ЭЖЕН СЮ

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS, VOLUME 3 OF 6

Эжен Жозеф Сю

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I
THE TEMPLE

To the deep snow which had fallen during the past night had succeeded a very sharp wind, so that the ordinarily muddy pavement was hard and dry, as Rigolette and Rodolph wended onwards to the immense and singular bazar called the Temple, the young girl leaning unceremoniously on the arm of her cavalier, who, on his part, appeared as much at his ease as though they had been old familiar friends.

"What a funny old woman Madame Pipelet is!" observed the grisette to her companion; "and what very odd things she says!"

"Well, I thought her remarks very striking, as well as appropriate."

"Which of them, neighbour?"

"Why, when she said 'Young people would be young people,' and '*Vive l'amour!*'"

"Well?"

"Well! I only mean to say those are precisely my sentiments."

"Your sentiments?"

"Yes, I should like nothing better than to pass my youth with you, taking '*Vive l'amour!*' for my motto."

"I dare say, for certainly you are not hard to please."

"Why, where would be the harm, – are we not near neighbours? Of course we are, or else I should not be seen walking out with you in this manner in broad day."

"Then you allow me to hope – "

"Hope what?"

"That you will learn to love me."

"Oh, bless you, I do love you already!"

"Really?"

"To be sure I do. Why, how can I help it? You are good and gay; though poor yourself, you have done all in your power by interesting rich people in the fate of the Morels; your appearance pleases me; and you have altogether a nice look, and a sort of air such as one is glad to find in a person we expect to go about with a great deal. So there, I think, are abundant reasons for my loving you."

Then, suddenly breaking into loud fits of laughter, Rigolette abruptly exclaimed, "Look there, only look at that fat woman with the furred shoes! What does she remind you of? I'll tell you, – of a great sack being drawn along by two cats without tails!" and again she laughed merrily.

"I would rather look at you, my pretty neighbour, than at all

the fat old women or tailless cats in Europe. I am so delighted to find you already love me."

"I only tell you the truth; if I disliked you, I should speak just as plainly. I cannot reproach myself with ever having deceived or flattered any one; but, if a person pleases me, I tell them so directly."

Again interrupting the thread of her discourse, the grisette drew up suddenly before the windows of a shop, saying, "Oh, do pray only look at that pretty clock and those two handsome vases! I had already saved up three francs and a half, and had put it in my money-box, to buy such a set as that. In five or six years I might have been able to buy them."

"Saved up, do you say? Then, I suppose, you earn – "

"At least thirty sous a day, – sometimes forty; but I never reckon upon more than thirty, which is the more prudent; and I regulate all my expenses accordingly," said Rigolette, with an air as important as though she was settling the financial budget.

"But with thirty sous a day, how do you manage to live?"

"Oh, bless you! that is easily reckoned. Shall I tell you how I manage, neighbour? I fancy you are rather extravagant in your notions; so, perhaps, it may serve as a lesson for you."

"Yes, pray do."

"Well, then, thirty sous a day make five and forty francs a month, do they not?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, out of that I pay twelve francs for lodging; that

leaves me twenty-three francs for food, etc."

"Is it possible? Twenty-three francs for one month's food!"

"Yes, really, all that! Certainly, for such a person as myself, it does seem an enormous sum; but then, you see, I deny myself nothing."

"Oh, you little glutton!"

"Ah! but then, remember, I include the food for both my birds in that sum."

"Certainly it seems less exorbitant, when you come to reckon, for three than for one; but just tell me how you manage day by day, that I may profit by your good example."

"Well, then, be attentive, and I will go over the different things I spend in it. First of all, one pound of bread, that costs four sous; then two sous' worth of milk make six; four sous' worth of vegetables in winter, or fruit and salad in summer, – I am very found of salad, because, like vegetables, it is such a nice clean thing to prepare, and does not soil the hands; there goes ten sous at once; then three sous for butter, or oil and vinegar, to season the salad with, that makes thirteen sous; a pail of nice fresh water, – oh, I must have that! it is my principal extravagance, – that brings it to fifteen sous, don't you see? Then add two or three sous a week for chickweed and seed for my birds, who generally have part of my bread and milk; all this comes to exactly twenty-three francs a month, neither more nor less."

"And do you never eat meat?"

"Meat, indeed! I should think not. Why, it costs from ten

to twelve sous a pound! A likely thing for me to buy! Besides, there is all the nuisance and smell of cooking; instead of which, milk, vegetables, or fruit, are always ready when you wish for them. I tell you what is a favourite dish of mine, without being troublesome to prepare, and which I excel in making."

"Oh, pray let me know what it is?"

"Why, I get some beautiful ripe, rosy apples, and put them at the top of my little stove; when they are quite tender, I bruise them with a little milk, and just a taste of sugar. It is a dish for an emperor. If you behave well, I will let you taste it some day."

"Prepared by your hands, it can scarcely fail being excellent; but let us keep to our reckoning. Let me see, we counted twenty-three francs for living, etc., and twelve francs for lodging; that makes thirty-five francs a month."

"Well, then, out of the forty-five or fifty francs I earn, there remains from ten to fifteen francs a month for my wood and oil during the winter, as well as for my clothes and washing; that is to say, for soap and other requisites; because, excepting my sheets, I wash my own things; that is another of my extravagances, – a good laundress would pretty well ruin me; while, as I am a very quick and good ironer, the expense is principally that of my own time. During the five winter months I burn a load and a half of wood, while I consume about four or five sous' worth of oil for my lamp daily; that makes it cost me about eighty francs a year for fire and lights."

"So that you have, in fact, scarcely one hundred francs to

clothe yourself, and find you in pocket money."

"No more; yet out of that sum I managed to save my three francs and a half."

"But your gowns, your shoes, – this smart little cap?"

"As for caps, I never wear one but when I go out, so that is not ruinous; and, at home, I go bareheaded. As for my gowns and boots, have I not got the Temple to go to for them?"

"Ah, yes, this convenient, handy Temple! So you buy there?"

"All sorts of pretty and excellent dresses. Why, only imagine, great ladies are accustomed to give their old, cast-off gowns, etc., to their maids. When I say old, I mean that, perhaps, they have worn them for a month or two, just to ride out in the carriage. Well, and then the ladies' maids sell them to the persons who have shops at the Temple for almost nothing. Just look at the nice dark merino dress I have on; well, I only gave fourteen francs for it, when, I make no doubt, it cost at least sixty, and had scarcely been put on. I altered it to fit myself; and I flatter myself it does me credit."

"Indeed, it does, and very great credit, too. Yes, I begin to see now, thanks to the Temple, you really may contrive to make a hundred francs a year suffice for your dress."

"To be sure; why, I can buy in the summer sweet pretty gowns for five or six francs; boots, like these I have on, and almost new, for two or three francs a pair; just look at my boots. Now, would not any one say they had been made for me?" said Rigolette, suddenly stopping, and holding up one of her pretty little feet,

really very nicely set off by the well-fitting boot she wore.

"It is, indeed, a charming foot; but you must have some difficulty in getting fitted. However, I suppose, at the Temple, they keep shoes and boots of all sizes, from a woman's to a child's."

"Ah, neighbour, I begin to find out what a terrible flatterer you are. However, after what I have told you, you must see now that a young girl, who is careful, and has only herself to keep, may manage to live respectably on thirty sous a day; to be sure, the four hundred and fifty francs I brought out of prison with me helped me on famously, for when people saw that I had my own furniture in my apartments, they felt more confidence in entrusting me with work to take home. I was some time, though, before I met with employment. Fortunately for me, I had kept by me as much money as enabled me to live three months without earning anything."

"Shall I own to you that, under so gay and giddy a manner, I scarcely expected to hear so much sound sense as that uttered by your pretty mouth, my good neighbour?"

"Ah! but let me tell you that, when one is all alone in the world, and has no wish to be under any obligation, it is quite necessary, as the proverb says, to mind how we build our nest, to take care of it when it is built."

"And certainly yours is as charming a nest as the most fastidious bird could desire."

"Yes, isn't it? for, as I say, I never refuse myself anything.

Now, I consider my chamber as above my means; in fact, too handsome for one like me; then I have two birds; always, at least, two pots of flowers on my mantelpiece, without reckoning those on the window-ledges; and yet, as I told you, I had actually got three francs and a half in my money-box, towards the ornaments I hoped some day to be able to buy for my mantelpiece."

"And what became of this store?"

"Oh, why, lately, when I saw the poor Morels so very, very wretched, I said to myself, 'What is the use of hoarding up these stupid pieces of money, and letting them lie idle in a money-box, when good and honest people are actually starving for want of them?' So I took out the three francs, and lent them to Morel. When I say lent, I mean I told him I only lent them, to spare his feelings; but, of course, I never meant to have them back again."

"Yes, but my dear neighbour, you cannot refuse to let them repay you, now they are so differently situated."

"Why, no; I think if Morel were to offer them to me now, I should not refuse them; it will, at any rate, enable me to begin my store for buying the chimney ornaments I do so long to possess. You would scarcely believe how silly I am; but I almost dream of a beautiful clock, such a one as I showed you just now, and two lovely vases, one on each side."

"But, then, you should think a little of the future."

"What future?"

"Suppose you were to be ill, for instance."

"Me ill? Oh, the idea!" And the fresh, hearty laugh of

Rigolette resounded through the street.

"Well, why should you not be?"

"Do I look like a person likely to be sick?"

"Certainly I never saw a more bright or blooming countenance."

"Well, then, what could possibly have put it into your head to talk such nonsense as to suppose I could ever be ill?"

"Nay, but – "

"Why, I am only eighteen years of age, and, considering the sort of life I lead, there is no chance of such a thing. I rise at five o'clock, winter or summer; I am never up after ten, or, at latest, eleven; I eat sufficient to satisfy my appetite, which certainly is not a very great one; I do not suffer from exposure to cold; I work all day, singing as merrily as a lark; and at night I sleep like a dormouse. My heart is free, light, and happy. My employers are so well satisfied with what I do for them, that I am quite sure not to want for work; so what is there for me to be ill about? It really is too amusing to hear you try to talk sense, and only utter nonsense! Me ill!" And, at the very absurdity of the idea, Rigolette again burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, so loud and prolonged that a stout gentleman who was walking before her, carrying a dog under his arm, turned around quite angrily, believing all this mirth was excited by his presence.

Resuming her composure, Rigolette slightly curtseyed to the stout individual, and pointing to the animal under his arm, said:

"Is your dog so very tired, sir?"

The fat man grumbled out some indistinct reply, and continued on his way.

"My dear neighbour," said Rodolph, "are you losing your senses?"

"It is your fault if I am."

"How so?"

"Because you talk such nonsense to me."

"Do you call my saying that perhaps you might be ill, talking foolishly?"

And, once more overcome by the irresistible mirth awakened by the absurdity of Rodolph's suggestion, Rigolette again relapsed into long and hearty fits of laughter; while Rodolph, deeply struck by this blind, yet happy reliance upon the future, felt angry with himself for having tried to shake it, though he almost shuddered as he pictured to himself the havoc a single month's illness would make in this peaceful mode of life. Then the implicit reliance entertained by Rigolette on the stability of her employ, and her youthful courage, her sole treasures, struck Rodolph as breathing the very essence of pure and contented innocence; for the confidence expressed by the young dressmaker arose neither from recklessness nor improvidence, but from an instinctive dependence and belief in that divine justice which would never forsake a virtuous and industrious creature, – a simple girl, whose greatest crime was in relying too confidently on the blessed gifts of youth and health, the precious boon of a heavenly benefactor. Do the birds of the air

remember, as they flit on gay and agile wing amidst the blue skies of summer, or skim lightly over the sweet-smelling fields of blooming lucerne, that bleak, cold winter must follow so much enjoyment?

"Then," said Rodolph to the grisette, "it seems you have no wish for anything more than you already possess?"

"No, really I have not."

"Positively, nothing you desire?"

"No, I tell you. Stay, yes, now I recollect, there are those sweet pretty chimney ornaments; but I shall be sure to have them some of these days, though I do not know exactly when; but still, they do so run in my head, that, sooner than be disappointed, I will sit up all night to work."

"And besides these ornaments?"

"Oh, nothing more; no, I cannot recollect any one other thing I care for more especially now."

"Why now, particularly?"

"Because, yesterday, if you had asked me the same question, I should have replied, there was nothing I wanted more than an agreeable neighbour in your apartments, to give me an opportunity of showing all the little acts of kindness I have been accustomed to perform, and to receive nice little attentions in return."

"Well, but you know, my dear neighbour, we have already entered into an agreement to be mutually serviceable to each other; you will look after my linen for me, and I shall clean up

and polish your chamber for you; and besides attending to my linen, you are to wake me every morning early by tapping against the wainscot."

"And do you think you have named all I shall expect you to do?"

"What else can I do?"

"Oh, bless you, you have not yet come to the end of your services! Why, do you not intend to take me out every Sunday, either to the Boulevards or beyond the barriers? You know that is the only day I can enjoy a little pleasure."

"To be sure I do; and when summer comes we will go into the country."

"No, no, I hate the country! I cannot bear to be anywhere but in Paris. Yet I used, once upon a time, to go, out of good nature, with a young friend of mine, who was with me in prison, to visit Meudon and St. Germain. My friend was a very nice, good girl, and because she had such a sweet voice, and was always singing, people used to call her the Goualeuse."

"And what has become of her?"

"I don't know. She spent all the money she brought with her out of prison, without seeming to have much pleasure for it; she was inclined to be mournful and serious, though kind and sympathising to every one. At the time we used to go out together I had not met with any work to do, but directly I procured employment, I never allowed myself a holiday. I gave her my address, but, as she never came to see me, I suppose she, like

myself, was too busy to spare the time. But I dare say you don't care to hear any more about her; I only mentioned it because I wanted to show you that it is no use asking me to go into the country with you, for I never did, and never will go there, except with the young friend I was telling you about; but whenever you can afford to take me out to dinner or to the play, I shall be quite ready to accompany you, and when it does not suit you to spend the money, or when you have none to spend, why then we will take a walk, and have a good look at the shops, which is almost the nicest thing I know, unless it is buying at them. And I promise you, you shall have no reason to feel ashamed of my appearance, let us go out among ever such company. Oh, when I wear my dark blue levantine silk gown, I flatter myself I *do* look like somebody! It is such a love of a dress, and fits me so beautifully! I never wear it but on Sundays, and then I put on such a love of a lace cap, trimmed with shaded orange-colour riband, which looks so well with dark hair like mine; then I have some such elegant boots of satin hue, made for me, not bought at the Temple! And last of all comes such a shawl! Oh, neighbour, I doubt if you ever walked with any one in such perfect beauty; it is a real *bourre-de-soie*, in imitation of cashmere. I quite expect we shall be stared at and admired by every one as we go along; the men will look back as they pass me, and say, 'Upon my word that's an uncommon pretty-looking girl, – she is, 'pon honour!' Then the women will cry, 'What a stylish-looking man! Do you see that tall, thin person?

I declare, he has such a fashionable appearance that he might pass as somebody if he liked; what a becoming and handsome moustachio he has!' And between ourselves, neighbour, I quite agree with these remarks, and especially about the moustachio, for I dearly love to see a man wear them. Unfortunately M. Germain did not wear a moustachio, on account of the situation he held; I believe his employer did not permit his young men to wear them. To be sure, M. Cabrion did wear moustachios, but then, his were quite red, like his great bushy beard, and I hate those huge beards; and besides, I did not like Cabrion for two other reasons; one was, he used to play all kinds of scampish tricks out in the street, and the other thing I disliked was his tormenting poor old Pipelet as he did. Certainly, M. Giraudeau, the person who lived next to me before M. Cabrion, was rather a smart-looking man, and dressed very well; but then he squinted, and at first that used to put me out very much, because he always seemed to be looking past me at some one by my side, and I always found myself, without thinking of it, turning around to see who it could be."

And here Rigolette indulged in another peal of merry laughter.

As Rodolph listened to all this childish and voluble talk, he felt almost at a loss how to estimate the pretensions of the grisette to be considered of first-rate prudence and virtue; sometimes the very absence of all reserve in her communications, and the recollection of the great bolt on her door, made him conclude that she bore a general and platonic affection only for every

occupant of the chamber adjoining her own, and that her interest in them was nothing more than that of a sister; but again he smiled at the credulity which could believe such a thing possible, when the unprotected condition of the young dressmaker, and the fascinations of Messrs. Giraudeau, Cabrion, and Germain were taken into account. Still, the frankness and originality of Rigolette made him pause in the midst of his doubts, and refuse to allow him to judge harshly of the ingenuous and light-hearted being who tripped beside him.

"I am delighted at the way you have disposed of my Sundays," said Rodolph, gaily. "I see plainly we shall have some capital treats."

"Stop a little, Mr. Extravagance, and let me tell you how I mean to regulate our expenses; in the summer we can dine beautifully, either at the Chartreuse or the Montmartre hermitage, for three francs, then half a dozen quadrilles or waltzes, and a ride upon the wooden horses, – oh, I do so love riding on horseback! – well, that will bring it altogether to about five francs, not a farthing more, I assure you. Do you waltz?"

"Yes, very well."

"I am glad of that. M. Cabrion always trod on my toes, so that he quite put me out; and then, too, by way of a joke, he used to throw fulminating balls about on the ground; so at last the people at the Chartreuse would not allow us to be admitted there."

"Oh, I promise you to be very well behaved whenever we are met together; and as for the fulminating balls, I promise you

never to have anything to do with them; but when winter comes, how shall we manage then?"

"Why, in the winter we shall be able to dine very comfortably for forty sous. I think people never care so much for eating in the winter as summer; so then we shall have three francs left to pay for our going to the play, for I shall not allow you to exceed a hundred sous for the whole of our expenses, and that is a great deal of money to spend in pleasure; but then, if you were out alone, it would cost you much more at the tavern or billiard-rooms, where you would only meet a parcel of low, ignorant men, smelling of tobacco enough to choke you. Is it not much better for you to pass a pleasant day with a nice little, cheerful, good-tempered companion, who, in return for the holiday you so agreeably pass with her, will contrive to make up the extra expense she costs you by hemming your handkerchiefs, and looking after your domestic affairs?"

"Nothing can be more advantageous, as far as I am concerned; but suppose any of my friends should meet me walking with my pretty neighbour, what then?"

"What then! Why, they would just look at you, and then at me; and then they would smile and say, 'That's a lucky fellow, that Rodolph!'"

"You know my name, do you?"

"Why, of course, when I heard that the chamber adjoining mine was let, I inquired the name of the person who had taken it."

"Yes, I dare say every one who met us out together would

remark, as you observe, what a lucky fellow I was; then the next thing would be to envy me."

"So much the better."

"They would believe I was perfectly happy."

"Of course, of course they would."

"All the while I should only be so in appearance."

"Well, what does that signify? As long as people think you happy, what does it matter whether you are really so or not? Men neither require nor care for more than outward show."

"But your reputation might suffer."

Rigolette burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter.

"The reputation of a grisette!" said she. "Do you suppose that any person believes in such a phenomenon? Ah, if I had either father, mother, brother, or sister, for their sakes I should fear what people might say of me, and be anxious about the world's opinion; but I am alone in the world, and have no person to consider but myself, so, while I know myself to be free from blame or reproach, I care not for what any one may say of me, or think either."

"But still I should be very unhappy."

"What for?"

"To pass for being a happy as well as a lucky fellow, when, after the fashion of Papa Crétu's dinner, I should be expected to make a meal off a dry crust, while all the tempting dishes contained in a cookery-book were being read to me."

"Oh, nonsense! you will be quite contented to live as I

describe. You will find me so grateful for every little act of kindness, so easily pleased, and so little troublesome, that I know you will say, 'Why, after all, I may as well spend my Sunday with her as with any one else.' If you have any time in the evening, and have no objection to come and sit with me, you can have the use of my fire and light. If it would not tire you to read aloud, you would amuse me by reading some nice novel or romance. Better do that than lose your money at cards or billiards; otherwise, if you are occupied at your office, or prefer going to a café, you can just bid me good night when you come in, if I happen still to be up; but should I have gone to bed, why then I will wish you good morning at an early hour next day, by tapping against your wainscot to awaken you. Why, M. Germain, my last fellow lodger, used to pass all his evenings with me in that manner, and never complained of their being dull. He read me all Walter Scott's novels in the course of the winter, which was really very amusing. Sometimes, when it chanced to be a wet Sunday, he would go and buy something at the pastry-cook's, and we used to have a nice little dinner in my room; and afterwards we amused ourselves with reading; and we liked that almost as well as going to the theatre. You see by this that I am not hard to please, but, on the contrary, am always ready to do what I can to make things pleasant and agreeable. And then you were talking about illness. Oh, if ever you should be ill, then, indeed, I should be a comfort to you, a real Sister of Charity! Only ask the Morels what sort of a nurse I am. You don't half know your own good fortune, M.

Rodolph; you have drawn a real prize in the lottery of good luck to have me for a neighbour, I can assure you."

"I quite agree with you; but I always was lucky. Apropos of your late fellow lodger, M. Germain, where is he at present?"

"In Paris, I believe."

"Then you do not see much of him now?"

"No, he has never been to see me since he quitted the house."

"But where is he living? And what is he doing at present?"

"Why do you want to know?"

"Because," said Rodolph, smiling, "I am jealous of him, and I wish – "

"Jealous!" exclaimed Rigolette, bursting into a fit of laughter. "La, bless you, there is no occasion for that, poor fellow!"

"But, seriously, my good neighbour, I wish most particularly to obtain M. Germain's address, or to be enabled to meet him. You know where he lives; and without any boast, I think I have good reason to expect you would trust me with the secret of his residence, and to believe me quite incapable of revealing again the information I ask of you, assuring you most solemnly it is for his own interest more than mine I am solicitous of finding him."

"And seriously, my good neighbour, although it is probable and possible your intentions towards M. Germain are as you report them, I am not at liberty to give you the address of M. Germain, he having strictly and expressly forbidden my so doing to any person whatever; therefore, when I refuse to tell *you*, you may be quite sure it is because I really am not at liberty to do

so; and that ought not to make you feel offended with me. If you had entrusted me with a secret, you would be pleased, would you not, to have me as careful of it, and determined not to reveal it, as I am about M. Germain's affair?"

"Nay, but – "

"Neighbour, once and for all, do not say anything more on this subject. I have made a promise which I will keep faithfully and honourably; so now you know my mind, and if you ask me a hundred times, I shall answer you just the same."

Spite of her thoughtlessness and frivolity, the young dressmaker pronounced these last words with so much firmness that, to his great regret, Rodolph perceived the impossibility of gaining the desired information respecting Germain through her means; and his mind revolted at the idea of laying any snare to entrap her into a betrayal of her secret; he therefore, after a slight pause, gaily replied:

"Well, let us say no more about it, then; but, upon my life, I don't wonder at you, who can so well keep the secrets of others, guarding your own so closely."

"Me have secrets?" cried Rigolette. "I only wish I had some more secrets of my own; it must be very amusing to have secrets."

"Do you really mean to assert that you have not a 'nice little secret' about some love-affair?"

"Love-affair!"

"Are you going to persuade me you have never been in love?" said Rodolph, looking fixedly at Rigolette, the better to read the

truth in her telltale features.

"Been in love? Why, of course I have, with M. Giraudeau, M. Cabrion, M. Germain, and you!"

"Are you sure you loved them just as you do me, neither more nor less?"

"Oh, really, I cannot tell you so very exactly! If anything, I should say less; because I had to become accustomed to the squinting eyes of M. Giraudeau, the disagreeable jokes and red beard of M. Cabrion, and the low spirits and constant dejection of M. Germain, for the poor young man was very sad, and always seemed to have a heavy load on his mind, while you, on the contrary, took my fancy directly I saw you."

"Come now, my pretty neighbour, you must not be angry with me; I am going to speak candidly and sincerely, like an old friend."

"Oh, don't be afraid to say anything to me; I am very good-natured; and besides, I feel certain you are too kind; you could never have the heart to say anything to me that would give me pain."

"You are quite right; but do tell me truly, have you never had any lovers?"

"Lovers! I should think not! What time have I for such things?"

"What has time got to do with it?"

"Why, everything, to be sure. In the first place, I should be jealous as a tigress; and I should be continually worrying myself

with one idea or another; and let me ask you whether you think it is likely I could afford to lose two or three hours a day in fretting and grieving. And then, suppose my lover were to turn out false! Oh, what tears it would cost me; how wretched I should be! All that sort of thing would put me sadly behindhand with my work, I can tell you."

"Well, but all lovers are not faithless and a cause of grief and sorrow to their mistress."

"Oh, bless you! It would be still worse for me, if he were all goodness and truth. Why, then I should not be able to live without him for a single hour; and as most probably he would be obliged to remain all day in his office, or shop, or manufactory, I should be like some poor, restless spirit all the time of his absence. I should imagine all sorts of things, picture to myself his being at that moment pleasantly engaged in company with one he loved better than myself. And then, if he forsook me, oh, Heaven only knows what I might be tempted to do in my despair, or what might become of me. One thing is very certain, that my work would suffer for it; and then what should I do? Why, quietly as I live at present, it is much as I can manage to live by working from twelve to fifteen hours a day. Where should I be, if I were to lose three or four days a week by tormenting myself? How could I ever catch up all that time? Oh, I never could; it would be quite impossible! I should be obliged, then, to take a situation, to live under the control of a mistress; but no, no, I will never bring myself to that, – I love my liberty too well."

"Your liberty?"

"Yes, I might go as forewoman to the person who keeps the warehouse for which I work; she would give me four hundred francs a year, with board and lodging."

"And you will not accept it?"

"No, indeed! I should then be the slave and servant of another; whereas, however humble my home, at least there is no one there to control me. I am free to come and go as I please. I owe nothing to any one. I have good health, good courage, good heart, and good spirits; and now that I can say a good neighbour also, what is there left to desire?"

"Then you have never thought of marriage?"

"Marriage, indeed! Why, what would be the use of my thinking about it, when, poor as I am, I could not expect to meet with a husband better off than myself? Look at the poor Morels; just see the consequences of burthening yourself with a family before you have the means of providing for one; whilst, so long as there is only oneself to provide for, one can always manage somehow."

"And do you never build castles in the air? – never dream?"

"Dream? Oh, yes! – of my chimney ornaments; but, besides them, what can I have to wish for?"

"But, suppose now some relation you never heard of in your life were to die, and leave you a nice little fortune – twelve hundred francs a year, for instance – you have made five hundred sufficient to supply all your wants?"

"Perhaps it might prove a good thing; perhaps a bad one."

"How could it be a bad one?"

"Because I am happy and contented as I am; but I do not know what I might be if I came to be rich. I can assure you that, when, after a hard day's work, I go to bed in my own snug little room, when my lamp is extinguished, and by the glimmer of the few cinders left in my stove I see my neat, clean little apartment, my curtains, my chest of drawers, my chairs, my birds, my watch, my table covered with the work confided to me, left all ready to begin the first thing in the morning, and I say to myself, all this is mine, – I have no one to thank for it but myself, – oh, neighbour, the very thoughts lull me into such a happy state of mind that I fall asleep believing myself the most fortunate creature on earth to be so surrounded with comforts. But, I declare, here we are at the Temple! You must own it is a beautiful object?"

Although not partaking of the profound admiration expressed by Rigolette at the first glimpse of the Temple, Rodolph was, nevertheless, much struck by the singular appearance of this enormous bazar with its many diverging passages and dependencies. Towards the middle of the Rue du Temple, not far from the fountain which stands in the corner of a large square, may be seen an immense parallelogram, built of wood, and surmounted with a slated roof. This building is the Temple, bounded on the left by the Rue du Petit Thouars, and on the right by the Rue Percée; it leads to a large circular building, – a colossal rotunda, surrounded with a gallery, forming a sort of arcade. A

long opening, intersecting this parallelogram in its length and breadth, divides it into two equal parts, which are again divided and subdivided into an infinity of small lateral and transverse openings, crossing each other in all directions, and sheltered by the roof of the building from all severity of weather. In this bazar new merchandise is generally prohibited; but the smallest fragment of any sort of material, the merest morsel of iron, brass, lead, or pewter, will here find both a buyer and a seller.

Here are to be found dealers in pieces of every coloured cloth, of all ages, qualities, shades, and capabilities, for the service of such as wish to repair or alter damaged or ill-fitting garments. Some of the shops present huge piles of old shoes, some trodden down of heel, others twisted, torn, worn, split, and in holes, presenting a mass of nameless, formless, colourless objects, among which are grimly visible some species of fossil soles about an inch thick, studded with thick nails, resembling the door of a prison and hard as a horse's hoof, the actual skeletons of shoes whose other component parts have long since been consumed by the devouring hand of Time. Yet all this mouldy, dried up accumulation of decaying rubbish will find a willing purchaser, an extensive body of merchants trading in this particular line.

Then there are the vendors of gimps, fringes, bindings, cords, tassels, and edgings of silk, cotton, or thread, arising out of the demolition of curtains past all cure and defying all reparation. Other enterprising individuals devote themselves to the sale of females' hats and bonnets, these articles only reaching their

emporium by the means of the dealers in old clothes, and after having performed the strangest journeys and undergone the most surprising transformations, the most singular changes of colour.

In order that the article traded in may not take up too much room in a warehouse ordinarily the size of a large box, these bonnets are carefully folded in half, then flattened and laid upon each other as closely as they can be packed, with the exception of the brim. They are treated in every respect the same as herrings, requiring to be stowed in a cask. By these means it is almost incredible what a quantity of these usually fragile articles may be accommodated in a small space of about four feet square.

Should a purchaser present himself, the various specimens are removed from the high pressure to which they have been exposed, the vendor, with a *dégagé* air, gives the crown a dexterous blow with his fist, which makes the centre rise to its accustomed situation, then presses the front out upon his knee, concluding by holding up, with an air of intense satisfaction at his own ingenuity, an object so wild, so whimsical, and withal so irresistibly striking, as to remind one of those traditional costumes ascribed for ages past to fishwomen, apple-women, or any whose avocation involves the necessity of carrying a basket on the head.

Farther on, at the sign of the Goût du Jour, beneath the arcades of the Rotunda, elevated at the end of the large opening which intersects the Temple and divides it into two parts, are suspended myriads of vestments of all colours, forms, and fashions, even

more various and extraordinary in their respective styles than the bonnets just described. There may be seen stylish coats of unbleached linen, adorned with three rows of brass buttons *à la hussarde*, and sprucely ornamented with a small fur collar of fox-skin; great-coats, originally bottle-green, but changed, by age and service, to the hue of the pistachio nut, edged with black braid, and set off with a bright flaming lining of blue and yellow plaid, giving quite a fresh and youthful appearance, and producing the most genteel and tasty effect; coats that, when new, bore the appellation, as regards their cut, of being *à queue de Morue*, of a dark drab colour, with velvet, shag, or plush collar, and further decorated with buttons, once silver-gilt, but now changed to a dull coppery hue. In the same emporium may be observed sundry pelisses or polonaises of maroon-coloured cloth, with cat-skin collar, trimmed with braiding, and rich in brandenburgs, tassels, and cords. Not far from these are displayed a great choice of dressing-gowns most artistically constructed out of old cloaks, whose triple collars and capes have been removed, the inside lined with remnants of printed cotton, the most in request being blue or dark green, made up here and there with pieces of various distinct shades, and embroidered with old braid, and lined with red cotton, on which is traced a flowing design in vivid orange, collar and cuffs similarly adorned; a cord for the waist, made out of an old bell-rope, serves as a finish to these elegant *déshabillés* so exultingly worn by Robert Macaire. We shall briefly pass over a mass of costumes more or less uncouth, in the midst of

which may be found some real and authentic relics of royalty or greatness, dragged by the revolution of time from the palaces of the rich and mighty to the dingy shelves of the Rotunda of the Temple.

These displays of old shoes, hats, and coats are the grotesque parts of the bazar, – the place where rags and faded finery seek to set up their claim to notice. But it must be allowed, or rather distinctly asserted, that the vast establishment we are describing is of immense utility to the poor or persons in mediocre circumstances. There they may purchase, at an amazing decrease of price, most excellent articles, nearly new, and whose wear has been little or none. One side of the Temple was devoted to articles of bedding, and contained piles of blankets, sheets, mattresses, and pillows. Farther on were carpets, curtains, every description of useful household utensil. Close at hand were stores of wearing apparel, shoes, stockings, caps, and bonnets, for all ages, as well as all classes and conditions.

All these articles were scrupulously clean and devoid of anything that could offend or shock the most fastidious person. Those who have never visited this bazar will scarcely credit in how short a space of time, and with how little money, a cart may be filled with every requisite for the complete fitting out of two or three utterly destitute families.

Rodolph was particularly struck with the manner, at once attentive, eager, and cheerful, of the various dealers, as, standing at the door of their shops, they solicited the patronage and custom

of the passers-by. Their mode of address, at once familiar and respectful, seemed altogether unlike the tone of the present day. Scarcely had Rigolette and her companion entered that part of the place devoted to the sale of bedding, than they were surrounded by the most seducing offers and solicitations.

"Walk in, sir, and look at my mattresses, if you please," said one. "They are quite new. I will just open a corner to show you how beautifully white and soft the wool is, – more like the wool of a lamb than a sheep."

"My pretty lady, step in and see my beautiful, fine white sheets. They are better than new, for the first stiffness has been taken out of them. They are soft as a glove, and strong as iron."

"Come, my new-married couple, treat yourselves to one of my handsome counterpanes. Only see how soft, light, and warm it is, – quite as good as eider-down, – every bit the same as new, – never been used twenty times. Now, then, my good lady, persuade your husband to treat you to one. Let me have the pleasure of serving you, and I will fit you up for housekeeping as cheaply as you can desire. Oh, you'll be pleased, I know, – you'll come again to see Mother Bouvard! You will find I keep everything. I bought a splendid lot of second-hand goods yesterday. Pray walk in and let me have the pleasure of showing them to you. Come, you may as well see if you don't buy. I shall charge you nothing for looking at them."

"I tell you what, neighbour," said Rodolph to Rigolette, "this fat old lady shall have the preference. She takes us for husband

and wife. I am so pleased with her for the idea that I decide upon laying out my money at her shop."

"Well, then, let it be the fat old lady," said Rigolette. "I like her appearance, too."

Rigolette and her companion then went into Mother Bouvard's. By a magnanimity, perhaps unexampled before in the Temple, the rivals of Mother Bouvard made no disturbance at the preference awarded to her. One of her neighbours, indeed, went so far as to say:

"So long as it is Mother Bouvard, and no one else, that has this customer; she has a family, and is the dowager and the honour of the Temple."

It was, indeed, impossible to have a face more prepossessing, more open, and more frank than that of the dowager of the Temple.

"Here, my pretty little woman," she said to Rigolette, who was looking at sundry articles with the eye of a connoisseur, "this is the second-hand bargain I told you of: two bed furnitures and bedding complete, and as good as new. If you would like a small old *secrétaire* very cheap, here is one (and Mother Bouvard pointed to one). I had it in the same lot. I do not usually buy furniture, but I could not refuse this, for the poor people of whom I had it appeared to be so very unhappy! Poor lady! it was the sale of this piece of furniture which seemed to cut her to the very heart. I dare say it was a family piece of 'furniture.'"

At these words, and whilst the shopkeeper was settling with

Rigolette as to the prices of the various articles of purchase, Rodolph was attentively looking at the *secrétaire* which Mother Bouvard had pointed out. It was one of those ancient pieces of rosewood furniture, almost triangular in shape, closed by a front panel, which let down, and, supported by two long brass hinges, served for a writing-table. In the centre of this panel, which was inlaid with ornaments of wood of different patterns, Rodolph observed a cipher let in, of ebony, and which consisted of an M. and an R., intertwined and surmounted with a count's coronet. He conjectured, therefore, that the last possessor of this piece of furniture was a person in an elevated rank of society. His curiosity increased, and he looked at the *secrétaire* with redoubled scrutiny; he opened the drawers mechanically, one after the other, when, having some difficulty in drawing out the last, and trying to discover the obstacle, he perceived, and drew carefully out, a sheet of paper, half shut up between the drawer and the bottom of the opening. Whilst Rigolette was concluding her bargain with Mother Bouvard, Rodolph was engrossed in examining what he had found. From the numerous erasures which covered this paper, he perceived that it was the copy of an unfinished letter. Rodolph, with considerable difficulty, made out what follows:

> "Sir: Be assured that the most extreme misery alone could compel me to the step which I now take. It is not mistaken pride which causes my scruples, but the absolute want of any and every claim on you for the service which I

am about to ask. The sight of my daughter, reduced, as well as myself, to the most frightful destitution, has made me throw aside all hesitation. A few words only as to the cause of the misfortunes which have overwhelmed me. After the death of my husband, all my fortune was three hundred thousand francs (12,000*l.*), which was placed by my brother with M. Jacques Ferrand, the notary; I received at Angers, whither I had settled with my daughter, the interest of this sum, remitted to me by my brother. You know, sir, the horrible event which put an end to his days. Ruined, as it seems, by secret and unfortunate speculations, he put an end to his existence eight months since. After this sad event, I received a few lines, written by him in desperation before this awful deed. 'When I should peruse them,' he wrote, 'he should no longer exist.' He terminated this letter by informing me that he had not any acknowledgment of the sum which he had placed, in my name, with M. Jacques Ferrand, as that individual never gave any receipt, but was honour and piety itself; that, therefore, it would be sufficient for me to present myself to that gentleman, and my business would be regularly and satisfactorily adjusted. As soon as I was able to turn my attention to anything besides the mournful end of my poor brother, I came to Paris, where I knew no one, sir, but yourself, and you only by the connection that had subsisted between yourself and my husband. I have told you that the sum deposited with M. Jacques Ferrand was my entire fortune, and that my brother forwarded to me every six months the interest which arose from that sum. More than a year had elapsed since

the last payment, and, consequently, I went to M. Jacques Ferrand to ask the amount of him, as I was greatly in want of it. Scarcely was I in his presence, than, without any consideration of my grief, he accused my brother of having borrowed two thousand francs of him, which he had lost by his death, adding, that not only was suicide a crime before God and man, but, also, that it was an act of robbery, of which he, M. Jacques Ferrand, was the victim. I was indignant at such language, for the remarkable probity of my poor brother was well known; he had, it is true, unknown to me and his friends, lost his fortune in hazardous speculations, but he had died with an unspotted reputation, deeply regretted by all, and not leaving any debt except to his notary. I replied to M. Ferrand, that I authorised him at once to take the two thousand francs, which he claimed from my brother, from the three hundred thousand francs of mine, which had been deposited with him. At these words, he looked at me with an air of utter astonishment, and asked me what three hundred thousand francs I alluded to. 'To those which my brother placed in your hands eighteen months ago, sir, and of which I have, till now, received the interest paid by you through my brother,' I replied, not comprehending his question. The notary shrugged his shoulders, smiled disdainfully, as if my words were not serious, and replied that, so far from depositing any money with him, my brother had borrowed two thousand francs from him.

"It is impossible for me to express to you my horror at this reply. 'What, then, has become of this sum?' I

exclaimed. 'My daughter and myself have no other resource, and, if we are deprived of that, nothing remains for us but complete wretchedness. What will become of us?' 'I really don't know,' replied the notary, coldly. 'It is most probable that your brother, instead of placing this sum with me, as you say, has used it in those unfortunate speculations in which, unknown to any one, he was engaged.' 'It is false, sir!' I exclaimed. 'My brother was honour itself, and, so far from despoiling me and my daughter, he would have sacrificed himself for us. He would never marry, in order that he might leave all he had to my child.' 'Dare you to assert, madame, that I am capable of denying a deposit confided in me?' inquired the notary, with indignation, which seemed so honourable and sincere that I replied, 'No, certainly not, sir; your reputation for probity is well known; but yet I can never accuse my brother of so cruel an abuse of confidence.' 'What are your proofs of this claim?' inquired M. Ferrand. 'I have none, sir. Eighteen months since, my brother, who undertook the management of my affairs, wrote to me, saying, "I have an excellent opportunity of obtaining six per cent.; send me your power of attorney to sell your stock, and I will deposit the three hundred thousand francs, which I will make up, with M. Jacques Ferrand, the notary." I sent the papers which he asked for to my brother, and a few days afterwards he informed me that the investment was made by you, and at the end of six months he remitted to me the interest due.' 'At least, then, you have some letters on this subject, madame?' 'No, sir; they were only on family matters, and I did not preserve

them.' 'Unfortunately, madame, I cannot do anything in this matter,' replied the notary. 'If my honesty was not beyond all suspicion, all attack, I should say to you, the courts of law are open to you, – attack me; the judges will have to choose between the word of an honourable man, who for thirty years has had the esteem of worthy men, and the posthumous declaration of a man who, after being ruined in most foolish undertakings, has found refuge only in suicide. I say to you now, attack me, madame, if you dare, and your brother's memory will be dishonoured! But I believe you will have the good sense to resign yourself to a misfortune which, no doubt, is very severe, but to which I am an entire stranger.' 'But, sir, I am a mother! If my fortune is lost, my daughter and I have nothing left but a small stock of furniture; if that is sold, we have nothing left, sir, – nothing, but the most frightful destitution staring us in the face.' 'You have been cheated, – it is a misfortune, but I can do nothing in the matter,' answered the notary. 'Once more, madame, your brother has deceived you. If you doubt between his word and mine, attack me; go to law, and the judges will decide.' I quitted the notary's in the deepest despair. What could I do in this extremity? I had no means of proving the validity of my claim; I was convinced of the strict honour of my brother, and confounded at the assertion of M. Ferrand, and having no person to whom I could turn for advice (for you were travelling), and knowing that I must have money to pay for legal opinions and advice, and desiring to preserve the very little that I had left, I dared not commence a suit at law. It was at this juncture – "

This sketch of the letter ended here, for what followed was covered with ink erasures, which completely blotted out the lines. At the bottom of the page, and in the corner, Rodolph found this kind of memorandum:

"To write to the Duchesse de Lucenay, for M. de Saint-Remy."

Rodolph remained deeply thoughtful after the perusal of this fragment of a letter, in which he had found two names whose connection struck him. Although the fresh infamy which appeared to accuse Jacques Ferrand was not proved, yet this man had proved himself so pitiless towards the unhappy Morel, had behaved so shamefully to Louise, his daughter, that the denial of a deposit, protected by certain impunity, on the part of such a wretch, appeared to him by no means improbable. This mother, who claimed a fortune which had disappeared so strangely, was, doubtless, used to a life of ease and comfort. Ruined by a sudden blow, and knowing no one in Paris, as the letter said, what must have been the existence of these two females, perhaps utterly destitute and alone in the midst of this vast metropolis!

The prince had, as we know, promised sure occupation to madame, by giving her accidentally, and to employ her mind, a part to play in some future work of charity, being certain to find sure misery for her to curtail before his next meeting with that lady. He thought that, perhaps, chance might bring before him some unfortunate and worthy person, who would, as he trusted, interest the heart and imagination of Madame d'Harville.

The sketch of the letter which he held in his hands, and the copy of which had, doubtless, never been sent to the person whose assistance was implored, evinced a high and resigned mind, which would revolt from an offer of alms. So, then, how many precautions, how many plans, how much delicacy, must be employed to conceal the source of such generous succour, or to make it accepted! And, then, how much address to introduce oneself to such a female, in order to judge if she really merited the interest which she seemed capable of inspiring! Rodolph foresaw in the development of this mysterious affair a multitude of new and touching emotions, which would singularly attract Madame d'Harville in the way he had previously proposed to her.

"Well, husband," said Rigolette, gaily, to Rodolph, "what is there so interesting in that piece of paper, which you are reading there?"

"My little wife," replied Rodolph, "you are very inquisitive; I will tell you by and by. Have you bought all you want?"

"Yes; and your poor friends will be set up like kings. There is nothing to do now but to pay; Madame Bouvard has made every allowance, I must do her that credit."

"My little wife, an idea occurs to me; whilst I am paying, suppose you go and choose the clothes for Madame Morel and her children? I confess my ignorance on the subject of such purchases. You can tell them to bring everything here, and then all the things will be together, and the poor people will have everything at once."

"You are right, husband. Wait here, and I shall not be long; I know two shopkeepers here, where I am a regular customer, and I shall find in their shops all I require."

And Rigolette went out, saying:

"Madame Bouvard, take care of my husband, and do not flirt with him, mind, whilst I am gone."

And then came the laugh, and away the merry maiden ran.

"I must say, sir," said Mother Bouvard to Rodolph, "that you have a capital little manager there. *Peste!* she knows how to make a bargain! And then she is so prettily behaved and pretty-looking! red and white, with those large, beautiful black eyes, and such hair!"

"Is she not charming? and ain't I a happy husband, Madame Bouvard?"

"As happy a husband as she is a wife, I am sure of that."

"You are not mistaken. But tell me how much I owe you."

"Your little lady would only give me three hundred and thirty francs for the whole; as true as heaven's above us, I only make fifteen francs by the bargain, for I did not try to get the things as cheaply as I might, for I hadn't the heart to bate 'em down; the people who sold 'em seemed so uncommon miserable!"

"Really! Were they the same people that you bought this little *secrétaire* of?"

"Yes, sir; and it cuts my heart to think of it! Only imagine, the day before yesterday there came here a young and still pretty girl, but so pale and thin one could almost see through her; and

you know that pains people that have any feeling at all. Although she was, as they say, neat as a new-made pin, her old threadbare black worsted shawl, her black stuff gown, which was also worn bare, her straw bonnet, in the month of January, for she was in mourning, all showed what we call great distress, for I am sure she was a real lady. At last, blushing up to the very eyes, she asked me if I would buy two beds and bedding complete, and a little old *secrétaire*. I said that, as I sold, of course I bought, and that if they would suit me I would have them, but that I must see the things. She then asked me to go with her to her apartment, not far off, on the other side of the Boulevards, in a house on the Quay of St. Martin's Canal. I left my niece in the shop, and followed the lady until we reached a smallish house at the bottom of a court; we went up to the fourth floor, and, the lady having knocked, the door was opened by a young girl about fourteen years of age, who was also in mourning, and equally pale and thin, but still very, very pretty, so much so that I was quite astonished."

"Well, and this young girl?"

"Was the daughter of the lady in mourning. Though it was very cold, yet a thin gown of black cotton with white spots, and a small, shabby mourning shawl, that was all she had on her."

"And their rooms were wretched?"

"Imagine, sir, two little rooms, very neat, but nearly empty, and so cold that I was almost froze; there was not a spark of fire in the grate, nor any appearance of there having been any for a very long time. All the furniture was two beds, two chairs, a chest of

drawers, an old portmanteau, and the small *secrétaire*, and on the chest was a parcel, wrapped in a pocket-handkerchief. This small parcel was all the mother and child had left when their furniture was once sold. The landlord had taken the two bedsteads, the chairs, a trunk, and a table, for what was due to him, as the porter said, who had gone up-stairs with us. Then the lady begged me fairly to estimate the mattresses, sheets, curtains, and quilts; and, as I am an honest woman, sir, although it is my business to buy cheap and sell dear, yet, when I saw the poor young thing with her eyes full of tears, and her mother, who, in spite of her affected calmness, seemed to be weeping in her heart, I offered for the things fifteen francs more than they were worth to sell again, I swear I did; I agreed, too, just to oblige them, to take this small *secrétaire*, although it is not a sort of thing I ever deal in."

"I will buy it of you, Madame Bouvard."

"Will you though? So much the better, sir, for it is else likely to stay with me for some time; I took it, as I say, only to oblige the poor lady. I told her then what I would give for the things, and I expected that she would haggle a bit and ask me something more, I did. Then it was that I saw she was not one of the common; she was in downright misery, she was, and no mistake about it, I am sure! I says to her, 'It's worth so much,' She answers me, and says, 'Very well; let us go back to your shop, and you can pay me there, for we shall not return here again to this house.' Then she says to her daughter, who was sitting on the trunk a-crying, 'Claire, take this bundle.' I remember her name, and I'm sure she called

her Claire. Then the young lady got up, but, as she was crossing the room, as she came to the little *secrétaire* she went down on her knees before it, and, dear heart! how the poor thing did sob! 'Courage, my dear child; remember some one sees you,' said her mother to her, in a low voice, but yet I heard her. You may tell, sir, they were poor, but very proud notwithstanding. When the lady gave me the key of the little *secrétaire*, I saw a tear in her red eyes, and it seemed as if her very heart bled at parting with this old piece of furniture; but she tried to keep up her courage, and not seem downcast before strangers. Then she told the porter that I should come and take away all that the landlord did not keep, and after that we came back here. The young lady gave her arm to her mother, and carried in her hand the small bundle, which contained all they possessed in the world. I handed them their three hundred and fifteen francs, and then I never saw them again."

"But their name?"

"I don't know; the lady sold me the things in the presence of the porter, and so I had no occasion to ask her name, for what she sold belonged to her."

"But their new address?"

"I don't know that either."

"No doubt they know at their old lodging?"

"No, sir; for, when I went back to get the things, the porter told me, speaking of the mother and daughter, 'that they were very quiet people, very respectable, and very unfortunate, – I hope

no misfortune has happened to them! They appeared to be very calm and composed, but I am sure they were quite in despair.' 'And where are they gone now to lodge?' I asked. '*Ma foi*, I don't know!' was the answer; 'they left without telling me, and I am sure they will not return here.'"

The hopes which Rodolph had entertained for a moment vanished; how could he go to work to discover these two unfortunate females, when all the trace he had of them was that the young daughter's name was Claire, and the fragment of a letter, of which we have already made mention, and at the bottom of which were these words:

"To write to Madame de Lucenay, for M. de Saint-Remy?"

The only, and very remote chance of discovering the traces of these unfortunates was through Madame de Lucenay, who, fortunately, was on intimate terms with Madame d'Harville.

"Here, ma'am, be so good as to take your money," said Rodolph to the shopkeeper, handing her a note for five hundred francs.

"I will give you the change, sir. What is your address?"

"Rue du Temple, No. 17."

"Rue du Temple, No. 17; oh, very well, very well, I know it."

"Have you ever been to that house?"

"Often. First I bought the furniture of a woman there, who lent money on wages; it is not a very creditable business, to be sure, but that's no affair of mine, – she sells, I buy, and so that's settled. Another time, not six weeks ago, I went there again for

the furniture of a young man, who lived on the fourth floor, and was moving away."

"M. François Germain, perhaps?" said Rodolph.

"Just so. Did you know him?"

"Very well; and, unfortunately, he has not left his present address in the Rue du Temple, so I do not know where to find him. But where shall we find a cart to take the goods?"

"As it is not far, a large truck will do, and old Jérome is close by, my regular commissionaire. If you wish to know the address of M. François Germain, I can help you."

"What? Do you know where he lives?"

"Not exactly, but I know where you may be sure to meet with him."

"Where?"

"At the notary's where he works."

"At a notary's?"

"Yes, who lives in the Rue du Sentier."

"M. Jacques Ferrand?" exclaimed Rodolph.

"Yes; and a very worthy man he is. There is a crucifix and some holy boxwood in his study; it looks just as if one was in a sacristy."

"But how did you know that M. Germain worked at this notary's?"

"Why, this way: this young man came to me to ask me to buy his little lot of furniture all of a lump. So that time, too, though rather out of my line, I bought all his kit, and brought it here,

because he seemed a nice young fellow, and I had a pleasure in obliging him. Well, I bought him right clean out, and I paid him well; he was, no doubt, very well satisfied, for, a fortnight afterwards, he came again, to buy some bed furniture from me. A commissionaire, with a truck, went with him, everything was packed: well, but, at the moment he was going to pay me, lo and behold! he had forgotten his purse; but he looked so like an honest man that I said to him, 'Take the things with you, – never mind, I shall be passing your way, and will call for the money.' 'Very good,' says he; 'but I am never at home, so call to-morrow in the Rue du Sentier, at M. Jacques Ferrand's, the notary, where I am employed, and I will pay you.' I went next day, and he paid me; only, what was very odd to me was that he sold his things, and then, a fortnight afterwards, he buys others."

Rodolph thought that he was able to account for this singular fact. Germain was desirous of destroying every trace from the wretches who were pursuing him: fearing, no doubt, that his removal might put them on the scent of his fresh abode, he had preferred, in order to avoid this danger, selling his goods, and afterwards buying others.

The prince was overjoyed to think of the happiness in store for Madame Georges, who would thus, at length, see again that son so long and vainly sought.

Rigolette now returned, with a joyful eye and smiling lips.

"Well, did not I tell you so?" she exclaimed. "I am not deceived: we shall have spent six hundred and forty francs all

together, and the Morels will be set up like princes. Here come the shopkeepers; are they not loaded? Nothing will now be wanting for the family; they will have everything requisite, even to a gridiron, two newly tinned saucepans, and a coffee-pot. I said to myself, since they are to have things done so grandly, let them be grand; and, with all that, I shall not have lost more than three hours. But come, neighbour, pay as quickly as you can, and let us be gone. It will soon be noon, and my needle must go at a famous rate to make up for this morning."

Rodolph paid, and quitted the Temple with Rigolette.

At the moment when the grisette and her companion were entering the passage, they were almost knocked over by Madame Pipelet, who was running out, frightened, troubled, and aghast.

"Mercy on us!" said Rigolette, "what ails you, Madame Pipelet? Where are you running to in that manner?"

"Is it you, Mlle. Rigolette?" exclaimed Anastasie; "it is Providence that sends you; help me to save the life of Alfred."

"What do you mean?"

"The darling old duck has fainted. Have mercy on us! Run for me, and get me two sous' worth of absinthe at the dram-shop, – the strongest, mind; it is his remedy when he is indisposed in the pylorus, – that generally sets him up again. Be kind, and do not refuse me, I can then return to Alfred; I am all over in such a fluster."

Rigolette let go Rodolph's arm, and ran quickly to the dram-shop.

"But what has happened, Madame Pipelet?" inquired Rodolph, following the porteress into the lodge.

"How can I tell, my worthy sir? I had gone out to the mayor's, to church, and the cook-shop, to save Alfred so much trotting about; I returned, and what should I see but the dear old cosset with his legs and arms all in the air! There, M. Rodolph," said Anastasie, opening the door of her dog-hole, "say if that is not enough to break one's heart!"

Lamentable spectacle! With his bell-crowned hat still on his head, even further on than usual, for the ambiguous castor, pushed down, no doubt, by violence, to judge by a transverse gap, covered M. Pipelet's eyes, who was on his back on the ground at the foot of his bed. The fainting was over, and Alfred was beginning to make some slight gesticulations with his hands, as if he sought to repulse somebody or something, and then he tried to push off this troublesome visor, with which he had been bonneted.

"He kicks, – that's a beautiful symptom! He comes to!" exclaimed the porteress, who, stooping down, bawled in his ears, "What's the matter with my Alfred? It's his 'Stasie who is with him. How goes it now? There's some absinthe coming, that will set you up." Then, assuming a falsetto voice of much endearment, she added: "What, did they abuse and assassinate him, – the dear old darling, the delight of his 'Stasie, eh?"

Alfred heaved an immense sigh, and, with a mighty groan, uttered the fatal word:

"Cabrion!"

And his tremulous hands again seemed desirous of repulsing the fearful vision.

"Cabrion! What, that cussed painter again?" exclaimed Madame Pipelet. "Alfred dreamed of him all night long, so that he kicked me almost to death. This monster is his nightmare; not only does he poison his days, but he poisons his nights also, – he pursues him in his very sleep; yes, sir, as though Alfred was a malefactor, and this Cabrion, whom may Heaven confound! was his unceasing remorse."

Rodolph smiled, discreetly detecting some new freak of Rigolette's former neighbour.

"Alfred! answer me; don't remain mute, you frighten me," said Madame Pipelet; "let's try and get you up. Why, lovey, do you keep thinking of that vagabond fellow? You know that, when you think of that fellow, it has the same effect on you that cabbage has, – it fills up your pylorus and stifles you."

"Cabrion!" repeated M. Pipelet, pushing up, with an effort, the hat which had fallen so low over his eyes, which he rolled around him with an affrighted air.

Rigolette entered, carrying a small bottle of absinthe.

"Thankee, ma'amselle, you are so kind!" said the old body; and then she added, "Come, deary, suck this down, that will make you all right."

And Anastasie, presenting the phial quickly to M. Pipelet's lips, contrived to make him swallow the absinthe. In vain did

Alfred struggle vigorously. His wife, taking advantage of the victim's weakness, held up his head firmly with one hand, whilst with the other she introduced the neck of the little bottle between his teeth, and compelled him to swallow the absinthe, after which she exclaimed, triumphantly:

"Ther-r-r-r-e, now-w-w! you're on your pins again, my ducky!"

And Alfred, having wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, opened his eyes, rose, and inquired, in accents of alarm:

"Have you seen him?"

"Who?"

"Is he gone?"

"Who, Alfred?"

"*Cabrion!*"

"Has he dared – " asked the porteress.

M. Pipelet, as mute as the statue of the commandant, like that redoubtable spectre, bowed his head twice with an affirmative air.

"What! has M. Cabrion been here?" inquired Rigolette, repressing a violent desire to laugh.

"What! has the monster been unchained on Alfred?" said Madame Pipelet. "Oh, if I had been there with my broom, he should have swallowed it, handle and all! But tell us, Alfred, all about this horrid affair."

M. Pipelet made signs with his hand that he was about to speak, and they listened to the man with the bell-crowned hat in

religious silence, whilst he expressed himself in these terms, and in a voice of deep emotion:

"My wife had left me, to save me the trouble of going out, according to the request of monsieur," bowing to Rodolph, "to the mayor's, to church, and the cook-shop."

"The dear old darling had had the nightmare all night, and I wished to save him the journey," said Anastasie.

"This nightmare was sent me as a warning from on high," responded the porter, religiously. "I had dreamed of Cabrion, and I was to suffer from Cabrion. Here was I sitting quietly in front of my table, reflecting on an alteration which I wished to make in the upper leather of this boot confided to my hands, when I heard a noise, a rustling, at the window of my lodge, – was it a presentiment, a warning from on high? My heart beat, I lifted up my head, and, through the pane of glass, I saw – I saw – "

"Cabrion!" exclaimed Anastasie, clasping her hands.

"Cabrion!" replied M. Pipelet, gloomily. "His hideous face was there, pressed close against the window, and he was looking at me with eyes like a cat's – what do I say? – a tiger's! just as in my dream. I tried to speak, but my tongue clave to my mouth; I tried to rise, I was nailed to my seat. My boot fell from my hands, and, as in all the critical and important events of my life, I remained perfectly motionless. Then the key turned in the lock, the door opened, – Cabrion entered!"

"He entered? Owdacious monster!" replied Madame Pipelet, as much astonished as her spouse at such audacity.

"He entered slowly," resumed Alfred, "stopped a moment at the threshold, as if to fascinate me with his look, atrocious as it was, then he advanced towards me, pausing at each step, and piercing me through with his eye, but not uttering a word, – straight, mute, and threatening as a phantom!"

"I declare, my very heart aches to hear him," said Anastasie.

"I remained still more motionless, and glued to my chair; Cabrion still advanced slowly towards me, fixing his eye as the serpent glares at the bird; he so frightened me that, in spite of myself, I kept my eye on him; he came close to me, and then I could no longer endure his revolting aspect, it was too much, and I could not. I shut my eyes, and then I felt that he dared to place his hands upon my hat, which he took by the crown and lifted gently off my head, leaving it bare. I began to be seized with vertigo, my breathing was suspended, there was a singing in my ears, and I was completely fastened to my seat, and I closed my eyes still closer and closer. Then Cabrion stooped, took my head between his hands, which were as cold as death, and on my forehead, covered with an icy damp, he deposited a brazen kiss, indecent wretch!"

Anastasie lifted her hands towards heaven.

"My enemy, the most deadly, imprinted a kiss on my forehead; such a monstrosity overcame and paralysed me. Cabrion profited by my stupor to place my hat on my head, and then, with a blow of his fist, drove it down over my eyes, as you saw. This last outrage destroyed me; the measure was full, all about me was turning

around, and I fainted at the moment when I saw him, from under the rim of my hat, leave the lodge as quietly and slowly as he had entered."

Then, as if the recital had exhausted all his strength, M. Pipelet fell back in his chair, raising his hands to heaven in a manner of mute imprecation. Rigolette went out quickly; she could not restrain herself any longer; her desire to laugh almost stifled her. Rodolph had the greatest difficulty to keep his countenance.

Suddenly there was a confused murmur, such as announces the arrival of a mob, heard from the street, and a great noise came from the door at the top of the entrance, and then butts of grounded muskets were heard on the steps of the door.

CHAPTER II
THE ARREST

"Good gracious! M. Rodolph," exclaimed Rigolette, running in, pale and trembling, "a commissary of police and the guard have come here."

"Divine justice watches over me," said M. Pipelet, in a transport of pious gratitude. "They have come to arrest Cabrion; unfortunately it is too late."

A commissary of police, wearing his tricoloured scarf around his waist underneath his black coat, entered the lodge. His countenance was impressive, magisterial, and serious.

"M. le Commissaire is too late; the malefactor has escaped," said M. Pipelet, in a sorrowful voice; "but I will give you his description, – villainous smile, impudent look, insulting – "

"Of whom do you speak?" inquired the magistrate.

"Of Cabrion, M. le Commissaire; but, perhaps, if you make all haste, it is not yet too late to catch him," added M. Pipelet.

"I know nothing about any Cabrion," said the magistrate, impatiently. "Does one Jérome Morel, a working lapidary, live in this house?"

"Yes, mon commissaire," said Madame Pipelet, putting herself into a military attitude.

"Conduct me to his apartment."

"Morel, the lapidary!" said the porteress, excessively surprised; "why, he is the mildest lambkin in the world. He is incapable of – "

"Does Jérome Morel live here or not?"

"He lives here, sir, with his family, in one of the attics."

"Lead me to his attic."

Then, addressing himself to a man who accompanied him, the magistrate said:

"Let two of the municipal guard wait below, and not leave the entrance. Send Justing for a hackney-coach."

The man left the lodge to put these orders in execution.

"Now," continued the magistrate, addressing himself to M. Pipelet, "lead me to Morel."

"If it is all the same to you, mon commissaire, I will do that for Alfred; he is indisposed from Cabrion's behaviour, which, just as the cabbage does, troubles his pylorus."

"You or your husband, it is no matter which. Go forward."

And, preceded by Madame Pipelet, he ascended the staircase, but soon stopped when he saw Rodolph and Rigolette following him.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" he inquired.

"They are two lodgers in the fourth story," said Madame Pipelet.

"I beg your pardon, sir, I did not know that you belonged to the house," said he to Rodolph.

The latter, auguring well from the polite behaviour of the

magistrate, said to him:

"You are going to see a family in a state of deep misery, sir. I do not know what fresh stroke of ill fortune threatens this unhappy artisan, but he has been cruelly tried last night, – one of his daughters, worn down by illness, is dead before his eyes, – dead from cold and misery."

"Is it possible?"

"It is, indeed, the fact, mon commissaire," said Madame Pipelet. "But for this gentleman who speaks to you, and who is a king of lodgers, for he has saved poor Morel from prison by his generosity, the whole family of the lapidary must have died of hunger."

The commissary looked at Rodolph with equal surprise and interest.

"Nothing is more easily explained, sir," said Rodolph. "A person who is very charitable, learning that Morel, whose honour and honesty I will guarantee to you, was in a most deplorable and unmerited state of distress, authorised me to pay a bill of exchange for which the bailiffs were about to drag off to prison this poor workman, the sole support of his numerous family."

The magistrate, in his turn, struck by the noble physiognomy of Rodolph, as well as the dignity of his manners, replied:

"I have no doubt of Morel's probity. I only regret I have to fulfil a painful duty in your presence, sir, who have so deeply interested yourself in this family."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"From the services you have rendered to the Morels, and your language, I see, sir, that you are a worthy person. Having, besides, no reason for concealing the object of the warrant which I have to execute, I will confess to you that I am about to apprehend Louise Morel, the lapidary's daughter."

The recollection of the rouleau of gold, offered to the bailiffs by the young girl, occurred to Rodolph.

"Of what is she then accused?"

"She lies under a charge of child-murder."

"She! she! Oh, her poor father!"

"From what you have told me, sir, I imagine that, under the miserable circumstances in which this artisan is, this fresh blow will be terrible for him. Unfortunately, I must carry out the full instructions with which I am charged."

"But it is at present only an accusation?" asked Rodolph. "Proofs, no doubt, are still wanting?"

"I cannot tell you more on that point. Justice has been informed of this crime, or rather the presumptive crime, by the statement of an individual most respectable in every particular, Louise Morel's master."

"Jacques Ferrand, the notary?" said Rodolph, with indignation.

"Yes, sir – "

"M. Jacques Ferrand is a wretch, sir!"

"I am pained to see that you do not know the person of whom you speak, sir. M. Jacques Ferrand is one of the most honourable

men in the world; his rectitude is universally recognised."

"I repeat to you, sir, that this notary is a wretch. It was he who sought to send Morel to prison because his daughter repulsed his libidinous proposals. If Louise is only accused on the denunciation of such a man, you must own, sir, that the charge deserves but very little credit."

"It is not my affair, sir, and I am very glad of it, to discuss the depositions of M. Ferrand," said the magistrate, coldly. "Justice is informed in this matter, and it is for a court of law to decide. As for me, I have a warrant to apprehend Louise Morel, and that warrant I must put into execution."

"You are quite right, sir, and I regret that an impulse of feeling, however just, should have made me forget for a moment that this was neither the time nor the place for such a discussion. One word only: the corpse of the child which Morel has lost is still in the attic, and I have offered my apartments to the family to spare them the sad spectacle of the dead body. You will, therefore, find the lapidary, and possibly his daughter, in my rooms. I entreat you, sir, in the name of humanity, do not apprehend Louise abruptly in the midst of the unhappy family only a short time since snatched from their state of utter wretchedness. Morel has had so many shocks during this night that it is really to be feared his reason may sink under it; already his wife is dangerously ill, and such a blow would kill him."

"Sir, I have always executed my orders with every possible consideration, and I shall act similarly now."

"Will you allow me, sir, to ask you one favour? It is this: the young female who is following us occupies an apartment close to mine, which, I have no doubt, she would place at your disposal. You could, in the first instance, send for Louise, and, if necessary, for Morel afterwards, that his daughter may take leave of him. You will thus save a poor sick and infirm mother from a very distressing scene."

"Most willingly, sir, if it can be so arranged."

The conversation we have just described was carried on in an undertone, whilst Rigolette and Madame Pipelet kept away discreetly a few steps' distance from the commissary and Rodolph. The latter then went to the grisette, whom the presence of the commissary had greatly affrighted, and said to her:

"My good little neighbour, I want another service from you, – I want you to leave your room at my disposal for the next hour."

"As long as you please, M. Rodolph. You have the key. But, oh, say what is the matter?"

"I will tell you all by and by. But I want something more; you must return to the Temple, and tell them not to bring our purchases here for the next hour."

"To be sure I will, M. Rodolph; but has any fresh misfortune befallen the Morels?"

"Alas! yes, something very sad indeed, which you will learn but too soon."

"Well, then, neighbour, I will run to the Temple. Alas, alas! I was thinking that, thanks to your kindness, these poor people

had been quite relieved from their trouble!" said the grisette, who then descended the staircase very quickly.

Rodolph had been very desirous of sparing Rigolette the distressing scene of Louise Morel's arrest.

"Mon commissaire," said Madame Pipelet, "since my king of lodgers will direct you, I may return to my Alfred. I am uneasy about him, for when I left him he had hardly recovered from his indisposition which Cabrion had caused."

"Go, go," said the magistrate, who was thus left alone with Rodolph.

They both ascended to the landing-place on the fourth story, at the door of the chamber in which the lapidary and his family had been temporarily established.

Suddenly the door opened. Louise, pale and in tears, came out quickly.

"Adieu, adieu, father!" she exclaimed. "I will come back again, but I must go now."

"Louise, my child, listen to me a moment," said Morel, following his daughter, and endeavouring to detain her.

At the sight of Rodolph and the magistrate, Louise and the lapidary remained motionless.

"Ah, sir, you, our kind benefactor!" said the artisan, recognising Rodolph, "assist me in preventing Louise from leaving us. I do not know what is the matter with her, but she quite frightens me, she is so determined to go. Now there is no occasion for her to return to her master, is there, sir? Did you

not say to me, 'Louise shall not again leave you, and that will recompense you for much that you have suffered?' Ah! at that kind promise, I confess that for a moment I had forgot the death of my poor little Adèle; but I must not again be separated from thee, Louise, oh, never, never!"

Rodolph was wounded to the heart, and was unable to utter a word in reply.

The commissary said sternly to Louise:

"Is your name Louise Morel?"

"Yes, sir," replied the young girl, quite overcome.

"You are Jérome Morel, her father?" added the magistrate, addressing the lapidary.

Rodolph had opened the door of Rigolette's apartment.

"Yes, sir; but – "

"Go in there with your daughter."

And the magistrate pointed to Rigolette's chamber, into which Rodolph had already entered.

Reassured by his preserver, the lapidary and Louise, astonished and uneasy, did as the commissary desired them.

The commissary shut the door, and said with much feeling to Morel:

"I know that you are honest and unfortunate, and it is, therefore, with regret that I tell you that I am here in the name of the law to apprehend your daughter."

"All is discovered, – I am lost!" cried Louise, in agony, and throwing herself into her father's arms.

"What do you say? What do you say?" inquired Morel, stupefied. "You are mad! What do you mean by lost? Apprehend you! Why apprehend you? Who has come to apprehend you?"

"I, and in the name of the law;" and the commissary showed his scarf.

"Oh, wretched, wretched girl!" exclaimed Louise, falling on her knees.

"What! in the name of the law?" said the artisan, whose reason, severely shaken by this fresh blow, began to totter. "Why apprehend my daughter in the name of the law? I will answer for Louise, I will, – this my child, my good child, ain't you, Louise? What! apprehend you, when our good angel has restored you to us to console us for the death of our poor, dear little Adèle? Come, come, this can't be. And then, to speak respectfully, M. le Commissaire, they apprehend none but the bad, you know; and my Louise is not bad. So you see, my dear, the good gentleman is mistaken. My name is Morel, but there are other Morels; you are Louise, but there are other Louises; so you see, M. le Commissaire, there is a mistake, certainly some mistake!"

"Unhappily there is no mistake. Louise Morel, take leave of your father!"

"What! are you going to take my daughter away?" exclaimed the workman, furious with grief, and advancing towards the magistrate with a menacing air.

Rodolph seized the lapidary by the arm, and said to him:

"Be calm, and hope for the best; your daughter will be restored

to you; her innocence must be proved; she cannot be guilty."

"Guilty of what? She is not guilty of anything. I will put my hand in the fire if – " Then, remembering the gold which Louise had brought to pay the bill with, Morel cried, "But the money – that money you had this morning, Louise!" And he gave his daughter a terrible look.

Louise understood it.

"I rob!" she exclaimed; and her cheeks suffused with generous indignation, her tone and gesture, reassured her father.

"I knew it well enough!" he exclaimed. "You see, M. le Commissaire, she denies it; and I swear to you, that she never told me a lie in her life; and everybody that knows her will say the same thing as I do. She lie! Oh, no, she is too proud to do that! And, then, the bill has been paid by our benefactor. The gold she does not wish to keep, but will return it to the person who lent it to her, desiring him not to tell any one; won't you, Louise?"

"Your daughter is not accused of theft," said the magistrate.

"Well, then, what is the charge against her? I, her father, swear to you that she is innocent of whatever crime they may accuse her of, and I never told a lie in my life either."

"Why should you know what she is charged with?" said Rodolph, moved by his distress. "Louise's innocence will be proved; the person who takes so great an interest in you will protect your daughter. Come, come! Courage, courage! This time Providence will not forsake you. Embrace your daughter, and you will soon see her again."

"M. le Commissaire," cried Morel, not attending to Rodolph, "you are going to deprive a father of his daughter without even naming the crime of which she is accused! Let me know all! Louise, why don't you speak?"

"Your daughter is accused of child-murder," said the magistrate.

"I – I – I – child-mur – I don't – you – "

And Morel, aghast, stammered incoherently.

"Your daughter is accused of having killed her child," said the commissary, deeply touched at this scene; "but it is not yet proved that she has committed this crime."

"Oh, no, I have not, sir! I have not!" exclaimed Louise, energetically, and rising; "I swear to you that it was dead. It never breathed, – it was cold. I lost my senses, – this is my crime. But kill my child! Oh, never, never!"

"Your child, abandoned girl!" cried Morel, raising his hands towards Louise, as if he would annihilate her by this gesture and imprecation.

"Pardon, father, pardon!" she exclaimed.

After a moment's fearful silence, Morel resumed, with a calm that was even more frightful:

"M. le Commissaire, take away that creature; she is not my child!"

The lapidary turned to leave the room; but Louise threw herself at his knees, around which she clung with both arms; and, with her head thrown back, distracted and supplicating, she

exclaimed:

"Father, hear me! Only hear me!"

"M. le Commissaire, away with her, I beseech you! I leave her to you," said the lapidary, struggling to free himself from Louise's embrace.

"Listen to her," said Rodolph, holding him; "do not be so pitiless."

"To her! To her!" repeated Morel, lifting his two hands to his forehead, "to a dishonoured wretch! A wanton! Oh, a wanton!"

"But, if she were dishonoured through her efforts to save you?" said Rodolph to him in a low voice.

These words made a sudden and painful impression on Morel, and he cast his eyes on his weeping child still on her knees before him; then, with a searching look, impossible to describe, he cried in a hollow voice, clenching his teeth with rage:

"The notary?"

An answer came to Louise's lips. She was about to speak, but paused, – no doubt a reflection, – and, bending down her head, remained silent.

"No, no; he sought to imprison me this morning!" continued Morel, with a violent burst. "Can it be he? Ah, so much the better, so much the better! She has not even an excuse for her crime; she never thought of me in her dishonour, and I may curse her without remorse."

"No, no; do not curse me, my father! I will tell you all, – to you alone, and you will see – you will see whether or not I deserve

your forgiveness."

"For pity's sake, hear her!" said Rodolph to him.

"What will she tell me, – her infamy? That will soon be public, and I can wait till then."

"Sir," said Louise, addressing the magistrate, "for pity's sake, leave me alone with my father, that I may say a few words to him before I leave him, perhaps for ever; and before you, also, our benefactor, I will speak; but only before you and my father."

"Be it so," said the magistrate.

"Will you be pitiless, and refuse this last consolation to your child?" asked Rodolph of Morel. "If you think you owe me any gratitude for the kindness which I have been enabled to show you, consent to your daughter's entreaties."

After a moment's sad and angry silence, Morel replied:

"I will."

"But where shall we go!" inquired Rodolph; "your family are in the other room."

"Where shall we go," exclaimed the lapidary, with a bitter irony, "where shall we go? Up above, – up above, into the garret, by the side of the body of my dead daughter; that spot will well suit a confession, will it not? Come along, come, and we will see if Louise will dare to tell a lie in the presence of her sister's corpse. Come! Come along!"

And Morel went out hastily with a wild air, and turning his face from Louise.

"Sir," said the commissary to Rodolph, in an undertone, "I

beg you for this poor man's sake not to protract this conversation. You were right when you said his reason was touched; just now his look was that of a madman."

"Alas, sir, I am equally fearful with yourself of some fresh and terrible disaster! I will abridge as much as I can this most painful farewell."

And Rodolph rejoined the lapidary and his daughter.

However strange and painful Morel's determination might appear, it was really the only thing that, under the circumstances, could be done. The magistrate consented to await the issue of this conversation in Rigolette's chamber; the Morel family were occupying Rodolph's apartment, and there was only the garret at liberty; and it was into this horrid retreat that Louise, her father, and Rodolph betook themselves. Sad and affecting sight!

In the middle of the attic which we have already described, there lay, stretched on the idiot's mattress, the body of the little girl who had died in the morning, now covered by a ragged cloth. The unusual and clear light, reflected through the narrow skylight, threw the figures of the three actors in this scene into bold relief. Rodolph, standing up, was leaning with his back against the wall, deeply moved. Morel, seated at the edge of his working-bench, with his head bent, his hands hanging listless by his sides, whilst his gaze, fixed and fierce, rested on, and did not quit, the mattress on which the remains of his poor little Adèle were deposited. At this spectacle, the anger and indignation of the lapidary subsided, and were changed to

inexpressible bitterness; his energy left him, and he was utterly prostrated beneath this fresh blow. Louise, who was ghastly pale, felt her strength forsake her. The revelation she was about to make terrified her. Still she ventured, tremblingly, to take her father's hand, – that miserable and shrivelled hand, withered and wasted by excess of toil. The lapidary did not withdraw it, and then his daughter, sobbing as if her heart would burst, covered it with kisses, and felt it slightly pressed against her lips. Morel's wrath had ended, and then his tears, long repressed, flowed freely and bitterly.

"Oh, father, if you only knew!" exclaimed Louise; "if you only knew how much I am to be pitied!"

"Oh, Louise, this, this will be the heaviest bitter in my cup for the rest of my life, – all my life long," replied the lapidary, weeping terribly. "You, you in prison, – in the same bench with criminals; you so proud when you had a right to be proud! No," he resumed in a fresh burst of grief and despair, "no; I would rather have seen you in your shroud beside your poor little sister!"

"And I, I would sooner be there!" replied Louise.

"Be silent, unhappy girl, you pain me. I was wrong to say so; I have been too harsh. Come, speak; but in the name of Heaven, do not lie. However frightful the truth may be, yet tell it me all; let me learn it from your lips, and it will be less cruel. Speak, for, alas! our moments are counted, they are waiting for you down below. Ah, just Heaven, what a sad, sad parting!"

"My father, I will tell you all, – everything," replied Louise,

taking courage; "but promise me – and our kind benefactor must promise me also – not to repeat this to any person, – to any person. If he knew that I had told! – oh," and she shuddered as she spoke, "you would be destroyed, destroyed as I am; for you know not the power and ferocity of this man."

"What man?"

"My master!"

"The notary?"

"Yes," said Louise in a whisper, and looking around her as if she feared to be overheard.

"Take courage," said Rodolph; "no matter how cruel and powerful this man may be, we will defeat him! Besides, if I reveal what you are about to tell us, it would only be in the interest of yourself or your father."

"And me too, Louise, if I speak, it would be in endeavouring to save you. But what has this villain done?"

"This is not all," said Louise, after a moment's reflection; "in this recital there will be a person implicated who has rendered me a great service, who has shown the utmost kindness to my father and family; this person was in the employ of M. Ferrand when I entered his service, and he made me take an oath not to disclose his name."

Rodolph, believing that she referred to Germain, said to Louise:

"If you mean François Germain, make your mind tranquil, his secret shall be kept by your father and myself."

Louise looked at Rodolph with surprise.

"Do you know him?" said she.

"What! was the good, excellent young man, who lived here for three months, employed at the notary's when you went to his service?" said Morel. "The first time you met him here, you appeared as if you had never seen him before."

"It was agreed between us, father; he had serious reasons why he did not wish it known that he was working at M. Ferrand's. It was I who told him of the room to let on the fourth story here, knowing that he would be a good neighbour for you."

"But," inquired Rodolph, "who, then, placed your daughter at the notary's?"

"During the illness of my wife, I said to Madame Burette – the woman who advanced money on pledges, who lived in this house – that Louise wished to get into service in order to assist us. Madame Burette knew the notary's housekeeper, and gave me a letter to her, in which she recommended Louise as a very good girl. Cursed letter! it was the cause of all our misfortune. This was the way, sir, that my daughter got into the notary's service."

"Although I know some of the causes which excited M. Ferrand's hatred against your father," said Rodolph to Louise, "I beg you to tell me as shortly as possible what passed between you and the notary after your entering into his service; it may, perhaps, be useful for your defence."

"When I first went into M. Ferrand's house," said Louise, "I had nothing to complain of with respect to him. I had a

great deal to do, and the housekeeper often scolded me, and the house was very dull; but I endured everything very patiently. Service is service, and, perhaps, elsewhere I should have other disagreeables. M. Ferrand was a very stern-looking person; he went to mass, and frequently had priests in his house. I did not at all distrust him; for at first he hardly ever looked at me, spoke short and cross, especially when there were any strangers. Except the porter who lived at the entrance, in the same part of the house as the office is in, I was the only servant, with Madame Séraphin, the housekeeper. The pavilion that we occupied was isolated between the court and the garden. My bedroom was high up. I was often afraid, being, as I was, always alone, either in the kitchen, which is underground, or in my bedroom. One day I had worked very late mending some things that were required in a hurry, and then I was going to bed, when I heard footsteps moving quietly in the little passage at the end of which my room was situated; some one stopped at my door. At first I supposed it was the housekeeper; but, as no one entered, I began to be alarmed. I dared not move, but I listened; however, I heard no one; yet I was sure that there was some one behind my door. I asked twice who was there, but no one answered; I then pushed my chest of drawers against the door, which had neither lock nor bolt. I still listened, but nothing stirred; so at the end of half an hour, which seemed very long to me, I threw myself on my bed, and the night passed quietly. The next morning I asked the housekeeper's leave to have a bolt put on my door, which had

no fastening, telling her of my fright on the previous night, and she told me I had been dreaming, and that, if I wanted a bolt, I must ask M. Ferrand for it. When I asked him, he shrugged up his shoulders, and said I was crazy; so I did not dare say any more about it. Some time after this, the misfortune about the diamond happened. My father in his despair did not know what to do. I told Madame Séraphin of his distress, and she replied; 'Monsieur is so charitable, perhaps he will do something for your father.' The same afternoon, when I was waiting at table, M. Ferrand said to me, suddenly, 'Your father is in want of thirteen hundred francs; go and tell him to come to my office this evening, and he shall have the money.' At this mark of kindness I burst into tears, and did not know how to thank him, when he said, with his usual bluntness, 'Very good, very good; oh, what I do is nothing!' The same evening, after my work, I came to my father to tell him the good news; the next day – "

"I had the thirteen hundred francs, giving him my acceptance in blank at three months' date," said Morel. "I did like Louise, and wept with gratitude, called this man my benefactor. Oh, what a wretch must he be thus to destroy the gratitude and veneration I entertained for him!"

"This precaution of making you give him a blank acceptance, at a date falling due so soon that you could not meet it, must have raised your suspicion?" said Rodolph.

"No, sir, I only thought the notary took it for security, that was all; besides, he told me that I need not think about repaying

this sum in less than two years; but that, every three months, the bill should be renewed for the sake of greater regularity. It was, however, duly presented here on the day it became due, but, as you may suppose, was not paid. The usual course of law was followed up, and judgment was obtained against me in the name of a third party. All this I was desired not to feel any uneasiness respecting, as it had been caused by an error on the part of the officer in whose hands the bill had been placed."

"His motive is very evident," said Rodolph; "he wished to have you entirely in his power."

"Alas, sir, it was from the very day in which he obtained judgment that he commenced! But, go on, Louise, go on. I scarcely know where I am. My head seems giddy and bewildered, and at times my memory entirely fails me. I fear my senses are leaving me, and that I shall become mad. Oh, this is too much – too hard to bear!"

Rodolph having succeeded in tranquillising the lapidary, Louise thus proceeded:

"With a view to prove my gratitude to M. Ferrand for all his kindness towards my family, I redoubled my endeavours to serve him well and faithfully. From that time the housekeeper appeared to take an utter aversion to me, and to embrace every opportunity of rendering me uncomfortable, continually exposing me to anger by withholding from me the various orders given by M. Ferrand. All this made me extremely miserable, and I would gladly have sought another place; but the knowledge

of my father's pecuniary obligation to my master prevented my following my inclinations.

"The money had now been lent about three months, and, though M. Ferrand still continued harsh and unkind to me in the presence of Madame Séraphin, he began casting looks of a peculiar and embarrassing description at me whenever he could do so unobserved, and would smile and seem amused when he perceived the confusion it occasioned me."

"Take notice, I beg, sir, that it was at this very time the necessary legal proceedings, for enabling him at any moment to deprive me of my liberty, were going on."

"One day," said Louise, in continuation, "the housekeeper went out directly after dinner, contrary to her usual custom; the clerks, none of whom lived in the house, were dismissed from further duty for the day, and retired to their respective homes; the porter was sent out on a message, leaving M. Ferrand and myself alone in the house. I was doing some needlework Madame Séraphin had given me, and by her orders was sitting in a small antechamber, from whence I could hear if I was wanted. After some time the bell of my master's bedroom rang; I went there immediately, and upon entering found him standing before the fire. As I approached he turned around suddenly and caught me in his arms. Alarm and surprise at first deprived me of power to move; but, spite of his great strength, I at last struggled so successfully, that I managed to free myself from his grasp, and, running back with all speed to the room I had just quitted, I

hastily shut the door, and held it with all my force. Unfortunately, the key was on the other side."

"You hear, sir, – you hear," said Morel to Rodolph, "the manner in which this generous benefactor behaved to the daughter of the man he affected to serve!"

"At the end of a few minutes," continued Louise, "the door yielded to the efforts of M. Ferrand. Fortunately, the lamp by which I had been working was within my reach, and I precipitately extinguished it. The antechamber was at some distance from his bedchamber, and we were, therefore, left in utter darkness. At first he called me by name; but, finding that I did not reply, he exclaimed, in a voice trembling with rage and passion, 'If you try to escape from me, your father shall go to prison for the thirteen hundred francs he owes, and is unable to pay.' I besought him to have pity on me, promised to do all in my power to serve him faithfully, and with gratitude for all his goodness to my family, but declared that no consideration on earth should induce me to disgrace myself or those I belonged to."

"There spoke my Louise," said Morel, "or, rather, as she would have spoken in her days of proud innocence. How, then, if such were your sentiments – But go on, go on."

"I was still concealed by the darkness, which I trusted would preserve me, when I heard the door closed which led from the antechamber, and which my master had contrived to find by groping along the wall. Thus, having me wholly in his power,

he returned to his chamber for a light, with which he quickly returned, and then commenced a fresh attack, the particulars of which, my dearest father, I will not venture to describe; suffice it, that promises, threats, violence, all were tried; but anger, fear, and despair armed me with fresh strength, and, while I continually eluded his grasp, and fled for safety from room to room, his rage at my determined resistance knew no bounds. In his fury he even struck me with such frenzied violence as to leave my features streaming with blood."

"You hear! you hear!" exclaimed the lapidary, raising his clasped hands towards heaven, "and are crimes like this to go unpunished? Shall such a monster escape and not pay a heavy penalty for his wickedness?"

"Trust me," said Rodolph, who seemed profoundly meditating on what he heard, "trust me, this man's time and hour will come. But continue your painful narration, my poor girl, and shrink not from telling us even its blackest details."

"The struggle between us had now gone on so long that my strength began to fail me. I was conscious of my own inability to resist further, when the porter, who had returned home, rang the bell twice, – the usual signal when letters arrived and required to be fetched from his hands. Fearing that, if I did not obey the summons, the porter would bring the letters himself, M. Ferrand said, 'Go; utter but one word, and to-morrow sees your father in prison. If you endeavour to quit this house, the consequences will fall on him; and, as for you, I will take care no one shall take you

into their house, for, without exactly affirming it, I will contrive to make every one think you have robbed me. Then, should any person refer to me for your character, I shall speak of you as an idle, unworthy girl whom I could keep no longer.'

"The following day after this scene, spite of the menaces of my master, I ran home to complain to my father of the unkind usage I received, without daring, however, to tell him all. His first desire was for me to quit the house of M. Ferrand without delay. But, then, a prison would close upon my poor parent; added to which, my small earnings had become indispensably necessary to our family since the illness of my mother, and the bad character promised me by M. Ferrand might possibly have prevented me from finding another service for a very long time."

"Yes," said Morel, with gloomy bitterness, "we were selfish and cowardly enough to allow our poor child to return to that accursed roof. Oh, I spoke truly when I said, 'Want, want, what mean, what degrading acts do you not force us to commit!'"

"Alas, dear father, did you not try by every possible means to procure these thirteen hundred francs? And, that being impossible, there was nothing left but to submit ourselves to our fate."

"Go on, go on; your parents have been your executioners, and we are far more guilty than yourself of all the fearful consequences!" exclaimed the lapidary, concealing his face with his hands.

"When I next saw my master," said Louise, "he had resumed

the harsh and severe manner with which he ordinarily treated me. He made not the slightest reference to the scene I have just related, while his housekeeper persisted in her accustomed tormenting and unkind behaviour towards me, giving me scarcely sufficient food to maintain my strength, and even locking the bread up so that I could not help myself to a morsel; she would even carry her cruelty so far as to wilfully spoil and damage the morsels left by herself and M. Ferrand for my repasts, I always taking my meals after my master and the housekeeper, who invariably sat down to table together. My nights were as painful as my days. I durst not indulge in sleep, lest I should be surprised by the entrance of the notary. I had no means of securing my chamber door, and the chest of drawers with which I used to fasten myself in had been taken away, leaving me only a small table, a chair, and my box. With these articles I barricaded the door as well as I could, and merely lay down in my clothes, ready to start up at the least noise. Some time elapsed, however, without my having any further alarm as regarded M. Ferrand, who seemed to have altogether forgotten me, and seldom bestowed even a look on me. By degrees my fears died away, and I became almost persuaded I had nothing more to dread from the persecutions of my master. One Sunday I had permission to visit my home, and with extreme delight hastened to announce the happy change that had taken place to my parents. Oh, how we all rejoiced to think so! Up to that moment, my dear father, you know all that occurred. What I have still to tell you,"

murmured Louise, as her voice sunk into an inarticulate whisper, "is so dreadful that I have never dared reveal it."

"I was sure, ah, too sure," cried Morel, with a wildness of manner and rapidity of utterance which startled and alarmed Rodolph, "that you were hiding something from me. Too plainly did I perceive, by your pale and altered countenance, that your mind was burthened with some heavy secret. Many a time have I said so to your mother; but she, poor thing! would not listen to me, and even blamed me for making myself unnecessarily miserable. So you see, that weakly, and selfish to escape from trouble ourselves, we allowed our poor, helpless child to remain under this monster's roof. And to what have we reduced our poor girl? Why, to be classed with the felons and criminals of a prison! See, see what comes of parents sacrificing their children. And, then, too, be it remembered – after all – who knows? True, we are poor – very poor, and may be guilty – yes, yes, quite right, guilty of throwing our daughter into shame and disgrace. But, then, see how wretched and distressed we were! Besides, such as we – " Then, as if suddenly striving to collect his bewildered ideas, Morel struck his forehead, exclaiming, "Alas! I know not what I say. My brain burns and my senses seem deserting me. A sort of bewilderment seems to come over me as though I were stupefied with drink. Alas, alas! I am going mad!" So saying, the unhappy man buried his face between his hands.

Unwilling that Louise should perceive the extent of his apprehensions as regarded the agitated state of the lapidary, and

how much alarm he felt at his wild, incoherent language, Rodolph gravely replied:

"You are unjust, Morel; it was not for herself alone, but for her aged and afflicted parent, her children, and you, that your poor wife dreaded the consequences of Louise's quitting the notary's house. Accuse no one; but let all your just anger, your bitter curses, fall on the head that alone deserves it, – on that hypocritical monster who offered a weak and helpless girl the alternative of infamy or ruin; perhaps destruction; perhaps death to those she most tenderly loved, – on the fiend who could thus abuse the power he held, thus prey upon the tenderest, holiest feelings of a loving daughter, thus shamelessly outrage every moral and religious duty. But patience; as I before remarked, Providence frequently reserves for crimes so black as this a fearful and astounding retribution."

As Rodolph uttered these words, he spoke with a tone so expressive of his own conviction of the certain vengeance of Heaven, that Louise gazed at her preserver with a surprise not unmingled with fear.

"Go on, my poor girl," resumed Rodolph, addressing Louise; "conceal nothing from us: it is more important than you can be aware that you should relate the most minute details of your sad story."

Thus encouraged, Louise proceeded:

"I began, therefore, as I told you, to regain my tranquillity, when one evening both M. Ferrand and his housekeeper went

out. They did not dine at home. I was quite alone in the house. As usual, my allowance of bread, wine, and water was left for me, and every place carefully locked. When I had finished my work, I took the food placed for me, and, having made my meal, I retired to my bedroom, thinking it less dull than remaining downstairs by myself. I took care to leave a light in the hall for my master, as when he dined out no one ever sat up for him. Once in my chamber, I seated myself and commenced my sewing; but, contrary to my usual custom, I found the greatest difficulty in keeping myself awake. A heavy drowsiness seemed to steal over, and a weight like lead seemed to press on my eyelids. Alas, dear father!" cried Louise, interrupting herself as though frightened at her own recital, "I feel sure you will not credit what I am about to say, you will believe I am uttering falsehoods; and yet, here, over the lifeless body of my poor little sister, I swear to the truth of each word I speak."

"Explain yourself, my good girl," said Rodolph.

"Indeed, sir," answered Louise, "you ask me to do that I have been vainly trying to accomplish during the last seven months. In vain have I racked my brains to endeavour to account for the events of that fatal night. Sometimes I have almost grown distracted while trying to clear up this fearful and mysterious occurrence."

"Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed the lapidary, suddenly rousing from one of those fits of almost apathetic stupor into which he had occasionally fallen from the very commencement of this

narration, "what dreadful thing is she going to tell us?"

"This lethargic feeling," continued Louise, "so completely overpowered me, that, unable any longer to resist it, I at length, contrary to my usual custom, fell asleep upon my chair. This is all I recollect before – before – Oh, forgive me, father, forgive me! indeed, indeed, I am not guilty; yet – "

"I believe you – I believe you; but proceed."

"I know not how long I slept; but when I awoke it was to shame and dishonour, for I found M. Ferrand beside me."

"'Tis false! 'tis false!" screamed the lapidary, in a tone of frenzied violence. "Confess that you yielded to violence or to the dread of seeing me dragged to prison, but do not seek to impose on me by falsehoods such as this."

"Father! father! I call Heaven to witness I am telling you the truth only."

"I tell you 'tis a base falsehood. Why should the notary have wished to throw me in prison, since you had freely yielded to his wishes?"

"Yielded! Oh, no, dear father, I would have died first! So deep was my sleep that it resembled that of death. It may seem to you both extraordinary and impossible, and I assure you that, up to the present hour, I myself have never been able to understand it or account for it – "

"But I can do so at once," said Rodolph, interrupting Louise. "This crime alone was wanting to complete the heavy calendar of that man's offences. Accuse not your daughter, Morel, of seeking

to deceive you. Tell me, Louise, when you made your meal, before ascending to your chamber, did you not remark something peculiar in the taste of the wine given you to drink? Try and recollect this circumstance."

After reflecting a short time, Louise replied:

"Yes, I do indeed remember," answered she, "that the wine and water left for me as usual had a somewhat bitter taste; but I did not pay much attention to it, because the housekeeper would frequently, when spitefully inclined, amuse herself with throwing salt or pepper into what I drank."

"But, on the day you were describing, your wine had a bitter taste?"

"It had, sir, but not sufficiently so to prevent my drinking it; and I attributed it to the wine being turned."

Morel, with fixed eye and haggard look, listened both to the questions of Rodolph and the answers of Louise without appearing to understand to what they tended.

"And before falling asleep on your chair, did not your head seem unusually heavy, and your limbs weary?"

"Oh, yes, sir, I felt a fullness and throbbing in my temples, an icy coldness seemed to fill my veins, and a feeling of unusual discomfort oppressed me."

"Wretch, villainous wretch!" exclaimed Rodolph. "Are you aware, Morel, what this man made your poor child take in her wine?"

The artisan gazed at Rodolph without replying to his question.

"His accomplice, the housekeeper, had mingled in Louise's drink some sort of stupefying drug, most probably opium, by which means both the bodily and mental powers of your unfortunate daughter were completely paralysed for several hours; and when she awoke from this lethargic state it was to find herself dishonoured and disgraced."

"Ah, now," exclaimed Louise, "my misfortune is explained. You see, dear father, I am less guilty than you thought me. Father! dear, dear father! look upon me, bestow one little look of pity and of pardon on your poor Louise!"

But the glance of the lapidary was fixed and vacant; his honest mind could not comprehend the idea of so black, so monstrous a crime as that ascribed to the notary, and he gazed with blank wonder at the words he heard, as though quite unable to affix any meaning to them. And besides, during the latter part of the discourse, his intellect became evidently shaken, his ideas became a shapeless, confused mass of wandering recollections; a mere chaotic mass of griefs and sorrows possessed his brain, and he sank into a state of mental prostration, which is to intellect what darkness is to the sight, – the formidable symptoms of a weakened brain. After a pause of some length, Morel replied, in a low, hasty tone:

"Yes, yes; it is bad, very, very bad; cannot be worse!" and then relapsed into his former apathy; while Rodolph, watching him with pained attention, perceived that the energy, even of indignation, was becoming exhausted within the mind of the

miserable father, in the same manner as excess of grief will frequently dry up the relief of tears. Anxious to put an end as quickly as possible to the present trying scene, Rodolph said to Louise:

"Proceed, my poor child, and let us have the remainder of this tissue of horrors."

"Alas, sir! what you have heard is as nothing to that which follows. When I perceived M. Ferrand by my side I uttered a cry of terror. My first impulse was to rush from the room, but M. Ferrand forcibly detained me; and I still felt so weak, so stupefied with the medicine you speak of as having been mingled in my drink, that I was powerless as an infant. 'Why do you wish to escape from me now?' inquired M. Ferrand, with an air of surprise which filled me with dread. 'What fresh caprice is this? Am I not here by your own free will and consent?' 'Oh, sir!' exclaimed I, 'this is most shameful and unworthy, to take advantage of my sleep to work my ruin; but my father shall know all!' Here my master interrupted me by bursting into loud laughter. 'Upon my word, young lady,' said he, 'you are very amusing. So you are going to say that I availed myself of your being asleep to effect your undoing. But who do you suppose will credit such a falsehood? It is now four in the morning, and since ten o'clock last night I have been here. You must have slept long and soundly not to have discovered my presence sooner. Come, come, no more attempts at shyness, but confess the truth, that I came hither with your perfect good-will and consent. You must

be less capricious or we shall not keep good friends, I fear. Your father is in my power. You have no longer any cause to fly me. Be obedient to my wishes and we shall do very well together; but resist me, and the consequences shall fall heavily on you, and your family likewise.' 'I will tell my dear father of your conduct,' sobbed I; 'he will avenge me, and the laws will punish you.' M. Ferrand looked at me as though at a loss to comprehend me. 'Why, you have lost your senses,' cried he; 'what, in Heaven's name, can you tell your father? That you thought proper to invite me to your bedroom? But, invent any tale you please, you will soon find what sort of a reception it will meet with. Why, your father will not look at you, much more believe you.' 'But you know,' cried I, 'you well know, sir, I gave no permission for your being here. You are well aware you entered my chamber without my knowledge, and are now here against my will.' 'Against your will! And is it possible you have the effrontery to utter such a falsehood, to dare insinuate that I have employed force to gain my ends? Do you wish to be convinced of the folly of such an imputation? Why, by my orders, Germain, my cashier, returned here last night at ten o'clock to complete some very important papers, and until one o'clock this morning he was writing in the chamber directly under yours; would he not then have been sure to have heard the slightest sound, much less the repetition of such a struggle as we had together a little while ago, my saucy little beauty, when you were not quite in as complying a humour as I found you in last evening? Germain must have heard you during

the stillness of the night had you but called for assistance. Ask him, when you see him, whether any such sound occurred; he will tell you no, and that he worked on uninterruptedly during the very hours you are accusing me of forcibly entering your bedchamber.'"

"Ah!" cried Rodolph, "the villain had evidently taken every precaution to prevent detection."

"He had, indeed. As for me, sir," continued Louise, "I was so thunderstruck with horror at these assertions of M. Ferrand, that I knew not what to reply. Ignorant of my having taken anything to induce sleep, I felt wholly unable to account for my having slept so unusually heavy and long. Appearances were strongly against me; what would it avail for me to publish the dreadful story? No one would believe me innocent. How, indeed, could I hope or expect they should, when even to myself the events of that fatal night continued an impenetrable mystery?"

Even Rodolph remained speechless with horror at this fearful revelation of the diabolical hypocrisy of M. Ferrand.

"Then," said he, after a pause of some minutes, "you never ventured to inform your father of the infamous treatment you had received?"

"No," answered she, "for I dreaded lest he might suppose I had willingly listened to the persuasions of my master; and I also feared that, in the first burst of his indignation, my poor father would forget that not only his own freedom, but the very existence of his family, depended upon the pleasure of M.

Ferrand."

"And probably," continued Rodolph, desirous if possible to save Louise the painful confession, "probably, yielding to constraint, and the dread of endangering the safety of your father and family by a refusal, you continued to be the victim of this monster's brutality?"

Louise spoke not, but her cast-down eyes, and the deep blushes which dyed her pale cheek, answered most painfully in the affirmative.

"And was his conduct afterwards less barbarous and unfeeling than before?"

"Not in the least. And when, by chance, my master had the curé and vicaire of Bonne Nouvelle to dine with him, the better to avert all suspicion from himself, he would scold me severely in their presence, and even beg M. le Curé to admonish me, assuring him that some day or other I should fall into ruin; that I was a girl of free and bold manners, and that he could not make me keep my distance with the young men in his office; that I was an idle, unworthy person, whom he only kept out of charity and pity for my father, who was an honest man with a large family, whom he had greatly served and obliged. With the exception of that part of the statement which referred to my father, the rest was utterly false. I never, by any chance, saw the clerks belonging to his office, as it was situated in a building entirely detached from the house."

"And, when alone with M. Ferrand, how did he account for

his treatment of you before the curé?"

"He assured me he was only jesting. However, the curé believed him, and reprehended me very severely, saying that a person must be vicious indeed to go astray in so godly a household, where I had none but the most holy and religious examples before my eyes. I knew not what answer to make to this address; I felt my cheeks burn and my eyes involuntarily cast down. All these indications of shame and confusion were construed to my disadvantage, until, at length, sick at heart, and weary, and disgusted, my very life seemed a burden to me, and many times I felt tempted to destroy myself; but the thoughts of my parents, my poor brothers and sisters, that my small earnings helped to maintain, deterred me from ending my sorrows by death. I therefore resigned myself to my wretched fate, finding one consolation, amidst the degradation of my lot, in the thought that, at least, I had preserved my father from the horrors of a prison. But a fresh misfortune overwhelmed me; I became *enceinte*. I now felt myself lost indeed. A secret presentiment assured me that, when M. Ferrand became aware of a circumstance which ought, at least, to have rendered him less harsh and cruel, he would treat me even more unkindly than before. I was still, however, far from expecting what afterwards occurred."

At this moment, Morel, recovering from his temporary abstraction, gazed around him, as though trying to collect his ideas, then, pressing his hand upon his forehead, looked at his

daughter with an inquiring glance, and said:

"I fancy I have been ill, or something is wrong with my head – grief – fatigue – tell me, my child – what were you saying just now? I seem almost unable to recollect."

"When," continued Louise, unheeding her father's look, "when M. Ferrand discovered that I was likely to become a mother – "

Here the lapidary waved his hand in despairing agony, but Rodolph calmed him by an imploring look.

"Yes, yes," said Morel, "let me hear all; 'tis fit and right the tale should be told. Go on, go on, my girl, and I will listen from beginning to end."

Louise went on. "I besought M. Ferrand to tell me by what means I should conceal my shame, and the consequence of a crime of which he was the author. Alas, dear father, I can scarcely hope or believe you will credit what I am about to tell you."

"What did he say? Speak."

"Interrupting me with much indignation and well-feigned surprise, he affected not to understand my meaning, and even inquired whether I had not lost my senses. Terrified, I exclaimed, 'Oh, sir, what is to become of me? Alas, if you have no pity on me, pity at least the poor infant that must soon see the light!'

"'What a lost, depraved character!' cried M. Ferrand, raising his clasped hands towards heaven. 'Horrible, indeed! Why, you poor, wretched girl, is it possible that you have the audacity to accuse me of disgracing myself by any illicit acquaintance with a

person of your infamous description? Can it be that you have the hardihood to lay the fruits of your immoral conduct and gross irregularity at my door, – I, who have repeated a hundred times, in the presence of respectable witnesses, that you would come to ruin some day, vile profligate that you are? Quit my house this instant, or I will drive you out!'"

Rodolph and Morel were struck with horror; a system of wickedness like this seemed to freeze their blood.

"By Heaven!" said Rodolph, "this surpasses any horrors that imagination could have conceived."

Morel did not speak, but his eyes expanded fearfully, whilst a convulsive spasm contracted his features. He quitted the stool on which he was sitting, opened a drawer suddenly, and, taking out a long and very sharp file, fixed in a wooden handle, he rushed towards the door. Rodolph, guessing his thoughts, seized his arm, and stopped his progress.

"Morel, where are you going? You will do a mischief, unhappy man!"

"Take care," exclaimed the infuriated artisan, struggling, "or I shall commit two crimes instead of one!" and the madman threatened Rodolph.

"Father, it is our benefactor!" exclaimed Louise.

"He is jesting at us; he wants to save the notary," replied Morel, quite crazed, and struggling with Rodolph. At the end of a second, the latter disarmed him, carefully opened the door, and threw the file out on the staircase. Louise ran to the lapidary,

embraced him, and said:

"Father, it is our benefactor! You have raised your hand against him, – recover yourself."

These words recalled Morel to himself, and hiding his face in his hands, he fell mutely on his knees before Rodolph.

"Rise, rise, unhappy father," said Rodolph, in accents of great kindness; "be patient, be patient, I understand your wrath and share your hatred; but, in the name of your vengeance, do not compromise your daughter!"

"Louise! – my daughter!" cried the lapidary, rising, "but what can justice – the law – do against that? We are but poor wretches, and were we to accuse this rich, powerful, and respected man, we should be laughed to scorn. Ha! ha! ha!" and he laughed convulsively, "and they would be right. Where would be our proofs? – yes, our proofs? No one would believe us. So, I tell you – I tell you," he added, with increased fury, "I tell you that I have no confidence but in the impartiality of my knife."

"Silence, Morel! your grief distracts you," said Rodolph to him sorrowfully; "let your daughter speak; the moments are precious; the magistrate waits; I must know all, – all, I tell you; go on, my child."

Morel fell back on the stool, overwhelmed with his anguish.

"It is useless, sir," continued Louise, "to tell you of my tears, my prayers. I was thunderstruck. This took place at ten o'clock in the morning in M. Ferrand's private room. The curate was coming to breakfast with him, and entered at the moment when

my master was assailing me with reproach and accusations. He appeared much put out at the sight of the priest."

"What occurred then?"

"Oh, he soon recovered himself, and exclaimed, call him by name, 'Well, Monsieur l'Abbé, I said so, I said this unhappy girl would be undone. She is ruined, ruined for ever; she has just confessed to me her fault and her shame, and entreated me to save her. Only think that, from commiseration, I have received such a wanton into my house!' 'How,' said the abbé to me with indignation, 'in spite of the excellent counsels which your master has given you a hundred times in my presence, have you really sunk so low? Oh, it is unpardonable! My friend, my friend, after the kindness you have evinced towards this wretched girl and her family, any pity would be weakness. Be inexorable,' said the abbé, the dupe, like the rest of the world, of M. Ferrand's hypocrisy."

"And you did not unmask the scoundrel on the spot?" asked Rodolph.

"Ah, no! monsieur, I was terrified, my head was in a whirl, I did not dare, I could not pronounce a word, – yet I was anxious to speak and defend myself. 'But sir – ' I cried. 'Not one word more, unworthy creature,' said M. Ferrand, interrupting me. 'You heard M. l'Abbé. Pity would be weakness. In an hour you leave my house!' Then, without allowing me time to reply, he led the abbé into another room. After the departure of M. Ferrand," resumed Louise, "I was almost bereft of my senses for a moment. I was

driven from his house, and unable to find any home elsewhere, in consequence of my condition, and the bad character which my master would give with me. I felt sure, too, that in his rage he would send my father to prison; and I did not know what to do. I went to my room, and there I wept bitterly. At the end of two hours M. Ferrand appeared. 'Is your bundle made up?' said he. 'Pardon,' I exclaimed, falling at his feet, 'do not turn me from your house in my present condition. What will become of me? I have no place to turn to.' 'So much the better; this is the way that God punishes loose behaviour and falsehood.' 'Dare you say that I tell falsehood?' I asked, indignantly, 'dare you say that it is not you who have caused my ruin?' 'Leave my house this moment, you wretch, since you persist in your calumnies!' he replied in a terrible voice; 'and to punish you I will to-morrow send your father to the gaol.' 'Well, no, no!' said I, terrified; 'I will not again accuse you, sir; that I promise you; but do not drive me away from the house. Have pity on my father. The little I earn here helps to support my family. Keep me here; I will say nothing. I will endeavour to hide every thing; and when I can no longer do so, oh, then, but not till then, send me away!' After fresh entreaties on my part, M. Ferrand consented to keep me with him; and I considered that a great favour in my wretched condition. During the time that followed this cruel scene, I was most wretched, and miserably treated; only sometimes M. Germain, whom I seldom saw, kindly asked me what made me unhappy; but shame prevented me from confessing anything to him."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.