

"Uncle," he began when he had cornered the other in an armchair so he could not retreat, "is it true that you, the wittiest man in France could not see that I should be as selfish for us two as for myself alone? you have been shunning me when I most have need of you."

"Upon honor, I do not understand you."

"I will in that case make all clear. The King was not inclined to make you Prime Minister *vice* Choiseul banished, and he did make me commander of the Light Cavalry, so that you suppose I sold you to get my reward."

"If I failed, you have won, and that is enough for the house of Richelieu. You have nothing to grumble about for you are high in favor and in six months will be ruler. Suppose I am the dog who snapped at the shadow of the meat--and letting the meat drop, sees another run away with it. I have learnt a lesson--but the meat is ours all the same. But what do I hear?"

"Nothing uncle; pray go on."

"But it is a carriage--I am in the way."

"No, no, go on for I love fables---- "

"Nay, it may be the appointment as minister--the meat! the little countess---- "

"She heartily loves you, uncle---- "

"Well she has been working for you *in camera*---- "

The servant entered.

"A deputation from Parliament," he said with some trepidation.

"What did I tell you?" sneered the old noble.

"A Parliamentary deputation here?" queried the younger duke, far from encouraged by the other's smile. "What can they want with me?"

"In the King's name!" thundered a sonorous voice at the end of the anteroom.

"Whew!" muttered Richelieu.

Aiguillon rose, quite pale, and went to show in two members of Parliament, behind whom appeared two

impassive ushers while at a distance a legion of frightened servants appeared.

Bowing to the duke, whom they officially recognized, the spokesman of the gentlemen of the Commission read a paper in a loud voice. It was the complete, particularised, circumstantial declaration that the Duke of Aiguillon was gravely inculpated and tainted with suspicions, moreover, guilty of deeds befouling his honor and that he was suspended in his functions as peer of France. The duke heard the reading like a man struck with lightning might listen to the thunder. He moved no more than a statue on its pedestal, and did not even put out his hand to take the document from the official of the Parliament. It was the marshal, standing up, alert and clear-headed, who took it, and returned the bow to the bearer. The Commission members were far while the duke remained in stupor.

"This is a heavy blow!" remarked Richelieu; "no longer a peer of the realm--it is humiliating."

The victim turned round as if only now restored to life.

"Did you not expect it?" asked the elder.

"Did you, uncle?" was the retort.

"How could anybody suspect that Parliament would so smartly rap the favorite of the King and of the King's favorite? these fellows will get themselves ground to powder."

The duke sank into a seat, with his hand on his burning cheek.

"If they do such a thing because you are made commander of the Light Cavalry," continued the old marshal, turning the dagger in the wound, "they will condemn you to be burnt at the stake when you are appointed Premier. These fellows hate you, Aiguillon; better distrust them."

The duke bore this untimely joking with heroic constancy; his misfortune magnified him and purified his spirit. But the other took it for insensibility or even want of intelligence, perhaps, and thought that he had not stung deeply enough.

"However, being no longer a peer, you will be exposed to the long bills of these blackbirds," he proceeded; "take refuge in obscurity for a few years. Besides, this safeguard, obscurity, will help you without your imagining it. Unpropped by your title, you will more grandly become the minister, because with more effort. Lady Dubarry will do more for you thus disarmed, for she wears you in her heart--and is a solid supporter."

Aiguillon rose without shooting at the jester one angry look for all the suffering he inflicted.

"You are right, uncle," he said, tranquilly, "and your wisdom shows in the last piece of advice. Lady Dubarry will defend me--she, to whom you introduced me and to whom you recommended me so warmly. Thank God! she likes me. She is brave and has full power over the King's mind. I thank you, uncle, for your hint, and I shall hie to her residence at Luciennes as to a haven of safety. What, ho there! my horses to be put to the carriage."

The marshal was sorely puzzled but he had some consolation when at evening he saw the delight of the Parisians on reading the posters proclaiming the disgrace of Aiguillon.

"Do you think, Rafte, that the duke will get out of this scrape?" asked the old intriguer of his valet and confidential man, who rather deserved the name of *Crafty*.

He had been forty years in his service.

"The King will."

"Oh, the King will always have a loophole. But the King has nothing to do with this case."

"Why, my lord, if the King can get through, Lady Dubarry will follow, and lead my lord of Aiguillon with her."

"You do not understand politics, Rafte."

Rafte was as keen as his master.

"Well, my lord, our lawyer, Flageot, who is member of Parliament, he thinks the King will not get out of it."

"Who will net the lion?"

"The rat, instead of helping him out."

"Oh, is Flageot the rat?"

"He says so. I always believe a lawyer when he promises anything unkind."

"We must look into the Flageot method, then, Rafte. But let me have something to eat before I go to sleep. It has upset me to see my poor nephew unmade peer of France and his chances of the Prime-Minister-ship knocked on the head. An uncle naturally feels for his nephew, eh?"

From sighing he set to laughing.

"You would have made as good a minister yourself," said Rafte.

On the morrow of the day when the terrible Parliamentary decree filled Paris and Versailles with noise, and all were in expectation of the next step, Richelieu returned to Versailles and carrying on his ordinary court life, saw his man Rafte enter with a letter which seemed to fill him with disquietude participated in by his master.

"The King is good," said the duke after opening the letter and smiling though he had frowned at the start. "He appoints Aiguillon Prime Minister."

Thus ran the letter:

"My Dear Uncle: Your kind advice has borne fruit. I confided my chagrin to that excellent friend of our house, Lady Dubarry, who was good enough to repeat the confidence to his Majesty. The King is indignant at the rudeness done me by the Parliamentary gentry, after my having so faithfully employed myself in his service. In his State Council this day, he has cancelled the decree and bids me continue in my place as peer and duke. I know the pleasure this news will give you, my dear uncle. You have the news before anybody else in the world. Believe in my tender respect, my dear uncle, and continue your good graces and good advice to your affectionate

Aiguillon."

"He pokes fun at me into the bargain," said the reader. "The idea of the King jumping into this hornet' nest!"

"You would not believe me yesterday saying so."

"I said that he would get out of it. You see he does."

"In fact, Parliament is beaten."

"So am I. And forever. I must pay the forfeit. You do not understand how grating on me will be the laughs at Luciennes. The duke is there now, laughing at me in chorus with La Dubarry, Jean and Chon, while the black boy snaps his fingers at me over the candy I gave him. 'Odsboddikins!' I have a soft heart, but this makes me furious."

"Then you should not have acted as you did, my lord."

"You goaded me on."

"I? what do I care whether the Duke of Aiguillon is or is not a peer of France? Man of brains though you are, your grace makes blunders that I would not forgive in a low-bred fellow like me."

"Explain, my old Rafte, and I will own if I am wrong."

"You wanted to be revenged yesterday, did you not? you aimed to humble your nephew because he was likely to be the Premier instead of your grace--well, such revenge costs dear. But you are rich and can afford to pay."

"What would you have done in my place, you knowing dog?"

"Nothing; you could not but show your spite because the Dubarry woman thought your nephew was younger than yourself."

A growl from the old marshal was all the comment.

"Parliament was egged on by you to do what it has done; knowing the decree would be issued, you offered your services to your unsuspecting nephew."

"I admit I was wrong. You ought to have given me a warning."

"I, prevent you doing ill? you are always saying that I am of your making and I should be little after your

model if I was not joyful at your making a mistake, or bringing about evil."

"Oh, you think evil will come of it?"

"Certainly; you are obstinate and will keep open the breach--Aiguillon will be the bridge between Dubarry and Parliament on which all the fighting will take place. After he shall have been very well trampled upon, he will suffer the fate of used-up wood--they will cast him away into the lumber-room--that is, into the Bastile. He will be minister first, but you will be exiled all the same."

"Bastile?" repeated Richelieu, shrugging his shoulders so sharply that he spilt half his snuff on the carpet. "Is our Louis the Fourteenth one?"

"No; but Lady Dubarry, with Aiguillon to back her, is up to the mark of Lady Maintenon. Beware! at present I do not know any princesses who will take you green goslings and sweetmeats when you lie in prison."

"Pretty prognostics, these!" said the duke after a long silence. "You read the future, do you? what about the present?"

"Your grace is too wise for me to offer advice."

"You knave, are you still poking fun at me?"

"Mind, my lord, a man is not a knave after forty, and I am sixty-seven."

"If not a knave you are your own counsel--be mine."

"If the King's act is not known yet, why not let the President of Parliament have the duke's letter and the royal decree in Council? Wait till the Parliament has debated on them, and then go and see your lawyer, Flageot. As he is your grace's lawyer he must have some case of ours in hand. Ask him about it and learn how things stand."

"But seeing the family lawyer is your province, Master Rafte."

"Nay, that was all very well when Flageot was a simple 'paper-stainer,' but henceforth Flageot is an Attila, a scourge of kings, and only a duke and peer of France can talk to the likes of him."

"Are you serious or having a jest?"

"To-morrow it will be serious, my lord."

C

T

It is not hard to guess what the dainty duke suffered in passing through the dirty and nauseating Paris of his era to reach the foul hole among ill-kempt houses which was called a street.

Before Flageot's door the way for the ducal coach was stopped by another vehicle. He perceived a female's headdress coming out of it, and as his seventy-five years had not rebuffed him in his reputation as a lover of the ladies, he hastened to wade through the mud to offer his arm to the lady who was stepping out unassisted.

He was not in luck: for the foot was the bony one of an old dame. Wrinkled face, the tan showing under a thick layer of rouge, proved that she was not merely old but decrepit.

But the marshal could not draw back: besides he was no chicken himself. The client--she must have been a client to be at this door--did not hesitate like he did: she put her paw with a horrible grin in the duke's hand.

"I have seen this Gorgon's head somewhere before," he thought.

"Going to call on Flageot?" he inquired.

"Yes, your grace."

"Oh, have I the honor of being known to you?" he exclaimed, disagreeably surprised as he stopped at the opening of the park passage.

"There is no woman who does not know the Duke of Richelieu," was the reply.

"This baboon flatters herself that she is a woman," muttered the Victor at Mahon: but he saluted with the utmost grace, saying aloud: "May I venture to ask to whom I have the honor of speaking?"

"I am your servant, the Countess of Bearn," replied the old lady, making a court reverence on the miry planks of the alley, three paces from a sort of open trapdoor in which the marshal expected to see her tumble when she got to the third courtsey.

"Enchanted to hear it, my lady," he responded. "So your ladyship has some law business on hand?"

"Law business, indeed! it is only one suit, but you must have heard about it as it is so long in the courts--my defense against the claim of the Saluce Brothers."

"Of course! there is a popular song about it--it is sung to the tune of 'the Bourbon Lass;' and runs some way thus----

'"My lady countess, how I want
Your help, which I should ever vaunt,
For I am in a stew'

"You understand that is Lady Dubarry who sings. It is saucy to her, but these ballad-mongers respect nobody. Lord, how greasy this rope for a handrail is! Then you reply as follows:

'"A lady old and obstinate,
Unsettled lawsuits are my fate,
To win I must rely on you.'"

"How shocking, my lord," said the countess, who was a descendant of the house of Bearn and Navarre which gave Henry IV as King to France: "how dare they thus insult a woman of quality?"

"Excuse my singing out of tune, but this staircase puts me in a heat. Ah, we have reached his door. Let me pull the bell."

The old dame let the duke pass her, but grumbled. He rang and Madame Flageot, the lawyer's daughter as well as lawyer's wife, did not think it beneath her to open the door. Introduced into the office a furious man was seen with a pen in his hand which he flourished, dictating to his principal clerk.

"Good heavens, what are you doing, Master Flageot?" asked the old countess whose voice made the proctor turn round.

"Oh, your ladyship's most faithful! A chair for the Countess of Bearn. And the Duke of Richelieu, if my eyes do not deceive me. Another seat, Bernardet, for my Lord of Richelieu."

"How is my suit going on," inquired the lady.

"Fine, my lady, I was just busy on your behalf, and it will make a noise now, I can tell you."

"If you have my action in motion, then you can attend to my lord duke."

"If you please."

"Well, you must know what brought me---- "

"The papers M. Rafte brought from your lordship? It is put off indefinitely, at least it may be a year before the case comes up in the courts."

"Eh, I should like to know the reasons?"

"Circumstances, my lord. The King having cancelled the Parliamentary decree about Duke Aiguillon, we reply by 'burning our ships.'"

"I did not know you Parliament gentlemen had any ships."

"Both Houses have refused to proceed with any cases before the courts until the King withdraws Lord Aiguillon."

"You don't say so?" exclaimed Richelieu.

"What, they won't try my case?" said Lady Bearn with a terror she did not try to dissimulate. "This is iniquitous--rebellion to our Lord the King!"

"My lady, the King forgets himself--and we forget our duty too," rejoined the lawyer loftily.

"You will be lugged into the Bastile."

"I shall go, singing, and my colleagues will escort me, bearing palms."

"The man is mad," said the lady to the nobleman.

"We are all of a feather," continued the proctor.

"This is curious," observed the marshal.

"But you said you were attending to my suit," protested the lady.

"And so I was. Yours is the first example I cite among the cases which will be suspended by our action--or, rather, inaction--he he! Here is the very paragraph concerning your ladyship."

Snatching from his clerk the sheet of paper on which he was writing, he read with emphasis:

"---- 'Their estate lost, fortune compromised, and their duties trodden under foot. His Majesty may imagine what such will suffer. For instance, the dependent must hold inert in his hands an important affair on which depends the fortune of one of the first families of the kingdom: by his care, industry and I make so bold as to say his talent, he was bringing this matter at length--great length--to a brilliant close, and the rights of the most high and powerful lady Angelique Charlotte Veronique de Bearn, were just going to be acknowledged and proclaimed when the breath of Discord--' I stopped at the breath, my lady; the figure of speech was so fine---- " said the proctor.

"Master Flageot," said the old litigant, "forty years ago I selected your father to be my lawyer, a worthy gentleman: I continued you in the matter; in which you have made some ten or twelve thousand a-year and might be making more--"

"Write that down," interrupted the legal gentleman: "it is a proof, an item of testimony--it shall be inserted in the appendix of supporting documents."

"Stay," went on the countess: "I withdraw my papers; henceforth you lose my trust."

This disgrace struck the lawyer like a thunderbolt: recovering from the stupefaction, he raised his eyes like a martyr ready for the golden chariot to mount to heaven, and said:

"Be it so. Bernardet, give the lady her documents and register this fact, that the petitioner preferred his conscience to his fees."

"I beg your ladyship's pardon," interposed Richelieu, "but it is useless to withdraw your papers, for this worthy practitioner's legal brethren, I take it, will not accept the case. He is not so dull as to be the only one to protest and lose his business. As for me, I declare Master Flageot a very honest lawyer, in whose box my

papers are as safe as in my own. So here I leave them, paying the fees just the same as though the case was up for trial."

"How right they are who say that your lordship is generous and liberal!" burst forth the proctor; "I shall propagate your lordship's fame."

Richelieu bowed as though overwhelmed.

"Bernardet," cried the enthusiastic lawyer, "in the peroration, insert the eulogium of the Duke of Richelieu."

"No, never! I like to do good deeds by stealth, sir. Do not disoblige me, my master, or I should deny it--I would give you the lie, sir--my modesty is so touchy. Come, countess, what say you?"

"That my case ought to be tried and it shall have a hearing."

"It will not be tried unless the King sends his army and all the great guns into the courtroom," replied the proctor.

"Do you not think that the King will wriggle out of this bag," asked Richelieu of the proctor in a whisper.

"Impossible. A country without courts going on is a land without daily bread."

"But this will anger the King."

"We have screwed up our minds to anything--prison, death. A man may wear a black gown, but a heart can be under it." And he thumped his chest.

"This is a black lookout for the cabinet," said the duke to his fellow-client. "It seems to me that you might apply to your presentee at court, Lady Dubarry, who is perhaps powerful enough to open this deadlock."

"Thanks, you give me the idea of going to her country house, and she shall tell the King that this stoppage of legal business will not suit me, whom she has reasons to oblige. His Majesty will speak to the Lord High Chancellor and he has a long arm. Master Flageot, please to refresh your mind with my case, for it will soon be coming up, I warrant you."

Flageot turned his head with incredulity not remarked by the willful old dame.

"Since you will go to Luciennes," suggested Richelieu, "you might convey my compliments. We are companions in affliction since my law case will not be tried. Besides you can testify to the displeasure these pettifoggers are causing me; and you might kindly add that it was at my hint that your ladyship thought of taking this clever step. Do me the honor to accept my hand as far as your carriage. Adieu, Master Flageot, I leave you to your petition."

"Rafte was right," mused the duke when by himself. "These Flageots are going to make a revolution. However, God be thanked. I am carrying water on both shoulders! I am for the court and of the Parliamentarians. Lady Dubarry will plunge into politics and get drowned. Decidedly, this Rafte is a good scholar of mine and I will make him my Chief Secretary when I am Premier."

Lady Bearn profited literally by the duke's advice so that, in two hours and a half, she was dancing attendance at Luciennes, in company with Lady Dubarry's pet page, the black boy Zamore.

Her name raised some curiosity in the Countess's boudoir, as it was well-known from her having been sponsor at the presentation of the favorite to the court. No other lady of title would do this office and she only accepted the shameful mission of go-between on her own conditions. Duke Aiguillon was plotting with the favorite when Chon asked a hearing for Countess Bearn.

"I should like you to stay by," said she to the duke, "in case the old beggar tries for a loan. You will be useful as she will ask for less."

Lady Bearn, with her face drawn down to suit the disaster, took the armchair in front of her hostess and began:

"A great misfortune brings me, news which will much afflict his Majesty--these Parliamentarians---- "

"This is the Duke of Aiguillon," Lady Dubarry hastened to say as he groaned, for fear of something awkward being said.

But the old dame was not one to make blunders; she hastened to proceed:

"I know the turpitude of these crows, and their lack of respect for merit and birth."

This blunt compliment to the duke earned his handsome bow for the litigant, who rose and returned it before she went on:

"But it is no longer his grace to whom they do harm, but to all the people. They will let no cases be tried."

"Tush, no more law-dealing in France," said Jeanne Dubarry; "What difference will that make?"

The duke smiled, but the old hag, instead of taking things pleasantly, looked as morose as possible.

"It is a great woe, but it is plain that your ladyship has no trials on the board."

"I see, and I remember that you have an important suit."

"To which delay is dangerous."

"Poor lady!"

"The King will have to do something."

"Oh, he will exile the judges."

"That will adjourn the trials indefinitely."

"If you know of any remedy, my lady, I wish you would kindly state it."

"There is one way," remarked Aiguillon, "but the King may not like to use it. It is the ordinary resource of royalty when the other branches of the ruling powers are burdensome. The King says, 'I will have it so!' whether the opponents say they will not or the other thing."

"Excellent plan," exclaimed Lady Bearn with enthusiasm. "Oh, my lady, if you who can influence the King, would get him to say: 'I will have Lady Bearn's case tried!' it would be realizing what you promised long ago."

Aiguillon bit his lip, bowed and quitted the boudoir, for he heard a coach and he thought it was the royal one.

"Here comes the King," said the hostess, rising to dismiss the pleader.

"Oh, won't your ladyship let me throw myself at the royal feet to---- "

"Ask for a special court to try the case? I am most willing," replied the countess quickly. "Stay here and have your wish."

Lady Bearn had hardly adjusted her headdress before the sovereign entered.

"Ha, you have visitors?" he exclaimed.

"It is my Lady Bearn," said the other lady.

"Sire, I crave for justice," squeaked the old dame, making a low courtsey. "Against the Parliament, which will do no acts of justice. Your Majesty, I beg for a special tribunal."

"A royal special court?" said the monarch. "Why, this is almost a revolution, my lady."

"It is the means to curb these rebels of whom you are the master. Your Majesty knows that they have no right to reply if you say 'I will do this.'"

"The idea is grand," said Lady Dubarry.

"Grand, yes; but not good," responded the King.

"It would be a splendid ceremony--the King going in state to open the special court royal, with all the peers and ladies in the train, and he so glorious in the ermine-lined mantle, the royal diamonds in the crown, and the gold sceptre carried before him--all the lustre beseeming your Majesty's handsome and august countenance."

"Do you think so?" asked the King, wavering. "It is a fact that such a sight has not been seen for a long time," he added with affected unconcern. "I will see about it next time the Parliaments do anything vexatious."

"They have done it, Sire," interposed La Dubarry. "The pests have determined to hold no more law courts until your Majesty lets them have their own way."

"Mere rumors."

"Please your Majesty, my proctor returned me the brief and papers in my case because there would be no trial for ever so long."

"Mere scarecrows, I tell you."

Zamore scratched at the door, that being the way to knock when royalty is in a room, and brought a letter.

Lord High Chancellor Maupeou, hearing where the King was, solicited an interview through the countess's good graces.

"You may stay," said the King to Lady Bearn. "Good morning, my lord--what is the news?"

"Sire, the Parliament which annoyed your Majesty is no more. The members wish to resign and have handed in their applications to be relieved all together."

"I told you this was a serious dilemma," whispered the young countess to her royal lover.

"Very serious," said Louis, with impatience. "Exile the pack, Maupeou!"

"But they will hold no law courts in exile, Sire."

"Chancellor," observed the ruler, gravely; "Law must be dealt out and I see no means but the efficacious if solemn one: I will hold a royal and special tribunal. Those gentry shall tremble for once."

"Sire, you are the greatest King in the whole world!"

"Yes, indeed," cried the chancellor, Chon and her fortunate sister like an echo.

"That is more than the whole world says, though," muttered the King.

C

T

THE famous royal special court, the "Bed of Justice," (which is the French equivalent for the "Star Chamber,") was held with all the ceremonial which royal pride required on one hand and the intriguers who urged their master to this exercise of royal claims, on the other.

The King pretended to be serene, but he was not at ease: yet his magnificent costume was admired and nothing cloaks a man's defects like majesty. The Dauphiness wore a plaintive look through all the affair. Lady Dubarry was brave, with the confidence given by youth and beauty. She seemed a ray of lustre from the King whose left-hand queen she was.

Aiguillon walked among the peers firmly, so that none could have guessed that it was across him the King and Parliament were exchanging blows. He was pointed at by the crowd and the Parliamentarists scowled at him; but that was all.

Besides, the multitude, kept at a distance by the soldiers, betrayed its presence only by a humming, not yet a hooting.

The King's speech began in honey but ended in a dash of vitriol so sharp that the nobles smiled. But Parliament, with the admirable unanimity of constitutional bodies, kept a tranquil and indifferent aspect which highly displeased the King and the aristocratic spectators on the stands.

The Dauphiness turned pale with wrath, from thus for the first time measuring popular resistance, and calculating the weight of its power.

After the King's speech was read by the Chancellor, the King, to the amazement of everybody made a sign that he was going to speak.

Attention became stupor.

How many ages were in that second!

"You hear what my chancellor informs you of my will," he said in a firm voice: "Think only to carry it out, for I shall never change."

The whole assembly was literally thunderstricken. The Dauphiness thanked the speaker with a glance of her fine eyes. Lady Dubarry, electrified, could not refrain from rising, and she would have clapped her hands but for the fear that the mob would stone her to death on going out, or to receive next day satirical songs each worse than the other.

"Do you hear?" she said to the Duke of Richelieu, who had bowed lowly to his triumphing nephew. "The King will never change, he says."

"They are terrible words, indeed," he replied, "but those poor Parliamentists did not notice that in saying he would never change, the King had his eyes on you."

She was a woman and no politician. She only saw a compliment where Aiguillon perceived the epigram and the threat.

The effect of the royal ultimatum was immediately favorable to the royal cause. But often a heavy blow only stuns and the blood circulates the more purely and richly for the shock.

This was the reflection made by three men in the crowd, as they looked on from the corner. Chance had united them here, and they appeared to watch the impression of the throng.

"This ripens the passions," observed one of them, an old man with brilliant eyes in a soft and honest face. "A Bed of Justice is a great work."

"Aye, but you may make a bed and not get Justice to go to sleep on it," sneered a young man.

"I seem to know you--we have met before?" queried the old man.

"The night of the accident through the fireworks; you are not wrong, M. Rousseau."

"Oh, you are my fellow-countryman, the young surgeon, Marat?"

"Yes, at your service."

The third man did not speak. He was young and had a noble face; during the ceremony he had done nothing but study the crowd. The surgeon was the first to depart, plunging onto the thick of the mob, which had forgotten him, being less grateful than Rousseau, but he intended to remind them some day.

Waiting till he had gone, the other young man addressed the philosopher, saying:

"Are you not going?"

"I am too old to risk myself in that crush."

"In that case," said the young man, lowering his voice, "we shall meet to-night in Plastriere Street--Do not fail, *Brother* Rousseau!"

The author started as though a phantom had risen in face of him. His usually pale tint became livid. He meant to reply to the other but he had vanished.

After these singular words from the stranger, trembling and unhappy, Rousseau meandered among the groups without remembering that he was old and feared the press. Soon he got out upon Notre Dame Bridge, and he crossed in musing and self-questioning, the Greve Ward next his own.

"So, the secret which every one initiated is sworn to guard at the peril of his life, is in the grip of the first comer. This is the result of the secret societies being made too popular. A man knows me, that I am his associate--perhaps his accomplice! Such a state of things is absurd and intolerable. I wanted to learn the bottom of the plan for human regeneration framed by those chosen spirits called the Illuminati: I was mad enough to believe that good ideas could come from Germany, that land of mental mist and beer. I have entangled myself with some idiots or knaves who used it as cloak to conceal their folly. But no, this shall not be. A lightning flash has shown me the abyss, and I am not going to throw myself into it with lightness of heart."

Leaning on his cane, he stopped in the street for an instant.

"Yet it was a lovely dream," he meditated. "Liberty in bondage, the future conquered without noise and shocks, and the net mysteriously spun and laid over the tyrants while they slumbered. It was altogether too lovely and I was a dupe to believe it. I do not want any of these fears, doubts and shadows which are unworthy of a free mind and independent body."

At this, he caught sight of some police officers, and they so frightened the free mind and impelled the independent body, that he hastened to seek the darkest shade under the pillars where he was strolling.

It was not far to his house, where he took refuge from his thoughts and his wife, the spitfire of this modern Socrates.

He now began to think that there might be danger in not keeping the appointment at the secret lodge of which the stranger in the mob had spoken.

"If they have penalties against turncoats, they must have them for the lukewarm and the negligent," he reasoned. "I have always noticed that black threats and great danger amount to little; one must be on guard against petty stings, paltry revenge; hoaxes and annoyances of small calibre. The application of wild justice by capital sentences is extremely rare. Some day my brother Freemasons will even up matters with me by stretching a rope across my staircase so that I shall break a limb or knock out the half-dozen teeth still my own. Or a brick may stave in my skull as I go under a scaffolding. Better than that, they may have some pamphleteer, living near me, in the league, who will watch what I do. That can be done as the meetings are held in my own street. This quill-driver will publish details of how my wife scolds, which will make me the laughing-stock of all the town. Have I not enemies all around me?"

Then his thoughts changed.

"Pah, where is courage, and where honor?" he said. "Am I afraid of myself? Shall I see a rogue or a poltroon when I look in the glass? No, this shall not be. I will keep the tryst though the entire universe coalesces to work my misery--though the cellars in the street broke down to swallow me up. Pretty reasonings fear lead a man into. Since that man spoke to me, I have been swinging round in a circle of nonsense. I am doubting everything--myself included. This is not logical. I know that I am not an enthusiast and I would not believe this association could work wonders unless it would do so. What says that I am not going to be the regenerator of humanity,--I, who have searched, and whom the mysterious agents of this limitless power sought out on the strength of my writings? Am I to recede from following up my theory and

putting it into action?"

He became animated.

"What is finer? Ages on the march--the people issuing from the state of brutes; step following step in the gloom and a hand beckoning out of the darkness. The immense pyramid arising on the tip of which future ages will set the crown--the bust of Rousseau, citizen of Geneva, who risked his life and his liberty to be true to his motto: 'Truth is more than life.'"

Night came and he passed out of his house.

He peeped around to make sure.

No vehicles were about. The street was full of loungers, who stared at one another, as usual, or halted at the store-windows to ogle the girls. A man the more would not be perceived in the scuffle. Rousseau dived into it, and he had no long road to travel.

Before the door where Rousseau was to meet the brothers, a street singer with a shrill fiddle was stationed. Nothing was more favorable to a jam in the thoroughfare than the crowd caused by the amateurs of this rude music. Everybody had to go one side or another of the group. Rousseau remarked that many of those who chose to take the inside and go along by the houses, became lost on the road as though they fell down some trapdoor. He concluded that they came on the same errand as himself and meant to follow their example.

Passing behind the group round the musician, he watched the first person passing this who went up the alley of the house. He was more timid than him, and his friends, for he waited till ten had disappeared. Then, too, when a cab came along and called all eyes toward the street, he dived into the passage.

It was black, but he soon spied a light ahead, under which was seated a man, placidly reading as a tradesman is in the custom to do after business hours. At Rousseau's steps, he lifted his head, and plainly laid his finger on his breast, lit up by the lamp. The philosopher replied to the sign by laying a finger on his lips.

Thereupon the guard rose and opening a door so artistically cut in the panelling so as to be unseen, he showed Rousseau a flight of stairs. It went steeply down into the ground.

On the visitor entering, the door closed noiselessly but rapidly.

Groping with his cane, Rousseau went down the steps, thinking it a poor joke for his colleagues to try to break his neck and limbs so soon on the threshold.

But the stairs were not so long as steep. He had counted seventeen steps when a puff of the warm air from a collection of men smote his face.

It was a cellar, hung with canvas painted with workmen's tools, more symbolical than accurate. A solitary lamp swung from the ceiling and cast a sinister glimmer on faces honest enough in themselves. The men were whispering to each other on benches. Instead of carpet or even planks, reeds had been strewn to deaden sound.

Nobody appeared to pay any heed to Rousseau. Five minutes before, he had wished for nothing so much as this entrance; now he was sorry that he had slipped in so smoothly.

He saw one place empty on one of the rear benches and he went and sat there modestly. He counted thirty-three heads in the gathering. A desk on a raised stage waited for the chairman of the club.

He remarked that the conversation was very brief and guarded. Many did not move their lips; only three or four couples really chatted.

Those who were silent strove to hide their faces, an easy matter from the lamp throwing masses of shadow. The refuge of these timid folk seemed to be behind the chairman's stage.

But two or three, to make up for this shrinking, bustled about to identify their colleagues. They went to and fro, spoke together, and often disappeared through a doorway masked by a curtain painted with red flames on a black ground.

Presently a bell rang.

Plainly and simply a man left the bench where he had been mixed up with the others and took his place at the desk. After having made some signs with fingers and hands which the assemblaged repeated, and

sealed all with a more explicit gesture, he declared the lodge open.

He was a complete stranger to Rousseau; under the appearance of a superior craftsman, he hid much presence of mind and he spoke with eloquence as fluent as a trained orator. His speech was clear and short, signifying that the lodge was held for the reception of a new member.

"You must not be surprised at the meeting taking place where the usual initiation ceremonies cannot be performed. Such tests are considered useless by the chiefs. The brother to be received is one of the torches of contemporaneous philosophy, a deep spirit devoted to us by conviction, not fear. He who has plumbed all the mysteries of nature and the human heart would not feel the same impression as the ordinary mortal who seeks our assistance in will, strength and means. To win his co-operation it will be ample to be content with the pledge and acquiescence of this distinguished mind and honest and energetic character."

The orator looked round to see the effect of his plea. It was magical on Rousseau. He knew what were the preliminary proceedings of secret societies; he viewed them with the repugnance natural in superior minds. The absurd concessions but useful ones, required to simulate fear in the novices when there was nothing to fear appeared to him the culmination of puerility and idle superstition.

Moreover, the timid philosopher, the enemy of personal display, reckoned himself unfortunate if compelled to be a sight even though the attacks upon him would be in earnest. To be thus dispensed from the trial was more than satisfaction. He knew the rigor of Equality in the masonic rites; this exception in his favor was therefore a triumph.

"Still," said the chairman, "as the new brother loves Equality like myself, I will ask him to explain himself on the question which I put solely for form's sake: 'What do you seek in our society?'"

Rousseau took two steps forward, and answered, as his dreamy and melancholy eye wandered over the meeting:

"I seek here what I have not found elsewhere. Truths, not sophisms. If I have agreed to come here, after having been entreated--(he emphasized the word)--it is from my belief that I might be useful. It is I who am conferring the obligation. Alas! we all may have passed away before you can supply me with the means of defense, or help me to freedom with your hands if I should be imprisoned, or give me bread and comfort if afflicted--for the light cometh slowly, progress has a halting step, and where the light is quenched, none of us may be able to revive it---- "

"Illustrious brother, you are wrong," said the soft and penetrative voice of one who charmed the philosopher, "more than you imagine lies in the scope of this society: it is the future of the world. The future is hope--science--heaven, the Chief Architect who hath promised to illuminate His great building, the earth. The Architect does not lie."

Startled by this lofty language, Rousseau looked and recognized the young man who had reminded him of the meeting at the street corner. It was Baron Balsamo. Clad in black with marked richness and great style, he was leaning on the side rail of the platform, and his face, softly lighted up, shone with all its beauty, grace and natural expressiveness.

"Science?" repeated the author, "a bottomless pit. Do you prate to me of science--comfort, future and promise where another tells of material things, rigor and violence--which am I to believe?" And he glanced at Marat whose hideous face did not harmonize with Balsamo's. "Are there in the lodge meeting wolves just as in the world above--wolf and lamb! Let me tell you what my faith is, if you have not read it in my books."

"Books," interrupted Marat, "granted that they are sublime; but they are utopias; you are useful in the sense of the old prosers being useful. You point out the boon, but you make it a bubble, beautiful with the sunshine playing in a rainbow on it, but it bursts and leaves a nasty taste on the lips."

"Have you seen the great acts of nature accomplished without preparation?" retorted Rousseau. "You want to regenerate the world by deeds? this is not regeneration but revolution."

"Then," sharply replied the surgeon, "you do not care for independence, or liberty?"

"Yes, I do," returned the other, "for independence is my idol--liberty my goddess. But I want the mild and radiant liberty which warms and vivifies. The equality which brings men together by friendship, not fear. I wish the education and instruction of each element of the social body, as the joiner wishes neat joints and the mechanician harmony. I retract what I have written--progress, concord and devotion!"

Marat smiled with disdain.

"Rivers of milk and honey--the dreams of the poets which philosophers want to realise."

Rousseau replied no more, it was so odd for him to be accused of moderation when all Europe called him an extreme innovator. He sat down in silence after having sought for the approval of the person who had defended him.

"You have heard?" asked the chairman, rising. "Is the brother worthy to enter the society? does he comprehend his duties?"

"Yes," replied the gathering, but the one of reservation showed no unanimity.

"Take the oath," said the presiding officer.

"It will be disagreeable to me to displease some of the members," said the philosopher with pride, "but I think that I shall do more for the world and for you, brothers, apart from you, in my own isolation. Leave me then to my labors. I am not shaped to march with others whom I shun; yet I serve them, because I am one of you, and I try to believe you are better than you are. Now, you have my entire mind."

"He won't take the oath!" exclaimed Marat.

"I refuse positively. I do not wish to belong to the society. Too many proofs come up that I shall be useless to it."

"Brother," said the member with the conciliating speech, "allow me thus to call you, for we are all brothers apart from all combinations of human minds--do not yield to a movement of spite--sacrifice a little of your proper pride. Do for us what may be repugnant to you. Your counsel, ideas and presence are the Light. Do not plunge us into the double darkness of your refusal and your absence."

"Nay, I take away nothing," said the author; "if you wish the name and the spiritual essence of Jean Jacques Rousseau, put my books on your chairman's table, and when my turn to speak comes round, open one and read as far as you like. That will be my advice--my opinion."

"Stop a moment," said Surgeon Marat as the last speaker took a step to go out. "Free will is all very well and the illustrious philosopher's should be respected like the rest; but it strikes me as far from regular to let an outsider into the sanctuary who--being bound by no clause, even tacit--may, without being a dishonest man, reveal our proceedings."

Rousseau returned him his pitying smile.

"I am ready for the oath, if one of discretion," he said.

But the unnamed member who had watched the debate with authority which nobody questioned, though he stood in the crowd, approached the chairman and whispered in his ear.

"Quite so," replied the Venerable, and he added: "You are a man, not a brother, but one whose honor places you on our level. We here lay aside our position to ask your simple promise to forget what has passed between us."

"Like a dream in the morning: I swear on my honor," replied Rousseau with feeling.

He went out upon these words, and many members at his heels.

C

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THOSE who went out were brothers of the second and third circles, and left seven who were masters in their lodge. They recognized each other by signs proving they were admitted to the high degrees.

Their first care was to close the doors. The presiding officer, who was now Balsamo, showed his ring. On it were graved the letters L. P. D. They stood for Latin words meaning "Destroy the Lilies!" The Lily is the emblem of the House of Bourbon.

This chief was charged with the universal correspondence of the order. The six other highest leaders dwelt in America, Russia, Sweden, Spain and Italy.

He had brought some of the more important messages received to impart them to his associates placed under him but above the files.

The most important was from Swedenborg the spiritualist, who wrote from Sweden:

"Look out in the South, brothers, where the burning sun hatched a traitor. He will be your ruin, brothers. Watch at Paris, for there the false one dwells: the secrets of the Order are in his hands and a hateful sentiment moves him. I hear the denunciation, made in a low voice. I see a terrible doom, but it may fall too late. In the interim, brothers, keep watchful. One treacherous tongue, however ill-instructed, would be enough to upset all our skillfully contrived plans."

The conspirators looked at one another in mute surprise. The language of the ferocious Rosicrucian and his foresight, to which many examples gave imposing authority, all contributed no little to cloud the committee presided over by the mesmerist.

"Brothers," he said, "this inspired prophet is seldom wrong. Watch therefore, as he bids us. Like me, now, you know that the war has begun. Do not let us be baffled by these ridiculous foes whose position we undermine. Do not forget, though, that they have an army of fierce hirelings at their disposal--a powerful argument in the eyes of those who do not see far beyond earthly limits. Brothers, be on your guard against the traitors who are bribed."

"Such alarm seems puerile to me," said a voice: "we are gaining in strength daily, and are led by brilliant genius and mighty hands."

Balsamo bowed at this flattery.

"True, but treachery sneaks in everywhere," remarked Marat, who had been promoted to a superior rank, spite of his youth, and for the first time sat in the superior council. "Think, brothers, that a great capture may be made by increasing the size of the bait. While Chief of Police Sartines, with a bag of silver, may catch a subordinate, the Prime Minister, with one of gold, may buy one of the superiors.

"In our company the obscure brother knows nothing. He may at the most know the names of a few of those above him, but these names afford no information. Our constitution is admirable, but it is eminently aristocratic. The lower members can know nothing and do nothing. They are only gathered to tell them some nonsense, and yet they contribute to the solidity of the building. They bring the mortar and the bricks as others bring the tools and the plan. But, without bricks and mortar, how can you have a Temple? The workman gets but a poor wage, although I for one regard him as equal to the Architect's clerk, whose plan creates and gives existence to the work. I regard him as an equal, I say, as he is a man and all men are equal, as the philosophers teach, for he bears his portion of misery and fatality like another, more than others, as he is exposed to the fall of a stone or the breaking down of a scaffold."

"I interrupt you, brother," said Balsamo. "You are talking wide of the question bringing us together. Your fault, brother, is in generalizing subjects, and exaggerating zeal. We are not discussing whether the constitution of our society is good or bad, but to maintain its firmness and integrity. If I were wrangling with you I should say, 'No, the organ which receives the movement is not the equal of the genius of the creator; the workman is not on a level with the architect; arms are not equal to the brains.'"

"If Sartine arrests one of our lowliest brothers he will send him to jail just as sure as you or me,"

protested the surgeon.

"Granted; but the person will suffer, not the society. It can endure such things. But if the head is imprisoned, the plot stops--the army loses the victory if the general is slain. Brothers, watch for the safety of the Supreme Chief!"

"Yes, but let them look out for us."

"It is their duty."

"And have their faults more severely punished."

"Again, brother, you overstep the regulations of the Order. Are you ignorant that all the members are alike and under the same penalties?"

"In such cases the great ones elude the chastisement."

"That is not what the Grand Masters think, brother; but hearken to the end of the letter from the great prophet Swedenborg, one of the greatest among us; here is what he adds:

"The harm will come from one of the great ones--very great--of the Order; or, if not from him directly, the fault will be imputable to him. Remember that Fire and Water may be accomplices: one gives light and the other gives revelations."

This enigmatical allusion would seem to be to the process of showing the future in the glass of water, which was one of the conjuring experiments of Joseph Balsamo.

"Watch, brothers, (Concluded the seer) over all things and all men!"

"Let us, then, repeat the oath," said Marat, grasping at his hold in the letter and the chief's speech, "the oath which binds us and pledges us to carry it out in full rigor in case one of us betrays or is the cause of a treacherous act."

Balsamo rose and uttered these awful words in a low voice, solemn and terrifying:

"In the name of the Architect of the Universe, I swear to break all carnal bonds attaching me to father and mother, sister and brother, wife, friends, mistress, kings, captains, benefactors, all unto whomsoever I have promised faith, obedience, gratitude or service.

"I vow to reveal to the chief whom I acknowledge according to the rules of the Order, what I have seen, heard, learnt or divined, and moreover to ascertain what happens beyond my knowledge.

"I honor all means to purify the globe of the enemies of truth and freedom.

"I subscribe to the vow of silence; I consent to die as if by the thunderbolt on the day when I deserve punishment and I will wait without remonstrance for the deadly stab to accomplish its work wherever I shall be."

The seven men repeated the oath, standing up with uncovered heads, a sombre gathering.

"We are pledged to one another," said Balsamo when the last word was spoken; "let us waste no time in idle arguments. I have a report to make to the Committee on the principal work of the year. France is situated in the center of Europe like its heart, and it makes the other parts of the body live. In its agitations may be sought the cause of the ills of the general organism. Hence I have come out of the East to sound this heart like a physician; I have listened to it, sounded it and experimented with it. A year ago when I began, monarchy was weakening. To-day, vices are destroying it. I have quickened the debauchery and favored what will be deadly.

"One obstacle stood in the way--a man, not merely the First Minister but the foremost man in the realm. It was Choiseul whom I have removed. This important work was undertaken by many intriguers and much hatred during ten years, but I accomplished it in a few months, by means which it is useless to describe. By a secret, which is one of my strong means, the greater as it must remain hidden from all eyes and never be manifested save by its effect, I have overturned and driven away Choiseul. Look at the fruit of the toil: all France is crying for Choiseul and rising to bring him back as orphans appeal to heaven to restore their father. Parliament uses its only right, inertia. But if it does not go on, there will be no work and the wage-earners will earn no money. No money for the workers--no rent, no tax paying--gold, the blood of a realm, will be wanting.

"They will try to make the poor pay--and there will be a struggle. But who will struggle against the

masses? not the army, which is recruited from the people, eating the black bread of the farm hand, and drinking the sour wine of the vineyard laborer. The King has his household troops, the foreign regiments, five or six thousand men at the most--what will this squad of pigmies do against an army of giants?"

"Bid them rise!" exclaimed the chiefs.

"Yes, yes, let us set to work," said Marat.

"Young man, your advice is not asked," coldly said Balsamo. "Yet you may speak."

"I will be brief," said Marat; "mild attempts rock the people to sleep when they do not discourage them. Mere chipping at the stone is the theory of the Rousseaus, who are always bidding us to wait. We have been waiting seven centuries! This poor and feeble opposition has not advanced humanity by a single step. Have we seen one abuse redressed in three hundred years? Enough of these poets and theorists! let us have work and deeds. For three hundred years we have been physicking France and it is high time that the surgeons were called in, with scalpel and lancet. Society is gangrened and we must cut away and apply the redhot iron. A revolt, though it be put down, enlightens slaves more on their power than a thousand years of precepts and examples. It may not be enough, but it is much!"

A flattering murmur rose from several hearers.

"Where are our enemies," continued the young man; "on the steps of the throne, guarding it as their palladium. We cannot reach royalty but over the bodies of those insolent, gold-coated guards. Well, let us fell them, as we read has been done to the body-guards of tyrants before now. Thus will we get near enough to the gilded idol to hurl it down. Count these privileged heads. Scarce two hundred thousand. Let us walk through the lovely garden, which is France, as Tarquin did in his, and cut off the heads of these flaunting poppies, and all will be done. When dwarfs aim to slay a colossus they attack its feet; when men want to fell the oak they chop at the root. Woodmen, take the ax, let us hack at the base of the tree and it will fall in the dust."

"And crush you, pigmies," commented the Supreme Chief in a voice of thunder. "You declaim against poets and you spout fustian. Brother, you have picked up these phrases in some novel you concoct in your garret."

Marat blushed.

"Do you know what a revolution is?" said the Grand Copt. "I have seen two hundred, and they have tended to nothing because the revolutionists were in too great a haste. You talk of chopping down giant trees. This tree is not an oak but one of those immense redwoods of the far western American forests which I have seen. If they were felled, a horseman starting from the base to avoid the high-up branches would be overtaken and smashed. You cannot wish this. You cannot obtain the warrant from me."

"I have lived some forty generations of man."

"Being long-lived, I can be patient. I carry your fate--ay, that of the world in the hollow of my hand. I will not open it to let out the lightnings till I see fit. Let us come down from these sublime hights and walk on the earth.

"Gentlemen, I say with simplicity and full belief, it is not yet time. The King now reigning is the last reflection of the glory of the Great Louis who dazzles still enough to pale your ineffectual fires. A King, he will die royally: of an insolent race but pure-bred. Slay him and that will happen which befel Charles First of England: his executioners will bow to him and courtiers will kiss the ax which lops off his head. You know that England was in too much of a hurry. It is true that Charles Stuart died on the scaffold but the block was a stepping-stone for his son to reach the throne and he died on it."

"Wait, wait, brothers, for the times are becoming propitious.

"We are sworn to destroy the lilies but we must root them up--not a stalk must be left. But the breath of fate is going to shrivel royalty up to nothing. Draw nearer and hear this--the Dauphiness, though a year wedded---- "

"Well?" asked the chiefs with anxiety.

"She is still as when she came from her mother's land."

An ominous murmur, so full of hatred and revengeful triumph as to make all Kings flee, escaped like a

blast of hell from the lips of this narrow circle of six heads almost touching, but towered over by Balsamo's bending down from the stage.

"In this state of things," he pursued, "two suppositions are presented. The race will die out and our friends will have no difficulties, combats or troubles. As happens every time three Kings succeed, the Dauphin, Provence and Artois will reign but die without posterity--it is the law of destiny.

"The other hypothesis is that the Dauphiness will yet bear children. That is the trap into which our enemies will rush in the belief that we will fall into it. We will rejoice when she is a mother, just like them; for we possess a dread secret, comprising crimes which no power, prestige or efforts can counteract. We can easily make out that the heir which she gives the throne is illegitimate and the more fecund she may be, the worse will appear her conduct.

"This is why, my brothers, that I wait; judging it useless as yet to unchain popular passions to be employed efficaciously when the right time comes.

"Now, brothers, you know how I have employed this year. You see the extent of my mines. Be persuaded that we shall succeed, but with the genius and courage of some, who are the eyes and the brain; with the labor and perseverance of others, who represent the arms; and with the faith and devotedness of others still, who are the heart.

"Be penetrated with the necessity of blind obedience which makes the Grand Copt himself stand ready to be immolated to the will of the Order's statutes when the day comes.

"There is a good act yet to do, and an evil to point out.

"The great author who came to us this evening and would have joined us but for the stormy behavior of one of our brothers who alarmed the sensitive spirit--he was right as against us and I am sorry one of the profane was in the right before a majority of our society, who know the ritual badly and our aims not at all. Triumphing with the sophisms of his works over our Order's truths, he represents a vice which I shall extirpate with fire and sword, unless it can be done with persuasion, as I hope. The self-conceit of one of our brothers showed itself vilely. He placed us secondary in the argument. I trust that no such fault will again be committed or else I shall have recourse to discipline.

"Now, brothers, propagate the faith with mildness and persuasion. Insinuate rather than impose, and do not try to make truths enter with hammer and ax blows like the torturers who use wedge and sledge. Remember that we shall be acknowledged great only after having proved that we have done good, and that will only happen when we shall appear better than those round us. Remember, too, that the good are nothing without science, art and faith; nothing beside those whom the Divine Architect has stamped with a peculiar seal to command men and rule an empire.

"Brothers, the meeting adjourns."

He put on his hat and wrapped himself in his mantle. Each freemason went out in his turn, alone and silent so as not to awaken suspicion. The last with the Supreme Master was the Surgeon Marat.

Very pale, he humbly approached him for he knew the terrible speaker's power was unlimited.

"Master, did I commit a fault?" he inquired.

"A great one, and all the worse as you are not conscious that you did so," replied the man of mystery.

"I confess it; not only ignorant, but I thought I spoke becomingly."

"Pride--destructive demon! men hunt for fever in the veins and search for the cancer in the vitals, but they let pride shoot up such roots deeply in their heart as never to be able to wrench them out."

"You have a very poor opinion of me, master," returned Marat. "Am I so paltry a fellow that I am not to be counted among my equals? Have I culled the fruit of the tree of knowledge so clumsily that I am incapable of saying a word without being taxed with ignorance? Am I so lukewarm a member that my conviction is suspected? Were this all so, still I exist by reason of my devotion to the masses."

"Brother, it is because the spirit of evil contends in you with that of good and seems to me to promise to overpower it one day, that I undertake to correct you. If I succeed it will be in one hour, unless pride has the upperhand of all your other passions."

"Master, make an appointment which I will keep."

"I will call on you."

"Mind what you promise. I am living in a garret in Cordelier' Street. A garret, mark you, while you--" he emphasized the word with an affectation of proud simplicity.

"While I---- "

"While, so they say, you live in a palace."

The master shrugged his shoulders as a giant might do when jeered at by a dwarf.

"I will call upon you in your garret in the morning."

"I go to the dissection hall at daybreak and then to the hospital."

"That will suit me very well; I should have suggested it if you had not said it."

"You understand--early--I do not sleep much."

"And I never sleep at peep of day," said Balsamo.

Upon this they separated, as they had reached the street door, dark and lonely on their going forth as it had been noisy and lively when they went in.

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BALSAMO was punctual and found, at six o'clock, Marat and his servant, a woman of all work, decking up the room with flowers in a vase in honor of the visitor. At sight of the master, the surgeon blushed more plainly than was becoming in a stoic.

"Where are we first going?" asked Balsamo when they got down to the street door.

"To Surgeon' Hall," was the reply. "I have selected a corpse there, a subject which died of acute meningitis; I have to make some observations on the brain and do not wish my colleagues to cut it up before I do."

"Let us to the hall, then."

"It is only a couple of steps; besides, you need not go in; you might wait for me at the door."

"On the contrary, I want to go in with you and have your opinion on the subject, since it is a dead body."

"Take care," said Marat; "For I am an expert anatomist and have the advantage of you there."

"Pride, more pride," muttered the Italian.

"What is that?"

"I say that we shall see about that. Let us enter."

Balsamo followed him without shrinking into the amphitheatre, on Hautefeuille Street. On a marble slab in the long, narrow hall were two corpses, a man's and a woman's. She had died young: he was old and bald; a wornout sheet veiled their bodies but half exposed their faces.

Side by side on the chilly bed, they might never have met in life and if their souls could see them now, they would have been mutually surprised at the neighborhood.

Marat pulled off the shroud of coarse linen from the two unfortunates equalised by death under the surgeon's knife. They were nude.

"Is not the sight repugnant to you?" asked Marat with his usual braggadocia.

"It makes me sad," replied the other.

"From not being habituated to it," said the dissector. "I see the thing daily and I feel neither sadness nor dislike. We surgical practitioners have to live with the lifeless and we do not on their account interrupt any of the functions of our life."

"It is a sad privilege of your profession."

"And why should I feel in the matter? Against sadness, I have reflection; against the other thing, habit. What is to frighten me in a corpse, a statue of flesh instead of stone?"

"As you say, in a corpse there is nothing, while in the living body there is---- "

"Motion," replied Marat loftily.

"You have not spoken of the soul."

"I have never come across it when I searched with my scalpel."

"Because you searched the dead only."

"Oh, I have probed living bodies."

"But have met nothing more than in dead ones?"

"Yes, pain; you don't call that the soul, do you?"

"Do you not believe in the soul?"

"I believe in it but I may call it the Moving Power, if I like."

"Very well; all I ask is if you believe in the soul; it makes me happy to think so."

"Stop an instant, master," interrupted Marat with his viper-like smile: "let us come to an understanding and not exaggerate; we surgical operators are rather materialists."

"These bodies are quite cold," mused Balsamo aloud, "and this woman was good-looking. A fine soul

must have dwelt in that fine temple."

"There was the mistake--it was a vile blade of metal in that showy scabbard. This body, master, is that of a drab who was taken from the Magdalen Prison of St. Lazare where she died of brain fever, to the Main Hospital. Her story is very scandalous and long. If you call her moving impulse a soul, you do ours wrong."

"The soul might have been healed and it was lost, because no physician for the soul came along."

"Alas, master, this is another of your theories. Only for bodies are there medicines," sneered Marat with a bitter laugh. "You use words which are a reflection of a part of 'Macbeth,' and it makes you smile. Who can minister to a mind diseased? Shakespeare calls your 'sou' the mind."

"No, you are wrong, and you do not know why I smile. For the moment we are to conclude that these earthly vessels are empty?"

"And senseless," went on Marat, raising the head of the woman and letting it fall down on the slab with a bang, without the remains shuddering or moving.

"Very well: let us go to the hospital now," said Balsamo.

"Not until I have cut off the head and put it by, as this coveted head is the seat of a curious malady."

He opened his instrument-case, took out a bistory, and picked up in a corner a mallet spotted with blood. With a skilled hand he traced a circular incision separating all the flesh and neck muscles. Cleaving to the spine, he thrust his steel between two joints and gave with the maul a sharp, forcible rap. The head rolled on the table, and bounced to the ground. Marat was obliged to pick it up with his moistened hands. Balsamo turned his head not to fill the operator with too much delight.

"One of these days," said the latter, thinking he had caught his superior in a weak moment, "some philanthropist who ponders over death as I do over life will invent a machine to chop off the head to bring about instantaneous extinction of the vital spark, which is not done by any means of execution now in practice. The rack, the garrote the rope, these are all methods of torture appertaining to barbarous peoples and not to the civilized. An enlightened nation like France ought to punish and not revenge: for the society which racks, strangles and decapitates by the sword inflicts punishment by the pain besides that of death alone, the culprit's portion. This is overdoing the penalty by half, I think."

"It is my opinion, too. What idea do you have of such an instrument?"

"A machine, cold and emotionless as the Law itself; the man charged with the inflection is affected by the sight of the criminal in his own likeness; and he misses his stroke, as at the beheading of Chalais and of the Duke of Monmouth. A machine would not do that, say, a wooden arm which brought down an ax on the neck."

"I have seen something of the kind in operation, the Maiden, it is called in Scotland, and the Mannaja, in Italy. But I have also seen the decapitated criminals rise without their heads, from the seat on which they were placed, and stagger off a dozen paces. I have picked up such heads, by the hair, as you just did that one which tumbled off the table, and when I uttered in the ear the name with which it was baptized, I saw the eyes open to see who called and showed that still on the earth it had quitted one could cry after what was passing from time to eternity."

"Merely a nervous movement."

"Are not the nerves the organs of sense? I conclude that it would be better for man, instead of seeking a machine to kill without pain for punishment, he had better seek the way to punish without killing. The society that discovers that will be the best and most enlightened."

"Another Utopia!" exclaimed Marat.

"Perhaps you are right, this once," responded Balsamo. "It is time that will enlighten us."

Marat wrapped up the female head in his handkerchief which he tied by the four corners in a knot.

"In this way, I am sure that my colleagues will not rob me of my head," he said.

Walking side by side the dreamer and the practitioner went to the great Hospital.

"You cut that head off coldly and skillfully," said the former. "Have you less emotion when dealing with the quick? Does suffering affect you less than insensibility? Are you more pitiless with living bodies than the dead?"

"No, for it would be a fault, as in an executioner to let himself feel anything. A man would die from being miscut in the limb as surely as though his head were struck off. A good surgeon ought to operate with his hand and not his heart, though he knows in his heart that he is going to give years of life and happiness for the second's suffering. That is the golden lining to our profession."

"Yes; but in the living, I hope you meet with the soul?"

"Yes, if you hold that the soul is the moving impulse--the sensitiveness; that I do meet, and it is very troublesome sometimes for it kills more patients than my scalpel."

Guided by Marat, who would not put aside his ghastly burden, Balsamo was introduced into the operation ward, crowded with the chief surgeon and the students.

The aids brought in a young man, knocked down the previous week by a heavy wagon which had crushed his foot. A hasty operation at that time had not sufficed; mortification had spread and amputation of the leg was necessary. Stretched on the bed of anguish, the poor fellow looked with a terror which would have melted tigers, on the band of eager men who waited for the time of his martyrdom, his death perchance, to study the science of life--the marvellous phenomenon which conceals the gloomy one of death. He seemed to sue from the surgeon and assistants some smile of comfort, but he met indifference on all sides, steel in every eye.

A remnant of courage and manly pride kept him mute, reserving all to try to check the screams which agony would tear from him.

Still, when he felt the kindly heavy hand of the porter on his shoulder, and the aid's arms interlace him like serpents, and heard the operator's voice saying "Keep up your pluck my brave man!" he ventured to break the stillness by asking in a plaintive tone:

"You are not going to hurt me much?"

"Not at all; be quiet," replied Marat, with a false smile which might seem sweet to the sufferer, but was ironical to Balsamo, and noting that the latter had seen through him, the young surgeon whispered to him:

"It is a dreadful operation. The bone is splintered and sensitive so as to make any one pity him. He will die of the pain, not the injury; that will make his soul want to fly away."

"Why operate on him--why not let him die tranquilly?"

"Because it is a surgeon's duty to attempt a cure when it is impossible."

"But you say that he will suffer dreadfully on account of his having a soul too tender for his frame? then, why not operate on the soul so that the tranquillity of the one will be the salvation of the other?"

"Just what I have done," replied Marat, while the patient was tied down. "By my words, I spoke to the soul--to his sensitiveness, what made the Greek philosopher say, 'Pain, thou art no ill.' I told him he would not feel much pain, and it is the business of his soul not to feel any. That is the only remedy known up to the present. As for the questions of the soul--lies! why is this deuce of a soul clamped to the body? When I knocked this head off a spell ago, the body said nothing. Yet that was a grave operation enough. But the movement had ceased, sensitiveness was no more and the soul had fled, as you spiritualists say. That is why the head and the body which I severed, made no remonstrance to me. But the body of this unhappy fellow with the soul still in, will be yelling awfully in a little while. Stop up your ears closely, master. For you are sensitive, and your theory will be killed by the shock, until the day when your theory can separate the soul from the body."

"You believe such separation will never come?" said Balsamo.

"Try, for this is a capital opening."

"I will; this young man interests me and I do not want him to feel the pain."

"You are a leader of men," said Marat, "but you are not a heavenly being, and you cannot prevent the lad from suffering."

"If he should not suffer, would his recovery be sure?"

"It would be likely, but not sure."

Balsamo cast an inexpressible look of triumph on the speaker and placing himself before the patient, whose frightened and terror-filled eyes he caught, he said: "Sleep!" not with the mouth solely but with look,

will, all the heat of his blood and the fluid electricity in his system.

At this instant the chief surgeon was beginning to feel the injured thigh and point out to the pupils the extent of the ail.

But at this command from the mesmerist, the young man, who had been raised by an assistant, swung a little and let his head sink, while his eyes closed.

"He feels bad," said Marat; "he loses consciousness."

"Nay, he sleeps."

Everybody looked at this stranger whom they took for a lunatic.

Over Marat's lips flitted a smile of incredulity.

"Does a man usually speak in a swoon?" asked Balsamo. "Question him and he will answer you."

"I say, young man," shouted Marat.

"No, there is no need for you to halloo at him," said Balsamo, "he will hear you in your ordinary voice."

"Give us an idea what you are doing?"

"I was told to sleep, and I am sleeping," replied the patient, in a perfectly unruffled voice strongly contrasting with that heard from him shortly before.

All the bystanders stared at one another.

"Now, untie him," said Balsamo.

"No, you must not do that," remonstrated the head surgeon, "the operation would be spoilt by the slightest movement."

"I assure you that he will not stir, and he will do the same: ask him."

"Can you be left free, my friend?"

"I can."

"And you promise not to budge?"

"I promise, if I am ordered so."

"I order you."

"Upon my word, sir," said the chief surgeon, "you speak with so much certainty that I am inclined to try the experiment."

"Do so, and have no fear."

"Unbind him," said the surgeon.

As the men obeyed Balsamo went to the head of the couch.

"From this time forward do not stir till I bid you."

A statue on a tombstone could not be more motionless than the patient after this command.

"Now, sir, proceed with the operation; the patient is properly prepared."

The surgeon had his steel ready, but he hesitated at the beginning.

"Proceed," repeated Balsamo with the manner of an inspired prophet.

Mastered as Marat and the patient had been and as all the rest were, the surgeon put the knife edge to the flesh: it "squeaked" literally at the cut, but the patient did not flinch or utter a sigh.

"What countryman are you, friend?" asked the mesmerist.

"From Brittany, my lord."

"Do you love your country?"

"Ay, it is such a fine one," and he smiled.

Meanwhile the operator was making the circular incisions which are the preliminary steps in amputations to lay the bone bare.

"Did you leave it when early in life?" continued Balsamo.

"I was only ten years old, my lord."

The cuts being made, the surgeon applied the saw to the gash.

"My friend," said Balsamo, "sing me that song the saltmakers of Batz sing on knocking off work of an evening. I only remember the first line which goes:

'Hail to the shining salt!'"

The saw bit into the bone: but at the request of the magnetiser, the patient smilingly commenced to sing, slowly and melodiously like a lover or a poet:

"Hail to the shining salt,
  Drawn from the sky-blue lake:
Hail to the smoking kiln,
  And my rye-and-honey cake!
Here comes wife and dad,
  And all my chicks I love:
All but the one who sleeps,
  Yon, in the heather grove.
Hail! for there ends the day,
  And to my rest I come:
After the toil the pay;
  After the pay, I'm home."

The severed limb fell on the board, but the man was still singing. He was regarded with astonishment and the mesmeriser with admiration. They thought both were insane. Marat repeated this impression in Balsamo's ear.

"Terror drove the poor lad out of his wits so that he felt no pain," he said.

"I am not of your opinion," replied the Italian sage: "far from having lost his wits, I warrant that he will tell us if I question him, the day of his death if he is to die; or how long his recovery will take if he is to get through."

Marat was now inclined to share the general opinion that his friend was mad, like the patient.

In the meantime the surgeon was taking up the arteries from which spirted jets of blood.

Balsamo took a phial from his pocket, let a few drops fall on a wad of lint, and asked the chief surgeon to apply this to the cut. He obeyed with marked curiosity.

He was one of the most celebrated operators of the period, truly in love with his science, repudiating none of its mysteries, and taking hazard as the outlet to doubt. He clapped the plug to the wound, and the arteries seared up, hissing, and the blood came through only drop by drop. He could then tie the grand artery with the utmost facility.

Here Balsamo obtained a true triumph, and everybody wanted to know where he had studied and of what school he was.

"I am a physician of the University of Gottingen," he replied, "and I made the discovery which you have witnessed. But, gentlemen and brothers of the lancet and ligature, I should like it kept secret, as I have great fear of being burnt at the stake, and the Parliament of Paris might once again like the spectacle of a wizard being so treated."

The head surgeon was brooding; Marat was dreaming and reflecting. But he was the first to speak.

"You asserted," he said, "that if this man were interrogated about the result of his operation he would certainly tell it though it is in the womb of the future?"

"I said so: what is the man's name?"

"Havard."

Balsamo turned to the patient, who was still humming the lay.

"Well, friend, what do you augur about our poor Havard's fate?" he asked.

"Wait till I come back from Brittany, where I am, and get to the Hospital where Havard is."

"Of course. Come hither, enter, and tell me the truth about him."

"He is in a very bad way; they have cut off his leg. That was neatly done, but he has a dreadful strait to

go through; he will have fever to-night at seven o'clock---- "

The bystanders looked at each other.

"This fever will pull him down; but I am sure he will get through the first fit."

"And will be saved?"

"No: for the fever returns and--poor Havard! he has a wife and little ones!"

His eyes filled with tears.

"His wife will be left a widow and the little ones orphans?"

"Wait, wait--no, no!" he cried, clasping his hands. "They prayed so hard for him that their prayers have been granted."

"He will get well?"

"Yes, he will go forth from here, where he came five days ago, a hale man, two months and fifteen days after."

"But," said Marat, "incapable of working and consequently to feed his family."

"God is good and he will provide."

"How?" continued Marat: "while I am gathering information, I may as well learn this?"

"God hath sent to his bedside a charitable lord who took pity on him, and he is saying to himself: 'I am not going to let poor Havard want for anything.'"

All looked at Balsamo, who smiled.

"Verily, we witness a singular incident," remarked the head surgeon, as he took the patient's hand and felt his pulse and his forehead. "This man is dreaming aloud."

"Do you think so?" retorted the mesmerist. "Havard, awake," he added with a look full of authority and energy.

The young man opened his eyes with an effort and gazed with profound surprise on the bystanders, become for him as inoffensive as they were menacing at the first.

"Ah, well," he said, "have you not begun your work? Are you going to give me pain?"

Balsamo hastened to speak as he feared a shock to the sufferer. There was no need for him to hasten as far as the others were concerned as none of them could get out a word, their surprise was so great.

"Keep quiet, friend," he said; "the chief surgeon has performed on your leg an operation which suits the requirement of your case. My poor lad, you must be rather weak of mind, for you swooned away at the outset."

"I am glad I did for I felt nothing of it," replied the Breton merrily: "my sleep was a sweet one and did me good. What a good thing that I am not to lose my leg."

At this very moment he looked over himself, and saw the couch flooded with blood and the severed limb. He uttered a scream and swooned away, this time really.

"Question him, now, and see whether he will reply," said Balsamo sternly to Marat.

Taking the chief surgeon aside while the aids carried the patient to his bed, he said:

"You heard what the poor fellow said---- "

"About his getting well?"

"About heaven having pity on him and inspiring a nobleman to help his family. He spoke the truth on that head as on the other. Will you please be the intermediary between heaven and your patient. Here is a diamond worth about twenty thousand livres; when the man is nearly able to go out, sell it and give him the money. Meanwhile, since the soul has great influence on the body, as your pupil Marat says justly, tell Havard that his future is assured."

"But if he should not recover," said the doctor hesitating.

"He will."

"Still I must give you a receipt; I could not think of taking an object of this value otherwise."

"Just as you please; my name is Count Fenix."

Five minutes afterwards Balsamo put the receipt in his pocket, and went out accompanied by Marat.

"Do not forget your head!" said Balsamo, to whom the absence of mind in this cool student was a compliment.

Marat parted from the chief of the Order with doubt in his heart but meditation in his eyes, and he said to himself: "Does the soul really exist?"

C

T

ROUSSEAU had been cheated into going to take breakfast with the royal favorite: he was formally invited by the Dauphiness to come to Trianon to conduct in person one of his operas in which she and her ladies and titled amateurs generally were to take the parts even to the supernumeraries.

He had not attired himself specially and he had stuffed his head with a lot of disagreeable plain truths to speak to the King, if he had a chance.

To the courtiers, however, it was the same to see him as any other author or composer, curiosities all, whom the grandees hire to perform in their parlors or on their lawns.

The King received him coldly on account of his costume, dusty with the journey in the omnibus, but he addressed him with the limpid clearness of the monarch which drove from Rousseau's head all the platitudes he had rehearsed.

But as soon as the rehearsal was begun, the attention was drawn to the piece and the composer was forgotten.

But he was remarking everything; the noblemen in the dress of peasants sang as far out of tune as the King himself; the ladies in the attire of court shepherdesses flirted. The Dauphiness sang correctly, but she was a poor actress; besides, she had so little voice that she could hardly be heard. The Dauphin spoke his lines. In short, the opera scarcely got on in the least.

Only one consolation came to Rousseau. He caught sight of one delightful face among the chorus-ladies and it was her voice which sounded the best of all.

"Eh," said the Dauphiness, following his look, "has Mdlle. de Taverney made a fault?"

Andrea blushed as she saw all eyes turn upon her.

"No, no!" the author hastened to say, "that young lady sings like an angel."

Lady Dubarry darted a glance on him sharper than a javelin.

On the other hand Baron Taverney felt his heart melt with joy and he smiled his warmest on the composer.

"Do you think that child sings well?" questioned Lady Dubarry of the King, whom Rousseau's words had visibly struck.

"I could not tell," he said: "while they are all singing together. One would have to be a regular musician to discover that."

Rousseau still kept his eyes on Andrea who looked handsomer than ever with a high color.

The rehearsal went on and Lady Dubarry became atrociously out of temper: twice she caught Louis XV. absent-minded when she was saying cutting things about the play.

Though the incident had also made the Dauphiness jealous, she complimented everybody and showed charming gaiety. The Duke of Richelieu hovered round her with the agility of a youth, and gathered a band of merrymakers at the back of the stage with the Dauphiness as the centre: this furiously disquieted the Dubarry clique.

"It appears that Mdlle. de Taverney is blessed with a pretty voice," he said in a loud voice.

"Delightful," said the princess; "if I were not so selfish, I would have her play Colette. But I took the part to have some amusement and I am not going to let another play it."

"Nay, Mdlle. de Taverney would not sing it better than your Royal Highness," protested Richelieu, "and---- "

"She is an excellent musician," said Rousseau, who was penetrated with Andrea's value in his line.

"Excellent," said the Dauphiness; "I am going to tell the truth, that she taught me my part; and then she dances ravishingly, and I do not dance a bit."

You may judge of the effect of all this on the King, his favorite, and all this gathering of the envious,

curious, intriguers, and news-mongers. Each received a gain or a sting, with pain or shame. There were none indifferent except Andrea herself.

Spurred on by Richelieu, the Dauphiness induced Andrea to sing the ballad:

"I have lost my only joy--
Colin leaves me all alone."

The King was seen to mark time with a nodding of the head, in such keen pleasure that the rouge scaled off Lady Dubarry's face in flakes like a painting in the damp.

More spiteful than any woman, Richelieu enjoyed the revenge he was having on Dubarry. Sidling round to old Taverney, the pair resembled a group of Hypocrisy and Corruption signing a treaty of union.

Their joy brightened all the more as the cloud darkened on Dubarry's brow. She finished by springing up in a pet, which was contrary to all etiquet, for the King was still in his seat.

Foreseeing the storm like ants, the courtiers looked for shelter. So the Dauphiness and La Dubarry were both clustered round by their friends.

The interest in the rehearsal gradually deviated from its natural line and entered into a fresh order of things. Colin and Colette, the lovers in the piece, were no longer thought of, but whether Madame Dubarry might not have to sing:

"I have lost my only joy--
Colin leaves me all alone."

"Do you see the stunning success of that girl of yours?" asked Richelieu of Taverney.

He dashed open a glazed door to lead him into the lobby, when the act made a knave who was standing on the knob to peer into the hall, drop to the ground.

"Plague on the rogue," said the duke; brushing his sleeve, for the shock of the drop had dusted him. He saw that the spy was clad like one of the working people about the Palace.

It was a gardener's help, in fact, for he had a basket of flowers on his arm. He had saved himself from falling but spilt the flowers.

"Why, I know the rogue," said Taverney, "he was born on my estate. What are you doing here, rascal?"

"You see, I am looking on," replied Gilbert proudly.

"Better finish your work."

"My work is done," replied the young man humbly to the duke, without deigning to reply to the baron.

"I run up against this idle vagabond everywhere," grumbled the latter.

"Here, here, my lord," gently interrupted a voice; "my little Gilbert is a good workman and a most earnest botanist."

Taverney turned and saw Dr. Jussieu stroking the cheek of his ex-dependent. He turned red with rage and went off.

"The lackeys poking their noses in here!" he growled.

"And the maids, too--look at your Nicole, at the corner of the door there. The sly puss, she does not let a wink escape her."

Among twenty other servants, Nicole was holding her pretty head over theirs from behind and her eyes, dilated by surprise and admiration, seemed to see double. Perceiving her, Gilbert turned aloof.

"Come," said the duke to Taverney, "it is my belief that the King wants to speak to you. He is looking round for somebody."

The two friends made their way to the royal box.

Lady Dubarry and Aiguillon, both on their feet, were chatting.

Rousseau was alone in the admiration of Andrea; he was busy falling into love with her.

The illustrious actors were changing their dresses in their retiring rooms, where Gilbert had renewed the floral decorations.

Taverney, left by himself in the corridor while Richelieu went to the King, felt his heart alternately frozen and seared by the expectation.

Finally his envoy returned and laid a finger on his lips. His friend turned pale with joy, and was drawn under the royal box, where they heard what had few auditors.

Lady Dubarry was saying: "Am I to expect your Majesty to supper this evening?" and the reply was "I am afraid I am too tired and should like to be excused."

At this juncture the Dauphin dropped into the box and said, almost stepping on the countess's toes without appearing to see her:

"Sire, is your Majesty going to do us the honor of taking supper at the Trianon?"

"No, my son; I was just saying to the countess that I am too tired for anything. All your youthful liveliness bewilders me; I shall take supper alone."

The prince bowed and retired. Lady Dubarry courtseyed very low and went her way, quivering with ire. The King then beckoned to Richelieu.

"Duke, I have some business to talk to you upon; I have not been pleased with the way matters go on. I want an explanation, and you may as well make it while we have supper. I think I know this gentleman, duke?" he continued, eyeing Taverney.

"Certainly--it is Taverney."

"Oh, the father of this delightful songstress?"

"Yes, Sire."

The King whispered in the duke's ear while the baron dug his nails into his flesh to hide his emotion.

A moment after, Richelieu said to his friend: "Follow me, without seeming to do so."

"Where?"

"Never mind--come, all the same."

The duke set off and Taverney followed within twenty paces to a room where the following gentleman stopped in the anteroom.

He had not long to wait there. Richelieu, having asked the royal valet for what his master had left on the toilet table, came forth immediately with an article which the baron could not distinguish in its silken wrapper. But the marshal soon drew him out of his disquiet when he led him to the side of the gallery.

"Baron, you have sometimes doubted my friendship for you," observed the duke when they were alone, "and then you doubted the good fortune of yourself and children. You were wrong, for it has come about for you all with dazzling rapidity."

"You don't say that?" said the old cynic, catching a glimpse of part of the truth; he was not yet sundered from good and hence not entirely enlisted by the devil. "How is this?"

"Well, we have Master Philip made a captain with a company of soldiers furnished by the King. And Mdlle. de Taverney is nigh to being a marchioness."

"Go to! my daughter a---- "

"Listen to me, Taverney: the King is full of good taste. When talent accompanies grace, beauty and virtue, it enchants him. Now, your girl unites all these gifts in an eminent degree so that he is delighted by her."

"I wish you would make the word 'delighted' clearer, duke," said the other, putting on an air of dignity more grotesque than the speaker's, which the latter thought grotesque as he did not like pretences.

"Baron," he drily replied, "I am not strong on language and not even good at spelling. For me, delighted signifies pleased beyond measure. If you would not be delighted beyond measure to see your sovereign content with the grace, beauty and virtue of your offspring, say so. I will go back to his Majesty," and he spun round on his red heels with quite youthful sprightliness.

"Duke, you don't understand me--hang it! how sudden you are," grumbled Taverney, stopping him.

"Why do you say you are not pleased?"

"I never said so."

"You ask comments on the King's good pleasure--plague on the dunce who questions it!"

"Again, I tell you, I never opened my mouth on that subject. It is certain that I am pleased."

"Yes, you--for any man of sense would be: but your girl?"

"Humph!"

"My dear fellow, you have brought up the child like the savage that you are."

"My dear fellow, she has brought herself up all alone; you might guess that I did not bother myself about her. It was hard enough to keep alive in that hole at Taverney. Virtue sprang up in her of its own impulsion."

"Yet I thought that the rural swains rooted out ill weeds. In short, your girl is a nun."

"You are wrong--she is a dove."

Richelieu made a sour face.

"The dove had better get another turtle to mate, for the chances to make a fortune with that blessing are pretty scarce nowadays."

Taverney looked at him uneasily.

"Luckily," went on the other, "the King is so infatuated with Dubarry that he will never seriously lean towards others."

Taverney's disquiet became anxiety.

"You and your daughter need not worry," continued Richelieu. "I will raise the proper objections to the King and he will think no more about it."

"About what?" gasped the old noble, pale, as he shook his friend's arm.

"About making a little present to Mdlle. Andrea."

"A little present--what is it?" cried the baron full of hope and greediness.

"A mere trifle," said Richelieu, negligently, as he opened the parcel and showed a diamond collar. "A miserable little trinket costing only a few thousand livres, which his Majesty, flattered by having heard his favorite song sung well, wanted the singer to be sued to accept. It is the custom. But let us say no more since your daughter is so easily frightened."

"But you do not seem to see that a refusal would offend the King."

"Of course; but does not virtue always tread on the corn of somebody or other?"

"To tell the truth, duke, the girl is not so very lost to reason. I know what she will say or do."

"The Chinese are a very happy people," observed Richelieu.

"How so?" asked Taverney, stupefied.

"Because they are allowed to drown girls who are a trouble to their parents and nobody says a word."

"Come, duke, you ought to be fair," said Taverney; "suppose you had a daughter."

"'Sdeath! have I not a daughter, and it would be mighty unkind of anybody to slander her by saying she was ice. But I never interfere with my children after they get out of the nursery."

"But if you had a daughter and the King were to offer her a collar?"

"My friend, pray, no comparisons. I have always lived in the court and you have lived latterly like a Red Indian; there is no likeness. What you call virtue I rate as stupidity. Learn for your guidance that nothing is more impolite than to put it to people what they would do in such a case. Besides, your comparison will not suit. I am not the bearer of a diamond collar to Mdlle. de Taverney, as Lebel the valet of the King is a carrier; when I have such a mission, which is honorable as the present is rich, I am moral as the next man. I do not go near the young lady, who is admirable for her virtue--I go to her father--I speak to you, Taverney, and I hand you the collar, saying: Take it or leave it."

"If the present is only a matter of custom," observed the baron: "if legitimate and paternal---- "

"Why, you are never daring to suspect his Majesty of evil intentions," said Richelieu, gravely.

"God forbid, but what will the world say--I mean, my daughter---- "

"Yes or no, do you take it," demanded the intermediary, shrugging his shoulders.

Out darted Taverney's fingers, as he said with a smile twin-like to the envoy's:

"Thus you are moral."

"Is it not pure morality," returned the marshal, "to place the father, who purifies all, between the

enchanted state of the monarch and the charm of your daughter? Let Jean Jacques Rousseau, who was in these precincts a while ago, be the judge: he will declare that the famous Joseph of Biblical name was impure alongside of me."

He uttered these words with a phlegm, dry nobility, and perkiness imposing silence on Taverney's observations, and helping him to believe that he ought to dwell convinced. So he grasped his illustrious friend's hand and as he squeezed it, he said:

"Thanks to your delicacy, my daughter may accept this present."

"The source and origin of the fortune of which I was speaking to you at the commencement of our annoying discussion on virtue."

"I thank you with all my heart, duke."

"One word: most carefully keep the news of this boon from the Dubarry's friends. She is capable of quitting the King and running away."

"Would the King be sorry for that?"

"I do not know, but the countess would bear you ill-will. I would be lost, in that case; so be wary."

"Fear nothing: but bear my most humble thanks to his Majesty."

"And your daughter's--I shall not fail. But you are not at the end of the favor. You can thank him personally, dear friend, for you are invited to sup with him. We are a family party. We--his Majesty, you, and I, will talk about your daughter's virtue. Good bye, Taverney! I see Dubarry with Aiguillon and they must not spy us in conversation."

Light as a page, he skipped out of the gallery, leaving the old baron with the jewels, like a child waking up and finding what Santa Claus left in his sock while he slept.

C

T

THE marshal found his royal master in the little parlor, whither a few courtiers had followed him, preferring to lose their meal than have his glances fall on somebody else.

But Louis had other matters to do than look at these lords. The paltriness of these parasites would have made him smile at another time: but they awakened no emotion on this occasion in the railing monarch, who would spare no infirmity in his best friend--granting that he had any friends.

He went to the window and saw the coach of Dubarry driven away at great speed.

"The countess must be in a rage to go off without saying good-bye to me," he said aloud.

Richelieu, who had been waiting for his cue to enter, glided in at this speech.

"Furious, Sire?" he repeated; "because your Majesty had a little sport this evening? that would be bad on her ladyship's part."

"Duke, deuce a bit did I find sport," said the King: "on the other hand, I am fagged, and want repose. Music enervates me: I should have done better to go over to Luciennes for supper and wine: yes, plenty of drink, for though the wine there is wretched, it sends one to sleep. Still I can have a doze here."

"Your Majesty is a hundred times right."

"Besides, the countess will find more fun without me. Am I so very lively a companion? though she asserts I am, I don't believe a word of it."

"Your Majesty is a hundred times wrong, now."

"No, no, duke; really! I count my days now and I fall into brown studies."

"Sire, the lady feels that she will never meet a jollier companion and that is what makes her mad."

"Dash me if I know how you manage it, duke; you lure all the fair sex after you, as if you were still twenty. At that age, man may pick and choose: but at mine--women lead us by the nose."

The marshal laughed.

"My lord, if the countess is finding diversion elsewhere, the more reason for us to find ours where we can."

"I do not say that she is finding but that she will seek it."

"I beg to say that such a thing was never known."

"Duke," said the King, rising from the seat he had taken, "I should like to know by a sure hand whether the countess has gone home."

"I have my man Rafte, but it seems to me that the countess has gone sure enough. Where but straight home do you imagine she would go?"

"Who can tell--jealousy has driven her mad."

"Sire, would it not rather be your Majesty who has given her cause for it--any other assumption would be humiliating to all of us."

"I, make her jealous," said the King with a forced laugh; "in fact, duke, are you speaking in earnest?"

Richelieu did not believe what he said: he was close to the truth in thinking that the King wanted to know whether Lady Dubarry had gone home in order to be sure that she would not drop in at the Trianon.

"I will send Rafte to learn," he said: "what is your Majesty going to do before supper?"

"We shall sup at once. Is the guest without?"

"Overflowing with gratitude."

"And the daughter?"

"He has not mentioned her yet."

"If Lady Dubarry were jealous and was to come back---- "

"Oh, Sire, that would show such bad taste, and I do not believe the lady is capable of such enormity."

"My lord, she is fit for anything at such times, particularly when hate supplements her spite. She execrates Taverney, as well as your grace."

"Your Majesty might include a third person still more execrated--Mdlle. Andrea."

"That is natural enough," granted the King; "so it ought to be prepared that no uproar could be made to-night. Here is the steward--hush! give your orders to Rafte, and bring the person into the supper room."

In five minutes, Richelieu rejoined the King, accompanied by Taverney, to whom the host wished good evening most pleasantly.

The baron was sharp and he knew how to reply to crowned and coroneted heads so that they would see he was one of themselves and be on easy terms with them.

They sat at table and began to feast.

Louis XV. was not a good King, but he was a first-rate boon companion; when he liked, he was fine company for those who like jolly eaters, hearty drinkers and merry talkers. He ate well and drew the conversation round to Music. Richelieu caught the ball on the fly.

"Sire," said he, "if Music brings men into harmony, as our ballet-master says and your Majesty seems to think, I wonder if it works the same with the softer sex?"

"Oh, duke, do not drag them into the chat," said the King. "From the siege of Troy to our days, women have always exerted the contrary effect to music. You above all have good reasons not to bring them on the board. With one, and not the least dangerous, you are at daggers-drawn."

"The countess, Sire? is it any fault of mine?"

"It is."

"I hope your Majesty will kindly explain---- "

"I can briefly; and will with pleasure," returned the host jestingly: "public rumor says that she offered you the portfolio of some ministerial office and you refused it, which won you the people's favor."

Richelieu of course only too clearly saw that he was impaled in the dilemma. The King knew better than anybody that he had not been offered any place in any cabinet. But it was necessary to keep Taverney in the idea that it had been done. Hence the duke had to answer the joke so skillfully as to avoid the reproach the baron was getting ready for him.

"Sire," said he, "let us not argue about the effects so much as the cause. My refusal of a portfolio is a secret of state which your Majesty is the last to divulge at a merry board; but the cause of my rejecting, it is another matter."

"Ho, ho, so the cause is not a state secret, eh?" said the King chuckling.

"No, Sire, particularly none for your Majesty: who is at present, for my lord baron and myself, the most amiable host man mortal ever had; I have no secrets from my master. I yield up my whole mind to him for I do not wish it to be said that the King of France has a servant who does not tell him the truth."

"Pray, let us have the whole truth," said the monarch, while Taverney smoothed his face in imitation of the King's for fear the duke would go too far.

"Sire, in the kingdom are two powers that should be obeyed; your will, to begin with, and next that of the friends whom you deign to choose as intimates. The first power is irresistible and none try to elude it. The second is more sacred as it imposes duties of the heart on whomsoever serves you. This is called your trust: a minister ought to love while he obeys the favorite of your Majesty."

"Duke," said the King, laughing: "That is a fine maxim which I like to hear coming from your mouth. But I defy you to shout it out on the market-place."

"Oh, I am well aware that it would make the philosophers fly to arms," replied the old politician; "but I do not believe their cries or their arms much daunt your Majesty or me. The main point is that the two preponderating wills of the realm should be satisfied. Well, I shall speak out courageously to your Majesty, though I incur my disgrace or even my death--I cannot subscribe to the will of Lady Dubarry."

Louis was silent.

"But then," went on the duke, "is that ever to be the only other will? the contrary idea struck me the other day, when I looked around the court and saw the beavy of radiantly beauteous noble girls; were I the

ruler of France, the choice would not be difficult to make."

Louis turned to the second guest, who, feeling that he was being brought into the arena, was palpitating with hope and fear while trying to inspire the marshal, like a boy blows on the sail of his toy-boat in a tub of water.

"Is this your way of thinking, baron?" he asked.

"Sire," responded the baron with a swelling heart, "it seems to me that the duke is saying capital things."

"You agree with him about the handsome girls?"

"Why, my lord, it is plain that the court is adorned with the fairest blossoms of the country."

"Do you exhort me then to make a choice among the court beauties?"

"I should say I am altogether of the marshal's advice if I knew it was your Majesty's opinion."

During a pause the monarch looked complaisantly on the last speaker.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I should snap at your advice were I thirty; but I am a little too old now to be credulous about my inspiring a flame."

"Oh, Sire," said Richelieu, "I did think up to the time being that your Majesty was the most polite gentleman in the realm; but I see with profound grief that I was wrong; for I am old as Mathusaleh, for I was born in '94. Just think of it, I am sixteen years older than your Majesty."

This was adroit flattery. Louis always admired the lusty old age of this man who had outlived so many promising youngsters in his service; for with such an example he might hope to reach the same age.

"Granted: but I suppose you do not still fancy you can be loved for your own sake?"

"If I thought that aloud, I should be in disgrace with two ladies who told me the contrary this very morning."

"Ha, ha! but we shall see, my lords! Nothing like youthful society to rejuvenate a man."

"Yea, my lord, and noble blood is a salutary infusion, to say nothing of the gain to the mind."

"Still, I can remember that my grandfather, when he was getting on in years, never courted with the same dash as earlier."

"Pish, Sire," said Richelieu. "You know my respect for the King who twice put me in the Bastile; but that ought not to stay me from saying that there is no room for a comparison between the old age of Louis XIV. and Louis XV. at his prime."

The King was in the meet state this evening to receive this praise, which fell on him like the spray from the Fountain of Youth, or Althota's magic elixir.

Thinking the opening had come, Richelieu gave Taverney the hint by knocking his knee against his.

"Sire," said the baron, "will your Majesty allow me to present my thanks for the magnificent present made my daughter?"

"Nothing to thank me for, my lord. Mdlle. de Taverney pleased me with her decent and honorable bearing. I only wish my daughters had come from the convent as creditably. Certainly, Mdlle. Andrea--I think I have the name---- "

"Yes, Sire," cried the noble, delighted at the King having his daughter's name so pat.

"A pretty name! Certainly, she would have been the first on my list, and not solely from the alphabetical order: but it is not to be thought of--all my time is monopolized. But, baron, take this as settled: the young lady shall have all my protection. I fear she is not richly dowered?"

"Alas, no, Sire!"

"Then, I shall arrange about her marriage."

Taverney saluted very lowly.

"Rest on that score: but nothing presses, for she is quite young."

"Yes, and shrinks from marriage."

"Look at that, now!" exclaimed Louis, rubbing his hands and glancing at Richelieu. "In any case, apply to me if you are bothered in any way. Marshal," called the King, rising. "Did the little creature like the

jewel?" he asked him.

"Pardon my speaking in an undertone," said the duke, "but I do not want the father to hear. I want to say that though the creature shrinks from marriage, it does not follow that she shrinks from Majesty."

This was uttered with a freedom which pleased the King by its excess. The marshal trotted away to join Taverney, who had drawn aside to be respectful, and the pair quitted the gallery and went through the gardens.

It was here that Gilbert, in ambush, heard the old diplomatist say to his friend:

"All things taken into account and pondered over, it must be stated, though it may come hard, that you ought to send your daughter back into the convent, for I wager the King is enamored of her."

These words turned Gilbert more white than the snowflakes falling on his shoulder and brow.

C

P

As the hour of noon was sounding from the Trianon clock, Nicole ran in to tell Andrea that Captain Philip was at the door.

Surprised but glad, Andrea ran to meet the chevalier, who dismounted from his horse and was asking if his sister could be seen.

She opened the door herself to him, embraced him, and the pair went up into her rooms. It was only there that she perceived that he was sadder than usual, with sorrow in his smile. He was dressed in his stylish uniform with the utmost exactness and he had his horseman's cloak rolled up under his left arm.

"What is the matter, Philip?" she asked, with the instinct of affectionate souls for which a glance is sufficient revelation.

"Sister, I am under orders to go and join my regiment at Rheims."

"Oh, dear!" and Andrea exhaled in the exclamation part of her courage and her strength.

Natural as it was to hear of his departure, she felt so upset that she had to cling to his arm.

"Gracious, why are you afflicted to this decree?" he asked, as to shed. "It is a common thing in a soldier's life. And the journey is nothing to speak of. They do say the regiment is to be sent back to Strasburg in all probability."

"So you have come to bid me farewell?"

"That is it. Have you something particular to say?" he questioned, made uneasy by her grief, too exaggerated not to be founded.

Nicole was looking on at the scene with surprise for the leave-taking of an officer going to his garrison was not a catastrophe to be received by tears. Andrea understood this emotion, and she put on her lace mantilla to accompany her brother through the grounds to the outer gate.

"My only dear one," said she, deadly pale and sobbing, "you are going to leave me all alone and you ask why I weep? You will say the Dauphiness is kind to me? so she is, perfect in my eyes, and I regard her as a divinity? but it is because she dwells in a superior sphere that I feel for her respect, not affection. Affection is so needful to my heart that the want of it makes it collapse. Father? Oh, heaven, I am telling you nothing new when I say that our father is not a friend or guardian to me. Sometimes he looks at me so that I am frightened. I am more afraid than ever of him since you go away. I cannot tell, but the birds know that a storm is coming when they take to flight while still it is calm?"

"What storm are you to be on your guard against? I admit that misfortune may await us. Have you some forewarning of it? Do you know whether you ought to run to meet it or flee to avoid it?"

"I do not, Philip, only that my life hangs on a thread. It seems to me that in my sleep I am rolled to the brink of a chasm, where I am awakened, too late for me to withstand the attraction which will drag me over. With you absent, and none to help me, I shall be crushed at the bottom of the chasm."

"Dear sister, my good Andrea," said the captain, moved despite himself by this genuine fright, "you make too much of affection for which I thank you. You lose a defender, it is true, but only for the time. I shall not be so far that I am not within call. Besides, apart from fancies, nothing threatens you."

"Then, Philip, how is it that you, a man, feel as mournful as I do at this parting? explain this, brother?"

"It is easy, dear," returned Philip. "We are not only brother and sister, but had a lonely life which kept us together. It is our habit to dwell in close communion and it is sad to break the chain. I am sad, but only temporarily. I do not believe in any misfortune, save our not seeing each other for some months, or it may be a year. I resign myself and say Good-bye till we meet again."

"You are right," she said, staying her tears, "and I am mad. See, I am smiling again. We shall meet soon again."

She tenderly embraced him, while he regarded her with an affection which had some parental tenderness in it.

"Besides," he said, "you will have a comfort, in our father coming here to live with you. He loves you, believe me, but it is in his own peculiar way."

"You seem embarrassed, Philip--what is wrong?"

"Nothing, except that my horse is chafing at the gates because I ought to have been gone an hour ago."

Andrea assumed a calm face and said in a tone too firm not to be affectation:

"God save you, brother!"

She watched him mount his horse and ride off, waving his hand to the last. She remained motionless as long as he was in sight.

Then she turned and ran at hazard in the wood like a wounded fawn, until she dropped on a bench under the trees where she let a sob burst from her bosom.

"Oh, Father of the motherless," she exclaimed, "why am I left all alone upon earth?"

A slight sound in the thicket--a sigh, she took it to be, made her turn. She was startled to see a sad face rise before her. It was Gilbert's, as pale and cast-down as her own.

At sight of a man, though he was not a stranger, Andrea hastened to dry her eyes, too proud to show her grief to another. She composed her features and smoothed her cheeks which had been quivering with despair.

Gilbert was longer than she in regaining his calm, and his countenance was still mournful when she looked on it.

"Ah, Master Gilbert again," she said, with the light tone she always assumed when chance brought her and the young man together. "But what ails you that you should gaze on me with that dolorous air? Something must have saddened you--pray, what has saddened you?"

"If you really want to know," he answered with the more sorrow as he perceived the irony in her words, "it is the sadness of seeing you in misery."

"What tells you so? I am not in any grief," replied Andrea, brushing her eyes for the second time with her handkerchief.

Feeling that the gale was rising, the lover thought to lull it with his humility.

"I beg pardon, but I heard you sobbing---- "

"What, listening? you had better---- "

"It was chance," stammered the young man, who found it hard to tell her a lie.

"Chance? I am sorry that chance should help you to overhear my sobs, but I prithee tell me how does my distress concern you?"

"I cannot bear to hear a woman weep," rejoined Gilbert in a tone sovereignly displeasing the patrician.

"Am I but a woman to you, Master Gilbert?" replied the haughty girl. "I do not crave the sympathy of any one, and least of all of Master Gilbert."

"You are wrong to treat me to rudely," persisted the ex-dependent of the Taverneys, "I saw you sad in affliction. I heard you say that you would be all alone in the world by the departure of Master Philip. But no, my young lady, for I am by you, and never did a heart beat more devoted to you. I repeat that never will you be alone while my brain can think, my heart throb, or my arm be stretched out."

He was handsome with vigor, nobility and devotion while he uttered these words, although he put into them all the simplicity which the truest respect commands.

But it was decreed that everything he should say and do was to displease, offend and drive Andrea to make insulting retorts, as though each of his offers were an outrage and his supplications provocation.

She meant to rise to suit an action most harsh to words most stern; but a nervous shiver kept her in her seat. She thought, besides, that she would be more likely to be seen if erect, and she did not wish to be remarked talking with a Gilbert! She kept her seat, but she determined once for all to crush this tormenting little insect under foot.

"I thought I had already told you that you dreadfully displease me; your voice irritates me, and your Philosophical nonsense is repugnant to me. Why then, as I told you this much, are you obstinate in speaking

to me?"

"Lady, no woman should be irritated by sympathy being expressed for her." He was pale but constrained. "An honest man is the peer of any human creature, and perchance I, whom you so persistently ill-treat, deserve the sympathy which I regret you do not show for me."

"Sympathy," repeated Andrea at this reiteration of the word, fastening her eyes widely open with impertinence on him, "sympathy from me towards you? In truth, I have made a mistake about you. I took you for a pert fellow and you are a mad one."

"I am neither pert nor mad," returned the low-born lover, with an apparent calm which was costly to the pride we know he felt. "No, for nature made me your equal and chance made you my debtor."

"Chance again, eh?" sneered the baron's daughter.

"I ought to say, Providence. I should never have mentioned it but your insults bring it up in my mind."

"Your debtor, I think you say--why do you say that?"

"I should be ashamed if you had ingratitude in your composition, for God only knows what other defects have been implanted in you to counterbalance your beauty."

Andrea leaped to her feet at this.

"Forgive me," said he, "but you gall me too much at times and I forget the interest you inspire."

Andrea burst out into such hearty laughter that the lover ought to have been lifted to the height of wrath; but to her great astonishment, Gilbert did not kindle. He folded his arms on his breast, retaining his hostile expression and fiery look, and patiently waited for the end of her outraging merriment.

"Deign, young lady," said he coldly, "to reply to one question. Do you respect your father?"

"It looks, sirrah, as if you took the liberty of putting questions to me," she replied with the greatest haughtiness.

"Yes, you respect your father," he went on, "not on account of any parts of his or virtues: but simply because he gave you life. For this same boon, you are bound to love the benefactor. This laid down as a principle," said the loving philosopher, "why do you insult me--why repulse me and hate me--who have not given you life, but I prevented you losing it."

"You--you saved my life?" cried Andrea.

"You have not thought of it--rather, you have forgotten it; it is quite natural, for it was a year ago. Therefore I must remind or inform you. Yes, I saved your life at the risk of losing my own."

"I should like to learn where and when?" said Andrea.

"On that day when a hundred thousand people, crushing one another as they fled from masterless horses and flashing swords, strewed Louis XV. Place with dying and the dead."

"The last day of May?"

Andrea lost and regained her ironical smile.

"Oh, you are Baron Balsamo, are you? I cry you pardon for I did not know this either, before!"

"No, I am not the baron," replied Gilbert, with flaming eyes and tremulous lip; "I am the poor boy, offspring of the dregs of the Kingdom, whose folly, stupidity, and misfortune it is to be in love with you. It was because of this I followed you into that multitude. I am Gilbert who, separated from you by the crush, recognized you by the dreadful scream you raised. Gilbert, who fell near you but encompassed you with his arms so that twenty thousand hands tearing at them could not have relaxed the clasp. Gilbert, who placed himself between the stone post on which you would be smashed, to make a buffer of his breast. Gilbert, who seeing in the throng the strange man who seemed to command the other men, called out your name to the Baron Balsamo, so that he and his allied friends should come to your rescue. He yielded you up to a happier saver, did Gilbert, retaining of his prize only the flag--the scrap of your dress torn in the struggle with the thousands; I pressed that to my lips, in time to stop the blood which flew up from my shattered bosom. The rolling sea of the terrified and brutal overwhelmed me but you ascended, like the Angel of the Resurrection, to the abode of the blessed."

Gilbert exhibited himself wholly in this outburst, wild, simple and sublime, the same in his determination as in his love. In spits of her contempt, Andrea could not view him without astonishment. He believed for an

instant that his story had the irresistibility of love and truth. But the poor lad reckoned without unbelief, the want of faith which hate has. Hating Gilbert, Andrea let none of the arguments capture in this disdained lover.

"I see," she said, "that the author Rousseau has taught you how to weave romances."

"My love a romance?" he exclaimed, indignant.

"And one which you forced me to listen to."

"Is this all your answer?" faltered he, with dulled eyes and his heart aching as in a vice.

"I do not honor with any answer at all," responded Andrea, pushing him aside as she went by to meet Nicole who was seeking her.

On recognizing her former sweetheart, Nicole regretted that she had not gone round so as to approach unseen and listen. She came also to announce that the baron and the Duke of Richelieu were wishful to see her young lady.

Andrea departed, with Nicole following, who glanced behind ironically at Gilbert, who, rather livid than merely pale, mad than agitated, and frenzied than angered, shook his fists after the enemies, muttering between his grinding teeth:

"Oh, thou creature without a heart and body with no soul, I saved thy life and concentrated my love upon thee and silenced all sentiment which might offend what I deemed thy candor; for in my delirium I believed thee a virgin holy as the Madonna. Now that I closely see you, I behold but a woman, and I am a man who will be revenged some day on you, Andrea Taverney! Twice have you been under my hand and I spared you. Beware of the third time, Andrea--and we shall meet again!"

He bounded into the underwood like a wounded wolf-cub, turning round as it flies to show its tusks and bloodshot eyes.

C

F

AT the end of the walk, Andrea perceived her father and the marshal, strolling before the vestibule as they awaited her. They seemed the happiest brace of friends in the world: they were arm in arm like a new Orestes and Pylades.

They seemed to brighten up still more at the sight of the girl, and made one another notice her beauty, enhanced by her vexation and the swiftness of her steps.

The marshal saluted the girl as he might have done were she the officially proclaimed royal mistress. This did not escape Taverney: it delighted him; but this mixture of gallantry and respect surprised the receiver. For the skilled courtier could put as much in one bow as the rogue in the comedy can put into one pretended Turkish word.

Andrea replied with a courtsey as ceremonious, and with charming grace invited them into her suite.

The duke admired the elegant daintiness which made the prim rooms not a palace but a fane. He and the baron took armchairs and the young hostess sat on a folding-chair, with one elbow on her harpsichord.

"Young lady," began the marshal, "I bring you from his Majesty all the compliments which your enchanting voice and consummate musicianly skill won from the auditors yesterday. His Majesty feared to make jealous folk cry out if he praised you too publicly. So he charged me to express the pleasure you caused him."

All blushes, the girl was so lovely that the marshal continued as though he were speaking for himself.

"The King affirmed that he had never seen any person in the court who so bountifully united gifts of the mind with those of the physique."

"You forget the qualities of the heart, my lord; Andrea is the best of daughters," added the baron, gushingly.

For a space the marshal feared that the old rogue was about to weep. Full of admiration for this effort of paternal sensitiveness, he exclaimed:

"The heart--Alas! you are the sole judge of what tenderness may be enclosed in that heart. Were I in my twenty-fifth year, I would lay my life and fortune at her feet."

As Andrea did not yet know how to meet the courtier' fulsome compliments, all the duke earned was a murmur.

"The King wishes to be allowed a testimonial of his satisfaction, and he charges your father, the baron, to transmit it to you. What am I to answer his Majesty on your behalf?"

"Your grace is to assure his Majesty of my entire gratitude," replied Andrea who saw in the exaggeration only the respect of a subject to the sovereign. "Tell the King that I am overwhelmed with kindness at being thought of, and that I am unworthy the attention of so mighty a monarch."

Richelieu appeared enthusiastic after this reply, uttered in a steady voice without any hesitation. He took her hand and kissed it respectfully, saying, as he gloated over her:

"A queenly hand, a fairy foot: wit, will and candor. Ah, my lord, what a treasure! It is not a lady you have there, but a queen."

He took leave, while Taverney swelled with pride and hope. He was a trifle perplexed at being alone with his daughter, for her looks pierced him like a diver penetrating the sea with his electric lamp-ray.

"The Duke of Richelieu was saying, father, that the King had entrusted some token of his gratification to you--what is it, please?"

"Ha, she is interested," uttered the old noble: "I would not have believed it. So much the better, Satan!"

Slowly he drew from his pocket the jewel-case given him by the marshal overnight, in the same way as fond papas produce the box of candies for the pet child.

"Jewels!" ejaculated Andrea.

"Do you like them?"

It was a string of pearls of great price; diamonds interlinked them: a diamond clasp, ear-rings, and a tiara for the headdress gave to the whole set the value of some thirty thousand crowns at the least.

"Heavens, father, the King must make some mistake," cried Andrea, "it is too handsome. I should be ashamed to wear them. What dresses have I to go with such gems?"

"I like your finding fault with them for being too rich," sneered the baron.

"You do not understand me, sir, I only say they are above my station."

"The donor of these gems is able to give you a wardrobe in keeping."

"But such bounty!"

"Do not my services warrant them?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, I forgot them," said Andrea, bending her head but unconvinced. She closed the case after a pause.

"I cannot wear such ornaments," said she, "while you and my brother stand in need of the necessities of life; this superfluity would hurt my eyes in thinking of your wants."

Taverney pressed her hand and smiled.

"Do not trouble yourself about that, my child," he said. "The King does this more for me than you. We are in favor, darling. It would not be like a respectful subject or a grateful woman not to appear before our sovereign in the ornaments he kindly presented."

"I shall obey, my lord."

"And do it with pleasure. The set does not seem to be to your taste?"

"I am not a judge of such things."

"Know then that those pearls are worth alone some fifty thousand livres."

"It is strange," said the girl, clasping her hands, "that his Majesty should make me such a present: only think!"

"I do not understand you, miss!" said Taverney in a dry tone.

"Everybody will be astounded if I wear such jewelry."

"Jewels are made to astound the world. Why in your case?" said he in the same tone, with a cold and overbearing air which made her wince.

"A scruple."

"This is strange, to hear you raise scruples where I do not see any. It takes these candid girls to recognize evil and see the snake in the grass though so well hidden that no one else perceives it. Long live the maiden of sixteen who makes old grenadiers like me blush!"

Hiding her confusion in her pearly hands, Andrea moaned:

"Oh, brother, why are you so far?"

Did Taverney hear this or only guess it by the marvellous perspicacity which was his? He changed his tone, at all events, and taking both her hands, he asked:

"Am I not by you to counsel and love you? do you not feel proud to contribute to the welfare of your brother and myself?"

"Yes," she answered.

He concentrated a look full of caresses upon her.

"You will be the queen of Taverney," he said, "to take up Richelieu's words. The King has distinguished you: the Dauphiness also," he added quickly, "and in the family of these illustrious personages you are to build up your future, while making their lives the happier. Friend of the princess and the King, what bliss! Remember Agnes Sorel. She restored honor to the French crown. All good Frenchmen will venerate your name. You may be the staff in his old age to the ruler of France. Our glorious monarch will cherish you like a daughter, and you will reign over France by the right of beauty, courage and fidelity."

"Why, how can I be all this?" demanded she, opening her astonished eyes.

"My dear, I have often told you that people in society must be taught to like virtue by its being made agreeable. Virtue, prudish, lugubrious, whining psalms, makes those flee who were ardently going up to it. Give yours all the lures of coquetry, and even of vice. Be so lovely that the court will speak of none but you: so loveable that the King cannot do without you; be so secret and reserved, save for our master, that they will attribute the power to you before you grasp it."

"I do not follow you in this last point," observed Andrea.

"Let me guide you: execute without understanding, which is the best course in a wise and generous creature like you. By the way, to begin with the first point, here is a hundred louis to line your purse. Provide a wardrobe worthy of the rank to which you are summoned since the King has kindly distinguished us."

He gave the gold to his daughter, kissed her hand and went out. He walked so briskly up the alley by which he came that he did not notice Nicole there, chatting with a nobleman who whispered in her ear.

C

T

ALWAYS bearer of good news, the Duke of Richelieu called on the Taverneys to announce that the King found a regiment for Captain Philip, not a company.

The conversation was the same as usual among the three at dinner; the duke spoke of his King, the baron of his daughter and Andrea of her brother. Richelieu preached on the same text as the baron, and enunciated his doctrine, so pagan, Parisian and courtier-like, that the girl had to confess that her kind of virtue could not be the true one if the nobles were to be the left-handed queens of the French monarchs whom the two tempters did not hesitate to cite.

At seven, the duke rose from the table as he had an appointment at Versailles, he said.

In going into the anteroom for his hat, he met Nicole who always had something to do there when the duke called.

"I wish you would come along with me, little lass," he said; "I should like you to take a bouquet the Duchess of Noailles is getting ready for my daughter the Countess of Egmont."

Nicole courtseyed as the shepherdesses did in Rousseau's comic operas. Leaning on Nicole's shoulder, he went down stairs, and when out on the lawn with her, said:

"Little maid, can you tell me the name of the sweetheart Nicole Legay has found--a well-turned gallant whom she used to welcome in Coq Heron Street, and receives here in Versailles. He is a French Guards corporal called--what do you say the name is?"

The girl was in hopes that the marshal did not know the name if he knew everything else.

"Faith, tell me, my lord, since you know so much," she said saucily.

"Beausire," said the marshal: "and he is a beau already; whether he will ever be a sire, I cannot say."

Nicole clasped her hands in prudery which did not baffle the marshal.

"Pest take us!" he said: "making love appointments under the eaves of Trianon: if Lady Noailles catches a whiff of this she will have Nicole Legay sent to the Salpetriere House of Correction and Corporal Beausire will have a row in the royal galleys."

"Not if I have your grace's protection."

"Oh, that is granted. You will not be imprisoned and driven from the place, but left free and enriched."

"Oh, what must I do, my lord, tell me quick."

"Mere child's play."

"Whom am I to do it for--my own good or your grace's?"

"Zounds," said the duke, eyeing her sharply, "what a sly puss you are!"

"Pray have done."

"It is for your good," he said plumply. "When Corporal Beausire comes to keep his tryst---- "

"At seven o'clock---- "

"Exactly. Say to him: We are discovered; but I have a patron who will save us both: you from the galleys, me from the jail. Let us be off."

"Be off?"

"Since you love him, you will marry and be off," said the duke.

"Love him, yes: but marry him? ha, ha, ha!" and the duke was stupefied by the laugh.

Even at court he had not met many hussies as shameless as this. Understanding the sly glance, he replied:

"In any case I will pay the expenses of this double journey."

Nicole asked no more: as long as the excursion was paid for the rest mattered not a jot.

"Do you know what you are thinking of," said he quickly, for he was beaten and he did not like to dwell

at that point.

"Faith, I do not."

"Why, the thought strikes you that your young mistress may wake up in the night and call you. This would raise the alarm before you got well away."

"I never thought of that, but I do now, and that I had better stay."

"Then Beausire will be caught and will expose you."

"Never mind: Mdlle. Andrea is kind and will speak to the King, in whose good graces she is, and he will pardon me my offense."

The marshal bit his lip.

"I tell you that Nicole is a fool. Mdlle. Andrea is not in the King's good graces as deeply as you may suppose and I will have you locked up where good graces have no effect in softening the straw bed or shortening the whiplash."

"Stay--How can my mistress be prevented from rising and ringing in the night for Nicole? She might be up a dozen times."

"Oh, troubled with my complaint, insomnia. She ought to take the remedy I do: and if she would not, you could make her do it."

"How could I make my mistress do anything, my lord?" inquired Nicole.

"It is the fashion to have an evening's drink--orangeade or licorice water---- "

"My young lady has a glass of water by her bedside, sometimes with a lump of sugar in it, or perfumed with orangewater, if her nerves are out of order."

"Wonderful, just like me," said Richelieu, taking out a handful of Exchequer notes. "If you were to put a couple of drops from my own bottle which I hand you, the young lady would sleep all the night."

"Good: and I will lock her in so that nobody can disturb her till the morning."

"No," said Richelieu, quickly. "That is just what you must not do. Leave the door ajar."

He understood that the girl saw all the plot.

"Money for the flight--the phial for the sleep--but they lock the gates and I have no key."

"But I am a First Gentleman in Attendance on the King and have my master-key."

"How timely all falls in," said Nicole; "it seems a whole calendar of miracles. Adieu, my lord."

Laughing in her sleeve, the traitress glided away in the dark.

"Again I succeed," thought Richelieu: "but I must be getting old to be rebuffed by this little imp. Never mind, if I come out the winner."

C

S

FROM his garret, Gilbert was watching, or rather devouring Andrea's room. It would be hard to tell whether his eyes now gazed with love or hatred. But the curtains were drawn and he could see nothing in that quarter; he turned to another.

Here he espied the plume of Corporal Beausire, as the soldier to beguile his waiting, whistled a tune. It was not till ten minutes had elapsed that Nicole appeared. She made her lover a sign which he understood, for he nodded and went towards a walk in a cutting leading to the Little Trianon.

Nicole ran back as lightly as a bird.

"Ha, ha," thought Gilbert, "Nicole and her trooper have something to say to each other which will not bear witnesses. Good!"

He was no longer curious about Nicole's flirtations, but he regarded her as a natural enemy and it was wise to know all her doings. In her immorality he wanted to find the weapon with which he might victoriously meet her in case she should attack him. He did not doubt that the campaign would open and he meant to have a good supply of weapons, like a true warrior.

So he nimbly came down from his loft, and reached the gardens by the chapel side-door. He had nothing to fear now as he knew all the coverts of the place like a fox at home. Thus he was able to reach the clump where he heard a strange sound for the woods--the chink of coin on a stone. Gliding like a serpent up to the terrace wall, hedged with lilacs, he saw Nicole at the grating, emptying a purse on a stone out of Beausire's reach by being on her side of the railing. It was the purse given by Richelieu, or strictly speaking the cash for the Treasury notes which she had converted. The fat gold pieces clinked down, glittering, while the corporal, with kindled eye and trembling hand, attentively looked at Nicole and them without comprehending how they came into company.

"My dear Beausire, more than once you have wanted me to elope," began Nicole.

"And to marry you," added the soldier, quite enthusiastically.

"We will argue that point hereafter," replied the girl; "at present, the main thing is to get away. Can we be off in a couple of hours?"

"In ten minutes, if you like."

"No; I have some work to do first and a couple of hours will suit me. Take these fifty louis," and she passed the amount between the bars; he pocketed them without counting, "and in an hour and a half be here with a coach."

"I do not shrink: but I am fearful about you--when the money is spent you will regret the palace and----"

"Oh, how thoughtful you are! do not be alarmed: I am not one of the sort to become unfortunate. Have no scruples. We shall see what comes next after the fifty louis."

She counted another fifty louis into her own purse: Beausire's eyes became phosphorescent.

"I would jump into a blazing furnace for you," he said.

"You are not asked to do so much," she returned: "get the coach and in two hours we are off."

"Agreed," and he drew her to the rails to kiss her. "Oh, how are you going to get through the railings?"

"Stupid, I have the pass-key."

Beausire uttered an Ah! full of admiration, and fled.

With brisk feet and thoughtful head, Nicole returned to her mistress, leaving Gilbert alone, to cogitate the questions which this interview excited. All he could guess of the puzzles was how the girl had obtained the money. This negation of his perspicacity was so goading to his natural curiosity or his acquired mistrust--have it either way--that he decided to pass the night in the open air, cold though it was, under the damp trees, to await the sequel to this scene.

A huge black cloud, coming out of the south, covered all the sky, so that beyond Versailles the sombre pall gradually lapped up all the stars which had been gleaming a while before in their azure canopy.

Nicole feared that some whim of her mistress would contravene her plan, and with that air of interest which the artful cat knew so well how to take, she said:

"I am afraid that you are not very well to-night; your eyes are red and swollen; I should think repose would do you good."

"Do you think so? perhaps it would," answered Andrea, without paying much heed, but extending her feet on a rug as she sat.

The girl accepted this reclining pose as a signal for her to take down her mistress's headdress for the night; the unbuilding of a structure of ribbons, flowers and wire, which the most skillful "house-breaker" could not have demolished in an hour. Nicole was not a quarter of that time doing it.

The toilet for the night being completed, Andrea gave her orders for the coming day. The tuner was to come for her harpsichord and some books which Philip had sent to Versailles were to be fetched. Nicole tranquilly answered that if she were not roused in the night she would be up early, and would do everything before her mistress rose.

As Andrea, in her long night wrapper, was dreaming in her chair, Nicole put two drops of the draught Richelieu had given her, into the glass of drink on the night-table. Turbid for a moment, the water took an opal tint which faded away gradually.

"Your night-drink is set out," said the maid: "your dresses folded up and the night-light lit. As I must be up early, can I go to bed now?"

"Yes," replied Andrea, absently.

Nicole went out and glided into the garden.

Gilbert was looking out for her as he promised himself he would do, and saw her go up to the gates where she passed the master key to Beausire, who was ready. The gate was opened and the girl slipped through. The gate was locked again and the key thrown over, where Gilbert noticed its place of falling on the sward.

He drew a long breath in relief for he was quit of Nicole, an enemy. Andrea was left alone, and he might penetrate to her room.

This idea set his blood boiling with all the fury of fear and disquiet, curiosity and desire.

But, as he placed his foot on the lowest stairs of the flight leading to Andrea's corridor, he beheld her, garbed in white, at the top step, coming down.

So white and solemn was she that he recoiled, and buried himself in a copse.

Once before, at Taverney, he had seen her thus walking in her sleep, when she was, without his suspecting it, under the mesmeric influence of Balsamo, the Magician.

Andrea passed Gilbert, almost touched him but did not see him.

Bewildered and overwhelmed, he felt his knees crook beneath him: he was frightened.

Not knowing to what errand to ascribe this night roaming, he watched her: but his reason was confounded, and his blood beat with impetuosity in his temples, being nearer folly than the coolness which a good observer ought to possess. He viewed her as he had always done since this fatal passion had entered his heart.

All of a sudden he thought the mystery was revealed: Andrea was not wandering out of her mind, but going to keep an appointment, albeit her step was slow and sepulchral.

A lightning flash illumined the sky. By its bluish glare Gilbert caught sight of a man, hiding in the linden walk, with pale visage and clothes in disorder. He stretched out one hand towards the girl as though to beckon her to him.

Something like pincers nipped Gilbert's heart and he half rose to see the better.

Another lightning stroke streaked the sky.

He recognized Baron Balsamo, covered with dust, who had by the aid of mysterious intelligence,

entered the locked-up Trianon, and was as invincibly and fatally drawing Andrea to him as a snake may a bird. Not till within two steps of him did she stop, when he took her hand and she quivered all over her body.

"Do you see?" he asked.

"Yes," was her reply, "but you have nearly been the death of me in bringing me out like this."

"It cannot be helped," returned Balsamo: "I am in a whirl, and am ready to die with the craze upon me."

"You do indeed suffer," said she, informed of his state by the contact of his hand alone.

"Yes, and I come to you for consolation. You alone can save me. Can you follow me---- "

"Yes, if you conduct me with your mind."

"Come!"

"Ah," said Andrea, "we are in Paris--a street lit by a single lamp--we enter a house--we go up to the wall which opens to let us pass through. We are in so strange a chamber, with no doors and the windows are barred. How greatly in disorder is everything!"

"But it is empty? where is the person who was there last?"

"Give me some object of hers that I may be in touch."

"This is a lock of her hair."

Andrea laid the hair on her bosom.

"Oh, I know this woman, whom I have seen before--she is fleeing into the city."

"Yes; but what was she doing these two hours before? Trace back."

"Wait: she is lying on a sofa with a cut in the breast. She wakes from a sleep, and seeks round her. Taking a handkerchief she ties it to the window bars. Come down, poor woman! She weeps, she is in distress, she wrings her arms--ah! she is looking for a corner of the wall on which to dash out her brains. She springs towards the chimney-place where two lion heads in marble are embossed. On one of them she would beat out her brains when she sees a spot of blood on the lion's eye. Blood, and yet she had not struck it?"

"It is mine," said the mesmerist.

"Yes, yours. You cut your fingers with a dagger, the dagger with which she stabbed herself and you tried to get it away from her. Your bleeding fingers pressed the lion's head."

"It is true: how did she get out?"

"I see her examine the blood, reflect, and then lay her finger where yours was pressed. Oh, the lion's head gives way--it is a spring which works: the chimney-plate opens."

"Cursed imprudence of mine," groaned the conspirator: "unhappy madman! I have betrayed myself through love. But she has gone out and flees?"

"The poor thing must be pardoned, she is so distressed."

"Whither goes she, Andrea? follow, follow, I will it!"

"She stops in a room where are armor and furs: a safe is open but a casket usually kept in it is now on a table: she knows it again. She takes it."

"What is in it?"

"Your papers. It is covered with blue velvet and studded with silver, the lock and bands are of the same metal."

"Ha! was it she took the casket?" cried Balsamo, stamping his foot.

"Yes, she. Going down the stairs to the anteroom, she opens the door, draws the chain undoing the street door and is out in the street."

"It is late?"

"It is nighttime. Once out, she runs like a mad thing up on the main street towards the Bastile. She knocks up against passengers and questions."

"Lose not a word--what does she say?"

"She asks a man clad in black where she can find the Chief of Police."

"So it was not a vain threat of hers. What does she do?"

"Having the address, she retraces her steps to cross a large square---- "

"Royale Place--it is the right road. Read her intention."

"Run, run quick! she is going to denounce you--if she arrives at Criminal Lieutenant Sartine' before you, you are lost!"

Balsamo uttered a terrible yell, sprang into the hedges, burst a small door, and got upon the open ground. There an Arab horse was waiting, on which he leaped at a bound. It started off like an arrow towards Paris.

Andrea stood mute, pale, and cold. But as though the magnetiser carried life away with him, she collapsed and fell. In his eagerness to overtake Lorenza, Balsamo had forgotten to arouse Andrea from the mesmeric sleep.

She had barely touched the ground before Gilbert leaped out with the vigor and agility of the tiger. He seized her in his arms and without feeling what a burden he had undertaken, he carried her back to the room which she had left on the call of Balsamo.

All the doors had been left open by the girl, and the candle was still burning.

As he stumbled against the sofa when he blundered in, he naturally placed her upon it. All became enfevered in him, though the lifeless body was cold. His nerves shivered and his blood burned.

Yet his first idea was pure and chaste: it was to restore consciousness to this beautiful statue. He sprinkled her face with water from the decanter.

But at this period, as his trembling hand was encircling the narrow neck of the crystal bottle, he heard a firm but light step make the stairs of wood and brick squeak on the way to the chamber.

It could not be Nicole who was on the way with Beausire or Balsamo who was galloping to Paris.

Whoever it was, Gilbert would be caught and expelled from the palace.

He fully comprehended that he was out of his place here. He blew out the candle and dashed into Nicole's room, timing his movement as the thunder boomed in the heavens.

Through its glazed door he could see into the room he quitted and the anteroom.

In this latter burnt a night-light on a small table. Gilbert would have put that out also if he had time, but the steps creaked now on the landing. A man appeared on the sill, timidly glided through the antechamber, and shut the door which he bolted.

Gilbert held his breath, glued his face to the glass and listened with all his might.

The storm growled solemnly in the skies, large raindrops spattered on the windows, and in the corridor, an unfastened shutter banged sinisterly against the wall from time to time.

But the tumult of nature, these exterior sounds, however alarming, were nothing to Gilbert: all his thought, mind and being were concentrated in his gaze, fastened on this man.

Passing within two paces, this intruder walked into the other room. Gilbert saw him grope his way up to the bed, and make a gesture of surprise at finding it untenanted. He almost knocked the candle off the table with his elbow; but it fell on the table where the glass save-all jingled on the marble top.

"Nicole," the stranger called twice, in a guarded voice.

"Why, Nicole?" muttered Gilbert. "Why does this man call on Nicole when he ought to address her mistress?"

No voice replying, the man picked up the candle and went on tiptoe to light it at the night-lamp.

Then it was that Gilbert's attention was so concentrated on this strange night visitor that his eyes would have pierced a wall.

Suddenly he started and drew back a step although he was in concealment.

By the light of the two flames he had recognized in the man holding the candle--the King! All was clear to him: the flight of Nicole, the money counted down between her and Beausire, and all the dark plot of Richelieu and Taverney of which Andrea was the object.

He understood why the King should call upon Nicole, the complaisant female Judas who had sold her mistress.

At the thought of what the royal villain had come to commit in this room, the blood rushing to the young man's head blinded him.

He meant to call out; but the reflection that this was the Lord's anointed, the being still full of awe as the King of France--that froze the tongue of Gilbert to his mouth-roof.

Meanwhile, Louis XV. entered the room once more, bearing the light. He perceived Andrea, in the white muslin wrapper, with her head thrown back on the sofa pillow, with one foot on another cushion and the other, cold and stiff, out of the slipper, on the carpet.

At this sight the King smiled. The candle lit up this evil smile; but almost instantly a smile as sinister lighted up Andrea's face.

Louis uttered some words, probably of love; and placing the light on the table, he cast a glance out at the enflamed sky, before kneeling to the girl, whose hand he kissed.

This was so chilly that he took it between both his to warm it, and with his other arm enclasping the soft and so beautiful body, he bent over to murmur some of the loving nonsense fitted for sleeping maids. His face was so close to hers that it touched it.

Gilbert felt in his pocket for a knife with a long blade which he used in pruning trees.

The face was as cold as the hand, which made the royal lover rise; his eyes wandered to the Cinderella foot, which he took hold of--it was as cold as the hand and the cheek. He shuddered for all seemed a marble statue.

Gilbert gritted his teeth and opened the knife, as he beheld so much beauty and regarded the royal threat as a robbery intended on him.

But the King dropped the foot as he had the hand. Surprised at the sleep which he had thought to be feigned in prudery by a coquet, he prepared to learn the nature of this insensibility.

Gilbert crept half way out of the doorway, with set teeth, glittering eye and the knife bared in his grip to stab the King.

Suddenly a frightful flash of lightning lit up Andrea's face with a vivid glare of violet and sulphur light while the thunder made every article of furniture dance in the room. Frightened by her pallor, immobility and silence, Louis XV. recoiled, muttering:

"Truly the girl is dead!"

The idea of having wooed a corpse sent a shudder through his veins. He took up the candle and looked at Andrea by its flickering flame. Seeing the brown-circled eyes, the violet lips, the disheveled tresses, the throat which no breath raised, he uttered a shriek, let the candlestick fall, and staggered out through the antechamber like a drunken man, knocking against the wainscotting in his alarm.

Knife still in hand, Gilbert came out of his covert. He advanced to the room door and for a space contemplated the lovely young maid still in the profound sleep.

The candle smouldering on the floor lit up the delicate foot and the pure lines above it of the adorable creature.

Gilbert trod on the wick and in sudden obscurity was blotted out the dreadful smile which was curling his lips.

"Andrea," he muttered, "I swore that you should not escape me the third time that you fell into my hands as you did the other two. Andrea, a terrible end was needed to the romance which you mocked at me for composing!"

With extended arms he walked towards the sofa where the girl was still cold, motionless and deprived of all feeling.

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THE mesmerist had galloped on the barb through Versailles in a few seconds and a league on the road to Paris when an idea came as comfort in the midst of his misery at the fear that all he did would be too late. He saw his brothers of the secret society at the mercy of his foes, and the woman who caused all this, through his infatuation for her, going free.

"Oh, if ever she returns into my power---- "

He made a desperate gesture, as he pulled up the splendid horse short on its haunches.

"Let me see," he said, frowning, "is silence a word or a fact? can it do or not do? let me try my will, again. Lorenza," he said while making the passes to throw the magnetic fluid to a distance, "Lorenza, sleep, I will it! Wherever you are, sleep, I will it, and rely upon it. Cleave the air, oh, my supreme will! cross all the currents antipathetic or indifferent; go through the walls like a cannonball; strike her and annihilate her will. Lorenza, I will have you sleep--I will have you mute!"

After this mighty effort of animal magnetism, he resumed the race, but used neither whip nor spur and gave the Arab rein.

It appeared as if he wanted to make himself believe in the potency of the spell he exercised.

While he was apparently peacefully proceeding, he was framing a plan of action. It was finished as he reached the paving stones of Sevres. He stopped at the Park gates as if he expected somebody. Almost instantly a man emerged from a coach-doorway and came to him.

It was his German attendant Fritz.

"Have you gathered information?" asked the master.

"Yes, Lady Dubarry is in Paris."

Balsamo raised a triumphant glance to heaven.

"How did you come?"

"On Sultan, now ready saddled in the inn stables here."

He went for the horse and came back on its back.

Balsamo was writing under the lantern of the town tax-gatherer's office door with a pen which was self-fed with ink.

"Ride back to town with this note," said he, "to be given to Lady Dubarry herself. Do it in half an hour. Then get home to St. Claude street, where you will await Signora Lorenza, who will soon be coming home. Let her pass without staying her or saying anything."

At the same time he said "He would!" Fritz laid spur and whip on Sultan, who sprang off, astonished at this unaccustomed aggression, with a painful neigh.

Balsamo rode on by the Paris Road, entering the capital in three quarters of an hour, almost smooth of face and calm in eye--if not a little thoughtful.

The mesmerist had reasoned correctly: as rapid as Dejerrid the steed might be, it was not as swift as the will, and that alone could outstrip Lorenza escaped from her prison-house.

As Andrea--the other medium had clearly seen, the vengeful Italian had found her way to the residence of Lieutenant Sartines.

Questioned by an usher, she replied merely by these words:

"Are you Lord Sartines?"

The servant was surprised that this young and lovely woman, richly clothed and carrying a velvet-covered casket under her arm, should confuse his black coat and steel chain of office with the embroidered coat and perriwig of the Lieutenant of Police, though a foreigner. But as a lieutenant is never offended at being called a captain, and as the speaker's eye was too steady and assured to be a lunatic's, he was convinced that she brought something of value in the casket and showed her into the secretaries.

The upshot of all was that she was allowed to see the Minister of Police.

He sat in an octagonal room, lighted by a number of candles.

Sartines was a man of fifty, in a dressing gown, and enormous wig, limp with curling and powder; he sat before a desk with looking-glass panels enabling him to see any one coming into the study without having to turn and study their faces before arranging his own.

The lower part of the desk formed a secretary where were kept in drawers his papers and those in cipher which could not be read even after his death, unless in some still more secret drawer were found the key to the cipher. This piece of mechanism was built expressly for the Regent Duke of Orleans to keep his poisons in, and it came to Sartines from his Prime Minister Cardinal Dubois per the late Chief of Police. Rumor had it that it contained the famous contract called the "Compact of Famine," the statutes of the Great Grain Ring among the directors of which figured Louis XV.

So the Police Chief saw in this mirror the pale and serious face of Lorenza as she advanced with the casket under her arm.

"Who are you--what do you want?" he challenged without looking round.

"Am I in the presence of Lord Sartines, Head of the Police?"

"Yes," he curtly answered.

"What proof have I of that?" she asked.

This made him turn round.

"Will it be good proof if I send you to prison?"

She did not reply but looked round for the seat which she expected to be offered her by right, as to any lady of her country. He was vanquished by that single look for Count Alby de Sartines was a well-bred gentleman.

"Take a chair," he said brusquely.

Lorenza drew an armchair to her and sat down.

"Speak quick," said the magistrate; "what do you want?"

"To place myself under your protection," answered Lorenza.

"Ho, ho," said he with a jeering look, peculiar to him.

"My lord, I have been abducted from my family and forced into a clandestine marriage by a man who has been ill-using me during three years and would be my death."

He looked at the noble countenance and was moved by the voice so sweet that it seemed to sing.

"Where do you come from?" he asked.

"I am a Roman and my name is Lorenza Feliciani."

"Are you a lady of rank, for I do not know the name?"

"I am a lady and I crave justice on the man who has incarcerated and sequestrated me."

"This is not in my province, since you say you are his wife."

"But the marriage was performed while I was asleep."

"Plague on it! you must enjoy sound sleep! I mean to say that this is not in my way. Apply to a lawyer, for I never care to meddle in these matrimonial squabbles." He waved his hand as much as to say "Be off!" but she did not stir.

"I have not finished;" she said "you will understand that I have not come here to speak of frivolities, but to have revenge. The women of my country revenge and do not go to law."

"This is different," said Sartines: "but have despatch for my time is dear."

"I told you that I come for protection against my oppressor. Can I have it?"

"Is he so powerful?"

"More so than any King."

"Pray, explain, my dear lady: why should I accord you my protection against a man according to your statement more powerful than a king, for a deed which may not be a crime. If you want to be revenged,

take revenge, only do not bring yourself under our laws; if you do a misdeed it will be you whom I must arrest. Then we shall see all about it. That is the bargain."

"No, my lord, you will not arrest me, for my revenge is of great utility to you, the King and France. I revenge myself by revealing the secrets of this monster."

"Ha, this man has secrets," said Sartines interested perforce.

"Great political secrets, my lord. But will you shield me?"

"What kind of shield?" coldly asked the magistrate; "silver or official?"

"I want to enter a convent, to live buried there, forgotten. I want a living tomb which will never be violated by any one."

"You are not asking much. You shall have the convent. Speak!"

"As I have your word, take this casket," said Lorenza; "it contains mysteries which will make you tremble for the safety of the sovereign and the realm. I know them but superficially but they exist, and are terrible."

"Political mysteries, you say?"

"Have you ever heard of the great secret society?"

"The Freemasons?"

"These are the Invisibles."

"Yes; I do not believe in them, though."

"When you open this box, you will."

"Let us look into it then," he said, taking the casket from her; but, reflecting, he placed it on his desk. "No, I would rather you opened it yourself," he added with distrust.

"I have not the key," she replied.

"Not got the key? you bring me a box containing the fate of an empire and you forget the key?"

"Is it so hard to open a lock?"

"Not when one knows the sort it is."

He held out to her a bunch of keys in every shape. As she took it, he noticed that her hand was cold as stone.

"Why did you not bring the key with you?" he asked.

"Because the master of the casket never lets it go from him."

"This is the man more powerful than the King?"

"Nobody can tell what he is; eternity alone knows how long he has lived. None but the God above can see the deeds he commits."

"But his name, his name?'

"He has changed it to my knowledge a dozen times--I knew him as Acharat."

"And he lives---- "

"Saint---- "

Suddenly Lorenza started, shuddered, let the casket and the keys fall from her hands. She made an effort to speak, but her mouth only was contorted in a painful convulsion; she clapped her hands to her throat as if the words about to issue were stopped and choked her. Then, lifting her arms to heaven, trembling and unable to articulate a word, she fell full length on the carpet.

"Poor dear!" muttered Sartines: "but what the devil is the matter with her? she is really very pretty. There is some jealousy in this talk of revenge."

He rang for the servants while he lifted up the Italian, who seemed with her astonished eyes and motionless lips, to be dead and far detached from this world.

"Carry out this lady with care," he commanded to the two valets; "and leave her in the next room. Try to bring her to, but mind, no roughness. Go!"

Left alone, Sartines examined the box like a man who could value fully the discovery. He tried the keys

until convinced that the lock was only a sham. Thereupon with a cold chisel he cut it off bodily. Instead of the fulminating powder or the poison which he perhaps expected, to deprive France of her most important magistrate, a packet of papers bounded up.

The first words which started up before his eyes were the following, traced in a disguised hand:

"It is time for the Grand Master to drop the name of Baron Balsamo."

There was no signature other than the three letters "L. P. D."

"Aha," said the head of police, "though I do not know this writing I believe I know this name. Balsamo--let us look among the B's."

Opening one of the twenty-four drawers of the famous desk, he took out a little register on which was written in fine writing three or four hundred names, preceded, accompanied or followed by flourishes of the pen.

"Whew! we have a lot about this busy B," he muttered.

He read several pages with non-equivocal tokens of discontent.

He replaced the register in the drawer to go on with inventorying the contents of the packet. He did not go far without being deeply impressed. Soon he came to a note full of names with the text in cipher. This appeared important to him; the edges were worn with fingering and pencil marks were made on the margin.

Sartines rang a bell for a servant to whom he said:

"Bring me the Chancellor's cryptographist at once, going through the offices to gain time."

Two minutes subsequently, a clerk presented himself, with pen in hand, his hat under one arm, and a large book under the other. Seeing him in the mirror, Sartines held out the paper to him over his shoulders, saying:

"Decipher that."

This unriddler of secret writing was a little thin man, with puckered up lips, brows bent by searching study; his pale face was pointed up and down, and the chin quite sharp, while the deep moony eyes became bright at times.

Sartines called him his Ferret.

Ferret sat down modestly on a stool, drew his knees close together to be a table to write upon, and wrote, consulting his memory and his lexicon with an impassible face. In five minutes time he had written:

"Order to gather 3000 Brothers in Paris.

"Order to compose three circles and six lodges.

"Order to select a guard for the Grand Copt, and to provide four residences for him, one to be in a royal domicile.

"Order to set aside five hundred thousand francs for his police department.

"Order to enroll in the first Parisian lodge all the cream of literature and philosophy.

"Order to bribe or in some way get a hold on the magistracy, and particularly make sure of the Chief of Police, by bribery, violence or trickery."

Ferret stopped at this passage, not because the poor man reflected but because he had to wait for the page to dry before he could turn over.

Sartines, being impatient, snatched the sheet from his knees and read it. Such an expression of terror spread over his features at the final paragraph, that it made him turn pale to see himself in the glass. He did not hand this sheet back to the clerk but passed him a clean one.

The man went on with his work, accomplishing it with the amazing rapidity of decipherers when once they hold the key.

Sartines now read over his shoulder.

"Drop the name of Balsamo beginning to be too well known, to take that of Count Fe---- "

A blot of ink eclipsed the rest of the name.

At the very time when the Police Chief was seeking the absent letters, the out-door bell rang and a servant came in to announce:

"His Lordship, Count Fenix!"

Sartines uttered an outcry, and clasped his hands above his wig at risk of demolishing that wonderful structure. He hastened to dismiss the writer by a side door, while, taking his place at his desk, he bade the usher show in the visitor.

In his mirror, a few seconds after, Sartines saw the stern profile of the count as he had seen him on the day when Lady Dubarry was presented at court.

Balsamo-Fenix entered without any hesitation whatever.

Sartines rose, made a cold bow, and sat himself ceremoniously down again, crossing his legs.

At the first glance he had seen what was the object of this interview. At a glance also Balsamo had seen the opened casket on the desk. His glance, however fleeting, had not escaped the magistrate.

"To what chance do I owe this visit, my lord?" inquired the Chief of Police.

"My Lord," returned Balsamo with a smile full of amenity, "I have found introducers to all the sovereigns of Europe, all their ministers and ambassadors: but none to present me to your lordship; so I have presented myself."

"You arrive most timely, my lord," replied Sartines: "For I am inclined to think that if you had not called I should have had to send for you."

"Indeed--how nicely this chimes in."

Sartines bowed with a satirical smile.

"Am I happy enough to be useful to your lordship?" queried Balsamo.

These words were pronounced without a shade of emotion or disquiet clouding the smiling brow.

"You have travelled a good deal, count," said the Police Chief.

"A great deal! I suppose you want for some geographical items. A man of your capacity is not cramped up in France but must embrace Europe and the world---- "

"Not geographical, my lord, but personal---- "

"Do not restrict yourself; in both, I am at your orders."

"Well, count, just imagine that I am looking after a very dangerous man, in faith, who seems to be an atheist, conspirator, forger, adulterer, coiner, charlatan, and chief of a secret league; whose history I have on my records and in this casket, which your lordship sees."

"I understand," said Balsamo; "you have the story but not the man. Hang it, that seems to me the more important matter."

"No doubt: but you will see presently how near he is to our hand. Certainly, Proct Proteon Proteus had not more shapes, Jupiter more names: Acharat in Egypt, Balsamo in Italy, Somini in Sardinia, the Marquis of Anna in Malta, Marquis Pellegrini in Corsica, and lastly, Count Fe--this last name I have not been able to make out; but I am almost sure that you will help me to it for you must have met this man in the course of your travels in the countries I have mentioned. I suppose, though, you would want some kind of description?"

"If your lordship pleases?"

"Well," continued Sartines, fixing on the other an eye which he endeavored to make like an inquisitor's, "he is a man of your age and stature, and bearing; sometimes a mighty nobleman distributing gold, or a charlatan seeking natural secrets, or a dark conspirator allied to the mysterious brotherhood which has vowed in darkness the death of kings and the downfall of thrones."

"This is vague," replied Balsamo, "and you cannot guess how many men I have met who would answer to this description! You will have to be more precise if you want my help. In the first place, which is his country by preference?"

"He lives everywhere at home."

"But at present?"

"In France, where he directs a vast conspiracy."

"This is a good piece of intelligence. If you know what conspiracy he directs you have one end of a

clew in your hands which will lead you up to the man."

"I am of your opinion."

"If you believe so, why do you ask my advice? It is useless."

"It is because I am debating whether or not to arrest him."

"I do not understand the Not, my lord, for if he conspires---- "

"But he is in a measure protected by his title---- "

"Ah, now I follow you. But by what title? Needless to say that I shall be glad to aid you in your searches, my lord."

"Why, sir, I told you that I knew the names he hides under but I do not know that under which he shows himself, or else---- "

"You would arrest him? Well, Lord Sartines, it is a blessed thing that I happened in as I did, for I can do you the very service you want. I will tell you the title he figures under."

"Pray say it," said Sartines who expected to hear a falsehood.

"The Count of Fenix."

"What, the name under which you were announced?"

"My own."

"Then you would be this Acharat, Balsamo, and Company?"

"It is I," answered the other simply.

It took Sartines a minute to recover from the amazement which this impudence had caused him.

"You see I guessed," he said; "I knew that Fenix and Balsamo were one and the same."

"I confess it. You are a great minister."

"And you are a great fool," said the magistrate, stretching out his hand towards his bell.

"How so?"

"Because I am going to have you arrested."

"Nonsense, a man like me is never arrested," said Balsamo, stepping between the magistrate and the bell.

"Death of my life, who will prevent it? I want to know."

"As you want to know, my dear Lieutenant of Police, I will tell you--I shall blow out your brains--and with the more facility and the less injury to myself as this weapon is charged with a noiseless explosive which, for its quality of silence, is not the less deadly."

Whipping out of his pocket, a pistol, with a barrel of steel as exquisitely carved as though Cellini had chiselled it, he tranquilly leveled it at the eye of Sartines, who lost color and his footing, falling back into his armchair.

"There," said the other, drawing another chair up to the first and sitting down in it; "now that we are comfortably seated, let us have a chat."

It was an instant before Lord Sartines was master of himself after so sharp an alarm. He almost looked into the muzzle of the firearm, and felt the ring of its cold iron on his forehead.

"My lord," he said at last. "I have the advantage over you of knowing the kind of man I coped with and I did not take the cautionary measures I should with an ordinary malefactor."

"You are irritated and you use harsh words," replied Balsamo. "But you do not see how unjust you are to one who comes to do you a service. And yet you mistake my intentions. You speak of conspirators, just when I come to speak to you about a conspiracy."

But the round phrase was all to no purpose as Sartines was not paying great attention to his words: so that the word Conspiracy, which would have made him jump at another time, scarcely caused him to pick up his ears.

"Since you know so well who I am," he proceeded, "you must know my mission in France. Sent by the Great Frederick--that is as an ambassador, more or less secret of his Prussian Majesty. Who says

ambassador, says 'inquisitor;' and as I inquire, I am not ignorant of what is going on; and one of the things I have learnt most about is the forestalling of grain."

Simply as Balsamo uttered the last words they had more power over the Chief of Police than all the others for they made him attentive. He slowly raised his head.

"What is this forestalling of the grain?" he said, affecting as much ease as Balsamo had shown at the opening of the interview. "Will you kindly enlighten me?"

"Willingly, my lord. Skillful speculators have persuaded his Majesty, the King of France, that he ought to build grainaries to save up the grain for the people in case of dearth. So the stores were built. While they were about it they made them on a large scale, sparing no stone or timber. The next thing was to fill them, as empty grainarers are useless. So they filled them. You will reckon on a large quantity of corn being wanted to fill them? Much breadstuffs drawn out of the markets is a means of making the people hungry. For, mark this well, any goods withdrawn from circulation are equivalent to a lack of production. A thousand sacks of corn in the store are the same as a thousand less in the market. Multiply these thousands by a ten only and up goes the price of grain."

Sartines coughed with irritation. Balsamo stopped quietly till he was done.

"Hence, you see the speculator in the storehouses enriched by the increase in value. Is this clear?"

"Perfectly clear," replied the other. "But it seems to me that you are bold enough to promise to denounce a crime or a plot of which his Majesty is the author."

"You understand it plainly," said Balsamo.

"This is bold, indeed, and I should be curious to know how the King will take the charge. I am afraid that the result will be precisely the same as that I conceived when I looked through your papers; take care, my lord, you will get into the Bastile all the same."

"How poorly you judge me and how wrong you are in still taking me for a fool. Do you imagine that I, an ambassador, a mere curious investigator, would attack the King in person? That would be the act of a blockhead. Pray hear me out."

Sartines nodded to the man with the pistol.

"Those who discovered this plot against the French people--pardon the precious time I am consuming, but you will see presently that it is not lost time--they are economists, who, very minute and painstaking, by applying their microscopic lenses to this rigging of the market, have remarked that the King is not working the game alone. They know that his Majesty keeps an exact register of the market rate of grain in the different markets: that he rubs his hands when the rise wins him eight or ten thousand crowns; but they also know that another man is filling his own alongside of his Majesty's--an official, you will guess--who uses the royal figures for his own behalf. The economists, therefore, not being idiots, will not attack the King, but the man, the public officer, the agent who gambles for his sovereign."

Sartines tried to shake his wig into the upright but it was no use.

"I am coming to the point, now," said Balsamo. "In the same way as you know I am the Count of Fenix through your police, I know you are Lord Sartines through mine."

"What follows?" said the embarrassed magistrate; "a fine discovery that I am Lord Sartines!"

"And that he is the man of the market-notebooks, the gambling, the ring, who, with or without the knowledge of the King, traffics on the appetites of the thirty millions of French whom his functions prescribe him to feed on the lowest possible terms. Now, just imagine the effect in a slight degree of this discovery! You are little loved by the people; the King is not an affectionate man. As soon as the cries of the hungry are heard, yelling for your head, the King, to avoid all suspicion of connivance with you, if any there be, or to do justice if there is no complicity, will hasten to have you strung upon a gibbet like that on which dangled Enguerrand de Marigny, which you may remember?"

"Imperfectly," stammered Sartines, very pale, "and you show very poor taste to talk of the gibbet to a nobleman of my degree!"

"I could not help bringing him in," replied Balsamo, "as I seemed to see him again--poor Enguerrand! I swear to you he was a perfect gentleman out of Normandy, of very ancient family and most noble house.

He was Lord High Chamberlain and Captain of the Louvre Palace, and eke Count of Longueville, a much more important county than yours of Alby. But still I saw him hooked up on the very gibbet at Montfaucon which was built under his orders, although it was not for the lack of my telling him:

"Enguerrand, my dear friend, have a care! you take a bigger slice out of the cake of finance than Charles of Valois will like. Alas, if you only knew how many chiefs of police, from Pontius Pilate down to your predecessor, who have come to grief!"

Sartines rose, trying in vain to dissimulate the agitation to which he was a prey.

"Well, accuse me if you like," he said: "what does the testimony of a man like you amount to?"

"Take care, my lord," Balsamo said: "men of no account were very often the very ones who bring others to account. When I write the particulars of the Great Grain Speculation to my correspondent, or Frederick who is a philosopher, as you are aware, he will be eager to transcribe it with comments for his friend, Voltaire, who knows how to swing his pen: to Alembert, that admirable geometrician, who will calculate how far these stolen grains, laid in a line side by side, will extend; in short when all the lampoon writers, pamphleteers and caricaturists get wind of this subject, you, my lord of Alby, will be a great deal worse off than my poor Marigny,--for he was innocent, or said so, and I would hardly believe that of your lordship."

With no longer respect for decorum, Sartines took off his wig and wiped his skull.

"Have it so," he said, "ruin me if you will. But I have your casket as you have your proofs."

"Another profound error into which you have fallen, my lord," said Balsamo: "You are not going to keep this casket."

"True," sneered the other; "I forgot that Count Fenix is a knight of the road who robs men by armed force. I did not see your pistol which you have put away. Excuse me, my lord the ambassador."

"The pistol is no longer wanted, my lord. You surely do not think that I would fight for the casket over your body here where a shout would rouse the house full of servants and police agents?---- No, when I say that you will not keep my casket, I mean that you will restore it to me of your own free will."

"I?" said the magistrate, laying his fist on the box with so much force that he almost shattered it. "You may laugh, but you shall not take this box but at the cost of my life. Have I not risked it a thousand times--ought I not pour out the last drop of my blood in his Majesty's service? Kill me, as you are the master; but I shall have enough voice left to denounce you for your crimes. Restore you this," he repeated, with a bitter laugh, "hell itself might claim it and not make me surrender."

"I am not going to require the intervention of subterranean powers; merely that of the person who is even now knocking at your street door."

Three loud knocks thundered at the door.

"And whose carriage is even now entering the yard," added the mesmerist.

"Some friend of yours who does me the honor to call?"

"Just as you say, a friend of mine."

"The Right Honorable the Countess Dubarry!" announced a valet at the study door, as the lady, who had not believed she wanted the permission to enter, rushed in. It was the lovely countess, whose perfumed and hooped skirts rustled in the doorway.

"Your ladyship!" exclaimed Sartines, hugging the casket to his bosom in his terror.

"How do you do, Sartines?" she said, with her gay smile.

"And how are you, count?" she added to Fenix, holding out her hand.

He bowed familiarly over it and pressed his lips where the King had so often laid his. In this movement he had time to speak four words to her which the Chief of Police did not hear.

"Oh, here is my casket," she said.

"Your casket," stammered the Lieutenant of Police.

"Mine, of course. Oh, you have opened it--do not be nice about what does not belong to you! How delightful this is. This box was stolen from me, and I had the idea of going to Sartines to get it back. You

found it, did you, oh, thank you."

"With all respect to your ladyship," said Sartines, "I am afraid you are letting yourself be imposed upon."

"Impose? do you use such a word to me, my lord?" cried Balsamo. "This casket was confided to me by her ladyship a few days ago with all its contents."

"I know what I know," persisted the magistrate.

"And I know nothing," whispered La Dubarry to the mesmerist. "But you have claimed the promise I made you to do anything you asked at the first request."

"But this box may contain the matter of a dozen conspiracies," said Sartines.

"My lord, you know that that is not a word to bring you good luck. Do not say it again. The lady asks for her box--are you going to give it to her or not?"

"But at least know, my lady---- "

"I do not want to know more than I do know," said the lady: "Restore me my casket--for I have not put myself out for nothing, I would have you to understand!"

"As you please, my lady," said Sartines humbly and he handed the countess the box, into which Balsamo replaced the papers strewn over the desk.

"Count," said the lady with her most winning smile, "will you kindly carry my box and escort me to my carriage as I do not like to go back alone through those ugly faces. Thank you, Sartines."

"My lady," said Balsamo, "you might tell the count who bears me much ill will from my insisting on having the box, that you would be grieved if anything unpleasant befel me through the act of the police and how badly you would feel."

She smiled on the speaker.

"You hear what my Lord says, Sartines," she said; "it is the pure truth: the count is an excellent friend of mine and I should mortally hate you if you were to vex him in any way. Adieu, Sartines."

He saw them march forth without showing the rage Balsamo expected.

"Well, they have taken the casket but I have the woman," he chuckled.

To make up for his defeat he began to ring his bell as though to break it.

"How is the lady getting on whom you took into the next room?"

"Very well indeed, my lord: for she got up and went out."

"Got up? why, she could not stand."

"That is so, my lord," said the usher: "but five minutes or so after the Count of Fenix arrived, she awoke from her swoon, from which no scent would arouse her, and walked out. We had no orders to detain her."

"The villain is a magician," thought the magistrate. "I have the royal police and he Satan's."

That evening he was bled and put to bed: the shock was too great for him to bear, and the doctor said that if he had not been called in he would have died of apoplexy.

In the meantime the count had conducted the lady to her coach. She asked him to step in, and a groom led the Arab horse.

"Lady," he said, "you have amply paid the slight service I did you. Do not believe what Sartines said about plots and conspiracies. This casket contains my chemical recipes written in the language of Alchemy which his ignorant clerks interpreted according to their lights. Our craft is not yet enfranchised from prejudices and only the young and bright like your ladyship are favorable to it."

"What would have happened if I had not come to your help?"

"I should have been sent into some prison, but I can melt stone with my breath so that your Bastile would not long have retained me. I should have regretted the loss of the formula for the chemical secrets by which I hope to preserve your marvelous beauty and splendid youthfulness."

"You set me at ease and you delight me, count. Do you promise me a philter to keep me young?"

"Yes: but ask me for it in another twenty years. You cannot now want to be a child forever!"

"Really, you are a capital fellow! But I would rather have that draft in ten, nay five years--one never

knows what may happen."

"When you like."

"Oh, a last question. They say that the King is smitten with the Taverney girl. You must tell me; do not spare me if it is true; treat me as a friend and tell me the truth."

"Andrea Taverney will never be the mistress of the King. I warrant it, as I do not so will it."

"Oh!" cried Lady Dubarry.

"You doubt? never doubt science."

"Still, as you have the means, if you would block the King's fancies---- "

"I can create sympathies and so I can antipathies. Be at ease, countess, I am on the watch."

He spoke at random as he was all impatience to get away and rejoin Lorenza.

"Surely, count," said the lady, "you are not only my prophet of good but my guardian angel. Mind, I will defend you if you help me. Alliance!"

"It is sealed," he said, kissing her hand.

He alighted and whistling for his horse, mounted and gallopped away.

"To Luciennes," ordered Lady Dubarry, comforted.

CHAPTER

IN five minutes Balsamo was in his vestibule, looking at Fritz and asking with anxiety:

"Has she returned?"

"She has gone up into the room of the arms and the furs, very wornout, from having run so rapidly that I was hardly in time to open the door after I caught sight of her. I was frightened; for she rushed in like a tempest. She ran up the stairs without taking breath, and fell on the great black lion's-skin on entering the room. There you will find her."

Balsamo went up precipitately and found her as said. He took her up in his arms and carried her into the inner house where the secret door closed behind them.

He was going to awake her to vent the reproaches on her which were nursed in his wrath, when three knocks on the ceiling notified him that the sage called Althotas, in the upper room, was aware of his arrival and asked speech of him.

Fearing that he would come down, as sometimes happened, or that Lorenza would learn something else detrimental to the Order, he charged her with a fresh supply of the magnetic fluid, and went up by a kind of elevator to Althota' laboratory.

In the midst of a wilderness of chemical and surgical instruments, phials and plants, this very aged man was a terrible figure at this moment.

Such part of his face as seemed yet to retain life was empurpled with angry fire: his knotted hands like those of a skeleton, trembled and cracked--his deepset eyes seemed to shake loose in the sockets and in a language unknown even to his pupil he poured invectives upon him.

Having left his padded armchair to go to the trap by which Balsamo came up through the floor, he seemed to move solely by his long spider-like arms. It must be extraordinary excitement to make him leave the seat where he conducted his alchemical work and enter into our worldly life.

Balsamo was astonished and uneasy.

"So you come, you sluggard, you coward, to abandon your master," said Althotas.

As was his habit, the other summoned up all his patience to reply to his master.

"I thought you had only just called me, my friend," he meekly said.

"Your friend, you vile human creature," cried the alchemist, "I think you talk to me as if I were one of your sort. Friend? I should think I were more than that: more than your father, for I have reared you, instructed you and enriched you. But you are no friend to me, oh, no! for you have left me, you let me starve, and you will be my death."

"You have a bilious attack, master, and you will make yourself ill by going on thus."

"Illness--rubbish! Have I ever been ill save when you made me feel the petty miseries of your mean human life? I, ill, who you know am the physician to others."

"At all events, master, here I am," coldly observed Balsamo. "Let us not waste time."

"You are a nice one to remind me of that. You force me to dole out what ought to be unmeasured to all human creatures. Yes, I am wasting time: my time, like others, is falling drop by drop into eternity when it ought to be itself eternity."

"Come, master, let us know what is to be done?" asked the other, working the spring which closed the trap in the floor. "You said you were starved. How so, when you know you were doing your fortnight's absolute fast?"

"Yes; the work of regeneration was commenced thirty-two days ago."

"What are you complaining about in that case--I see yet two or three decanters of rainwater, the only thing you take."

"Of course: but do you think I am a silkworm to perform alone the great task of transformation and

rejuvenation? Can I without any strength alone compose my draft of life? Do you think I shall have my ability when I am lying down with no support but refreshing drink, if you do not help me? abandoned to my own resources, and the minute labor of my regeneration--you know you ought to help and succor, if a friend?"

"I am here," responded Balsamo, taking the old man and placing him in his chair as one might a disagreeable child, "what do you want? You have plenty of distilled water: your loaves of barley and sesame are there; and I have myself given you the white drops you prescribed."

"Yes; but the elixir is not composed. The last time I was fifty, I had your father to help me, your faithful father. I got it ready a month beforehand. For the blood of a virgin which I had to have, I bought a child of a trader at Mount Ararat where I retired. I bled it according to the rites; I took three drops of arterial blood and in an hour my mixture, only wanting that ingredient, was composed. Therefore my regeneration came off passing well: my hair and teeth fell during the spasms caused by the draft, but they came again--the teeth badly, I admit, for I had neglected to use a golden tube for decanting the liquor. But my hair and nails came as if I were fifteen again. But here I am once more old; and the elixir is not concocted. If it is not soon in this bottle, with all care given to compounding it, the science of a century will be lost in me, and this admirable and sublime secret which I hold will be lost for man, who would thus through me be linked with divinity. Oh, if I go wrong, if I fail, you, Acharat, will have been the cause, and my wrath will be dreadful!"

As these final words made a spark flash from his dying eye, the hideous old man fell back in a convulsion succeeded by violent coughing. Balsamo at once gave him the most eager care. The old doctor came to his senses; his pallor was worse; this slight shaking had so exhausted him that he seemed about to die.

"Tell me what you want, master, and you shall have it, if possible."

"Possible?" sneered the other, "You know that all is possible with time and science. I have the science; but time is only about to be conquered by me. My dose has succeeded; the white drops have almost eradicated most of my old nature. My strength has nearly disappeared. Youth is mounting and casting off the old bark, so to say. You will remark, Acharat, that the symptoms are excellent; my voice is faint; my sight weakened by three parts; I feel my senses wander at times; the transitions from heat to cold are insensible to me. So it is urgent that I get my draft made so that on the proper day of my fifteenth year, I shall pass from a hundred years to twenty without hesitation. The ingredients are gathered, the gold tube for the decanting is ready; I only lack the three drops of pure blood which I told you of."

Balsamo made a start in repugnance.

"Oh, well, let us give up the idea of a child," sneered Althotas, "since you dream of nothing but your wife with whom you shut yourself up instead of coming to aid me."

"My wife," repeated Balsamo, sadly: "a wife but in name. I have had to sacrifice all to her, love, desire, all, I repeat, in order to preserve her pure that I may use her spirit as a seer's to pierce the almost impenetrable. Instead of making me happy, she makes the world so."

"Poor fool," said Althotas, "I believe you gabble still of your amelioration of society when I talk to you of eternal youth and life for man."

"To be acquired at the price of a horrid crime! and even then---- "

"You doubt--he doubts!"

"But you said you renounced that want: what can you substitute?"

"Oh, the blood of the first virgin creature which I find--or you supply within a week."

"I will attend to it, master," said Balsamo.

Another spark of ire kindled the old man's eye.

"You will see about it!" he said, "that is your reply, is it? However, I expected it, and I am not astonished. Since when, you insignificant worm, does the creature speak thus to its creator? Ah, you see me feeble, solicitating you and you fancy I am at your mercy! Do you think I am fool enough to rely on your mercy? Yes or no, Acharat--and I can read in your heart whether you deceive me or not--ay, read in your heart--for I will judge you and pursue you."

"Master, have a care! your anger will injure you. I speak nothing but the truth to my master. I will see if I can procure you what you want without its bringing harm, nay, ruin upon us both. I will seek the wretch who will sell you what you wish but I shall not take the crime upon me. That is all I can say."

"You are very dainty. Then, you would expose me to death, scoundrel; you would save the three drops of the blood of some paltry thing in order to let the wondrous being that I am fall into the eternal abysm. Acharat, mark me," continued the weird old man, with a frightful smile, "I no longer ask you for anything. I want absolutely nothing of you. I shall wait: but if you do not obey me, I shall take for myself; if you abandon me I shall help myself. You hear? away!"

Without answering the threat in any way, Balsamo prepared all things for the old man's wants; like a good servant or a pious son attending to his father. Absorbed in quite another thought than that torturing Althotas, he went down through the trap-hole without noticing the old sage's ironical glance following him. He smiled like an evil genius when he saw the mesmerist beside Lorenza, still asleep.

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BEFORE the Italian beauty, Balsamo stopped, with his heart full of painful but no longer violent thoughts.

"Here I stand," he mused, "sad but resolute, and plainly seeing my situation. Lorenza hates me and betrayed me as she vowed she would do. My secret is no longer mine but in the hands of this woman who casts it to the winds. I resemble the fox caught in the trap, who gnaws off his leg to get away, but the hunter coming on the morrow and seeing this token can say: 'He has escaped but I shall know him when I catch him again.'

"Althotas could not understand this misfortune, which is why I have not told him; it breaks all my hope of fortune in this country and consequently in the Old World, of which France is the heart--it is due to this lovely woman, this fair statue with the sweet smile. To this accursed angel I owe captivity, exile or death, with ruin and dishonor meanwhile.

"Hence," he continued, animating, "the sum of pleasure is surpassed by that of harm, and Lorenza is a noxious thing to me. Oh, serpent with the graceful folds, they stifle: your golden throat is full of venom; sleep on, for I shall be obliged to kill you when you wake."

With an ominous smile he approached the girl, whose eyes turned to his like the sunflower follows the sun.

"Alas, in slaying her who hates me, I shall slay her who loves."

His heart was filled with profound grief strangely blended with a vague desire.

"If she might live, harmless?" he muttered. "No, awake, she will renew the struggle--she will kill herself or me, or force me to kill her. Lorenza, your fate is written in letters of fire: to love and to die. In my hands I hold your life and your love."

The enchantress, who seemed to read his thoughts in an open book, rose, fell at the mesmerist's feet, and taking one of his hands which she laid on her heart, she said with her lips, moist as coral and as glossy:

"Dead be it, but loved."

Balsamo could resist no longer; a whirl of flames enveloped him.

"As long as a human being could contend have I struggled," he sighed; "demon or angel of the future, you ought to be satisfied. I have long enough sacrificed pride and egotism to all the generous passions seething in my heart. No, no, I have not the right to revolt against the only human feeling fermenting in me. I love this woman, and such passionate love will do more against her than the keenest hate. What, when I appear before the Supreme Architect, will not I, the deceiver, the charlatan, the false prophet, have one well cut stone to show for my craftsmanship--not one generous deed to avow, not a single happiness whose memory would comfort me amid eternal sufferings? Oh, no, no, Lorenza, I know that I lose the future by loving you; I know that my revealing angel mounts to heaven while this woman comes down to my arms--but I wish Lorenza!"

"My beloved," she gasped.

"Will you accept this life instead of the real one?"

"I beg for it, for it is love and bliss."

"Never will you accuse me before man or heaven of having deceived your heart?"

"Never, never! before heaven and men, I shall thank you for having given me love, the only boon, the only jewel of price in this world."

Balsamo ran his hand over his forehead.

"Be it so," he said. "Besides, have I absolutely need of her--is she the only medium? No; while this one makes me happy, the other shall make me rich and mighty. Andrea is predestined and is as clairvoyante as she. Andrea is young, and pure, and I do not love Andrea. Nevertheless, in her mesmeric sleep, she is submissive as you are. In Andrea I have a victim ready to replace you, one to be the *corpus vili* of the physician to be employed for experiments. She can fly as far, perhaps farther, in the shades of the Unknown

as you. Andrea, I take you for my kingdom. Lorenza, come to my arms for my darling and my wife. With Andrea I am powerful; with Lorenza I am happy! Henceforth, my life is complete, and I realise the dream of Althotas, without the immortality, and become the peer of the gods!"

And lifting up the Italian beauty, he opened his arms from off his heaving breast on which Lorenza enclasped herself as the ivy girdles the oak.

Another life commenced for the magician, unknown to him previously in his active, multiple, perplexed existence. For three days he felt no more anger, apprehension or jealousy; he heard nothing of plots, politics or conspiracies. Beside Lorenza he forgot the whole world. This strange love threw him into felicity composed of stupor and delirium, soaring over humanity, as it were, full of misery and intoxication, a phantom love--for he knew he could at a sign or a word change the sweet mistress into an implacable enemy.

Singularly, she remained of astonishing lucidity as far as regarded himself; but he wanted to learn if this were not sheer sympathy; if she became dark outside of the circle traced by his love--if the eyes of this new Eve clearly seeing in Eden, would not be this blind when expelled from Paradise.

He dared not make a decisive test, but he hoped, and hope was the starry crown to his happiness.

With gentle melancholy Lorenza said to him:

"Acharat, you are thinking of another woman than me, a woman of the North, with fair hair and blue eyes--Acharat, this woman walks beside you and me in your mind. Shall I tell you her name?"

"Yes," he said in wonderment.

"Wait--it is Andrea."

"Right. Yes, you can read my mind; one last fear troubles me. Can you still see through space though blocked by material obstacles?"

"Try me."

He took her hand, and in his mind went away from that place, taking her soul with him.

"What do you see?"

"A vast valley with woods on one side, a town on the other, while a river separates them and is lost in the distance after bathing the walls of a palace."

"It is so, Lorenza. The wood is Vesinet, the town St. Germain; the palace Maisons. Let us go into the summerhouse behind us. What do you see?"

"A young negro, eating candies."

"It is Zamore, Countess Dubarry's blackmoor. Go on."

"An empty drawing-room, splendidly furnished, with the panels painted with goddesses and Cupids."

"Next?"

"We are in a lovely boudoir hung with blue satin worked with flowers in their natural colors. A woman is reclining on a sofa. I have seen her before--it is Countess Dubarry. She is thinking of you---- "

"Thinking of me? Lorenza, you will drive me mad."

"You made her the promise to give her the water of beauty which Venus gave to Phaon to be revenged on Sappho."

"That is so; go on."

"She makes up her mind to a step, for she rings a bell. A woman comes--it is like her---- "

"Her sister, Chon?"

"Her sister. She wants the horses put to the carriage! in two hours she will be here."

Balsamo dropped on his knees.

"Oh heaven, if she should be here in that time, I shall have no more to beg of you for you will have had pity on my happiness."

"Poor dear," said she, "why do you fear? Love which completes the physical existence, enlarges the moral one. Like all good passions, love emanates from heaven whence cometh all light."

"Lorenza, you make me wild with joy."

Still he waited for this last test; the arrival of Lady Dubarry.

Two strokes of the bell, the signal of an important visitor, from Fritz told him that the vision was realised.

He led Lorenza into the room hung with fur and armor.

"You will not go away from here?" asked the mesmerist.

"Order me to stay and you will find me here on your return. Besides, the Lorenza who loves you is not the one who dreads you."

"Be it so, my beloved Lorenza; sleep and await me."

Still struggling with the spell, she laid a last kiss on her husband's lips, and tottered to sink upon a lounge, murmuring.

"Soon again, my Balsamo, soon?"

He waved his hand: she was already reposing.

As he closed the door he thought he heard a sound: but no, Lorenza was sound asleep. He went through the parlor without fear or any foreshadowing, carrying paradise in his heart.

Lorenza dreamed: it seemed to her that the ceiling opened and that a kind of aged Caliban descended with a regular movement. The air seemed to fail her as two long fleshless arms like living grapnels clutched her white dress, raised her off the divan, and carried her to the trap. This movable platform began to rise, with the grinding of metal and a shrill, hideous laugh issued from the mouth of this human-faced monster who bore her upwards without any shock.

C

T

THE beautiful favorite of Louis XV. had been shown into the parlor where she impatiently waited for Balsamo while turning over the leaves of Holbein's Dance of Death, which caught her attention on the table. She had just arrived at the picture of the Beauty powdering her cheek before a mirror, when the host opened the door and bowed to her with a smile of joy over his face.

"I am sorry to have made you wait," he said, "but I was a little out in my calculation about the speed of your horses."

"Gracious, did you know that I was coming?"

"Certainly; at least you gave the orders for your sister to transmit them for your departure, while lounging in your blue boudoir."

"Wizard that you are, if you can see all that goes on there, you must apprise me."

"I only look in where doors are open."

"But you saw my intention as regards you?"

"I saw that it was good."

"So are all mine to you, count. But you merit more than mere intentions for it seems to me that you are too good and useful to me in taking the part of tutor the most difficult to play that I know."

"You make me very happy; what can I do for you?"

"Have you not, to begin with, some of the seed which makes one invisible: for on the way it seemed to me that one of Richelieu's men was riding after me."

"The Duke of Richelieu cannot be dangerous to you in any meeting," said the mesmerist.

"But he was, my lord, before this last scheme failed."

Balsamo comprehended that here was a plot of which Lorenza had not informed him. So he smiled without venturing on the unknown ground.

"I nearly fell a victim to the scheme, in which you had a share."

"I, in a scheme against you? never."

"Did you not give Richelieu a philter to make the drinker fail madly in love?"

"Oh, no, my lady: he composes those things himself; I did give him a simple narcotic--a sleeping draft. He called for it on the eve of the day when I sent you the note by my man Fritz to meet me at Sartines."

"That is it--the very time when the King went to little Taverney's rooms. It is all clear now, for the narcotic saved us."

"I am happy to have served your ladyship, though unawares," he said without knowing the matter.

"Yes; the King must have seen the girl under the influence of this soporific, for he was seen to stagger out of the chapel corridor during the storm, crying 'She is dead!' Nothing frightens the King more than the dead, or next to it those in a death-like sleep. Finding Mdlle. de Taverney in a sleep, he took it for death."

"Yes, like death, with all the appearances," said the other, remembering that he had fled without reviving Andrea. "Go on, my lady!"

"The King woke with a touch of fever and was only better at noon. He came over to see me in the evening, where I discovered that Richelieu is almost as great a conjurer as your lordship."

The countess's triumphant face, and her gesture of coquetry and grace completed her thought, and perfectly encouraged the Italian about her sway over the King.

"So you are satisfied with me?" he asked.

She held out in token of thanks her white, soft and scented hand, only it was not fresh like Lorenza's.

"Now, count, if you preserved me from a great danger, I believe I have saved you from one not to be despised."

"I had no need to be grateful to you," said Balsamo, hiding his emotion, "but I should like to know---- "

"That casket really contained cipher correspondence which Sartines had his experts write out plain: That is what he brought to Versailles this morning, with blank warrants to imprison parties named in the documents: one was filled with your name, but I would not let him slip that under the royal hand for the signature. Since Damiens stuck him with the penknife, he can be frightened into anything by the bogey of assassination. Sartines persisted and so did I, but the King said with a smile and looking at me in a style which I know:

"'Let her alone, Sartines: I can refuse her nothing to-day.'

"As I was by, Sartines did not like to vex me by accusing you direct but he talked of the King of Prussia bolstering up the philosophers of a numerous and powerful sect formed of courageous, resolute and skillful adepts, working away underhandedly against his Royal Majesty. He said they spread evil reports, as for instance that the King was in the scheme to starve the people. To which Louis replied: 'Let anybody come forward, saying so and I will give him the lie by furnishing him with board and lodging for nothing. I will feed him in the Bastile.'"

Balsamo felt a shiver run through him, but he stood firm.

"And the end?"

"It was the day after the sleeping potion, you understand," he preferred my company to Sartines; and turned to me.

"'Drive away this ugly man,' I said, 'he smells of the prison.'

"'You had better go, Sartines,' said the King.

"Seeing he was in a scrape, he came to me and kissing my hand humbly, he said: 'Lady, let us say no more on this head--(your head, count)--but you will ruin the realm. Since you so strongly wish it, my men shall protect your protege.'"

The conspirator was buried in thought.

"So you see you must thank me for not having been clapped into the Bastile," concluded the countess: "not unjust, perhaps, but disagreeable."

Without replying Balsamo took from his pocket a phial containing a fluid of blood color.

"For the liberty you give me," he said, "I give you twenty years more youthfulness."

She slipped the bottle into her corsage and went off, joyous and triumphant.

"They might have been saved but for the coquetry of this woman," he murmured. "It is the little foot of this courtesan which spurns them into the abyss. Beyond doubt, God is on our side!"

C

T

LADY DUBARRY had not seen the street door close after her before Balsamo hurried up into the room where he had left Lorenza. But she was gone.

Her fine flowered cashmere shawl remained on the cushions as a token of her stay in the room.

A painful thought struck him that she had feigned to sleep. Thus she would have dispelled all uneasiness, doubts and mistrust in her husband's mind only to flee at the first chance for liberty. This time she would be surer of what to do, instructed by her former experience.

This idea made him bound. He searched without avail after ringing for Fritz to come to him. But nobody was about, as nobody had gone out behind the countess.

To run about, moving the furniture, calling Lorenza, looking without seeing, listening without hearing, thrilling without living, and pondering without thinking--such was the state of the infuriate for three minutes, which were as many ages.

He came out of his hallucination and dipping his hand in a vase of iced water, he held it on his forehead. By his will he chased away that throbbing of the blood in the brains which goes on silently in life but when heard means madness or death.

"Come, come, let us reason," he said, "Lorenza is no more here, and consequently must have gone forth. How? Through Andrea de Taverney I can ascertain all--whether my incorruptible Fritz was bribed and--then, if love is a sham, if science is an error, and fidelity a snare--Balsamo will punish without pity or reservation--like the powerful man smites when he has put aside mercy and preserves but pride. I must let Fritz perceive nothing while I haste to Trianon."

In taking up his hat to go, he stopped.

"Goodness, I am forgetting the old man," he said. "I must attend to Althotas before all. In my monstrous love, I left my unfortunate friend to himself--I have been inhuman and ungrateful."

With the fever animating his movements he sprang to the trap which he lowered and on which he stepped.

Scarcely had he reached the level of the laboratory, than he was struck by the old man's voice crooning a song. To Balsamo's high astonishment his first words were not a reproach as he expected; he was received by a natural and simple outburst of gaiety.

The old man was lolling back in his easy chair, snuffing the air as though he were drinking in new life at each sniff. His eyes were filled with dull fire, but the smile on his lips made them lighter as they were fastened on the visitor.

In this close, warm atmosphere, Balsamo felt giddy as if respiration and his strength failed him simultaneously.

"Master," said he, looking for something to lean against, "you must not stay here: one cannot breathe. Let me open a window overhead for there seems to reek from the floor the odor of blood."

"Blood? ha, ha, ha!" roared Althotas. "I noticed it but did not mind: it is you who have tender heart and brain who is easily affected."

"But you have blood on your hands and it is on the table--this smell is of blood--and human blood," added the younger man, passing his hand over his brow streaming with perspiration.

"Ha, he has a subtile scent," said the old sage. "Not only does he recognize blood but can tell it is human, too."

Looking round, Balsamo perceived a brass basin half full with a purple liquid reflected on the sides.

"Whence comes this blood?" he gasped.

He uttered a terrible roar! Part of the table, usually cumbered by alembics, crucibles, flasks, galvanic batteries and the like, was now clothed with a white damask sheet, worked with flowers. Among the

flowers here and there, spots of a red hue oozed up. Balsamo took one corner of the sheet and plucked the whole towards him.

His hair bristled up, and his opened mouth could not let the horrible yell come forth--it died in the gullet.

It was the corpse of Lorenza which stiffened on the board. The livid head seemed still to smile and hung back as though drawn down by the weight of her hair.

A large cut yawned above the clavicle, but not a drop of blood was issuing now. The hands were rigid and the eyes closed under the violet lids.

"Yes, thanks for your having placed her under my hand where I could so readily take her," said the horrible old man; "in her have I found the blood I wanted."

"Villain of the vilest," screamed Balsamo, with the cry of despair bursting from all pores, "you have nothing to do but die--for this was my wife since four days ago! You have murdered her to no gain."

"She was not a virgin?"

Althotas quivered to the eyes at this revelation, as if an electric shock made them oscillate in their orbits. His pupils frightfully dilated; his gums gnashed for want of teeth; his hand let fall the phial of the elixir of long life, and it fell and shivered into a thousand splinters. Stupefied, annihilated, struck at the same time in heart and brain, he dropped back heavily in his armchair.

Balsamo, bending with a sob over the body of his wife, swooned as he was kissing the tresses.

Time passed silently and mournfully in the death-chamber where the blood congealed.

Suddenly in the midst of the night a bell rang in the room itself.

Fritz must have guessed that his master was in the laboratory of Althotas to have sent the warning thither. He repeated it three times and still Balsamo did not lift his head.

In a few minutes the ringing came, still louder, without rousing the mourner from his stupor.

But at another call, the impatient jangle made him look up though not with a start. He questioned the space with the cold solemnity of a corpse coming forth from a grave.

The bell kept on ringing.

Energy, reviving, at last aroused intelligence in the husband of Lorenza Feliciani. He took away his head from hers; it had lost its warmth without warming hers.

"Great news or a great danger," he said to himself. "I should as lief meet a great danger."

He rose upright.

"But why should I answer this appeal?" he asked without perceiving the sombre effect of his voice under the gloomy skylight and in the funeral chamber. "Is there anything in this world to alarm or interest me?"

As if to answer him the bell was so roughly shaken that the iron tongue broke loose and fell on a glass alembic which it shivered on the floor.

He held back no longer; besides, it was important that neither Fritz nor another should come here to find him.

With a tranquil tread he opened the trap and descended. When he opened the staircase door, Fritz stood on the top step, pale and breathless, holding a torch in one hand and the broken bell-pull in the other.

At sight of his master, he uttered a cry of satisfaction and then one of surprise and fright. Respectful as he usually was, he took the liberty of seizing him by the arm and dragging him up to a Venetian mirror.

"Look, excellency," he said.

Balsamo shuddered. In an hour he had grown twenty years older. In his eyes were lustre; in his skin no blood; and over all his lineaments was spread an expression of stupor and lack of intelligence. Bloody foam bathed his lips, and on the white front of his shirt a large blood spot spread. He looked at himself for an instant without recognition. Then he plunged his glance steadily into that of his reflected self.

"You are quite right, Fritz," he said. "But why did you call me?"

"They are here, master," said the faithful servant, with disquiet: "the five masters."

"All here?" queried Balsamo, starting.

"With each an armed servant in the yard. They are impatient which is why I rang so often and roughly."
Without adjusting his dress or hiding the blood spot, Balsamo went down the stairs to the parlor.
"Has your excellency no orders to give me about weapons?" asked the valet.
"Why should I take a sword even?"
"I do not know, I only feared--I thought---- "
"Thanks, you can go."
"Yes: but your double-barrelled pistols are in the ebony box on the gilded buffet."
"Go, I bid you," said the master, and he entered the parlor.

C

T

THE parlor was well lighted, and Balsamo entering could see the grim air of the five men who kept their seats until he was before them and bowed. Then they all rose and returned the salute.

He took an armchair facing theirs without appearing to remark that theirs formed a horse-shoe in front of his so that he occupied the place of the culprit at a trial.

He did not speak first as he would have done on another occasion. From the painful dulness which succeeded the shock to him he looked without seeing.

"You seem to have understood what we come for, brother," said the man who held the central chair: "yet you were long coming and we were deliberating if we should not send for you."

"I do not understand you," simply replied the mesmerist.

"That did not seem so when you took the place of the accused."

"Accused?" faltered the other, vaguely. "Still I do not understand."

"It will not be hard to make you do so," said the chief officer: "judging by your pale front, dull eyes and tremulous voice. Do you not hear me?"

"Yes, I hear," was the reply, while he shook his head to drive away the thoughts oppressing him.

"Do you remember, brother," said the president, "that at the last meeting, the Superior Committee gave you warning of treason meditated by one of the main upholders of the Order?"

"Perhaps so, I do not know."

"You answer as with a perturbed and tumultuous conscience. But recover--do not be cast down. Answer with the clearness and preciseness which a dreadful position demands. Answer with such certainty that you will convince us, for we come with no more hatred than prejudice. We are the Law. It speaks not till after the judges pronounce."

Balsamo made no reply.

Seeing the calm and immobility of the accused, the others stared at him not without astonishment, before fastening their eyes on the chief again.

"You are warned. Protect yourself, for I resume.

"After this warning the Order delegated five of the members to watch at Paris about him who was designated as a traitor. It was not easy to watch a man like you, whose power was to enter everywhere. You had at your disposal all the means, which are immense, of our association, given for the triumph of our cause. But we respected the mystery of your conduct as you fluctuated between the adherents of Dubarry, of Richelieu and Rohan. But three days ago, five warrants of arrest, signed by the King and put in motion by Sartines, were presented on the same day to five of our principal agents, very faithful and devoted brothers who have been taken away. Two are put in solitary confinement in the Bastile, two at Vincennes Castle, in the dungeons, and one is in Bicetre in the deepest cell. Did you know of this?"

"No," replied the accused.

"Strange, with the close connections you have with royalty. But this is stranger still. To arrest those friends, Sartines must have had the note naming them, the only one, under Arabian characters, which was addressed to the Supreme Circle in 1769, when you received them and gave them the grade assigned to them. But the sixth name was the Count of Fenix's."

"I grant that," said Balsamo.

"Then how comes it that they five should be arrested as by that list while you were spared? you deserved prison as well as they. What have you to answer?"

"Nothing."

"Your pride survives your honor. The police discovered those names in reading our papers which you kept in a casket. One day a woman came out of your house with this casket and went to the Chief of

Police. Thus all was discovered. Is this true?"

"Perfectly true."

The president stood up.

"Who was this woman?" he said. "A fair and passionate one devoted to you body and soul and affectionately loved. Lorenza Feliciani is your wife, Balsamo."

He groaned in despair.

"A quarter of an hour after she called on the head of the police, you called in your turn. She had sown the seed and you were to gather the harvest. An obedient servant she committed the treachery and you had but to give the finishing touches to the infernal work. Lorenza came out alone. No doubt you arranged this and did not want to be compromised by her company. You came out triumphantly with Lady Dubarry, called there to receive from your mouth the information which she was to pay. You got into the carriage of this courtesan, leaving the papers which ruined us in the hands of Lord Sartines but carrying away the empty casket. Happily we saw you. The light of the All-seeing Eye did not fail us on all occasions."

Balsamo bowed still without remark.

"I conclude," said the chief judge. "Two guilty ones are pointed out: the woman who was your accomplice and may have unwittingly injured us by conveying the revelations of our secrets; the second, yourself the Grand Copt, the luminous ray who had the cowardice to let your wife shield you in this deed of treason."

Balsamo slowly raised his pale face, and fixed on the speaker a glance with the fire in it which had accumulated while the speech was made.

"Why do you accuse this woman?" he demanded.

"We know that you will try to defend her; that you love her to idolatry and prefer her above all. She is your treasure of science, happiness and fortune; the most precious of your instruments."

"You know this?"

"And that in striking her we hurt you more than in striking you. This is the sentence, then: Joseph Balsamo is a traitor. He has broken his oath, but his science is immense and useful to the Order. He ought to live for the cause he has betrayed; he belongs still to his brothers though he has renounced them. A perpetual prison will protect the society against future perfidy, and at the same time let the brothers gather the gain due to them if only as a forfeit. As for Lorenza Feliciani, a dreadful doom---- "

"Stay," said Balsamo, with the greatest calm in his voice. "You are forgetting that I have not defended myself. The accused ought to have a hearing in his justification. One word will suffice--one piece of evidence. Wait for me one moment while I bring the proof I speak of."

The judges consulted an instant.

"Do you fear that I will commit suicide?" said the accused with a bitter smile. "I wear a ring that would kill this room-full of people were I to open it. Do you fear that I will flee? Let me be escorted, if that be your fear."

"Go," said the president.

For only a while did the prisoner disappear; then they heard his step descending the stairs, heavily. He entered.

On his shoulder was the cold discolored, rigid corpse of Lorenza, with her white hand sweeping the floor.

"As you said, this woman--whom I adored and was my treasure, my only joy, my very life--she betrayed us," he said: "here she is--take her! The High Justicer of heaven did not wait for you to come and slay her."

With a movement as swift as lightning, he slid the corpse out of his arms, and rolled it to the feet of the judges. The dark hair and inert hands struck them with all their profound horror while by the lamplight the wound glared with its ominous red, deeply yawning in the midst of the swan-white neck.

"Utter your sentence, now," said Balsamo.

Aghast, the judges uttered a terror-stricken cry, and fled dizzily in confusion inexpressible. The horses

of their carriage and escort were heard neighing in the yard and trampling; the carriage-gate groaned on its hinges and then solemn silence sat once more on the abode of death and despair.

C

H

NOTHING had meanwhile changed in the other part of the house. But the old wizard had seen Balsamo enter his study and carry away the remains of Lorenza, which had recalled him to life.

Shrieks of "Fire!" from the old man reached Balsamo, when, rid of his dread visitors, he had carried Lorenza back to the sofa where only two hours previously she had been reposing before the old sage broke in.

Suddenly he appeared to Althota' eyes.

"At last," said the latter, drunk with joy; "I knew you would have fear! see how I can revenge myself! It was well you came, for I was going to set fire to the place."

His pupil looked at him contemptuously without deigning a word.

"I am thirsty. Give me some water out of that bottle," he said wildly.

His features were breaking up fast; no steady fire was in his eyes, only frightful gleams, sinister and infernal; under his skin was no more blood. His long arms in which he had carried Lorenza as though she were a child, now dangled like cuttlefish's suckers. In anger had been consumed the strength momentarily restored him by desperation.

"You won't give me to drink? You want to kill me with thirst. You covet my books and manuscripts and lore, my treasures! Ah, you think you will enjoy them--wait a bit. Wait, wait!"

Making a supreme effort, he drew from under the cushion on which he was huddled up a bottle which he uncorked. At the contact of air, a flame spouted up from the glass and Althotas, like a magic creature, shook this flame around him.

Instantly, the writings piled up around the old man, the scattered books, the rolls of papyrus extracted with so many hardships from the pyramids of Egypt and the libraries of Herculaneum, caught fire with the quickness of gunpowder. The marble flour was turned into a sheet of fire, and seemed to Balsamo one of those fiery rings described by Dante.

No doubt the old man thought that his disciple would rush among the flames to save him, but he was wrong. He merely drew himself away calmly out of the scope of the fire.

It enveloped the incendiary himself; but instead of frightening him it seemed as if he were in his element. The flame caressed him as if he were a salamander, instead of scorching him.

Though as he sat, it devoured the lower part of his frame, he did not seem to feel it.

On the contrary, the contact appeared salutary, for the dying one's muscles relaxed, and a new serenity covered his features like a mask. Isolated at this ultimate hour, the spirit forgot the matter, and the old prophet, on his fiery car, seemed about to ascend to heaven.

Calm and resigned, analysing his sensations, listening to his own pangs as the last voices of earth, the old Magus let his farewell sullenly escape to life, hope and power.

"I die with no regret," he said; "I have enjoyed all earthly boons; I have known everything; I have held all given to the creature to possess--and I am going into immortality."

Balsamo sent forth a gloomy laugh which attracted the old man's attention.

Althotas darted on him a look through the veiling flames, which was impressed with ferocious majesty.

"Yea, you are right: I had not foreseen one Thing--God!"

As if this mighty word had snatched the soul out of him, he dwindled up in the chair: his last breath had gone up to the Giver whom he had thought to deprive of it.

Balsamo heaved a sigh, and without trying to save a thing from the pyre of this modern Zoroaster dying, he went down to Lorenza, having set the trap so that it closed in all the fire as in an immense kiln.

All through the night the volcano blazed over Balsamo with the roaring of a whirlwind, but he neither sought to extinguish it or to flee. After having burnt up all that was combustible, and left the study bare to

the sky, the fire went out, and Balsamo heard its last roar die away like Althota' in a sigh.

C

T

ANDREA was in her room, giving a final touch to her rebellious curls when she heard the step of her father, who appeared as she crossed the sill of the antechamber with a book under her arm.

"Good morning, Andrea," said the baron; "going out, I see."

"I am going to the Dauphiness who expects me."

"Alone?"

"Since Nicole ran away, I have no attendant."

"But you cannot dress yourself alone; no lady ever does it: I advised you quite another course."

"Excuse me, but the Dauphiness awaits---- "

"My child, you will get yourself ridiculed if you go on like this and ridicule is fatal at court."

"I will attend to it, father: but at present the Dauphiness will overlook the want of an elaborate attire for the haste I show to join her."

"Be back soon for I have something serious to say. But you are never going out without a touch of red on the cheeks. They look quite hollow and your eyes are circled with large rings. You will frighten people thus."

"I have no time to do anything more, father."

"This is odious, upon my word," said Taverney, shrugging his shoulders: "there is only one woman in the world who does not think anything of herself and I am cursed with her for my daughter. What atrociously bad luck! Andrea!"

But she was already at the foot of the stairs. She turned.

"At least, say you are not well," he suggested. "That will make you interesting at all events."

"There will be no telling lies there, father, for I feel really very ill at present."

"That is the last straw," grumbled the baron. "A sick girl on my hands, with the favor of the King lost and Richelieu cutting me dead! Plague take the nun!" he mumbled.

He entered his daughter's room to ferret about for some confirmation of his suspicions.

During this time Andrea had been fighting with an unknown indisposition as she made her way through the shrubbery to the Little Trianon. Standing on the threshold, Lady Noailles made her understand that she was late and that she was looking out for her.

The titular reader to the Dauphiness, an abbe, was reciting the news, above all desonating on the rumor that a riot had been caused by the scarcity of corn and that five of the ringleaders had been arrested and sent to jail.

Andrea entered. The Dauphiness was in one of her wayward periods and this time preferred the gossip to the book; she regarded Andrea as a spoilsport. So she remarked that she ought not to have missed her time and that things good in themselves were not always good out of season.

Abashed by the reproach and particularly its injustice, the vice-reader replied nothing, though she might have said her father detained her and that her not feeling well had retarded her walk. Oppressed and dazed, she hung her head, and closing her eyes as if about to die, she would have fallen only for the Duchess of Noailles catching her.

"Oh, dear, she is white as her handkerchief," said the Archduchess; "it is my fault for scolding her. Poor girl, take a seat! Do you think you could go on with your reading?"

"Certainly; I hope so, at least."

But hardly had she cast her eyes on the page before black specks began to swarm and float before her sight and they made the print indecipherable.

She turned pale anew; cold perspiration beaded her brow; and the dark ring round her eyes with which Taverney had blamed his daughter enlarged so that the princesses exclaimed, as Andrea's faltering made

her raise her head.

"Again? look, duchess, the poor child must be ill, for she is losing her senses."

"The young lady must get home as soon as possible," said the Mistress of the Household drily. "Thus commences the small pox."

The priest rose and stole away on tiptoe, not wanting to risk his beauty.

"Yes," said the Dauphiness, in whose arms the girl came to, "you had better retire, but do not go indoors at once. A stroll in the garden may do you good. Oh, send me back my abbe, who is yonder among the tulips."

Andrea was glad to be out doors, but she felt little improved. To reach the priest she had to make a circuit. She walked with lowered head, heavy with the weight of the strange dulness with which she had suffered since rising. She paid no attention to the birds hunting each other among the blooming hedges or to the bees humming amid the thyme and lilacs. She did not remark, only a few paces off, Dr. Jussieu giving a lesson in gardening to Gilbert. Since the pupil perceived the promenader, he made but a poor auditor.

"Oh, heavens!" interrupted he, suddenly extending his arms.

"What is the matter?" asked the lecturer.

"She has fainted!"

"Who? are you mad?"

"A lady," answered Gilbert, quickly.

His pallor and his alarm would have betrayed him as badly as his cry of "She" but Jussieu had looked off in the other direction.

He saw Andrea fallen on a garden seat, ready to give up the last sensible breath.

It was the time when the King had the habit of paying the Dauphin a visit and came through this way. He suddenly appeared, holding a hothouse peach, with a true selfish king's wonder, thinking whether it would not be better for the welfare of France that he should enjoy it rather than the princess.

"What is the matter?" he cried as he saw the two men racing towards the swooning girl whom he vaguely distinguished but did not recognize, thanks to his weak sight.

"The King!" exclaimed Jussieu, holding Andrea in his arms.

"The King!" murmured she, swooning away in earnest this time.

Approaching, the King knew her at last and exclaimed with a shudder:

"Again? this is an unheard-of thing! when people have such maladies, they ought to shut themselves up! it is not proper to go dying all over the house and grounds at all hours of the day and night."

And on he went, grumbling all sorts of disagreeable things against poor Andrea. Jussieu did not understand the allusion, but seeing Gilbert in fear and anxiety, he said:

"Come along, Gilbert; you are stronger; carry Mdlle. de Taverney to her lodgings."

"I?" protested Gilbert, quivering; "She would never forgive me for touching her. No, never!"

And off he ran, calling for help.

When the gardeners and some servants came up, they transported the girl to her rooms where they left her in the hands of her father.

But from another point arrived the Dauphiness, who had heard of the disaster from the King, and who not only came but brought her physician.

Dr. Louis was a young man, but he was intelligent.

"Your highness," he reported to his patroness, "the young lady's malady is quite natural and not usually dangerous."

"And do you not prescribe anything?"

"There is absolutely nothing to be done."

"Very well; she is luckier than I, for I shall die unless you send me the sleeping pills you promised."

"I will prepare them myself when I get home."

When he was gone the princess remained by her reader.

"Cheer up, my dear Andrea," she said with a kindly smile. "There is nothing serious in your case for the doctor will not prescribe anything whatever."

"I am glad to hear it, but he is a little wrong, for I do not feel at all well, I declare to you."

"Still the ail cannot be severe at which a doctor laughs. Have a good sleep, my child; I will send somebody to attend you for I notice that you are quite alone. Will you accompany me, my Lord of Taverney?"

C

T

For a month Gilbert wandered round the sick girl's lodgings, inventing work in the gardens in their neighborhood so that he could keep his eye constantly on the windows.

In this time he had grown paler; on his face youth was no more to be viewed than in the strange fire in his eyes and the dead-white and even complexion; his mouth curled by dissimulation, his sidelong glance, and the sensitive quivering of his muscles belonged already to later years.

Looking up, billhook in hand as a horseman struck sparks from the ride by the walk, he recognized Philip Taverney.

He moved towards the hedgerow. But the cavalier urged his horse towards him, calling out:

"Hey, Gilbert!"

The young man's first impulse was for flight, for panic seized him and he felt like racing over the garden and the ponds themselves.

"Do you not know me, Gilbert?" shouted the captain in a gentle tone which was understood by the incorrigible youth.

Comprehending his folly, Gilbert stopped. He retraced his steps but slowly and with distrust.

"Not at first, my lord," he said trembling: "I took you for one of the guards, and as I was idling, I feared to be brought to task and booked for punishment."

Content with this explanation, Philip dismounted, put the bridle round his arm and leaning the other hand on Gilbert's shoulder which visibly made him shudder, he went on:

"What is the matter, boy? Oh, I can guess; my father has been treating you with harshness and injustice. But I have always liked you."

"So you have."

"Then forget the evil others do you. My sister has also been always good to you."

"Hardly," replied Gilbert: with an expression no one could have understood for it embodied an accusation to Andrea, and an excuse for himself, bursting like pride while groaning like remorse.

"I understood," said Philip: "she is a little high-handed at times, but she is good-hearted. Do you know where our good Andrea is at the present?"

"In her rooms, I suppose, sir," gasped Gilbert, struck to the heart. "How am I to know---- "

"Alone, as usual, and pining?"

"In all probability, alone, since Nicole has run away."

"Nicole run away?"

"With her sweetheart--at least it is presumed so," said Gilbert, seeing that he had gone too far.

"I do not understand you, Gilbert. One has to wrench every word out of you. Try to be a little more amiable. You have sense, and learning, so do not mar your acquirements with an affected roughness unbecoming to your station in life, and not likely to lift you to a higher."

"But I do not know anything about what you ask of me; I am a gardener and am ignorant of what goes on in the palace."

"But, Gilbert, I believed you had eyes and owed some return in watchfulness to the house of Taverney, however slight may have been its hospitality."

"Master Philip," returned the other in a high hoarse voice, for Philip's kindness and another unspoken feeling had mollified him: "I do like you; and that is why I tell you that your sister is very ill."

"Very ill?" ejaculated the gentleman: "why did you not tell me so at the start?" "What is it?" he asked, walking so quickly.

"Nobody knows. She fainted three times in the grounds yesterday and the Dauphiness's doctor has been

to see her, as well as my lord the baron."

Philip was not listening any farther for his presentiments were realized and his fortitude came to him in face of danger. He left his horse in Gilbert's charge, and ran to the chapel.

Gilbert put the horse up in the stable and ran into the woods like one of those wild or obscene birds which cannot bear the eye of man.

On entering the ante-chamber Philip missed the flowers of which his sister used to be fond but which irritated her since her indisposition.

As he entered she was musing on a little sofa before mentioned. Her lovely brow surcharged with clouds drooped lowly, and her fine eyes vacillated in their orbits. Her hands were hanging and though the position ought to have filled them with blood they were white as a waxen statue's.

Philip caught the strange expression and, alarmed as he was, he thought that his sister's ailment had mental affliction in it.

The sight caused so much trembling in his heart that he could not restrain a start in flight.

Andrea lifted her eyes and rose like a galvanised corpse, with a loud scream; breathlessly she clung to her brother's neck.

"Yes, Philip, you!" she panted, and force quitted her before she could speak more.

"Yes, I who return to find you ill," he said, embracing and sustaining her for he felt her yield. "Poor sister, what has happened you?"

Andrea laughed with a nervous tone which hurt him instead of encouraging as she intended.

"Nothing: the doctor whom the Dauphiness kindly sent me, says it is nothing he can remedy. I am quite well save for some fainting fits which came over me."

"But you are so pale?"

"Did I ever have much color?"

"No, but you were alive at that time, while now---- "

"It is nothing: the pleasant shock of seeing you again---- "

"Dear Andrea!"

But as he pressed her to his heart, her strength fled once more and she fell on the sofa, whiter than the muslin curtains on which her face was outlined.

She gradually recovered and looked handsomer than ever.

"Your emotion at my return is very sweet and flattering, but I should like to know about your illness--to what you attribute it?"

"I do not know, dear: the spring, the coming of the flowers: you know I have always been nervous. Yesterday the perfume of the Persian lilacs nearly suffocated me--I believe it was then I was taken bad. Strange to say, I who used to be so fond of the flowers hold them in execration now. For over two weeks not so much as a daffodil has entered my rooms. But let us leave them. It is the headache I have, which caused a swoon and made Mdlle. de Taverney a happy girl, because it has drawn the notice of the Dauphiness upon her. She has come here to see me. Oh, Philip, what a delicate friend and charming patroness she is! But since her doctor says there is nothing to be alarmed at, tell me why you have been alarmed?"

"It was that little numbskull Gilbert, of course!"

"Gilbert," repeated the lady testily. "Did you believe that little idiot who is only able in doing or saying ill? But how is it I see you without any notice?"

"Answer me why you ceased to write?"

"Only for a few days."

"For a full fortnight, you negligent girl! Ah, I was utterly forgotten there even by my sister. They were in a dreadful hurry to pack me off, yet when I got there I never heard a word about the fabulous regiment of which I was to take command as promised by the King per the Duke of Richelieu to our father himself."

"Oh, do not be astonished at that," said the girl, "the duke and father are quite upset about it. They are

like two bodies with one soul; but father sometimes cries out against him, saying he is betrayed. Who betrays him? I do not know and between us I little want to know. Father lives like a soul in purgatory, fretting about something which never comes."

"But the King, he is not well disposed to us?"

"Speak low. The King," replied Andrea, looking timidly round. "I am afraid the King is very fickle. The interest which he professed for our house, for each of us, cooled off, without my being able to understand it. He does not look at me and yesterday he turned back on me--which was when I fainted in the garden."

"Then little Gilbert was right."

"To tell everybody that I fainted? what does it matter to the miserable little rogue? I know, my dear Philip," added Andrea laughing, "that it is not the proper thing to faint in a royal residence but it is not one of those things that one does for the fun of it."

"Poor dear, I can well believe that it is not your fault: but go on."

"That is all; and Master Gilbert might have withheld his remarks about it."

"There you are abusing the poor boy again."

"And you taking his defense."

"For mercy's sake, do not be so rude to him, so hard, for I have heard how you treat him. But, goodness, what is the matter now?"

This time she fainted so that it took a long time for her senses to return.

"Undoubtedly you suffer," said Philip, "so as to alarm persons more bold than I am when you are concerned. Say what you like, this is a case that wants attending to. I will see your doctor myself," he concluded tranquilly.

C

T

THE day was closing and Dr. Louis, who was trying to read a medical tract as he came along in the twilight to the chapel, was vexed at the interposition of an opaque body to intercept the scanty light.

Raising his head and seeing a man before him, he asked:

"What do you want?"

"Excuse me but is not this Dr. Louis?" asked Philip de Taverney.

"Yes, sir," replied the doctor shutting his book.

"I should like a word with you---- "

"Pardon me, but I am in attendance on her Royal Highness the Dauphiness and---- "

"But the lady I wish to ask you about is in her household---- "

"Do you mean Mdlle. de Taverney?"

"Precisely."

"Aha," said the doctor quickly, examining the young captain.

"I am afraid she is very bad, for she went off into a swoon more than once while I was speaking to her this afternoon."

"Oh, you seem to take this to heart?"

"I love Mdlle. de Taverney more than my life."

He spoke the words with such exalted brotherly affection that the doctor was deceived.

"Oh, so it is you who is the lover?" he exclaimed.

Philip fell two steps back, carrying his hand to his brow and becoming pale as death.

"Mind, sir, you insult my sister!"

"Oh, your sister? excuse me, captain, but your air of mystery, the hour of your addressing me and the place, all led me into error which I deplore."

"Stay, sir; you think that Mdlle. de Taverney has a lover---- "

"Captain Taverney, I have not said a word of the sort to the Dauphiness, to your father, or to you--press me no more."

"On the contrary, we must speak of this. And yet it is impossible. I should have to give up all the religion of my life: it is accusing an angel--it is defying heaven! Doctor, let me require you to approve this. Science may err."

"Seldom."

"But, doctor, promise me that you will come and see her when you return from the Dauphiness? it is the boon the victim would not be refused by the executioner. You will see her again?"

"It is useless; but I should like to be mistaken. Captain, I will come and see your sister to-night."

Dr. Louis was one of those grave and honorable men for whom science is a holy thing and who study religiously. In a materialistic age he studied mental maladies: under the husk of the practitioner he had a heart and that was why he told Philip that he hoped he had erred.

That was why, too, he came to make a more full examination and was true to his appointment.

Whether by accident or from emotion due to the doctor's call, Andrea was seized with one of those fainting fits which had so alarmed her brother, and she was staggering, with her handkerchief carried to her mouth in pain.

The doctor assisted her to the sofa and sat down on it beside her. She was astonished at the second visit of one who had declared the case insignificant that same morning and still more that he should take her hand, not like a doctor to feel her pulse, but like a friend. She was almost going to snatch it away.

"Do you desire to see me, or is it merely the desire of your brother?" he asked.

"My brother did announce his intention of seeing you; but after your having said the matter was of no moment I should not have disturbed you myself."

"Your brother seems to be excitable, jealous of his honor, and intractable on some points. I suppose this is why you have not unbosomed yourself to him?"

Andrea looked at him with supreme haughtiness.

"Allow me to finish. It is natural that seeing the pain of the young gentleman and foreseeing his anger, you should obstinately keep secret before him: but towards me, the physician of the soul as well as of the body, one who sees and knows, you will be spared half the painful road of revelation and I have the right to expect you will be more frank."

"Doctor," replied Andrea, "if I did not see my brother darkened with true grief and yourself with a reputation of gravity I might believe you were in a plot to play some comedy with me and to frighten me into taking some disagreeable medicine."

"I entreat you, young lady," said the doctor frowning, "to stop in this course of dissimulation."

"Dissimulation?"

"Would you rather I said hypocrisy?"

"Sir, you offend me."

"You mean that I read you clearly. Will you spare me the pain of making you blush?"

"I do not understand you," said the girl, three times, looking at the doctor with eyes shining with interrogation and defiance, and almost with menace.

"But I understand you. You doubt science, and you hope to hide your condition from the world. But, undeceive yourself--with one word I pull down your pride: you are *enceinte*!"

Andrea uttered a frightful shriek and fell back on the sofa.

This cry was followed by the crash of the door flying open and Philip bounded into the room, drawing his sword and crying:

"You lie!"

Without letting go the pulse of the fainted woman, the doctor turned round to the captain.

"I have said what it was my duty to say," he replied: "and it is not your sword, in or out of the sheath, which will belie me. I deeply sorrow for you, young gentleman, for you have inspired as much sympathy as this girl has aversion by her perseverance in falsehood."

Andrea made not a movement but Philip started.

"I am father of a family," went on the doctor, "and I understand what you must suffer. I promise you my services as I do my discretion. My word is sacred, and everybody will tell you that I hold it dearer than my life."

"This is impossible!"

"It is true. Adieu, Captain."

When he was gone, Philip shut all the doors and windows, and coming back to his sister who watched with stupor these ominous preparations, he said, folding his arms:

"You have cowardly and stupidly deceived me. Cowardly, because I loved you above all else, and esteemed you, and my trust ought to have induced your own though you had no affection. Stupidly, because a third person holds the infamous secret which defames us; because spite of your cunning, it must have appeared to all eyes; lastly, because if you had confessed the state to me, I might have saved you from my affection for you. Your honor, so long as you were not wedded, belongs to all of us--that is, you have shamed us all.

"Now, I am no longer your brother since you have blotted out the title: only a man interested in extorting from you by all possible means the whole secret in order that I may obtain some reparation. I come to you full of anger and resolution, and I say that you shall be punished as cowards deserve for having been such a coward as to shelter yourself behind a lie. Confess your crime, or---- "

"Threats, to me?" cried the proud Andrea, "to a woman?" And she rose pale and menacing likewise.

"Not to a woman but to a faithless, dishonored creature."

"Threats," continued Andrea, more and more exasperated, "to one who knows nothing, can understand nothing of this except that you are looked upon by me as sanguinary madmen leagued to kill me with grief if not with shame."

"Aye, you shall be killed if you do not confess," said Philip. "Die on the instant, for heaven hath doomed you and I strike at its bidding."

The convulsively young man convulsively picked up his sword, and applied the point like lightning to his sister's breast.

"Yes, kill me!" she screamed, without shrinking at the smart of the wound.

She was even springing forward, full of sorrow and dementia, and her leap was so quick that the sword would have run through her bosom but for the sudden terror of Philip and the sight of a few drops of red on her muslin at the neck making him draw back.

At the end of his strength and his anger, he dropped the blade and fell on his knees at her feet. He wound his arms round her.

"No, Andrea," he cried, "it is I who shall die. You love me no more and I care for nothing in the world. Oh, you love another to such a degree that you prefer death to a confession poured out on my bosom. Oh, Andrea, it is time that I was dead."

She seized him as he would have dashed away, and wildly embraced him and covered him with tears and kisses.

"No, Philip, you are right. I ought to die since I am called guilty. But you are so good, pure and noble, that nobody will ever defame you and you should live to sorrow for me, not curse me."

"Well, sister," replied the young man, "in heaven's name, for the sake of our old time's love, fear nothing for yourself or him you love. I require no more of you, not even his name. Enough that the man pleased you, and so he is dear to me.

"Let us quit France. I hear that the King gave you some jewels--let us sell them and get away together. We will send half to our father and hide with the other. I will be all to you and you all to me. I love no one, so that I can be devoted to you. Andrea, you see what I do for you; you see you may rely on my love. Come, do you still refuse me your trust? will you not call me your brother?"

In silence, Andrea had listened to all the desperate young man had said: only the throbbing of her heart indicated life; only her looks showed reason.

"Philip," she said after a long pause, "you have thought that I loved you no longer, poor brother! and loved another man? now I forgive you all but the belief that I am impious enough to take a false oath. Well, I swear by high heaven which hears me, by our mother's soul--it seems that she has not long enough defended me, alas! that a thought of love has never distracted my reason. Now, God hath my soul in His holy keeping, and my body is at your disposal."

"Then there is witchcraft here," cried Philip; "I have heard of philters and potions. Someone has laid a hellish snare for you. Awake, none could have won this prize--sleeping, they have despoiled you. But we are together now and you are strong with me. You confide your honor in me and I shall revenge you."

"Yes, revenge, for it would be for a crime!" said the girl, with a sombre glow in her eyes.

"Well let us search out the criminal together," continued the Knight of Redcastle. "Have you noticed any one spying you and following you about--have you had letters--has a man said he loved you or led you to suppose so--for women have a remarkable instinct in such matters?"

"No one, nothing."

"Have you never walked out alone?"

"I always had Nicole with me."

"Nicole? a girl of dubious morals. Have I known all about her escapade?"

"Only that she is supposed to have run away with her sweetheart."

"How did you part?"

"Naturally enough; she attended to her duties up to nine o'clock when she arranged my things, set out my drink for the night and went away."

"Your drink? may she not have mixed something with it?"

"No; for I remember that I felt that strange thrill as I was putting the glass to my lips."

"What strange thrill?"

"The same I felt down at our place when that foreign lord Baron Balsamo came to our home. Something like vertigo, a dazing, a loss of all the faculties. I was at my piano when I felt all spin and swim around me. Looking before me I saw the baron reflected in a mirror. I remember no more except that I found myself waking in the same spot without ability to reckon how long I had been unconscious."

"Is this the only time you experienced this feeling?"

"Again on the night of the accident with the fireworks. I was dragged along with the crowd when suddenly, on the point of being mangled, a cloud came over my eyes and my rigid arms were extended: through the cloud I just had time to catch a glimpse of that man. I fell off into a sleep or swoon then. You know that Baron Balsamo carried me away and brought me home."

"Yes; and did you see him again on the night when Nicole fled?"

"No; but I felt all the symptoms which betoken his presence. I went into sleep; when I woke, I was not on the bed but on the floor, alone, cold as in death. I called for Nicole but she had disappeared."

"Twice then you saw this Baron Joseph Balsamo in connection with this strange sleep: and the third time---- "

"I divined that he was near," said Andrea, who began to understand his inference.

"It is well," said Philip. "Now you may rest tranquil and abate not your pride, Andrea: I know the secret. Thank you, dear sister, we are saved!"

He took her in his arms, pressed her affectionately to his heart, and, borne away by the fire of his determination, dashed out of the rooms without awaiting or listening for anything.

He ran to the stables, saddled and bridled his steed with his own hands, and rode off at the top of speed to Paris.

C

T

PHILIP was ignorant of Balsamo's address but he remembered that of the lady who he said had harbored Andrea. The Marchioness of Savigny's maid supplied him with the directions, and it was not without profound emotion that he stood before the house in St. Claude Street, where he conjectured Andrea's repose and honor were entombed.

He knocked at the door with a sure enough hand, and, as was the habit, the door was opened.

Leading his horse, he entered the yard. But he had not taken four steps before he was faced by Fritz.

"I wish to speak to the master of the house, Count Fenix," said Philip, vexed at this simple obstacle and frowning as though the German were not fulfilling his duty.

He fastened his horse to a hitching-ring in the wall and proceeded up to the house.

"My lord is not at home," answered Fritz.

"I am a soldier and so understand the value of orders," said the captain: "your master cannot have foreseen my call which is exceptional."

"The prohibition is for everybody," replied Fritz, blunderingly.

"Oh, then, your master is in!"

"Well, suppose he is?" challenged Fritz, who was beginning to lose patience.

"Then I shall wait till I see him."

"My lord is not at home," repeated the valet: "we have had a fire here and the place is not fit to live in."

"But you are living here!"

"I am the care-taker. And any way," he continued, getting warm, "whether the count is or is not in, people do not force their way in; if you try to break the rule, why--I will put you out," he added tranquilly.

"You?" sneered the dragoon of the Dauphiness's Regiment, with kindling eye.

"I am the man," rejoined Fritz, with his national peculiarity of being the more cool while the more roused up.

The gentleman had his sword out in a minute. But Fritz, without any emotion at the sight of the steel, or calling--perhaps he was alone in the house--plucked a short pike off a trophy of arms and attacking Philip like a single-stick player rather than a fencer, shivered the court sword.

The captain yelled with rage, and sprang to the panoply to get a weapon for himself. But at this, a secret door opened, and the count appeared enframed in the dark doorway.

"What is this noise, Fritz?" he asked.

"Nothing, my lord," replied the German, but placing himself with the pike on guard so as to defend his master, who, standing on the stairs, was half above him.

"Count Fenix," said Philip, "is it the habit in your country for visitors to be received by the pikepoints of your varlets or only a peculiar custom of your noble house?"

At a sign Fritz lowered his weapon and stood it up in a corner.

"Who are you?" queried the count, seeing badly by the corridor lamplight.

"I am Philip of Taverney," replied the officer, thinking the name would be ample for the count's conscience.

"Taverney? my lord, I was handsomely entertained by your father--be welcome here," said the count.

"This is better," uttered Philip.

"Be good enough to follow me."

Balsamo closed the secret door and walked before his guest to the parlor where he had outfaced the five masters of the Invisibles. It was lighted up as though visitors were expected, but that was only one of the habits of this luxurious establishment.

"Good evening, Captain Taverney," said Fenix in a voice so mild and low that it made him look at him.

He started back. He was but the shadow of himself: a smile of mortal sorrow flitted on the pallid lips.

"I must offer excuses for my servant," he said; "he was only obeying orders and you must own that you were wrong to overbear them."

"My lord, you must know that there are cases when circumstances overrule," returned Philip, "and this is one of them. To speak to you, I was bound to brave death."

"Speak quickly," said Balsamo, "for I warn you that I listen out of kindness and that I am soon tired."

"I shall speak as I ought to do, and at what length I see fit, and whether you please or not, I shall commence with a question."

At this, a flash of lightning was disengaged from Balsamo's terrible frowning brows.

"Sir," said he, with a tone which he forced to be calm while haughty, "since I have had the honor to see you, I have met misfortune; my house has been partly burnt, and many valuable objects destroyed, very valuable, understand; the result is that I am grieved and a little estranged by this grief. I beg you to be clear, therefore, or I must immediately take leave of you."

"Oh, no," replied Philip, "you are not going to leave as easily as you say. You may have had misfortunes, but one has befallen me, far greater than any of yours, I am sure."

Balsamo smiled hopelessly as before.

"The honor of my family is lost my lord, and you can restore it."

"Indeed? you must be mad," and he put out his hand to ring a bell, and yet with so dull and feelingless a gesture that Philip did not stay it.

"I am mad," said he in a broken voice. "But do you not understand that the question is of my sister, whom you held senseless in your arms on the 31st of May, last, and whom you took to a house no doubt of ill fame--my sister, of whom I demand the honor, sword in hand."

"What a lot of beating the bush to come to a plain fact. You say I insulted--Who says I insulted your sister?"

"She herself, my lord---- "

"Verily, you give me a very sad idea of yourself and your sister. You ought to know that it is the vilest of speculations that some women make with their fame. As you come to me, bursting in at my door, with your sword flourished like the bully in the Italian comedies who quarrels for his sister, it proves that she has great need of a husband or you of money--for you hear that I make gold. You are mistaken on both points, sir: You will get no money, and your sister will remain unwed."

"Then I will have all the blood in your veins," roared Philip.

"No, I want it, to shed it on a more serious occasion. So take yourself off, or if you do not and make a noise, I shall call Fritz, who at a sign from me, will snap you in twain like a reed. Begone!"

As Philip tried to stop him ringing the bell, he opened an ebony box on a gilt console and took out a pair of pistols which he cocked.

"Well, I would rather this--kill me," said the young man, "because you have dishonored me."

He spoke the words with so much truth, that Balsamo said as he bent mild eyes upon him:

"Is it possible that you are acting in earnest? and that Mdlle. de Taverney alone conceived the idea and urged you forward? I am willing to admit that I owe you satisfaction. I swear on my honor that my conduct towards your sister on that memorable night was irreproachable. Do you believe me? You must read in my eyes that I do not fear a duel? Do not be deceived by my apparent weakness. It is a fact that I have scant blood in my face; but my muscles have lost none of their strength. See!"

With one hand and no apparent effort, he raised off its pedestal a massive bronze vase.

"Well, my lord, I grant that for the 31st of May; but you use a subterfuge: you have seen my sister since."

Balsamo wavered but he said:

"True: I have seen her." And his brow clouded with terrible memories.

"But, granting that I have seen her, what does that prove against me?"

"You did it to plunge her into that inexplicable sleep which she has felt three times at your approach and which you took advantage of to commit a crime."

"Again, who says this?"

"My sister!"

"How could she know, being asleep?"

"Ah, you confess that she was put to sleep?"

"More than that, I put her to sleep."

"In what end--to dishonor her?"

"In what end, alas!" said the mesmerist, letting his head fall on his breast. "To have her reveal a secret more precious than life. And during that night---- "

"My sister is a mother!"

"True," exclaimed Balsamo, "I remember I omitted to awaken her. And some villain profited by her sleep on that dreadful night--dreadful for all of us."

"You are mocking at me?"

"No, I will convince you. Take me to your sister. I have committed an oversight, but I am pure of crime. I left the girl in a magnetic slumber. In compensation of this fault, which it is just to pardon me, I will give up to you the malefactor's name."

"Tell it, tell it!"

"I know it not, but your sister does."

"But she has refused to name him."

"Refused you, but not me. Will you believe her if she accuses someone?"

"Yes; for she is an angel of purity."

Balsamo called his man and ordered the horses to be harnessed to his carriage.

"You will tell me the guilty man's name," said Philip.

"My friend," said the count, "your sword was broken in my house; let me replace it with another." He took off the wall a magnificent rapier with a chiselled hilt which he placed in the officer's sheath.

"And you?"

"I have no need of a weapon," he continued, "my defense is at Trianon and my defender will be yourself when your sister shall have spoken."

C

T

DRIVEN by Fritz, the count's excellent team covered the ground swiftly.

Philip was silent if not patient during the ride, for he felt that he was not the superior power which could persuade or domineer over this wonderful man.

When they had passed the palace gates and were near the chapel, he stopped.

"A last word, my lord," he said; "I do not know what question you were to put to my sister; at least, spare her the incidents of the horrible scene passing during her unconsciousness. Spare the purity of the soul since the reverse befell the virginity of the body."

"Captain," replied Balsamo, "mark this well. I never came into these gardens farther than the hedges you see yonder fronting the line of buildings where your sister is lodged. As for the scene which you fear the effect of on her mind, the effect will be for yourself alone, and on a sleeping person; for I will at the present send your sister into the mesmeric sleep."

He made a halt folding his arms and turning towards the house where Andrea dwelt, he stood quiet for a space, frowning, with an expression of will strong on his face.

"It is done--she is asleep," he said. "You doubt? To prove that I can command her at a distance, I order her to come and meet you at the foot of the stairs where took place our last interview."

"When I see that, I shall believe," said the officer.

They went and stood in the grove and Balsamo held out his hand towards the chapel. A sound made them start in the next cluster of trees.

"Look out, there is a man!" said Balsamo.

"I see--it is Gilbert, one of the gardeners here, but he used to be a retainer of ours," said Philip.

"Have you anything to fear from him?"

"No, I should think not: but never mind, stay. If he is up already to work, others may be about."

During this time, Gilbert fled frightened, for seeing Philip with Balsamo, he instinctively comprehended that he was lost.

"My lord," said Philip, yielding to the charm the magnetiser exercised on everybody, "if really your power is great enough to bring my sister hither, manifest it by some sign, without having her out to a place so public as this where any passer may see and hear."

"You spoke in time," was the other's answer, grasping his arm and pointing to Andrea's white figure, appearing at the corridor window as she was obeying the supernatural mandate.

He held his palm open towards her and she stopped short.

Then, like a statue revolved on the pedestal, she wheeled round, and returned into her room.

Some instants afterwards the two gentlemen were in the same place.

But rapid as had been their movement, time was given for a third person to glide into the house and hide in Nicole's room, for he understood that his life depended on this interview.

It was Gilbert.

Philip had taken his sister in his arms and placed her in a chair while the count shut the door. Then he took up a candle and passed it to and fro before her eyes, without the flame causing her lids to blink.

"Are you convinced that she sleeps?"

"That is plain but, good God! how strange is this sleep," said Philip.

"I will question her; or since you fear I may put some inapt question to her, do so yourself."

"But though I have spoken to her and touched her just now, she did not appear to hear me or heed me."

"You were not in continuity with her: I will place you in contact."

He joined the hands of brother and sister, and at once Andrea smiled and murmured:

"It is you, brother."

"She knows you and will answer: question."

"But if she did not remember awake, how can she when sleeping?"

"A mystery of science."

Sighing, he sat in an armchair in the corner.

Philip was motionless, thinking how to begin, when as if responding to his reflections, Andrea, with her face clouding like his own, said:

"You are right, brother, it is a sad affliction to the family."

Philip had not expected that she could translate his very mind and he shuddered.

"Make her speak, sir," suggested Balsamo.

"How?"

"By willing that she shall do so."

Philip looked at his sister while mentally formulating an inquiry and she blushed.

"Oh, Philip, how unkind of you to believe that Andrea would deceive you."

"Then you love nobody?"

"Not one."

"But there was an accomplice, the guilty person who must be punished."

"I do not understand you, brother."

"You must press her," said Balsamo: "question her bluntly, without heed of her modesty, for when awakened she will recall nothing of this."

"But can she answer such questions?"

"Mark," said Balsamo: "Do you see?"

She started at the sound of his voice and turned towards him.

"Not so clearly as if you were speaking," she replied: "but still I do see."

"Then tell me what you see on the night of your fainting."

"Why do you not commence by the night of the 31st of May, sir? Your suspicions start at that point, methinks? this is the time for all to be made clear."

"No, my lord," rejoined Philip: "it is useless: I now believe in your word of honor. He who disposes of so wondrous a power would not act in an ignoble way. Sister," repeated he, "relate to me what happened on the night when you swooned."

"I do not remember."

"I suppose as she was asleep---- "

"Her spirit was awake," said Balsamo, and holding out his hand to the obstinate medium with a frown indicating a doubling of will and action, he said:

"Remember--I will it!"

"I see myself," said Andrea. "I hold in hand the glass prepared by Nicole. Oh, goodness! the wretch! she has put some drug in the water and if I drink, I am lost. I am going to drink it at the moment the count calls---- "

"What count?"

"There," and Andrea pointed to Balsamo. "I set down the glass and I fall into the sleep. I go forth to meet him under my window in the linden grove."

"The count never was in the same room with you, sister?"

"Never."

"You see, sir?" said Balsamo.

"You say you went to meet the count?"

"Oh, I obey him when he calls."

"What did he want?"

Andrea turned towards the third person, questioningly.

"Tell it, for I am not listening," said Balsamo, burying his face in his hands to prevent the voice coming to him.

"He wanted news," said Andrea in a diminishing voice, not to torture the count's heart, "of a person who fled from his house and who is--now--dead."

"Faintly as she breathed the last word, Balsamo heard it, or guessed it was spoken, for he uttered a gloomy sob.

"Proceed," said he as a long silence fell: "your brother wants to know all and he must know it. After the man obtained the information he sought, what did he do?"

"He went away, leaving me in the garden, where I fell as he departed as though the sustaining force had vanished with him. I was still in the sleep, a leaden one. A man came out of the bushes, took me in his arms and carried me up into my rooms where he placed me on the sofa. Oh," she said with scorn and disgust, "it is that little Gilbert again."

"Gilbert?"

"He stands to listen--he goes into the other room but returns frightened. He enters Nicole's closet--Horror!"

"What?"

"Another man comes in, and I cannot defend myself--not even scream, for I am locked in sleep."

"Who is this man?"

"Brother," she answered in the deepest distress, "it is the King!"

Philip shuddered.

"Just as I thought," muttered Balsamo.

"He approaches me," continued the medium, "he speaks, he takes me in his arms, he kisses me. Oh, brother!"

Tears rolled down the young captain's cheeks while he grasped the sword handle which Balsamo had given him.

"Go on," said the count in a more imperative tone than before.

"What a blessing! he is perplexed, he stops, he looks at me in terror--he flees--Andrea is saved!"

"Saved," repeated Philip, who was breathlessly listening to her every word.

"Stay! I had forgotten the other, who lurks in the closet, with the bared knife in his hand--pale as death."

"Gilbert?"

"Gilbert follows the King," continued Andrea: "he shuts the door behind him, he puts his foot on the candle dropped on the carpet; he advances towards me--Oh!"

Rising on her brother's arm, her muscles stiffened as though about to snap.

"The villain!" she got out at last, and fell without strength. "It was he!" Then rising so as to reach her brother's ear, she hissed into it while her eyes glittered: "You will kill him, Philip?"

"Oh, yes," said the young man.

As he leaped up he overturned a stand of china and the porcelain was shivered to pieces.

The crash was blended with the bang of a door, over which rang Andrea's shriek.

"We were overheard," said Philip.

"It is he," said Andrea.

"Gilbert everywhere? Yes, I will kill him," and he darted into the anteroom while Andrea fell on the sofa.

But Balsamo ran after him and caught him by the arm.

"Take care, sir," he said: "the secret will become public; it will come out and the echo in royal residences is noisy."

"To think it is Gilbert and that he was close to us, listening," said Philip: "I might have killed the wretch--

woe to him!"

"Yes: but silence: you will find him yet. But you must think of your sister. You see how fatigued she is with all this emotion."

"Yes: I understand what she must suffer by my own feelings; the misfortune is so great and so difficult to repair. I shall die of the shame."

"No, you will live for her sake. She has need of you, love her, pity her and preserve her! But you have no more want of me?" he asked after a pause.

"No: overlook my suspicions and my insults: although the evil happened through you."

"I do not excuse myself: but remember what your sister said: that she would have drunk the sleeping draft but for my calling her away. In that case the guilt would have fallen on the King. Would you have considered the fate worse?"

"No, the same crime: I see that we were doomed. Awaken my poor sister, my lord."

"Not for her to see me and perhaps guess what occurred. Better to do it when at a distance, as I sent her to sleep."

"One word still, count, as you are a man of honor---- "

"You need not recommend secrecy to me, being what you say: and because having no farther points of community with mankind, I shall forget it and its secrets; but rely on me, knight, if I can in any way be useful. But no, I can be of use to nobody for I am worth nothing on this earth. Farewell, sir, farewell!"

Bowing, he glanced at Andrea, whose head dropped forward with all the tokens of pain and lassitude.

"O Science," he sighed, "how many victims for a valueless result!"

As he disappeared, Andrea reanimated: she raised her heavy head as though it were made of lead and looking with astounded eyes at her brother, she muttered:

"Oh, Philip, what has passed?"

"Nothing," he answered, repressing a sob.

"Nothing? and yet I dreamed--I thought that Dr. Louis said---- "

"Nothing: you are pure as the daylight: but all accuses you and looks black against you. A terrible secret is imposed on us both. I am going to see Dr. Louis who will tell the Dauphiness that you are home-sick, and we must get you down to Taverney to save you. Father will not go with us, and I will prepare him. Courage--heaven is the goal for all. Make out that you ought never to have left home--that is what made you ill. Be strong, for our honor--the honor of both of us--depends on this."

He embraced his sister, picked up the sword which had fallen, sheathed it with a trembling hand and darted down the stairs.

C

F

THE knight of Redcastle knew he should find his father at their Paris Lodgings. Since his rupture with Richelieu, he found life insupportable at Versailles and he tried to conquer torpor by agitation, and by change of residence.

With frightful spells of swearing, he was pacing the little garden when he saw his son appear. In his expectation he snapped at any branch. He greeted him with a mixture of spite and curiosity; but when he saw his moody face, paleness, rigid lines of feature, and set of the mouth, it froze the flow of questions he was about to let go.

"You? by what hazard?"

"I am bringing bad news," returned the captain gravely.

The baron staggered.

"Are we quite alone?" asked the younger man.

"Yes."

"But I think we had better go in, as certain things should not be spoken under the light of heaven."

Affecting unconcern and even to smile, the baron followed his son into the low sitting room where Philip carefully closed the doors.

"Father, my sister and I are going to take leave of you."

"What is this?" said the old noble surprised. "How about the army?"

"I am not in the army: happily, the King does not require my services."

"I do not understand the 'happily?'"

"I am not driven to the extremity of preferring dishonor to fortune--there you have it."

"But your sister? does she entertain the same ideas about duty?" asked the baron frowning.

"She has had to rank them beneath those the utmost necessity."

The baron rose from his chair, grumbling:

"What a foolish pack these riddle-makers are!"

"If what I say is an enigma to you, then I will make it clear. My sister is obliged to go away lest she be dishonored."

The baron laughed.

"Thunder, what model children I have!" he sneered. "The boy gives up his regiment and the girl a stool-of-state at a princess's feet, all for fear of dishonor. We are going back to the time of Brutus and Lucretia. In my era, though we had no philosophy, if any one saw dishonor coming, he whipped out his sword and ran the dishonor through the middle. I know it was a sharp method, for a philosopher who does not like to see bloodshed. But, any way, military officers are not cut out for philosophers."

"I have as much consciousness as you on what honor imposes; but blood will not redeem---- "

"A truce to your pretty phrases of philosophy," cried the old man; irritated into trying to be majesty. "I came near saying poltroons."

"You were quite right not to say it," retorted the young chevalier, quivering.

The baron proudly bore the threatening and implacable glance.

"I thought that a man was born to me in my house," said he: "a man who would cut out the tongue of the first knave who dared to tell of dishonor to the Taverney Redcastles."

"Sometimes the shame comes from an inevitable misfortune, sir, and that is the case of my sister and myself."

"I pass to the lady. If according to my reasoning, a man ought to attack the dagger, the woman should await it with a firm foot. Where would be the triumph of virtue unless it meets and defeats vice? Now, if my

daughter is so weak as to feel like running away---- "

"My sister is not weak, but she has fallen victim to a plot of scoundrels who have cowardly schemed to stain unblemished honor. I accuse nobody. The crime was conceived in the dark; let it die in the dark, for I understand in my own way the honor of my house."

"But how do you know?" asked the baron, his eyes glowing with joy at the hope of securing a fresh hold on the plunder. "In this case, Philip, the glory and honor of our house have not vanished; we triumph."

"Ugh! you are really the very thing I feared," said the captain with supreme disgust; "you have betrayed yourself--lacking presence of mind before your judge as righteousness before your son."

"I have no luck with my children," said the baron; "a fool and a brute."

"I have yet to say two things to you. The King gave you a collar of pearls and diamonds---- "

"To your sister."

"To you. But words matter not. My sister does not wear such jewels. Return them or if you like not to offend his Majesty, keep them."

He handed the casket to his father who opened it, and threw it on the chiffonier.

"We are not rich since you have pledged or sold the property of our mother--for which I am not blaming you, but so we must choose. If you keep this lodging, we will go to Taverney."

"Nay, I prefer Taverney," said the baron, fumbling with his lace ruffles while his lips quivered without Philip appearing to notice the agitation.

"Then we take this house."

"I will get out at once," and the baron thought, "down at Taverney I will be a little king with three thousand a-year."

He picked up the case of jewels and walked to the door, saying with an atrocious smile:

"Philip, I authorise you to dedicate your first philosophical work to me. As for Andrea's first work, advise her to call it Louis, or Louise, as the case may be. It is a lucky name."

He went forth, chuckling.

With bloodshot eye, and a brow of fire, Philip clutched his swordhilt, saying:

"God grant me patience and oblivion."

C

G

For a week that Gilbert had been in flight from Trianon, he lived in the woods with no other food than the wild roots, plants and fruit. At the last gasp, he went into town to Rousseau's house, formerly a sure haven, not to foist himself on his hospitality, but to have temporary rest and nourishment.

It was there that he obtained the address of Baron Balsamo, or rather Count Fenix, and to his mansion he repaired.

As he entered, the proprietor was showing out the Prince of Rohan whom a duty of politeness brought to the generous alchemist. The poor, tattered boy dared not look up for fear of being dazzled.

Balsamo watched the cardinal go off in his carriage, with a melancholy eye and turned back on the porch, when this little beggar supplicated him.

"A brief hearing, my lord," he said. "Do you not recall me?"

"No; but no matter, come in," said the conspirator whose plots made him acquainted with stranger figures still: and he led him into the first room where he said, without altering his dull tone but gentle manner:

"You asked if I recalled you? well, I seem to have seen you before."

"At Taverney, when the Archduchess came through. I was a dependent on the family. I have been away three years."

"Coming to---- "

"To Paris, where I have studied under M. Rousseau and, later, a gardener at Trianon by the favor of Dr. Jussieu."

"You are citing high and mighty names: What do you want of me?"

Gilbert fixed a glance on Balsamo not deficient in firmness.

"Do you remember coming to Trianon on the night of the great storm, Friday, six weeks ago? I saw you there."

"Oho!" said the other. "Have you come to bargain for silence?"

"No, my lord, for I am more interested in keeping the secret than you."

"Then you are Gilbert!"

With his deep and devouring glance the magnetiser enveloped the young man whose name comprised such a dreadful accusation. Gilbert stood before the table without leaning on it: one of his hands fell gracefully by his side, the other showed its long thin fingers and whiteness spite of the rustic labor.

"I see by your countenance what you come for. You know that a dreadful denunciation is hanging over you from Mdlle. de Taverney, that her brother seeks your life, and you think I will help you to elude the outcome of a cowardly act. You ought not to have the imprudence to walk about in Paris."

"This little matters. Yes," said the young man, "I love Mdlle. de Taverney as none other will love her: but she scorned me who was so respectful to her that, twice having her in my arms, I hardly kissed the hem of her dress."

"You made up for this respect and revenged yourself for the scorn by wronging her, in a trap."

"I did not set the trap: the occasion to commit the crime was afforded by you."

The count started as though a snake had stung him.

"You sent Mdlle. Andrea to sleep, my lord," pursued Gilbert. "When I carried her into her room, I thought that such love as mine must give life to the statue--I loved her and I yielded to my love. Am I as guilty as they say? tell me, you who are the cause of my misery."

Balsamo gave him a look of sadness and pity.

"You are right, boy: I am the cause of your crime and the girl's misfortune. I should repair my omission. Do you love her?"

"Before possessing her, I loved with madness: now with fury. I should die with grief if she repulsed me; with joy if she forgave me."

"She is nobly born but poor," mused the count: "her brother has a heart and is not vain about his rank. What would happen if you asked the brother for the sister's hand?"

"He would kill me. But as I wish death more than I fear it, I will make the demand if you advise it."

"You have brains and heart though your deed was guilt, my complicity apart. There is a Taverney the father. Tell him that you bring a fortune to his daughter the day when she marries you and he may assent. But he would not believe you. Here is the solid inducement."

He opened a table drawer and counted out thirty Treasury notes for ten thousand livres each.

"Is this possible?" cried Gilbert, brightening: "such generosity is too sublime."

"You are distrustful. Right; and but discriminate in distrust."

He took a pen and wrote:

"I give this marriage portion of a hundred thousand livres in advance to Gilbert for the day when he signs the marriage contract with Mdlle. Andrea de Taverney, in the trust the happy match will be made.

JOSEPH BALSAMO."

"If I have to thank you for such a boon, I will worship you like a god," said the young man, trembling.

"There is but one God and He reigns above," said the mesmerist.

"A last favor; give me fifty livres to get a suit fit for me to present myself to the baron."

Supplying him with this little sum, Balsamo nodded for him to go, and with his slow, sad step, went into the house.

The young man walked to Versailles, for he wanted to build his plans on the road where he was much annoyed by the hack-drivers who could not understand why such a dandy as he had turned himself out by the outlay of the fifty livres, could think of walking.

All his batteries were prepared when he reached the Trianon but they were useless. As we know, the Taverneys had departed. All the janitor of the place knew was that the doctor had ordered the young lady home for native air.

Disappointed, he walked back to Paris where he knocked at the door of the house in Coq-Heron Street, but here again was a blank. No one came to the door.

Mad with rage, gnawing his nails to punish the body, he turned the corner and entered Rousseau's house where he went up to his familiar garret. He locked the door and hung the handkerchief containing the banknotes to the key.

It was a fine evening and as he had often done before, he went and leaned out of the window. He looked again at the garden house where he had spied Andrea's movements, and the desire seized him to wander for the last time in the grounds once hallowed by her presence.

As he recovered from the smart of the failure to his expectation, his ideas became sharper and more precise.

In other times when he had climbed down into the young lady's garden by a rope, there was danger because the baron lived there and Nicole was out and about, if only for the meetings with her soldier lover.

"Let me for the last time trace her footsteps in the sandroof, the paths," he said: "The adored steps of my bride."

He spoke the word half aloud, with a strange pleasure.

He had one merit, he was quick to execute a plan once formed.

He went down stairs on tiptoe and swung himself out of the back window whence he could slide down by the espalier into the rear garden. He went up to the door to listen, when he heard a faint sound which made him recoil. He believed that he had called up another soul, and he fell on his knees as the door opened and disclosed Andrea.

She uttered a cry as he had done, but as she no doubt expected someone she was not afraid.

"Who is there?" she called out.

"Forgive me," said Gilbert, with his face turned to the ground.

"Gilbert, here?" she said with anger and fear; "in our garden? What have you come here for?"

She looked at him with surprise understanding nothing of his groveling at her feet.

"Rise and explain how you come here."

"I will never rise till you forgive me," he said.

"What have you done to me that I should forgive you? pray, explain. As the offense cannot be great," she went on with a melancholy smile, "the pardon will be easy. Did Philip give you the key?"

"The key?"

"Of course, for it was agreed that I should admit nobody in his absence and he must have helped you in, unless you scaled the wall."

"O, happiness unhoped for, that you should not have left the land! I thought to find the place deserted and only your memory remaining. Chance only--but I hardly know what I am saying. It was your father that I wanted to see---- "

"Why my father?"

Gilbert mistook the nature of the question.

"Because I was too frightened of you to--and yet, I do not know but that it would be better for us to keep it to ourselves. It is the surest way to repair my boldness in lifting my eyes to you. But the misfortune is accomplished--the crime, if you will, for really it was a great crime. Accuse fate, but not my heart---- "

"You are mad, and you alarm me."

"Oh, if you will consent to marriage to sanctify this guilty union."

"Marriage," said Andrea, receding.

"For pity, consent to be my wife!"

"Your wife?"

"Oh," sobbed Gilbert, "say that you forgive me for that dreadful night, that my outrage horrifies, but you forgive me for my repentance; say that my long restrained love justifies my action."

"Oh, it was you?" shrieked Andrea with savage fury. "Oh, heavens!"

Gilbert recoiled before this lovely Medusa's head expressing astonishment and fright.

"Was this misery reserved for me, oh, God?" said the noble girl, "to see my name doubly disgraced--by the crime and by the criminal? Answer me, coward, wretch, was it you?"

"She was ignorant," faltered Gilbert, astounded.

"Help, help," screamed Andrea, rushing into the house; "here he is, Philip!"

He followed her close.

"Would you murder me," she hissed, brought to bay.

"No; it is to do good, not harm that this time I have come. If I proposed marriage it was to act my part fitly; and I did not even expect you to bear my name. But there is another for whom see these one hundred thousand livres which a generous patron gives me for marriage portion."

He placed the banknotes on the table which served as barrier between them. "I want nothing but the little air I breathe and the little pit, my grave, while the child, my child, our child has the money!"

"Man, you make a grave error," said she, "you have no child. It has but one parent, the mother--you are not the father of my infant."

Taking up the notes, she flung them in his face as he retreated. He was made so furious that Andrea's good angel might tremble for her. But at the same moment the door was slammed in his flaming face as if by that violent act she divided the past forever from the present.

C

D

IN the morning after a sleepless night, Gilbert went to Count Fenix's.

The count was lounging on a sofa as though he, too, had not slept during the night.

"Oh, it is our bridegroom," he said, laying aside the book he had opened but was not reading.

"No, my lord," replied Gilbert, "I have been sent about my business."

The count turned round entirely.

"Who did this?"

"The lady."

"That was certain; you ought to have dealt with the father."

"Fate forbad it."

"Fate? so we are fatalists?"

"I have no right to believe in faith."

"Do not juggle with balls which you do not know," said Balsamo, eyeing him with curiosity as he frowned. "In grown men it is nonsense, in the young, rashness. Have pride but don't be a fool. To resume, what have you done?"

"Nothing; so I return the money," and he counted out minutely the notes on the table.

"He is honest," mused the count, "not avaricious. He has wit; he has firmness. He is a man."

"Now I want to account for the two louis I had."

"Do not overdo it," said the other: "it is handsome to restore a hundred thousand, but puerile to return fifty."

"I was not going to return them, but I wanted to show how I spent them, for I need to borrow twenty thousand."

"You do not mean any evil to the woman?"

"No, not to her father or her brother."

"I know: but one may wound by dogging a person and annoying him."

"Far from anything of that kind, I want to leave the country."

"But it would not cost you more than one thousand for that," said Balsamo, in his keen yet unctuous voice conveying no emotions.

"My lord, I shall not have a penny in my pocket when I go aboard the ship: and I want it for reparation of my fault, which you facilitated---- "

"You are rather given to harping on the one string," observed the other, with a curling lip.

"Because I am right. I wish the money for another than myself."

"I see. The child?"

"My child, yes, my lord," said Gilbert, with marked pride. "I am strong, free and intelligent. I can make my living anywhere."

"Oh, you will live well enough. Heaven never gives such spirits to an inadequate frame. But if you have no money for yourself, how will you get away? The ports are not open and no captain will take a novice for a seaman. You suppose that I will aid you to disappear?"

"I know you can, as you have extraordinary powers. A wizard is never so sure of his power that he does not have more than one trap-door to his cell."

"Gilbert," said the wonder-worker, extending his hand towards the young man, "you have a bold and adventurous spirit; you are a mingling of good and bad, like a woman; stoical and honest. Stay with me, my house being a stronghold, and I will make a very great man of you. Besides, I shall be leaving Paris shortly."

"In a few months you might do what you like with me," Gilbert replied: "but dazzling as your offer is to

an unfortunate man, I have to refuse it. But I have a duty as well as vengeance to perform."

"Here is your twenty thousand livres," said the count.

"You confer obligations like a monarch," said Gilbert, taking up the notes.

"Better, I trust, for I expect no return."

"I will repay, with as many years of service as the sum is equal to."

"But you are going away. Whither?"

"What do you say to America?"

"I shall be glad to cross the sea at two hour' notice for any land not France."

Balsamo had found in his papers a slip of paper on which were three signatures and the line: "For Boston from Havre, Dec. 15th, the *Adonis*, P. J., master."

"Will the middle of December suit you?"

"Yes," said Gilbert, having reckoned on his fingers.

Balsamo wrote on a sheet of paper:

"Receive on the *Adonis* one passenger.

"JOS. BALSAMO."

"But this is dangerous," said Gilbert: "I may be locked up in the Bastile if this be found on me."

"Overmuch cleverness makes a man a fool," replied Balsamo. "That is a vessel of which I am part owner. Go to Havre and ask for the skipper, Paul Jones."

"Forgive me, count, and accept all my gratitude."

"We shall meet again," said Balsamo.

C

T

THE day of pain and grief had come. It was the 29th of November.

Dr. Louis was in attendance and Philip was ever on guard.

She had come to the point, had Andrea, as if to the scaffold. She believed that she would be a bad mother to the offspring of the lowborn lover whom she hated more than ever.

At three o'clock in the morning, the doctor opened the door behind which the young gentleman was weeping and praying.

"Your sister has given birth to a son," he said.

Philip clasped his hands.

"You must not go near her, for she sleeps. If she did not, I should have said: 'A son is born and the mother is dead.' Now, you know that we have engaged a nurse. I told her to be ready as I came along by the Pointe-de-Jour, but you shall go for her as she must see nobody else. Profit by the patient's sleep and take my carriage. I have a patient to attend to on Royale Place where I must finish the night. To-morrow at eight, I will come."

"Good-night!"

The doctor directed the servant what to do for the mother and child which was placed near her, though Philip, remembering his sister's aversion thought they ought to be parted.

The gentlemen gone, the waiting woman dozed in a chair near her mistress.

Suddenly the latter was awakened by the cry of the child.

She opened her eyes and saw the sleeping servant. She admired the peace of the room and the glow of the fire. The cry struck her as a pain at first, and then as an annoyance. The child not being near her, she thought it was a piece of Philip's foresight in executing her rather cruel will. The thought of the evil we wish to do never affects us like the sight of it done. Andrea who execrated the ideal babe and even wished its death, was hurt to hear it wail.

"It is in pain," she thought.

"But why should I interest myself in its sufferings--I, the most unfortunate of living creatures?"

The babe uttered a sharper and more painful cry.

Then the mother seemed to know that a new voice spoke within her, and she felt her heart drawn towards the abandoned little one who lamented.

What had been foreseen by the doctor came to pass. Nature had accomplished one of her preparations: physical pain, that powerful bond, had soldered the heartstrings of the mother to the progeny.

"This little one must not appeal to heaven for vengeance," thought Andrea. "To kill them may exempt them from suffering, but they must not be tortured. If we had any right, heaven would not let them protest so touchingly."

She called the servant but that robust peasant slept too soundly for her weak voice. However, the babe cried no more.

"I suppose," mused Andrea, "that the nurse has come. Yes I hear steps in the next room, and the little mite cries not--as if protection was extended over it, and soothed its unshaped intelligence. So, this then is a poor mother who sells her place for a few crowns. The child of my bosom will find this other mother, and when I pass by it will turn from me as a stranger and call on the hireling as more worthy of its love. It will be my just reward! No, this shall not be. I have undergone enough to entitle me to look mine own in the face: I have earned the right to love it with all my cares and make it respect me for my sorrow and my sacrifice."

Slowly the servant was aroused by her renewed cries and went heavily into the next room for the removed child or to welcome the wetnurse; but the latter had not arrived and she returned to say that the

babe was not to be seen.

"Bring it to me, and shut that door."

Indeed, the wind was pouring in somewhere and making the candle flicker.

"Mistress," said the servant softly, "Master Philip told me plainly to keep the child apart from you from fear it would disturb you---- "

"Bring me my child," said the young mother with an outbreak which nearly burst her heart.

Out of her eyes, which had remained dry despite her pangs, gushed tears on which must have smiled the guardian angels of little children.

"Mistress," replied the servant, returning. "I tell you that the child is not there. Somebody must have come in---- "

"Yes, I heard it; the nurse has come and--where is my brother?"

"Here he is, mistress; with the nurse."

Captain Philip returned, followed by a peasant woman in a striped shawl who wore the smirk customary in the mercenary to her employer.

"My good brother," said Andrea: "I have to thank you for having so earnestly pleaded with me to see the baby once more before you took it away. Well, let me have it. Rest easy, I shall love it."

"What do you mean?" asked Philip.

"Please, your honor, the babe is neither here nor there."

"Hush, let us save the mother," whispered Philip: then aloud: "What a bother about nothing! do you not know that the doctor took the child away with him?"

"The doctor?" repeated Andrea, with the suffering of doubt but also the joy of hope.

"Why, yes: you must be all lunatics here. Why, what do you think--that the young rogue walked off himself?" and he affected a merry laugh which the nurse and servant caught up.

"But if the doctor took it away, why am I here?" objected the nurse.

"Just so, because--why, he took it to your house. Run along back. This Marguerite sleeps so soundly she did not hear the doctor coming for it and taking it away."

Andrea fell back, calm after the terrible shock.

Philip dismissed the nurse and sent home the servant. Taking a lantern he examined the next passage door which he found ajar, and on the snow of the garden he saw footprints of a man which went to the garden door.

"A man's steps," he cried, "the child has been stolen. Woe, woe!"

He passed a dreadful night. He knew his father so thoroughly that he believed he had committed the abduction, thinking the child was of royal origin. He might well attach great importance to the living proof of the King's infidelity to Lady Dubarry. The baron would believe that Andrea would sooner or later enter again into favor, and be the principal means of his fortune.

When he saw the doctor he imparted to him this idea, in which he did not share. He was rather inclined to the opinion that in this deed was the hand of the true father.

"However," said the young gentleman, "I mean to leave the country. Andrea is going into St. Denis Nunnery, and then I shall go and have it out with my father. I will overcome his resistance by threatening the intervention of the Dauphiness or a public exposure."

"And the child recovered, as the mother will be in the convent?"

"I will put it out to nurse and afterwards send it to college. If it grows up it shall be my companion."

But the baron, who was regaining strength after a fit of fever was ready to swear that he was innocent of abduction, and the captain had to return baffled.

The same fate awaited him in another quarter, the least expected. Andrea avowed her resolution to live for her son and not to be immured in a convent.

Philip and the doctor joined in a pious lie. They asserted that the child was dead, that the cries she heard on the night of its disappearance were its last.

They were congratulating themselves on the success of their fiction when a letter came by the post. It was addressed to:

"Mdlle. Andrea de Taverney, Paris; Coq-Heron Street, the first coachhouse door from Plastriere Street."

"Who can write to her?" wondered Philip. "Nobody but our father knew our address and it is not his hand."

Thoughtlessly he gave it to his sister, who took it as coolly. Without reflecting, or feeling astonishment, she broke open the envelope, but had scarcely read the few lines before she gave a loud scream, rose like a mad woman, and fell with her arms stiffening, as heavily as a statue, into the arms of the servant who ran up.

Philip picked up the letter and read:

At Sea., 15th Dec., 17--.

"Driven by you, I go, and you will never see me again. But I bear with me my child, who will never call you mother.

"GILBERT."

"Oh," said Philip, crushing up the paper in his wrath, "I had almost pardoned the crime by chance; but this deliberate one must be punished. By thy insensible, head, Andrea, I swear to kill the villain at sight. Doctor, see the poor girl into the Convent while I pursue this scoundrel. Besides, I must have this child. I will be at Havre in thirty-six hours."

C

A

PHILIP left his sister in the nunnery and rode straight to the post-house where he began his journey to the sea.

At Havre, he found the first ship for America to be the Brig *Adonis*, to set sail that day for New York and Boston. He sent his effects on board and followed with the tide.

Having written a farewell letter to the Dauphiness, Philip had no concerns with the land.

It might pass as a prayer to his Creator as well as a letter to his fellow countrymen.

"Your Highness (He had written); a hopeless man severed from worldly ties, goes far from you with the regret of having done so little for his future Queen. He goes amid the storms of ocean while you remain amid the whirls and tempests of government.

"Young and fair, adored, surrounded by respectful friends and idolising servants, you will no doubt forget one whom your royal hand deigned to lift from the herd. But I shall never forget it. I go into the New World to study how I may most efficaciously assist you on your throne.

"I bequeathe to you my sister, poor blighted flower, who will have no sunshine but your looks. Deign sometimes to stoop as low as her, and in the bosom of your joy, and power, and in the concert of unanimous good wishes, rely, I entreat you, on the blessing of an exile whom you will hear and perhaps see no more."

On the voyage Philip read a great deal; he took his meals in his room, save the dinner with the captain, and spent much of the time on deck, wrapped in his cloak.

The other passengers did not like the sea and he saw little of them.

In the night, sometimes, Philip heard on the planks above him the step of the captain, a pale, nervous young man, with a quick, restless eye, with another's, probably the officer of the watch. If it were a passenger, it was a good reason not to go up as he did not wish to be intrusive.

Once, however, as he heard neither voices nor tread, he ventured up.

The sky was cloudy, the weather warm, and the myriad of phosphorescent atoms sparkled in the wake.

It seemed too threatening for most passengers, for none of them were about.

At the heel of the bowsprit, however, leaning out over the bow, he dimly descried a figure--some poor passenger of the second class, or "deck" sort, an exile who was looking forward for an American port as ardently as Philip had regretted that of France.

For a long while he watched him till the chill morning breeze struck him. He thought of turning in, although the stranger only gazed on the dawning white.

"Up early, captain?" he said, seeing that worthy approach.

"I am always up."

"Some of your passengers have beaten you this time."

"You! but military officers are used to being up at all hours."

"Oh, not me alone," replied Philip. "Look at that deep dreamer; a passenger also?"

The Captain looked and was surprised.

"Who is he?" asked the Frenchman.

"Oh, a trader," answered Paul Jones, embarrassed.

"Running after fortune eh? your brig sails too slowly for him."

Instead of responding, the captain went forward straight to the brooder, to whom he spoke a few words, whereupon he disappeared down a companion-way.

"You disturbed his dreams," said Taverney; "he was not in my way."

"No, captain, I just told him that it was freshening and the breeze was killing. The forward-deck passengers are not so warmly clad as you and I."

"How are we getting along, captain?"

"To-morrow we shall be off the Azores, at one of which we shall stop to take fresh water, for it is pretty warm."

After twenty days out, they were glad to see any land.

"Gentleman," said the captain to the passengers, "you have five hours to have a run ashore. On this little island completely uninhabited, you will find some frozen springs to amuse the naturalists and good shooting if you are sportsmen."

Philip took a gun and ammunition and went ashore in one of the two boats carrying the merry visitors, delighted to tread the earth.

But the noise was not to his taste, no more than the pursuit of game so tame as to run against his legs, and he stopped to lounge in a cool grotto which was not the natural icehouse indicated.

He was still in reverie when he saw a shadow at the mouth of the cave. It was one of his fellow passengers. Though he had not been intimate with them, even withholding his name, he felt that here he was bound to extend the honor of the cave by right of discoverer.

He rose and offered his hand to this timid, stumbling figure whose fingers closed on his own in acceptance of the courtesy.

At the same time as the stranger's face was shone in the twilight, Philip drew back and uttered an outcry in horror.

"Gilbert?"

"Philip!"

The soldier gripped the other by the throat, and dragged him deeper into the cavern. Gilbert allowed it to be done without a remonstrance. Thrust with his back against the rocks, he could be pushed no farther.

"God is just," said Philip, "He hath delivered you to me. You shall not escape."

The prisoner let his hands swing by his side and turned livid.

"Oh, coward and villain," said the victor, "he has not even the instinct of the beast to defend himself."

"Why should I defend myself?" returned Gilbert. "I am willing to die and by your hand foremost."

"I will strangle you," cried Philip fiercely: "why do you not defend yourself? coward, coward!"

With an effort Gilbert tore himself loose and sent the assaillant a yard away. Then he folded his arms.

"You see I could defend myself. But get your gun and shoot me straight. I prefer that to being torn and mangled."

Philip was reaching for his gun but at these words he repulsed it.

"No," he said, "how come you here?"

"Like yourself, on the *Adonis*."

"Oh, you are the skulking thing who did not dine with the other passengers but took the air at night?"

"I was not hiding from you, for I did not know you were aboard."

"But you were hiding, not only yourself but the child whom you stole away."

"Babes are not taken to sea."

"With the nurse, whom you were forced to engage."

"I tell you I have not brought my child, which I removed only that it should not be brought up to despise its father."

"If I could believe this true," said Philip, "I should deem you less of a rogue; but you are a thief, why not a liar?"

"A man cannot steal his own property. And the child is mine!"

"Wretch, do you flout me? will you tell me where my sister's child is? will you restore it to me?"

"I do not wish to give up my boy."

"Gilbert, listen, I speak to you quietly. Andrea loves the child, your child, with frenzy. She will be touched by your repentance, I promise you. But restore the child, Gilbert."

"You would not believe me and I shall not trust you," rejoined Gilbert, with dull fire in his eyes and folding his arms: "Not because I do not believe you an honorable man but because you have the prejudices of your caste. We are mortal enemies and as you are the stronger, enjoy your victory. But do not ask me to lay down my arm; it guards me against scorn, insult and ingratitude."

"I do not want to butcher you," said the officer, with froth at the mouth: "but you shall have the chance to kill Andrea's brother. One crime more will not matter. Take one of these pistols and let us count three, turn and fire."

"A duel is just what I refuse Andrea's brother," said the young man, not stooping for the firearm.

"Then God will absolve me if I kill you. Die, like a villain, of whom I clear the world, a sacrilegious bandit, a dog!"

He fired on Gilbert, who fell in the smoke as if by lightning. Philip felt the sand at his feet fall in from being wet with blood. He lost his reason and rushed from the grotto.

When he ran upon the strand the last boat was waiting. He made its tally right, and no one questioned him.

It was not till the subsequent day that Paul Jones noticed that a passenger was missing.

C

T

AT eight at night, on the ninth day of May, 1774, Versailles presented the most curious and interesting of sights.

Since the first day of the month, Louis XV., stricken with a sickness of which the physicians dared not at the outset reveal the gravity, had kept his bed, and began look around him for truth or hope.

Two head physicians sided with the Dauphin and Dubarry severally; one said that the truth would kill the patient, and the other that he ought to know so as to make a Christian end.

But to call in Religion was to expel the favorite. When the Church comes in at one door, Satan must fly out of the other.

While all the parties were wrangling, the disease easily rooted itself in the old, debauched body and so strengthened itself that medicine was not to put it to rout.

At the first, the King was seen between his two daughters, the favorite and the courtiers most liked. They laughed and made light of the affair.

Suddenly appeared at Versailles the stern and austere countenance of the eldest daughter, the Princess Louise, Lady Superior of St. Denis, come to console her father.

She stalked in, pale and cold as a statue of Fate. Long since she had ceased to be a daughter to her father and sister to his children. She resembled the prophets of woe who come in calamities to scatter ashes on the gold and jewels. She happened in at Versailles on a day when Louis was kissing the hands of Countess Dubarry and using them as soft brushes for his inflamed cheeks and aching head.

On seeing her, all fled. Her trembling sisters ran to their rooms; Lady Dubarry dropped a courtsey and hastened to her apartments; the privileged courtiers stole into the outer rooms; the two chief physicians alone stayed by the fireplace.

"My daughter," muttered the monarch, opening his eyes which pain and fever had closed.

"Your daughter," said the Lady Louise, "who comes from God, whom you have forgotten, to remind you. Pursuant to etiquette, your malady is one of the mortal ones which compels the Royal Family to gather around your bedside. When one of us has the small pox, he must have the Holy Sacrament at once administered."

"Mortal?" echoed the King. "Doctors, is this true?"

The two medical attendants bowed.

"Break with the past," continued the abbess, taking up his hand which she daringly covered with kisses. "And set the people an example. Had no one warned you, you ran the risk of being lost for eternity. Now, promise to live a Christian if you live: or die one, if die you must."

She kissed the royal hand once more as she finished and stalked forth slowly.

That evening Lady Dubarry had to retire from the Town and suburbs.

This is why on the night in question, Versailles was in tribulation. Would the King mend and bring back Lady Dubarry, or would he die and his successor send her farther than where she paused?

On a stone bench at the corner of the street opposite the palace an old man was seated, leaning on his cane, with his eyes bent on the place. He was so buried in his contemplation among the crowds in groups, that he did not perceive a young man who crossed so as to stand by him.

This young man had a bald forehead, a hook nose, with a twist to it, high cheekbones and a sardonic smile.

"Taking the air?" he said as he gave a squint.

The old man looked up.

"Ah, my clever surgeon," he said.

"Yes, illustrious master," and he sat by his side. "It appears that the King is getting better? only the small

pox, that so many people have. Besides, he has skillful doctors by him. I wager that Louis the Well-Beloved will scratch through; only, people will not cram the churches this time to sing Oh, be joyful! over his recov---- "

"Hush," said the old man, starting: "Silence, for you are jesting at a man on whom the finger of God is even now laid."

Surprised at this language, the younger man looked at the Palace.

"Do you see that window in which burns a shaded lamp? That represents the life of the King. A friend of mine, Dr. Jussieu, will put it out when the life goes out. His successor is watching that signal, behind a curtain. This signal, warning the ambitious when their era commences, tells the poor philosopher like me when the breath of heaven blasts an age and a monarchy. Look at this night, young man, how full of storms. No doubt I shall see the dawn, for I am not so old as not to see the morrow. But you are more likely to see the end of this new reign than I."

"Ah!" cried the young man, as he pointed to the window shrouded in darkness.

"The King is dead!" said the old man, rising in dread.

Both were silent for a few instants.

Suddenly, a coach drawn by eight horses gallopped out of the palace courtyard, with two outriders carrying torches. In the vehicle sat the Dauphin, Marie Antoinette and the King's sister, Lady Elizabeth. The torchlight flared ominously on their faces.

The equipage passed close to the two spectators.

"Long live King Louis the Sixteenth--Long live his Queen!" yelled the young man in a shrill voice as if he were insulting the new rulers rather than greeting them.

The Dauphin bowed, the new Queen showed a sad, stern face, and the coach disappeared.

"My dear Rousseau, Lady Dubarry is a widow," jeeringly said the young man.

"She will be exiled to-morrow," added the other. "Farewell, Dr. Marat."

How Marat, chief among the Paris revolutionists, fared, we have to tell in following pages. His career will be traced, as well as those of Andrea, of Gilbert and their son, while we are to behold under another phase the remarkable figure of the arch-conspirator, Balsamo, carrying on his gigantic mission of overturning the throne of the Bourbons. The work is entitled: "THE QUEEN'S NECKLACE."

THE END.

Typographical errors corrected by the etext transcriber:

Andrea hear the compliment=> Andrea heard the compliment {pg 6}

God have merey=> God have mercy {pg 8}

Oh, dctoor=> Oh, doctor {pg 12}

replied the young man gloomly=> replied the young man gloomily {pg 19}

romanic=> romantic {pg 23}

carriage-doorway=> carraige-doorway {pg 24}

nine oclock=> nine o'clock {pg 35}

they waned their plump hands=> they waved their plump hands {pg 36}

servants's=> servant' {pg 39}

It was a suit of anteroom and two parlors=> It was a suite of anteroom and two parlors {pg 40}

hostility and resistence=> hostility and resistance {pg 45}

his eyes was kindled=> his eyes were kindled {pg 47}

But is was our sole resource=> But it was our sole resource {pg 51}

Which would Compromise Choiseul=> Which would compromise Choiseul {pg 52}

The duchess write=> The duchess wrote {pg 53}

Honesty not, count=> Honestly not, count {pg 54}
nearly everbody flocked=> nearly everybody flocked {pg 61}
empoverished nobleman's daughter=> impoverished nobleman's daughter {pg 65}
full of caressess=> full of caresses {pg 75}
and a face rose with cautoin=> and a face rose with caution {pg 79}
circumstancial=> circumstantial {pg 83}
serious dilema=> serious dilemma {pg 95}
vitrol so sharp=> vitriol so sharp {pg 96}
some idots or knaves=> some idiots or knaves {pg 98}
comtemporaneous=> contemporaneous {pg 102}
Bosicrucian=> Rosicrucian {pg 106}
it's work wherever I shall be=> its work wherever I shall be {pg 108}
bidding us to Wait=> bidding us to wait {pg 109}
ready to be imolated=> ready to be immolated {pg 112}
the remans shuddering or moving=> the remains shuddering or moving {pg 116}
babarous peoples=> barbarous peoples {pg 116}
garote=> garrote {pg 116}
gentelmen and brothers=> gentlemen and brothers {pg 122}
became strociously=> became atrociously {pg 126}
droppod into the box=> dropped into the box {pg 129}
catching a glmpse=> catching a glimpse {pg 130}
what thay would do=> what they would do {pg 132}
Good by, Taverney!=> Good bye, Taverney! {pg 133}
jealously has driven her mad=> jealousy has driven her mad {pg 135}
for nature made me you equal=> for nature made me your equal {pg 144}
invited them into her suit=> invited them into her suite {pg 147}
I were such jewelry=> I wear such jewelry {pg 149}
ringing in the right for Nicole=> ringing in the night for Nicole {pg 153}
would be caught and expell=> would be caught and expelled {pg 160}
violet and sulpher light=> violet and sulphur light {pg 163}
is slience a word or a fact=> is silence a word or a fact {pg 164}
to dro the name=> to drop the name {pg 169}
You will recken on=> You will reckon on {pg 174}
connivence=> connivance {pg 176}
extraordinay excitement=> extraordinary excitement {pg 182}
an in an hour=> and in an hour {pg 183}
the wierd old man=> the weird old man {pg 185}
my craftmanship=> my craftsmanship {pg 186}
my Palsamo=> my Balsamo {pg 189}
parties name in the documents=> parties named in the documents {pg 192}
Venitian mirror=> Venetian mirror {pg 196}
everbody will tell=> everybody will tell {pg 215}
in the same room with your=> in the same room with you {pg 227}
Aftert he=> After the {pg 227}
you have pleged=> you have pledged {pg 232}
proprieter=> proprietor {pg 233}
he had climed down=> he had climbed down {pg 236}

abroad the ship=> aboard the ship {pg 239}
well attack great importance=> well attach great importance {pg 244}
did not wish to be instrusive=> did not wish to be intrusive {pg 246}
Philip took a gun and amunition=> Philip took a gun and ammunition {pg 247}
witholding=> withholding {pg 247}