

COUNT CAGLIOSTRO:

OR,

THE CHARLATAN.

A TALE OF

THE REIGN OF LOUIS XVI.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL I.

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CHAPTER I.

THE CARDINAL AND HIS SECRETARY.

THE apartment, in which his Eminence the Cardinal Di Jomelli was daily wont to break his fast, was as noble and spacious a saloon as any in Italy. The floor, or at least as much of it as a luxurious Turkey carpet permitted you to see, was paved with the purest marble, chequered

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and diversified with different coloured lavas. The walls were hung with a fine specimen of Gobelin tapestry, while the vaulted ceiling exhibited an exquisite representation of Susannah and the Elders, by Julio Romano. Some exquisite relics of antique sculpture were tastefully disposed in different parts of the saloon, no doubt to soften and relieve the splendour of the gilded and showy furniture.

Many wise and pious people are of opinion, that it is necessary to invest the superior clergy of a land with rank and affluence; lest they should cease to command the respect of the wealthy and refined classes of society. But those, who most insist on the necessity of ecclesiastical affluence, would certainly have been satisfied with the room in which the Cardinal was accustomed to take his morning refection. Ill-natured people might possibly have found

flaws or defects in the holy prelate's moral and religious character, but none in his palace. The most fastidious and sneering nobleman in Italy could not, with any regard to truth and candour, have affected to undervalue his Excellency's breakfast room.

The Cardinal entered the apartment with a languid air. The prelate was a stout hale man of sixty, somewhat inclining to obesity. His white hair and purple cheeks seemed to indicate that he had enjoyed to the utmost the good things which Providence had allotted to his share. His features, though somewhat thickened and animalized by excess, had been once regular and even handsome.

His secretary, a keen-looking dark-eyed little abbate of thirty, who had been some time waiting the Cardinal's appearance, rose at his approach, and in a quiet, but insinuating man-

ner, enquired how his Eminence had passed the night.

“ Pretty well—pretty well ; I dosed for a couple of hours—a very fair amount of rest, when you consider the terrible excitement of the preceding evening.”

The prelate had not, as some unsophisticated reader might imagine from these words, been witnessing the death-bed horrors of some noble profligate ; he had not been deciding on the life or death of some half-score of heretics ; he had not even been assisting at any of the more impressive or fatiguing ceremonies of the Roman Church ; he had been to a concert to witness the *début* of a *prima donna* who had been engaged at his instance.

“ I did not tremble much,” said the secretary ; “ the result was not in my opinion for a moment doubtful. I knew that your Eminence’s

recommendation would vindicate itself, and come forth from the trial, like pure gold from the furnace."

"Ah! my son," said the prelate with a look of kindly reproach, "you speak with the rashness of youth. But how can I blame you. I did not act myself with the caution becoming my years."

"I thought your Eminence had seen the Signora Bettoni twice, and were well assured of her surpassing talents."

"True—but consider what I risked. I had pledged myself to all Rome, that the rising glory of my youthful débutante should eclipse the meridian blaze of Madame Colnacci. All Rome was there, and aware of the fact. If she had failed, I was a lost man!—my musical reputation was gone for ever!—I could never have shown myself in the musical world again!"

“ But her success was certain, after the first bar.”

“ Ay, but reflect my son,” rejoined the Cardinal with moral solemnity, “ how small an accident might have marred the happy result !— a cold, a headache, nervous agitation, a cause so trifling as to be imperceptible—nay, unknown to mortal eyes—might have blasted the great triumph. Then look at my position. The audience would have accepted no excuse, no extenuating circumstances ; and one of the Fathers of the Church would have been exposed to the ridicule and obloquy of all Rome. I shudder to look back on the danger I have escaped.”

The prelate threw himself panting on a sofa, and thrusting forth one of his crimson-stockinged legs, which showed to great advantage on the yellow satin of the couch, he firmly placed the

other on a velvet footstool, and demanded his breakfast.

While the Cardinal was thus occupied, the secretary busied himself in sorting and arranging a huge pile of memorials, and other papers, seemingly with the view of presenting them to the Cardinal, when he should have finished his repast. The latter appeared to guess his secretary's intention, for he impatiently waved his hand, exclaiming—

“Don't trouble yourself, I cannot transact any business this morning; my thoughts are of another world.”

With these words the Cardinal stretched himself in a still easier position on the yellow satin sofa, while his eyes assumed the lack-lustre expression indicative of profound reverie.

The secretary's eyebrows elevated themselves

with surprise on hearing the celestial nature of the Cardinal's thoughts. He endeavoured to track the direction of his intently gazing eyes, and ascertained them to be fixed on a splendidly bound breviary, which was lying on an ebony reading desk at some distance, and which, by the way, though twenty years old, looked as good as new.

“ Now may I be broiled on the gridiron of St. Lawrence,” thought the Abbate, “ if he is not going to celebrate a private Te Deum for the success of La Bettoni, and in that posture too !”

Notwithstanding his internal scandal, the complaisant Abbate rose, and was about to hand the breviary to his superior, when the Cardinal, perceiving his mistake, said, with some confusion, but more amazement—

“ Nay, my son, I meant that they had wan-

dered to the realm of music—the sphere of poetry. The delicious notes of the Signora Bettoni were still thrilling on my ear, and lapping my soul in Elysium.”

The wily secretary was much more confused than the Cardinal, to find that he had unintentionally been more pious than his master, and he hastened to set the latter at ease by a little elegant blasphemy.

“If your Grace’s thoughts then were not occupied with Heaven, they were at least fixed on an angel.”

“Good—good—I protest,” said the Cardinal, chuckling with delight, and rejoiced to find, that, though profane himself, he might still lecture his secretary on profanity. “But, my son, methinks you allow your musical enthusiasm to carry you too far, and to make your wit almost border on sacrilege.”

“I acknowledge my fault,” said the Abbate, submissively casting down his eyes ; “ but who can be near your Grace, and be otherwise than an enthusiast in that divine science ?”

Before the Cardinal could answer this flattery, the door opened, and a lacquey announced that a monk of the Benedictine order craved audience of his Eminence.

“ Pshaw !” said his Eminence, who was much more disposed to have given audience to a singer than an ecclesiastic. “ This is too bad ! before I have even finished my morning refec-tion ! We cannot always be occupied with our ecclesiastical functions. Already my constitution sinks under the fatigue : eh, Maroncelli ?” said he, looking at his secretary, without whose advice he no more ventured to take any step in business, than a prince of the blood-royal, who is nominally appointed Generalissimo of an

army, dare order a movement without the sanction of the veteran at his elbow, who has been specially appointed to guide him.

“From what convent does the holy father come?” said the secretary to the lacquey.

The lacquey disappeared, and, in a moment afterwards, re-entered with the information that the stranger belonged to the convent of St. John's.

“Perhaps,” said the secretary, “he brings news respecting your Eminence's niece ; and if I mistake not, the nunnery adjoining St. John's contains the picture of the holy Baptist,” (crossing himself) “which your Eminence so much admired, and was anxious to purchase of the good sisters. Perhaps they have despatched this monk to negotiate the transaction for them. Does not your Eminence recollect the painting?”

The Cardinal's half-shut eyes opened wider and wider during this speech, till at last they actually appeared to scintillate; and, with a vivacity that ill accorded with his declaration respecting the state of his constitution, he exclaimed—

“Recollect it? Holy Virgin! I have thought of nothing else since I saw it, excepting the Signora Bettoni's *début*, and my attention then was rather a matter of duty, which I owed to my musical reputation, than a pleasure. Tell the good father we are ready to see him.”

A short rotund-looking friar, whose face, from its extreme gravity and stupidity, looked like that of an owl, was soon ushered into the apartment.

“Do you come on the behalf of the good sisters of St. John?” said the Cardinal eagerly.

“I do,” said the monk, rather surprised.

“Respecting the sale of that splendid picture—splendid, I mean,” said the Cardinal, recollecting that it was not his policy to praise his intended purchase, “considering that it is the production of an obscure modern artist, of no repute whatever.”

“The affair on which I am deputed, though an unworthy messenger, to consult with your Eminence, is no doubt mysteriously connected with the picture to which your Eminence alludes. But I was not aware that its sale was resolved upon.”

“Then you have not come to sell the picture,” said the Cardinal, looking very disappointed, and giving, at the same time, a significant glance to his secretary, which evidently said, “I shall turn the bore over to you.” The Cardinal leant back in his easy chair, and shut his eyes.

“I came,” said the monk, looking grievously offended at the Cardinal’s somnolent attitude, “albeit an unworthy messenger, to consult with his Eminence respecting a most astonishing and important occurrence : but if his Eminence is too fatigued to hear my narrative, I had better retire.”

“Stop, brother !” said the Abbate Maroncelli, darting a hawk’s-eye glance on the owl-like monk, from which the latter shrunk, as his feathered prototype would have done from a ray of the mid-day sun. “Think not, because his Eminence’s eyes are outwardly shut, that their inward sense is not open. Know that, in all difficult and laborious investigations, which demand intense mental attention, such is his Eminence’s uniform mode of abstracting his mind from all external impressions ; whereby he is the more fully able to concentrate its

powers on the subject in hand : therefore, brother, continue your narrative without further loss of time."

The Cardinal uttered a sound, between a grunt and a snore, which testified his full assent to the secretary's explanation of his attitude.

Somewhat consoled, or else a little awed, the monk began again, in the same words and tone ; for he had prepared his discourse beforehand, and was determined not, or perhaps was unable, to vary from it, however the circumstances under which he pronounced it might alter. "I came here, albeit an unworthy messenger, to consult with his Eminence, respecting a most astonishing and important occurrence, which has just happened at our monastery. Divers and manifold opinions have sprung up among our brotherhood touching the event. I myself opine, in common with many others,

that the affair savoureth of the miraculous ; while a certain portion of our holy community, relying upon their gift of carnal wisdom, suggest that the alleged appearances are the result of human fraud. Others, again, hold, that the matter is an artifice exceedingly puzzling, and, indeed, altogether unaccountable. That some one of these doctrines will prove to be the true one, I entertain but little doubt ; and in instituting a comparison between my own opinions and——”

“ My good brother,” said the secretary, determined to cut short this dreadful harangue, “ with all possible deference to the opinions of the fraternity of St. John, of whose wisdom their ambassador is a very sufficient specimen and proof, I would humbly request you to relate the facts of your communication, before you favour me with your comments.”

“Well, then,” said the monk, rather pettishly, “it was on the eighth of last month, in the present year of our Lord, 1771, that St. John the Baptist—praised be his name!—first made his appearance in the Nunnery of St. John.”

The Abbate Maroncelli's first emotion on hearing of this astounding visit was actual terror. He thought he was conversing with a madman; and he gazed with some anxiety on the monk's face. But no—every line and feature of that unmeaning disk indicated solemn stupidity, but nothing of insanity. His next idea was that the whole affair was an attempt, by some mischievous people, to mystify the Cardinal and himself; and that this weak-headed monk, having been previously hoaxed himself, had been selected as a proper tool for the purpose. Indignant at such a supposition, he composed his features into an aspect of great severity and said—

“I am unwilling to think, that you would knowingly lend yourself to the perpetration of this insult on his Eminence ; but remember that in these sacred matters, the absence of due care and pious caution is in itself a crime, and might draw down upon you a portion of that condign punishment which will assuredly overtake the original authors of this farce.”

“Farce indeed !” retorted the monk, “some of the most learned and pious brethren of our monastery, whose wisdom your Reverence has just now admitted, think that the incident more resembles a sacred mystery or morality, than a farce. But be it farce, or mystery, we are neither (to use a profane comparison) authors, actors, nor even spectators, with the exception of two of our brethren, who were called in by the holy sisterhood to witness the vision.”

The Abbate Maroncelli mused for a moment : he saw that he should gain nothing by brow-beating the monk, so he determined to restrain his temper, and sift the matter with patience.

“Nay, brother,” rejoined he in a milder tone, “be not offended. I was but fearful that you had been imposed upon by some impious and malignant persons. Prithee give me an exact and detailed account of the manner in which this extraordinary vision first appeared to the sisterhood of St. John.”

“It was on the first Monday of last month the 8th of July, the Signora Erminia, his Eminence’s niece, whom the Convent have the honour of educating, was walking in the Convent garden, about twilight. She stooped to tie up a rose, which had been trod down. On rising, she saw the holy Baptist standing at the top of the gravel walk, about ten yards before her.

She was much frightened ; but the Saint smiled graciously, and bidding her, in a sort of chaunt, not be frightened, told her to repair to the same spot on the morrow evening, an hour after vespers. He then disappeared."

The Abbate counterfeited a patience which he certainly did not feel, and mildly enquired, eyeing the monk all the time with a glance which would have done honour to the best practitioner in Westminster Hall, "How was it, that the Signora Erminia knew that the figure she saw was St. John the Baptist?"

"That is the most wonderful part of the whole story," said the monk ; "the vision so exactly resembled the picture of St. John in the Chapel—you know the painting, I think, father,—the same which his Eminence just now talked of buying—that the Signora thought the canvass had walked out of the frame. The

young lady was a good judge of the likeness, for she always exhibited a singular preference for this picture, over all the other shrines and images in the convent, and always performed her private devotions before it."

"So!" said the secretary scornfully, "a silly child of fourteen or fifteen, is allowed by the sensible sisters of St. John, to be wandering about the Convent garden, when she ought to have been counting her beads in the chapel, or sleeping in the dormitory. She falls asleep, very naturally dreams of the picture she is always looking at by day, wakes, finds herself alone, and is excessively frightened. She then very naturally tells her story, which like all dreams is exceedingly incoherent and unmeaning, to the Superior, which she very strangely believes. Upon this small egg, the pious and learned brothers of St. John condescend to sit,

until they have hatched from it a monstrous bird, which appears to have flown away with their understandings."

"Judge us not," said the monk, "until you hear the sequel. The Prioress did not at first believe the story. She reprimanded the Signora, and bade her dismiss such profane nonsense from her head ; but the other persisting in her account, she, rather to calm the young lady's agitation than from any other motive, repaired to the spot at the hour, accompanied by the Signora, and half a dozen of the sisters——"

"And saw nothing," said the Abbate, impetuously.

"Alas ! reverend brother, sorry am I to contradict you ; but when they arrived at the spot, there they saw St. John, exactly as he is represented on our altar-piece—a comely young man,

with a beautiful and smiling face, clothed in a raiment of goats' hair, which, flung around his body, partly disclosed his shoulders and legs, both of which limbs seemed framed after a sweet and angel-like fashion. His garment shone with a mild white light, and round his head appeared a glory of green fire."

"A glory of green fire! grant me patience," muttered the secretary. "Well, brother, what then?"

"St. John then waved his hand, and chaunted, in a low sweet tone—

" 'Erminia stay,
The rest away.'

When the Prioress, and the other sisters, were so frightened, that they ran away, and tumbled over one another into the refectory, which opens into the garden."

"And the Lady Erminia?"

“Remained behind ; having seen the Saint before, she was not so frightened as the rest.” The monk then went on to state, that the saint disappeared as before, repeating his injunction to the Signorina to repair again to the spot on the next evening. It seems the Prioress then laid the case before her confessor ; and he advised that she should again repair to the spot with the Lady Erminia, but accompanied also by two of the stoutest brethren in the monastery. The same scene appears to have been repeated, with this slight variation, that when the Saint espied the brethren, he waved them indignantly off, and shook his head, until the green glory appeared like a flame. Daunted at this appearance, they hesitated some time what steps to take. At last they summoned courage to rush up to the spot where the figure appeared to be standing, but before they could

reach the place, it had vanished. They searched, but could find no traces of any human being. The failure of this attempt to detect any bodily agency in the transaction, gave a great blow to the anti-miracle party; while the spirits of their antagonists were proportionally elated. They strongly deprecated any repetition of such impious efforts, and fervently prayed that the ridiculous and sacrilegious attempt which had been already made, to lay violent hands on the Saint, might not draw down divine vengeance on the convent. Erminia was of course looked upon with great veneration, and expected punctually to attend any appointment which St. John might vouchsafe to make with her.

Reports of the miraculous apparition of St. John, in the gardens of the convent dedicated to his name, soon began to fly about the neighbourhood; and the Prioress was much puzzled as to the style in which she ought to frame her

answers to the numerous queries, which were daily put to her on the subject. She was fully alive to the reputation, and perhaps profit, which would probably accrue to the convent from the authentication of such an extraordinary miracle. Moreover, she had seen the saint herself with her own eyes—had seen him elude the grasp of his intended captors, and vanish into thin air. She firmly believed in the reality of the appearance; but still she hesitated to publish her unqualified belief to the world. The age was violently sceptical. The nineteenth century may be indifferent to religion; but the latter end of the eighteenth was openly, and, if the expression may be allowed, ostentatiously infidel. And so much does the spirit of the age affect even those, who are most opposed to its principles, and farthest removed from its influence, that the Prioress hesitated to take upon herself the responsibility of recognizing the miracle. She

instinctively felt, that the dignitaries of her Church would be rather embarrassed than pleased at the event. In this juncture, she determined to state the circumstances to some prelate of high rank, and act upon the authority of his advice. The near relationship of Erminia to the Cardinal, naturally pointed him out to the Prioress as the proper person, to whom recourse ought to be had on the present occasion; but not particularly liking to perform the mission in her own person, she applied to the monks of the adjoining monastery, one of whom, with the permission of his superior, readily undertook the office.

We have mentioned that the Cardinal, whose interest in the monk's business had entirely ceased, when he found that the latter was not empowered to enter into any negotiations respecting the sale of the coveted altar-piece, had sunk into his easy chair, and assumed a som-

nolent appearance. From this state he partially roused himself, and although his eyes were still closed, a profane person would have suspected, from sundry regulated bobbings of the head, and tappings of the fingers, that his Eminence was internally rehearsing a song. Towards, however, the end of the monk's narrative, his attention or rather curiosity had been excited by the sharpness and impatience of his secretary's tone. He gradually opened his eyes, and raising himself to an upright position in his chair, began to listen to the dialogue.

"Be assured, my brother," he heard his secretary say, "that the holy St. John, to whose name be all honour and glory, hath no part in these proceedings. To my mind they resemble rather the machinations of an evil spirit; not that I would allow you for a moment to suppose that you have actually seen any supernatural appearance. These are not times when demons

are permitted to assault and tempt the outward man with their visible presence. But I fear much, that such a spirit as I speak of hath insinuated itself into your hearts, and deluded your brains; rendering you an easy prey to human imposture; puffing up your souls with vain imaginations, until ye conceive yourselves worthy of divine intercourse with an immortal angel; you, who ought to deem yourselves too happy when allowed to grovel in the dust before his shrine."

The Cardinal saw that his secretary had, somehow or other, achieved a victory over the frightened monk, and, still retaining some spite against that individual for the disappointment which the latter had innocently occasioned him, he thought it a good opportunity to join in the farther discomfiture of the already conquered enemy.

"For vain imaginations," quoth he, "I know

of no remedy so simple and efficacious as long continued and diligent fasting : eh, Maroncelli ?” and he glanced at his secretary, to ascertain whether he was proceeding after an orthodox fashion ; and being encouraged by an approving look, he continued, with increased confidence and severity.

“ Wherefore, my son, do thou thyself, together with all thy brethren at St. John’s, abstain from all animal food during the next six weeks ; excepting the healths of any of the weaker brethren, (among whom you cannot rank yourself,) my son, shall imperiously require it. Touch not at your meals any kind of vinous liquor, however diluted with the simple element. Spare not the frequent use of the scourge, and rise three times every night, repeating, during each vigil, such a number of credos and paternosters as your superior shall judge necessary. Depart, my son, depart in peace.”

“But what answer,” said the monk, quite aghast at this strange mode of solving the Prioress’s doubts, “but what answer shall I return the Prioress?”

The Cardinal looked doubtingly at the secretary, as if to inquire the answer; but the latter, who saw that it was impossible, by mere casual prompting, to enable his master properly to support his part, determined to close the scene.

“Depart, my brother, depart in peace; fail not to macerate and mortify your outward bodies, according to his Eminence’s behests; so shall your inward spirits be purified and exalted.”

The monk was very reluctant to retire: he was utterly amazed at the sentence which the Cardinal had pronounced. He could not conceive how the nuns had committed a crime in involuntarily beholding a spectacle, which had caused them so much terror and uneasiness:

still less could he comprehend, why, supposing them to have been guilty of some offence, they should be allowed to expiate their sins by the vicarious suffering of his brethren and himself. It seemed strange to him, that those who had seen the apparition, and vouched for its existence, should get off scot-free, while those, who had only heard of it through them, should be thus cruelly punished.

Fain would he have argued the point a little longer; but the Cardinal and the secretary renewed their cry of "Depart in peace," in full duet, until he was obliged to make his obeisance, and retire.

After the monk had left the apartment, the Abbate Maroncelli recounted to the Cardinal the strange story which he had just heard. It amused the prelate so much, that he bitterly regretted that he had not listened to the original narrative. He was delighted at the incident,

for three reasons : first, because it was connected with the picture, the acquisition of which, at the present moment, formed the primary object of his thoughts ; secondly, whilst it was extravagant enough to afford entertainment, it was mysterious enough to provoke his wonder, and therefore well calculated to relieve the habitual ennui under which the Cardinal, like all idle and imaginative people, laboured ; and thirdly, it evidently plagued and embarrassed his secretary, whose superior abilities, although he was quite aware of their value, and felt the impossibility of dispensing with their guidance, he could not altogether pardon.

“ Nay, my son,” said he, with an air of affected benignity and moderation, “ methinks you are too harsh with these poor brethren.”

Maroncelli disdained to convict the Cardinal of inconsistency, and to remind him that he himself had but five minutes ago enjoined the

monk to perform penance. He calmly observed, "I presume your Eminence does not believe in the reality of what these silly sisters fancy themselves to have seen."

"Truly, Maroncelli," maliciously replied the Cardinal, "I will not hazard any rash decision; here are nearly a dozen, living, impartial, credible eye-witnesses, who all depose to the same fact, agree in their testimony, and have no apparent motive in lending themselves to any deception. There are many miracles performed by saints occupying a distinguished place in our calendar, which have been received by our Holy Church upon much slighter evidence."

"Had the whole convent come forward as eye-witnesses, it would not have increased the credibility of the story, and would only have aggravated the scandal."

"Why, my son, you are as sceptical as the English heretic who wrote a book to prove, that

the man who saw a miracle, ought rather to believe that his senses were deceived, than that the laws of nature had varied from their ordinary course."

"A moment's reflection will convince your Eminence of the infinite detriment, which such occurrences as the present, are likely to inflict upon the Church. The story, which this senseless friar has just told, bears upon its face every mark of imposture. But were it otherwise,—were the evidence of its truth so strong, as to produce upon our minds the awful conviction that one of the immortal band of Heaven had really manifested himself to us, humble dwellers on the earth, the interest of our Church would require us to bury the event in profound silence. The present age has produced Voltaire, Helvetius, and a whole crowd of minor infidels—it is indeed a stiff-necked and unbelieving generation. Proclaim a miracle to our modern race

of philosophers and free-thinkers, and though one arose from the dead to attest it, they would give it no credence. They would only use it as an instrument to cast discredit upon those miraculous occurrences, which were received by the piety of former ages, as your Eminence observes, upon much slighter testimony."

"You remind me," said the Cardinal, who, while he was quite convinced of the sound policy of his secretary's views, took a puerile pleasure in keeping up his teasing opposition, "you remind me of one of the French kings, who conceiving certain miraculous cures worked at a particular tomb to be productive of scandal to the Church, shut it up, and forbad the performance of farther miracles. Did not some profane wit write over the gates—

"Defendu par le roi au Dieu
De faire miracle en ce lieu"?

The secretary resolved to adopt another mode of managing the Cardinal.

“As the likeness,” said he, “which the nuns fancied the fictitious apparition bore to the altarpiece in their chapel, seems to me one of the strongest points of the imposture, the sooner this unlucky picture is got rid of, the quicker the whole affair will be forgotten. Your Eminence could not act a kinder part to the sisters, than by proposing to purchase the painting at the price you have already named. I will pledge myself to induce them to accept the offer.

The Cardinal seized the bait.

“True, very true,” said he, “I commend your policy, and the picture will now be doubly interesting from the legend connected with it.”

“But your Eminence will observe,” said the secretary with a significant smile, “that every

trace of superstition respecting the picture, must first be eradicated from the minds of the sisters ; or you might as well ask them to part with the convent."

" True—true," replied the Cardinal ; " my son, I never for a moment doubted either your zeal, or your ability to serve the true interests of the Church ; any little objections I may have made, were thrown out rather for the purpose of unfolding your reasons, and developing your plans, than with a view of offering them any serious opposition."

It was finally arranged between the Cardinal and his secretary, that the latter should set off instantly for the convent of St. John, which was situated a few miles from Rome, with full powers to examine into the miracle, to detect and punish the authors of the imposture, and above all to effect the purchase of the picture.

CHAPTER II.

THE APPARITION HUNT.

ARRIVED at the convent, the Abbate Maroncelli immediately commenced a vigorous investigation of all the circumstances connected with the singular imposture which had been played on the sisters of St. John. His first care was to examine the picture which the apparition was declared so minutely to resemble.

The freshness and brilliancy of the colours proved that it had been recently painted; otherwise, from the skill with which the artist had

imitated the style of Raphael, it might have been mistaken for a genuine production of that great master. Indeed, had the tone of the colouring been properly lowered, and the whole picture been judiciously smoked and dirtied, it would no doubt have been joyfully purchased at the price of thousands, by some wealthy idolater of the old masters. Perhaps some such idea had suggested itself to the Cardinal, and accounted for his eagerness to obtain the work.

Both figure and face were graceful and beautiful in the extreme; but unsuited in the Abbate's opinion to the character they were intended to represent. He thought the expression savoured more of mortal voluptuousness than of celestial love. "Fitter for a Ganymede than a St. John," muttered Maroncelli, as he contemplated the picture, and resolved that no time should be lost in transferring it to the Cardinal's gallery. Having thus made himself

intimately acquainted with the features delineated in the painting, he repaired to the adjoining monastery, and accurately scrutinized the visage of each individual monk; but not the smallest glimpse of resemblance could he discover. He returned to the nunnery, and examined the face of every nun, but without any better success. He enquired whether any repairs had been lately executed on any part of the monastery, and whether, if for that, or any similar purpose, workmen or strangers of any description had been lately admitted?

To all these, and many other questions of the same nature, a positive distinct negative was returned. The Abbate ran about the monastery, from place to place, like a staunch hound, when he cannot get upon the scent; but all in vain. No trap door, or secret passage, could he detect. Not an outlet or aperture could he find, on which he could reasonably hang a sus-

picion. Finally he examined an old man, who occasionally officiated as gardener. He was retained in the service of the convent, partly out of charity, partly out of regard to his skill as a florist. He was long since past his labour ; but his horticultural knowledge was considerable, and he served to direct and regulate the vigorous but unscientific diggings and rakings of the lay-sisters.

The Abbáte questioned him with regard to his knowledge of the singular transaction which had lately distracted the convent. But he evidently knew nothing but what he had learnt from the sisters, who worked under his superintendence in the garden. The Abbáte then asked him whether he had lately had any visitors at his cottage, and above all, whether he had, on any pretext whatsoever, admitted any person to the garden of the convent.

The old man answered both questions with simplicity, and in the negative.

Maroncelli thought he remarked a considerable degree of nervous agitation about the old man, as he responded to the latter queries; but shrewd and suspicious as he was, he could not deny to himself, that the old man's agitation more probably arose from the timidity of old age, than from the confusion of conscious guilt. The supposition that the hoary decrepid old man had himself enacted any part in the imposture, was of course preposterous. Neither had he intended to suppress any circumstances which he believed of consequence; but tired and frightened at the number of questions put to him, he had answered some in the negative to stop farther enquiry. For instance, he never stated, that for the last three weeks he had entertained his nephew, a youth of about eigh-

teen, who had been apprenticed to an engraver at Florence. The lad, who, by the by, had disappeared two days previous to the Abbate's arrival, suddenly entered his cottage one day, and after relating that the cruelty of his master at Florence had forced him to abscond from his apprenticeship, he begged his uncle for food and shelter, until he could find some employment.

His old relative consented. His cottage was isolated; no visitor ever came near it. The old man suffered from loneliness; besides, the services of the youth might be useful to him. In fact, he had, on one or two occasions, when indisposed himself, and when he knew all the sisters were engaged at their devotions, sent Giuseppe, dressed in his own attire, into the garden to finish some work, which required more strength than he could exert in his languid state. But then he had very strong reasons for

believing that his nephew was not in any manner concerned in the affair under discussion. There was nothing prophetic or supernatural about the lad's appearance; nor did he, to his knowledge, resemble St. John. Besides, he did not feel assured, that he himself might not be censurable for sheltering a runaway apprentice.

He saw that any piece of information afforded, produced a host of fatiguing consecutive queries, while complete ignorance on any point terminated the investigation: and, with the cautious and cunning selfishness of old age, he determined not to answer questions which he felt certain would produce no profit to himself, and which he could not persuade himself were of any importance to those who put them.

A simple negative will often baffle the most acute cross-examination. Let the advocate touch but the slightest clue; let him grasp but

the smallest thread of the tangled matter, and he will quickly unravel the most intricate knot. But a flat denial of all knowledge of the affair, cuts away the ground on which the examinant must place his instruments of investigation. State to an arithmetician three terms of a proposition, and he will tell you the fourth. Show a naturalist a single bone, and from it he will infer the structure, habits, and history of the animal from which it is taken. Allow the mathematician his postulata, and he will push his deductions to the verge of infinity; but where all the points of a problem are unknown, *Oedipus* himself could not discover the solution.

Baffled, but not disheartened, the Abbate renewed his efforts. He requested to be shown the exact spot in the garden where the apparition had disappeared. A small cluster of low bushes, quite incapable of concealing a man, was pointed out. The Abbate was about to

tu:n away, when he was struck with the dead and withered state of the leaves of the centre bush. This circumstance, slight as it was, immediately arrested his attention. He plunged into the middle of the shrubs, and soon discovered that the withered bush was not fixed in the earth, but that a large circular hole, of about four feet deep, had been dug beneath it, while the loose bush, together with a little furze, and other rubbish, had evidently been placed over the mouth of the hole for the purposes of concealment. The Abbáte pointed out the circumstance, with bitter derision, to the nuns, who were covered with confusion.

The suspicions of the Abbáte as to the imposture were now made evident. But there still remained circumstances which could not be satisfactorily explained. An outrage of the most daring and profane cast, which would subject the offender, if discovered, to severe

punishment, had been committed, without any imaginable motive, except levity of disposition, and recklessness of consequences. Above all, the perfect and exact likeness, which the nuns, one and all, declared to exist between the apparition and the picture in the chapel, exceedingly puzzled the Abbate. That an ideal portrait should happen to resemble any living personage was an extraordinary coincidence, but that this particular individual should chance to come to the immediate vicinity of the picture,—that he, and nobody else, should become acquainted with the similarity,—and that he should then avail himself of the circumstance for the purpose of playing such an useless, profane, and dangerous prank,—constituted a series of contingencies which was utterly incredible.

The Abbate now turned his attention to his patron's niece, and elicited from the nuns, with

his usual ability, the minutest details respecting her disposition, habits, and conduct.

When the Cardinal placed his niece as a pupil at the Convent of St. John, an establishment noted for the severity of its discipline, everybody wondered at his choice. The fat and lean kine in Pharaoh's dream were not more different than the Abbess and the Prelate : for, to do the latter justice, he was not one of those persons who, luxurious themselves, preach mortification and abstinence to the rest of the world. On the contrary, after enjoyment in his own person of a feast, his next greatest pleasure was to witness its enjoyment by others. But when it was discovered that the convent contained among its inmates some nuns who were great proficient in the musical art, the world began to comprehend his motive, though they still continued to be surprised at his choice.

For it was anticipated, that the ascetic edu-

cation of the convent would create a character very distasteful to the Cardinal. Nevertheless, the gloom and austerity of Erminia's preceptresses did not produce the expected effects on her young mind. In vain an old nun, with a peaked and purple nose, and a mouth whose corners were drawn down into the sourest of all possible angles, talked to her by the hour together of disease and death, of the certainty of dissolution to age, of its possibility to youth. How make a girl, whose pulses were throbbing with the electric blood of fifteen, comprehend the nature of death? In vain did her lugubrious instructress describe the world as a den of misery, governed, or rather desolated, by a sex whom she likened to ravenous lions, prowling about, and seeking whom they might devour. Erminia only felt the more contented with her present retreat. In vain did the Abbess, under the name of the flesh-pots of

Egypt, proscribe all the ordinary comforts of life. In vain did she stigmatize the most innocent games and recreations, as profane and scandalous diversions. Erminia needed not either. With such perfection of youthful health was she endowed, that mere existence was a luxury. A simple breath of the fresh fragrant air of morning, afforded her a sentiment of enjoyment, which a Sybarite might well have envied. She sighed not for the pleasures of a world she had never known, or heard of only to abhor. She pined not for amusement; in fact she had plenty. It was a sufficient excitement to her unworn susceptible mind, to tend the flowers in the garden—to watch the progress of their growth and beauty, and to lament their decay. Then there were the pictures in the chapel—there was the Virgin Mary and her child, and, above all, the picture of the youthful St. John.

Before the latter picture had arrived at the convent, she had been very fond of contemplating the Holy Mother and Child; but now the picture of St. John absorbed all her devotion. She could never sufficiently admire the youthful saint,—the speaking eloquence of those soft dark eyes, that seemed to say a thousand things, and say them all for her!—The ineffable tenderness of that beautiful half smile, which just curved his lips,—the exquisite symmetry of those sweet limbs, which seemed indeed formed after God's own image.

No sun-worshipper ever watched his rising divinity with half the quiet adoration and intense contentment with which Erminia for hours contemplated her favourite saint. In vain did the Abbess banish, as she thought, every trace of pleasure from her dominion. Every moment, not spent in prayer and sleep, was to Erminia spent in amusement, and even the performance

of her religious exercises gave her the delightful sense of satisfied duty. Was she not happy—supremely happy? Yet the convent walls, that held the contented Erminia, were not in truth so beautiful or so romantic as the “horrid and unrelenting shrines” which surrounded the wretched Eloisa. Alas! when will men learn that happiness must be found in their own minds? When the pleasures they already possess cease to delight their diseased spirits, they never suspect that the fault is within—in their own blunted susceptibilities, but strive, with frantic eagerness, to increase their external means of enjoyment; forgetful that the heart, soured by disappointment, and scarred with ancient wounds, carries with it, through every change of scene, its own gloomy atmosphere; and, though transported to the brightest bower in paradise, would still find all blank and barren.

But a change had come over Erminia since the affair of the apparition. She became melancholy, absent, and moping. She no longer contemplated her favourite picture with her usual adoration. Nay, some of the nuns declared, that she could not even behold it without shuddering ; and one went so far as to aver, that she had actually found the young lady stretched on the cold flags before the mysterious picture, in a trance or fainting fit. None of these circumstances,—not the smallest or most insignificant, were lost upon the Abbate. Without mentioning his own suspicions or conjectures to the sisters, he immediately subjected Erminia to a series of searching and long protracted examinations ;—with what result will be seen in the following pages.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECRETARY'S REPORT.

THE Cardinal was sitting alone in his library not poring over the works of the Fathers, but conning over the score of a new opera; while ever and anon he hummed a bar, and then refreshed his vocal pipe from a decanter of choice wine, which stood on a small table beside him.

A valet announced the return of his secretary. The Cardinal intimated that he should like to see him as soon as possible.

Without waiting either to take refreshment, or even to divest his apparel of the traces of the journey he had just finished, Maroncelli made his appearance.

“Welcome, Maroncelli; have you got the picture?”

“I have, your Eminence.”

“Thrice welcome! my incomparable secretary, you are an universal genius, as skilful in executing a negotiation as wise in devising the plan;—as cunning in judging a picture as learned in composing a sermon.” (The wine and music had elevated his Eminence’s spirits.) “But at what price were you forced to purchase the gem.”

“I gave a hundred crowns,” said the secretary, who did not seem inspired with his patron’s spirits.

“A hundred crowns!—what, let it go for a hundred crowns!—the pious excellent old addle-

heads ! I suppose a square yard of painted canvas was to them a square yard of painted canvas under all circumstances, no matter whether done by Raphael, or the village sign-painter. Good lack ! good lack ! I wonder whether they can tell a rose from an onion ? And where, my son, would you advise me to hang this admirable production ?”

“ In the centre of the hottest fire in your palace,” emphatically replied the secretary.

“ Maroncelli !” said the Cardinal, looking aghast, “ do I hear you aright ? No man loves a jest—that is, a seasonable jest on a proper subject—better than myself ; but I do not like to hear a serious matter treated with levity. My taste in pictures has never yet been questioned by the greatest geniuses in Rome.”

“ Heaven is witness, that I am in no humour for levity,” said the secretary gravely ; “ your

Eminence must prepare yourself for a great blow."

The Cardinal clasped his hands together. "I foreboded how it would be; you have defaced the picture!"

"The picture is the same as when it left the painter's easel——"

"Thank God!"

"My communication relates to your Eminence's niece, the Lady Erminia."

"What of her?—has she got the small-pox?—has her voice broke? What has happened?—speak out man."

The secretary made no answer.

"Speak out," cried the Cardinal starting from his easy chair; "tell me the worst—is she dead?"

"Would to God she were," answered the Abbate looking upwards; "better that she had

died in her sinless innocence, than that she had lived to fall a prey to the demon of seduction."

"You rave, Maroncelli; my niece is in the centre of the strictest convent in Italy, surrounded by high walls, and by a circle of nuns, more impregnable than any fortress. What harm should reach her?"

"It is natural for your Eminence to hold this language; but alas! there is no spot of ground in this bad world, however fenced in and guarded, which the villainy of mankind, aided by the malice of Satan, will not penetrate."

"You speak riddles," said the Cardinal, pacing up and down the room with agitated steps; "tell me in plain language what has befallen my niece?"

"I have satisfied myself," replied the secretary, "that the pretended apparition was—I will not call him the Signora Erminia's lover—but a vile daring impostor, who availing himself

of her unsuspecting purity, and the ineffable folly of her guardians, has contrived to bereave the unhappy lady of her happiness and innocence."

"These treacherous stupid old women shall answer for it," cried the Cardinal passionately; "I would not educate her in my own palace, though worse could not have happened there.—No—for years I have deprived myself of the society of that sweet child, who brought to me my departed sister's image, young and beautiful even as I knew her in my boyish days; I sacrificed all this, and placed her in yonder accursed convent, that she might be better and happier than myself, or than I could make her. And now what is the result?—but these veiled Jezebels shall answer for it; I will have them all buried alive!"

"Your Eminence will pardon me," calmly remarked the secretary, "but I do not think

you could convict the abbess or her nuns of any participation in the offence. I believe at this moment they are wholly unconscious of the mischief which has occurred. The Signora Erminia seems the only person who could, according to ecclesiastical law, be sentenced to that awful death."

The Cardinal wanted an object on which to vent his passion, and he found it in this remark of his secretary. He suddenly stopped short in his walk, and began with affected composure.—

"Maroncelli, you know that I entered the Church not from inclination, but because my family had the power to make me a cardinal; whatever may be my disposition, my sense of honour to my order will always prevent me from either disgracing or betraying it. I say, it must be no slight pressure that drives me to do either of these things; but rather," continued he, stamping furiously, "than sanction the cold-

blooded atrocity to which you dare allude—rather than allow one hair of that girl's head to be scathed, I would tear off my cardinal's robes in the middle of St. Peter's, and hurl the rags in the Pope's face. I was born a man before I was made a cardinal !

The secretary listened to his excited patron with a cold marble-like indifference. He was a man of many talents, and numberless ideas ; but he had only two animating motives—ambition for himself, and the class to which he belonged. Far from being affected by the trait of tenderness which circumstances had thus developed in a character otherwise so sensual and selfish,—he looked upon it with infinite contempt, as an explosion of maudlin tenderness. “ Your Eminence,” said he, “ misunderstands me, I only stated the law ; I never for a moment contemplated its application to any party in this unfortunate affair. Even were I

destitute of pity for the Signora's extreme youth and heedless unsuspecting innocence—were I devoid of sympathy for my benefactor's family, I should dread the scandal which would result to the Church, from the adoption of such a course; I deprecate all punishment inflicted on ecclesiastics, or their protégées. It is far more important to mankind, that the reputation of the Holy Church should be preserved pure and spotless, than that every offence committed by its ministers should be adequately chastised."

"Pooh ! pooh !" cried the Cardinal, "I wish my niece's reputation were assafe as the church's."

"Both may be saved by following the plan I shall mark out. Send the Lady Erminia to your distant estate at Perugia."

The Cardinal nodded approbation.

"Permit me," resumed the secretary, "to remind your Eminence, that near this same estate, there is a benefice within your gift which

has been sometime vacant; your Eminence has more than once half promised it to me. I could take possession, while I superintend the interests of the Lady Erminia."

The Cardinal smiled, in spite of his vexation, as he replied : " The opportunity you choose is irresistible ; your request is granted. But to return to our first subject, why do you recommend its destruction ?"

" By some most mysterious coincidence, this fatal picture is really and truly the exact portrait of the impostor, who hath sinned so grievously against your Eminence. The Lady Erminia cannot see it without going into fits."

" But shall we not thereby destroy all clue to the rascal's detection ?"

" And what would that avail us ?" said the wily secretary ; " I want no discovery — no detection :—I wish to bury the whole affair in the most impenetrable secrecy."

“ You are right, my son,” said the Cardinal, with a reluctant sigh, “ I will order the picture to be burnt, after I have looked at it once more. Alas ! how one misfortune entails another !”

From this period our story contains no farther records of the Cardinal.

From an obscure history of the time we can gather, that, four or five years after the events narrated in the foregoing pages, the Cardinal was appointed ambassador from the Pope to his most Christian Majesty, Louis the Sixteenth, who had just ascended the French throne : and, in this capacity, he appears, during his residence at Paris, to have concluded a match extremely advantageous to his niece, and a treaty of commerce remarkably disadvantageous to his country.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LOVER'S TASK.

Who has not heard of the *petit soupers* of Paris ?
Who has not longed to be present in some of
those brilliant saloons, where the costliest inven-
tions and most refined luxuries, that modern art
can create for lavish wealth, formed but the
smallest portion of the scene's attraction ? Where
wit and beauty, genius and rank, philosophy and
opulence, combined their various splendours into
one bright galaxy, beneath whose lustre fashion
seemed to lose her frivolity ; and pleasure, freed

from the incumbrance of folly, displayed fascinations, that might almost have justified the doctrines of Epicurus. This is no exaggerated description of the Assembly which was held at the Hotel de Mirbot. The party consisted of a score of the highest noblesse of France, together with some of the most celebrated literary men of the day. Condorcet, Diderot, Grimm, and Marmontel, were present; and the rest of the company apparently inspired by these distinguished guests, displayed a degree of wit and information that seemed almost incompatible with the indolence and frivolity in which their lives had been passed. Yet, though the conversation was such as the most fastidious of intellectual epicures might have reckoned a feast, it seemed to have no attractions for two of the more patrician guests, who sat somewhat apart from the rest of the company, heedless of the brilliant sallies, ingenious reasonings, and lively

anecdotes, which circulated round the table. Their inattention was the more remarkable, as they did not seem to find much excitement in their own society. One of them, a very lovely woman of four and thirty, sat listening with an ennuyée air to the courtly, but vapid compliments, her assiduous cavalier incessantly addressed to her. "I cannot divine what could have induced you, Count,—you, who are the politest man, in the politest city of the world," said the lady, with a smile, ironical indeed, but so beautiful, that it seemed to captivate her admirer's fancy, even more than it wounded his *amour propre*, "to offer your homage to one, who, as my good-natured friend, Madame Verneuil, observes, values herself on her rudeness; talks of her violations of etiquette as so many titles to your esteem, and challenges for her defects a respect and consideration, which others do not presume to claim for their accomplishments."

“ I assure you, Marchioness,” returned the Count D'Ostalis, in some confusion, “ Madame Verneuil never mentions your name, but as your other friends do, with love and admiration ; that is, at least not to me. Had she so sinned against truth and good taste, I am afraid I should have lost that reputation for good breeding of which you speak.”

“ I did not charge you with having listened to the satire,—and remember, Count, he proves his guilt who defends himself before he is accused ; but let that pass”—continued she, scornfully tossing her head, “ and give a categorical answer to my question.”

“ Ah ! Madame,” exclaimed the Count, “ assuming a sentimental air, and throwing himself into an elaborately graceful attitude—“ can I assign any other than that which all Paris has celebrated ? But how shall I describe what painters and poets—”

“ Stop !” said the Marchioness, “ if you utter a word about the irresistible influence of my charms, or call yourself beauty’s slave, or address me with any of your Corydon phrases—if, to use your own words, you do so sin against truth and good taste : I shall probably behave much more uncourteously than you did to Madame Verneuil.”

“ Did ! Madame !” repeated the Count with an expostulatory sigh.

“ No more of that,” said she imperiously, “ for I think—yes—I am almost—nay, quite sure I have come to a resolution to renounce your friendship.”

“ Gracious heavens !” exclaimed the Count, with a start which displayed much more elegance than passion, “ what can have induced such a barbarous determination ? Do you doubt the sincerity of my devotion ?”

“ Oh not at all ! or what is the same thing, I

do not consider it worth while to ascertain its nature ; I only doubt your ability to amuse me."

" I admit my personal unworthiness to hold that charming office," said the Count, with an air of consummate conceit ; " nevertheless, I hoped, that my profound admiration, and fervent desire to please, might atone for my deficiencies ; even as the offering at the shrine receives value rather from the intention of the donor, than its own intrinsic richness."

" I doubt, whether those who profit by the shrine would allow your doctrine to be orthodox."

" Ay ! but it is not the priest, but the saint, to whom I address my orisons ; besides, Madame, to continue my metaphor, if indeed it be one when applied to you, the sternest divinities deign to indicate the means by which their favour may be acquired. Would it not then

become the Marchioness de Montolieu to reveal the mode by which she may be propitiated ?”

“ Well, then,” replied the lady laughing, “ lest you should inflict on me a third edition of that insufferable simile, I will apprise you in one word what constitutes my greatest delight—novelty. I am tired of everything and every person that now surrounds me.” (The Count of course interposed a parenthetical sigh.) “ I want new ideas, new sensations, new characters, new pleasures ; and if you wish to please me, you must gratify this desire.”

“ Alas ! Madame, how can I hope to amuse one whom the present company has failed to entertain ?”

The Marchioness’s eye wandered round the table as she replied. “ Against Diderot I will say nothing, he talks even better than he writes ; but then he has offended me : as to Marmontel, he is a cold, insipid, prating pedant : Grimm’s great

abilities will not make me pardon his greater coxcombry; Condorcet's reasonings are so close, so exact, so admirable, that they make my head ache; and as for the rest, they are neither wiser nor wittier than ourselves, Count."

"This admirable criticism, Madame, instructs me, delights me, but it also terrifies me. Yet it is but what I might have expected from one who was the correspondent of Voltaire, and whose genius compelled even the republican Franklin to adopt the language of a courtier."

"Miserable man ! do you hope to recommend yourself by reminding me of my misfortunes?—Yes—Voltaire is dead—he had consented to assist at a *soirée* to which I had invited all Paris; but three days before the glorious evening arrived, the patriarch had ceased to exist, save in his immortal works. Europe lost her mightiest genius, and my party its chief orna-

ment. Dreadful ! And Franklin too !—that charming old man ! he has also left France ; oh, what wisdom ! what wit ! Never shall I forget, Count, the pithy reply he made to you at Madame D'Olcys's."

" I do not recollect it, Madame," replied Count D'Ostalis, with more pique than he had yet betrayed.

" Oh ! then, I will recal it to your memory," said the Marchioness, with a malicious smile ; " you will remember, my dear Count, that you addressed to him one of those graceful flowery unmeaning speeches with which you so often favour me, and you concluded by observing, ' what a sublime drama America was acting in the sight of all Europe.' The admirable Franklin drily replied, ' True, but the spectators pay nothing.' Ha ! ha ! Positively, Count, you must find or invent something or somebody, which is

capable of filling the vacuum which the loss of these two great geniuses has left in my imagination."

"I frankly confess the task exceeds my powers," replied the Count.

"No matter; I have pronounced the irrevocable fiat, and it must be obeyed."

"Trembling at my own audacity," said the Count, tapping his snuffbox; "I venture to ask if the assumption of such absolute sovereignty is quite consistent in the admirer of the republican Franklin?"

The Marchioness laughed in some confusion, but soon replied. "There is no liberty, no equality, no justice, in the relations of the two sexes. We are either tyrants or slaves, tormentors or victims, deceivers or dupes. In this delightful conjugation, I choose to be the verb active: you admit I have the power."

The Count slapped the left side of his satin waistcoat, and exclaimed : “ Ay ! Madam, you have indeed a right divine over this susceptible bosom.”

“ Then I will use it,” said the Marchioness, imperiously clenching her small white hand, as though in the act of grasping a sceptre ; “ and I shall regard any—the slightest, the most humble expostulation, as an insufferable infringement on my indefeasible privilege. We shall meet this day week at Madame de Breteuil’s ; shall we not, Count ?”

“ We shall, Madame, unless I expire under your despotic rigour in the interval.”

“ Good,” replied the Marchioness, “ now hear me—if, by that time, you have not performed the command I imposed on you, I solemnly promise to forswear your acquaintance, and vow an eternal enmity. No reply. And

now let us listen or appear to listen to the discourse which Marmontel is delivering, or he will write another volume of 'Moral Tales' on purpose to lampoon us."

"Marchioness," said the Count, with the true flourish of a Frenchman, "what you command is impossible; nevertheless you shall be obeyed."

CHAPTER V.

SEARCH AFTER NOVELTY.

NOTWITHSTANDING the piece of rhodomontade with which Count D'Ostalis ornamented his promise ; in reality he entertained very little doubt of his ability to perform it. His own imagination he conceived to be fertile ; and even if that failed, he felt certain that an inexhaustible supply of novelty might without difficulty be discovered in the city of Paris. On arriving at his hotel, he sat down, and endeavoured to devise some new amusement, some unheard-of

pastime, which might catch the imagination of the volatile Marchioness. Nothing could be easier; but he was astonished to find that his efforts were not crowned with success. He turned over in his mind various whimsical plans for fêtes champêtres, soirées, and masques. Some of them, he thought, might even please his fastidious mistress; but to all of them existed the fatal objection that they were not new. He could not imaginé a single device or conception, which had not been put into execution by other people. Every path had been already traversed. Go where he would, think what he would, mankind had been beforehand with him. He slapped his forehead, muttered an execration at his inexplicable dulness, and retired to bed, at last, in the expectation that sleep would restore the usual liveliness of his faculties.

The next day he renewed his exertions, but to as little purpose as on the preceding evening.

He began to lose confidence in his own originality; and to regard invention as a more difficult process than he had hitherto imagined.

As he turned over a book, from which he had been vainly striving to glean a suggestion, or plagiarize an idea, his attention was arrested by the remark, that necessity is the mother of invention. Self-love grasped at the excuse as eagerly as a drowning man catches at straws. "Behold a great truth," exclaimed he, with delight; "this explains the mystery; this accounts for my dulness; if necessity alone can produce invention, no wonder that a rental of ninety thousand livres should render a man's creative powers somewhat languid. Truly, I have not experienced much of that plebeian evil, necessity. I took the trouble to be born; and rank, riches, and pleasure, have ever since rewarded the exertion. Aha! I see my course. I must betake myself to some

poor devil, who lives by his wits; and a few louis will no doubt prove a more efficient inspiration to him, than the smiles of my beautiful Marchioness have been to me."

He applied to men of taste and virtù, to connoisseurs, actors, and projectors. Their promises inspired him with the liveliest admiration, but their performances made him ready to send them to the Bastile. They were even more hackneyed and common-place than his own; and the Count perceived that poverty had not even the solitary advantage which he erroneously attributed to it. "I see how it is," quoth he, "there is no terra-incognita in the world of pleasure. Perhaps, however, men have been less ardent in the pursuit of truth. I will address myself to philosophers, and men of science, and try if they cannot furnish me with novelty. The Marchioness affects to pre-

fer utility to amusement, and will be ashamed to disapprove of my taste."

With these views, he repaired to some eminent scientific men with whom he was acquainted, and intimated his willingness to contribute a large sum to the advancement of philosophy, if they would privately communicate to him any discovery which they might have in petto, before it was made known to the public. They inquired the motive of his request,—and receiving the Count's promise, that he would not reveal their communications to more than one person, for whose secrecy he would be answerable, they readily laid before him some important discoveries, which had been lately made in different departments of science.

With some difficulty the Count was made to understand their nature, and was extremely mortified to perceive, in what a very small addition to the amount of truth already known

the present discoveries consisted. He asked if they were not acquainted with some new art or invention, which would produce an immediate practical effect on society, and excite the curiosity and interest of the uninitiated ?

One of the philosophers, who seemed to guess his feelings, observed : “ The discoveries which are now submitted to your notice, and of which you seem to think so little, will, nevertheless, be sufficient to immortalize my friend Lavoisier. As for those inventions, which form epochs in the history of the world, and change the whole face of society, know that they are seldom, if ever, the produce of a single individual. Their first germs are often the result of chance—often spring up in some inferior mind, who knows not their value. The idea is seized, and improved on by some stronger intellect. In this manner it is transplanted, from mind to mind, until it gradually

ripens into some wondrous art, that opens a new world to man. Such was probably the origin of printing, gun-powder, and the mariner's compass. Such an origin, at least, is the only mode by which we can account for the inexplicable mystery that envelopes their authors."

"Prodigiously learned !" thought the Count, suppressing a yawn ; "but mighty unsatisfactory, to a person who has only two days left to hit upon a novelty."

With compliments on his lip, smiles on his brow, and disappointment in his heart, the Count bowed himself out of the learned circle, and ordered his coachman to drive to Diderot.

To this celebrated genius the Count related his adventures, and concluded by requesting his assistance.

"Monsieur le Comte," exclaimed Diderot, laughing, "I will explain the whole affair,

The Marchioness de Montolieu, having pre-determined to break with you, has imposed on you a task, which she knows cannot be performed. With me she has already proclaimed irreconcilable hostility, under a less colourable pretext."

"And yet, Monsieur Diderot, I have heard you extolled for your originality."

"True, some people have been so complaisant, or so witless, as to praise me on those grounds; but, for myself, I disclaim all pretensions so ridiculous. There is nothing new under the sun. All that the greatest genius could do—all that Voltaire did—was to recombine and arrange the ideas of those who have preceded him, and to adapt them to the wants and feelings of the age. All novelty is but oblivion."

The Count was once more thrown on his own

resources, and once more commenced his researches. A calculating boy gave him hopes for a moment ; but he recollected that his imperious mistress hated arithmetic. An infant musical genius at another time excited his attention ; but then he called to mind that similar prodigies had been presented to the Marchioness, and that she had detected the last to be a dwarf of three times his pretended age. The Count was in despair—not at the prospect of disappointing the Marchioness, or incurring her anger—but at the idea of confessing his inability to satisfy her requisition.

“ This is worse than a basilisk hunt,”* muttered the baffled Count. “ What sort of monster would this lovely savage wish me to procure ? Does she wish me to find a patriot minister—a virtuous opera dancer—a modest

* See Voltaire’s pretty tale of *Zadig*.

author—an honest farmer-general—or a reasonable beauty? Bah! I am getting as cynical as herself. A new amusement, forsooth!—Morbleu! if I had blurted out the truth, after her own uncivilized fashion, I should have told her that she had exhausted the pleasures of folly, and was incapable of tasting the delights of wisdom. What excuse shall I make? Let me consider. Madame la Marquise, all novelty is but oblivion—the difficulty of furnishing this desideratum, will be in exact proportion to the acquirements of the individual to whom it is presented. If, then, I have been unable to supply the Marchioness de Montolieu, I can at least aver, in my defence, that I have only failed where it was impossible to succeed.—Good—I think that must touch her. Yet I know not—she is such a tigress—so ferocious—and yet so beautiful.”

CHAPTER VII.

CONSOLATION AND COUNSEL.

WEARIED with the fatigue he had undergone, vexed at his failure in the frivolous project he had undertaken, the Count began to think of abandoning the attempt, and providing himself with consolation. He had a thousand friends, who would either have moralized, or rallied him on the subject; but he had not the least wish to hear them.

What he wanted was a patient listener, who could allow him to expatiate on his misfortunes.

This was what the Count d'Ostalis understood by consolation. Among all his acquaintance, he knew but one such person ; and he, it will very readily be believed, was not a Frenchman.

Reginald Cleveland was an Englishman of good fortune, and high family, who had for some years permanently resided in Paris. The singularity of his disposition, or rather the extreme contrast which it presented to the prevailing characters of the nation amongst whom he was situated, had obtained for him a sort of notoriety ; and his company was much sought, in the highest circles of the French capital. Young, (at least his age did not appear to exceed thirty), rich, handsome, talented, he seemed formed to enjoy, more keenly than another, the delights of the gay city, in which he had placed

himself; yet he moved through each scene of pleasure, as if only to exhibit his indifference.

Possessed of great conversational powers, he let slip the fairest and most legitimate opportunities of display; and it was not until pointedly appealed to, that he betrayed his extraordinary natural eloquence, and extensive range of information. Was this timidity? The idea seemed incompatible with the air of perfect self-possession which characterized his manner. Was it excess of pride, that made him disdain the applause of a petty coterie? It could hardly be, for he listened with patience and affability to the prosiest talkers of Paris. He was the idol of all the bores; and it was insinuated that, to the support of this influential party, he owed his success in society. With many of the professed geniuses of the day, he was not quite

so popular. They admitted his general capacity, and even allowed him the possession of some wit, but doubted his taste. They averred that he had no true relish for intellectual society. They did not deny that he ostensibly paid his due quota of admiration; but they doubted whether his veneration was sincere. At least, he appeared languid and unexcited in their company; nay, one of the exacting wits hinted, with some indignation, his suspicion, that he had detected Cleveland exerting himself not to be bored with some of the most brilliant society in Paris. Be this as it might, Cleveland's manners were studiously polite. If an utter indifference to his companions' applause was at times unpleasantly obvious, he seemed determined to give no tangible cause for offence. The same apathy of manner pervaded even his demeanour to the fair sex. Though endowed

with mental and personal attractions, which, if skilfully played off, would, in the dissipated circles of France, have produced conquests without number, as rapid as that which dictated Cæsar's celebrated boast, of simultaneously arriving, beholding, and conquering, Cleveland seemed unconscious of his powers. When, indeed, some enterprising dames made such attacks, as left him no alternative but to fight or fly, he met their advances with a graceful and unembarrassed gallantry. But amid his most pointed attentions, and choicest compliments, there lurked an air of self-possession, so different from the eagerness of passion, that the most superficial observer must have seen, that the occupation was to him what leading a forlorn-hope is to a soldier, a matter of honour rather than of inclination. Throughout Paris he had obtained the soubriquet of the "English

Poco-curante;" and in truth the term was not ill applied; for his want of interest and excitement in the brilliant scenes by which he was surrounded, could only be accounted for by supposing, that he secretly entertained that distaste of the world, and every thing in it, which the noble Venetian so roundly expressed to Candide and the Manichean philosopher.

To the apartments of the person whose character we have been attempting to delineate did Count D'Ostalis hie, and luckily found their occupant at home.

"Pity me, my dear Cleveland," cried the Count, throwing himself into a fauteuil, with every mark of vexation and weariness, "Stoic as you are, extend your pity to the most unfortunate of men: I am plunged into the lowest gulf of despair."

"Excuse me, my dear Count," calmly replied

the Englishman, with a placid smile ; “ but I have seen you in that condition at least fifty times ; and five minutes afterwards, I beheld you floating like a feather on the surface of an ocean of frivolity. With your leave, I will on the present occasion wait that period, and then pity you.”

“ Ah ! how I envy your languid indifference ; doubtless, it is the effect of the sea-coal fires, amid whose fumes you have passed your youth : but you have not heard my misadventures.”

“ Nay, I will anticipate them,—the fickle La Gabrielle has deserted you before she has quite completed your ruin.”

“ No,” said the Count, very gravely, “ that is not the present cause of my vexation ; La Gabrielle has indeed basely deserted me, but that event took place a month ago.”

“ Consequently, you have emerged from the gulf of despair, into which doubtless you sunk

on that distressing occasion, just twenty-seven days, twenty-three hours, and fifty-five minutes ago."

"A truce to your mocking, and hear my griefs."

Cleveland bowed, and composed himself into an attitude of attention.

"You know the Marchioness de Montolieu?"

Cleveland gave a negative nod.

"Well, it is not necessary you should, to understand my story. She is the most lovely tigress in all France. My too susceptible heart, and so forth—you comprehend?"

"Perfectly," replied Cleveland.

"Good!—my inexorable goddess has imposed on me a task, to which the labours of Hercules were mere jokes—bagatelles, I assure you."

"Indeed!"

"She has enjoined me to discover some

novelty ; to purvey something, at once new and amusing, for her entertainment.” And the Count forthwith related, not without many digressions, all the efforts he had made, and all the adventures he had encountered, in the pursuit of this unattainable phantom novelty. “ And now,” said he to Cleveland, “ what do you say to the idea ?”

“ Thus much,” answered Cleveland, “ that I have spent my whole life in the same pursuit which has occupied your last few hours,—and I find each succeeding day, and every thing that it brings with it, more weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable, than its predecessor. At last, grown wiser by disappointment, I have desisted ; and now, I suffer myself to be borne along on the current of life, without making the smallest effort to alter my predestined course ; well assured, that whatever persons cross my pathway—whe-

ther simple or sage—whatever events befall my passage, be they miscalled good or bad, all will alike leave my mind in the same dull state of indifference in which they found it.”

The Count, who during the latter part of this speech had been gazing on the lid of his snuff-box, now took a pinch, and exclaimed—“ Do not moralize, my dear friend, but tell me what course I had better take. She has forbidden me her presence until I have performed her behest.”

“ You might as well try to pluck a star from the firmament as essay success.”

“ I begin to think so myself: yet when I undertook the task, it seemed to me as easy as getting into debt. But advise; what would be your own conduct under such circumstances?”

“ I should cut the knot by leaving her task unperformed, and evade the sentence of banish-

ment by disobeying her prohibition; but you would be very unwise to act in this manner."

"Why so?"

"Why should you not avail yourself of one of the happiest of natural gifts—the invaluable faculty of being excited by trifles. No, Count, you doubtless sup at the Duke de Fronsac's to-night?"

"Yes; but what of that?"

"You will there meet a large portion of the highest nobility of France. 'In a multitude of councillors there is safety,' said the royal sage. Without mentioning the Marchioness's name, propose your difficulty to the aristocratic conclave—the question is worthy of their solution."

"Thanks, my dear Cleveland," said the Count, squeezing his friend's hand with sincere gratitude, "a thousand thanks! I will certainly avail myself of your suggestion. Adieu for the

present, we shall meet this evening. Adieu, my dear friend, adieu !”

The Count, who in telling his story had attained his object in calling, now took his leave. He was not a natural born idiot ; on the contrary, he came into the world with a fair average portion of ability. But, for many years, he had accustomed himself with unwearied assiduity to consider trifles in the light of serious events, and serious events in the light of trifles ; until at last he had effectually confounded them, as Don Quixote did the castles and windmills.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DELICATE WAGER.

THE Duke de Fronsac belonged to a class of characters unfortunately too numerous among the higher ranks of the French nation before the Revolution. Debarred by the despotic nature of their government from political occupations, and corrupted by the example of the court, many of the nobles gave themselves wholly up to libertinism. The duke seemed to consider himself born for no other purpose than to see how many women he could induce to transgress the

laws of society, and then abandon to shame and ruin. Seduction was not only the amusement, but the business of his life.

The Duke de Fronsac had now arrived at a period of existence, when age brings shame if not wisdom,—and the libertine becomes not only odious, but ridiculous. Yet time, while it wrinkled his cheek and benumbed his limbs, wrought no change in his habits and inclinations. Advancing years still found him engaged in his disgraceful pursuits. In vain had age stripped his person of all pretensions to please; art was summoned to repair the loss. The poor remains which fifty-six years of dissipation had left of a once handsome face and figure, were decorated with an anxiety, which would have made even a court beauty smile. The details of the toilette were multiplied and elaborated, until they almost assumed the dignity and im-

portance of a science : but when ingenuity had done her utmost, and the Duke felt, that despite the exertions of a whole army of artists, the hand of time was too deep to be effaced—that personal attractions had vanished for ever ; he desisted not a jot from his usual objects, he only varied his means. The resources of an immense property were unhesitatingly lavished on his unworthy pursuits ; and what he could no longer beguile from vanity or passion, he unblushingly purchased from distress and venality.

The Duke de Fronsac was in the habit of devoting the last Sunday evening in every month to a réunion of his male acquaintance. It was understood among all who had the honour of knowing the Duke, that they might on that evening, without any special invitation, repair to the Hôtel de Fronsac, where they would be sure to meet with an exquisite supper,

seasoned with a vast deal of colloquial intercourse, carried on in a style that was considerably more amusing than edifying. The tone of the conversation was not, perhaps, more essentially immoral than that which prevailed in the saloons, where the other sex were present, but it was much plainer. No doubt the power of dispensing with the modern periphrases, with which they were elsewhere forced to varnish keen and wicked sayings, constituted one of the principal attractions of the evening, in the eyes of the wits and rakes of Paris.

To a company convened under such auspices, did Count D'Ostalis propose the difficulties under which he laboured; and scorning that fastidious reserve which some men might have affected, he related without hesitation the peculiar circumstances by which he was first induced to commence the pursuit, and the penalty

to which he was exposed, in case of failure. He then threw out some intelligibly obscure insinuations, as to the reward he expected to receive, should his efforts be crowned with success. What little encouragement he had received to justify such language, the reader is well aware. In spite, however, of the reiterated attempts and solicitations of the party, the Count refused to divulge the name of his task-mistress; a piece of delicacy which was truly commendable, inasmuch as her own husband happened to be one of the audience. It is a physiological fact, known to the most ordinary observers, though unexplained by theologians and philosophers, that after men have imbibed a moderate portion of some alcoholic liquor, there is a prodigious inclination to banter upon any subject which bears the remotest allusion to the other sex. It may be conceived that the Count's tale, and

the serio-comic tone of despair in which it was narrated, was not calculated to lessen those propensities. An absolute tempest of witty sayings began to fall on the story-teller's head. Every species of extravagant and ironical remark was tendered amid unextinguishable shouts of laughter. Every one broke their joke on the new Hercules, and the metaphysical Omphale. The professed wits seemed to have an inexhaustible subject; and even the dullest, after some pre-meditation and preparation, discharged their single shafts at the general butt. The Count bore the pelting of the pitiless storm with great courage, or rather he enjoyed the hilarity and excitement of the moment (although he was its object), as much as any of the party. He defended himself too with much ingenuity, and returned some pungent answers to the numberless bon mots that were launched against him;

for, as we have before said, the Count was one of those who play the fool from choice, and not from necessity.

At last the shower began to abate. "Gentlemen," said the Chevalier de Crespigny, wiping his eyes, "if after so many brilliant sayings, it is permissible to utter what is simply useful, I would recommend our unfortunate novelty-hunter to apply to Count Cagliostro, who I understand has lately reappeared in Paris."

"What and who is this Count Cagliostro?" enquired Cleveland. "Every body talks about him, yet nobody will give me any clear, definite information respecting him."

"Morbleu," interrupted the Duke de Fronsac, "that complaint might be made to people's conversation on other subjects besides Cagliostro; but if you want him described, I refer you to Beaumarchais, who has had, if I mistake

not, one of his innumerable quarrels with Count Cagliostro. So, no doubt, he will discuss the topic with much truth and liveliness. Eh! Beaumarchais," continued he, arresting the attention of the celebrated author of 'Figaro,' "Cagliostro, who has not been heard of since the affair of the necklace,* has, according to the Chevalier de Crespigny's report, reappeared in Paris. Monsieur Cleveland wished to know who and what he is."

"It is a difficult task," said Beaumarchais, eagerly seizing the opportunity of calumniating an old opponent, "to describe a rogue with so many disguises. He is, Monsieur Cleveland, the prince of charlatans—the very Cæsar of jugglers. He is a wonderful alchymist, who has found out the art of transmuting folly into gold, and credulity into bank notes. For the trifling

* See note at the end of the third volume.

sum of a thousand louis-d'or, he sold an elixir of immortality to my friend the Marquis de Mirepoix, who died last year. He wheedled an old usurer into lending him two thousand livres. This sum his Countship received in hard cash, and by a magic process, converted it into double the amount in bills of exchange, which he gratefully presented to the old miser; but lo! when they became due, if they did not, like the money of the magician in the 'Arabian Nights,' actually turn into withered leaves, they proved of quite as little value. Add to these traits, that the Count has the remarkable faculty of being invisible whenever the police are in pursuit of him; and you will have some idea of the supernatural gifts of the far-famed Cagliostro."

"Bravo!" cried the Duke, "for a good sharp stinging libel, I would back Beaumarchais against any man in France."

“ Ay,” replied the Chevalier, “ but though the gentlemen of the long robe say that truth is sometimes a libel ; nobody will pretend that a libel is always truth. I will, therefore, take upon myself to aver, in spite of some traits which savour of charlatanism, and give a fair handle to Beaumarchais’ satire, Cagliostro is, or rather was (for I know nothing of his late exploits) a most extraordinary personage. His scientific knowledge was great.”

“ Yes,” said Beaumarchais, “ if picking pockets be a science.”

“ But his acquaintance with events,” persisted De Crespigny, “ which he could not by any possible means have witnessed or heard related, was astonishing. I have heard some of the most sceptical of my friends confess their belief that he possessed to a certain extent the powers of divination.”

“Assuredly then,” retorted Beaumarchais, “if your friends were sceptics in anything, it was not from want of credulity. The power of divination to a certain extent ! Shade of Voltaire ! is it come to this, that one, who was once admitted to the honour of thy friendship and correspondence, can now avow his belief of a certain extent of divination ? If, indeed, the necessity of believing nonsense be such a pressing want in the human breast, that as soon as one prejudice be expelled, another must be speedily absorbed, I would devoutly believe in the celestial pigeon, that brought to Clovis the sacred oil, wherewith our most Christian kings have ever since been anointed. If it were the law of my existence, Chevalier, that my reason must prostrate itself before a certain number of superstitions, I would at least select errors rendered respectable by antiquity, and consecrated

by custom;—not the flimsy impositions of a modern charlatan, who is still alive to mock you.”

“ Yet the man,” answered the Chevalier, “ who scoffs at superstition, will sometimes blindly swallow every prejudice that hatred can suggest. Alas ! poor human nature ! But you might have spared your eloquent apostrophe and tirade, since I never expressed my own belief in the supernatural powers of Cagliostro, but merely that of my friends.”

“ You mentioned the assertion without reproaching its absurdity,” observed Beaumarchais.

“ We are not *all* of us, my good Beaumarchais, unable to report a friend’s opinion without a sarcasm,” retorted De Crespigny. “ But this much I will avow on my own behalf, that Cagliostro’s means of obtaining secret information respecting parties who consulted him, was al-

most as wonderful as an actual power of divination would have been."

"Was not this same Cagliostro," asked Count D'Ostalis, "remarkable for his success with women of rank?"

"To such an extent," said De Crespigny, "that the opera girls thought it necessary to intrigue with him to keep up their reputation for fashion. Your ex-mistress La Gabrielle was, I believe, one of his most enthusiastic admirers."

"Humph!" said Count D'Ostalis, not looking particularly pleased. At this moment the Marquis de Montolieu whispered something to him. His face immediately brightened, and he exclaimed, "reserve your taunts for our noble host, for he was the last swain she deserted."

"What!" cried Beaumarchais; "La Gabrielle must be getting insane! Has she voluntarily left the wealthiest man in France, and, I might

add, the most generous," continued he in a low tone, "where merit and distress are not applicants."

"Yes," said the Duke, vainly endeavouring to disguise the air of vexation which he felt overspreading his face; "the awful catastrophe to which you allude has taken place. Luckily, the fact has happened twenty times before; therefore I bear it with equanimity, and believe it the most fortunate calamity that ever happened to me. Condole with me, if you like; but it is a misfortune that can give no pleasure even to my best friends."

The Marquis de Montolieu smiled, and took snuff with a triumphant air.

"Well, Marquis," continued the Duke, "you seem in a hurry to boast of your new acquisition. I only wish that you may not repent your success with equal celerity. I, who have

escaped from the fair demon, can pity those who are about to be subjected to her spell."

"You, who have escaped from the fair demon !" repeated the Marquis. "You mean, my dear Duke, that she has escaped from you. But never mind ! Many thanks for your hopes, and your pity, which are both, no doubt, equally sincere ; though I do not need either, to enable me to bear the misfortune of having the finest woman in France under my protection."

"I can safely aver," replied the Duke, "that the most satisfactory moment of my acquaintance with La Gabrielle, was that in which I bade her adieu."

"The fox in the fable said something to the same purpose," cried Montolieu, "but the world has never believed him."

"Hear me, Messieurs !" exclaimed the Duke, rising with much excitement from his seat.

"I will propose a toast. To the most perfect beauty in France, who, secluded from the world, in the loveliest spot which the province of Champagne contains, exists only for love, and the fortunate Duke de Fronsac!"

A shout of laughter followed this announcement.

"I can easily conceive," said the Chevalier de Crespigny, "that the Duke has found a new beauty in Champagne."

"Yes," observed one, "that sparkling wine suggests such visions."

"Drink six more glasses, my dear Duke," cried another, "and you will see two."

"Joke as much as you please, gentlemen," replied the Duke; "I have said nothing but the sober truth."

Another shout of laughter.

"Can I," said the Marquis de Montolieu,

appealing to the party, most of whom had, by this time drank enough to enjoy the indelicate dispute: "Can I, either as a philosopher or as a knight, yield the supremacy of my dulcinea's beauty, without some better proof than a loose assertion, hastily uttered over the wine-table?"

"No—no—certainly not," was repeated from all sides.

"I will bet you a thousand louis," cried the Duke, passionately, "that my unknown beauty is a thousand times more lovely than La Gabrielle."

"Done!" exclaimed the Marquis.

The party were in extasy at the bet; and some of the most inebriated hinted, that both ladies ought to be immediately produced to the assembled company, who should, after ocular inspection, decide on the question of superiority.

“No !” said the Marquis de Montolieu, who was the proudest aristocrat in France. “Decision by the vote of the majority savours of republicanism ; and France always has been, and always will be, a monarchy. I will refer the matter to the arbitration of a single umpire. Nay, I will be magnanimous enough to select a discarded lover for the judge. I propose the Count d’Ostalis.”

“I shall be most happy,” cried the Count, with enthusiasm, “to accept the delicate office.”

“Much obliged to you,” answered the Duke ; “but I distrust the Count’s known predilections ; besides I frankly confess, I deem him too susceptible a gentleman to enact the part of Paris. My Helen would not be safe ; for, after having been umpire, he might perchance aspire to be something more. I propose, as arbitra-

tor, the English poco-curante, Monsieur Cleveland."

Half a dozen voices eagerly ratified the propriety of the choice.

"Yes," said two or three; "Cleveland for ever, as a safe judge! Fastidious and indifferent: all taste, and no passion! Yes! yes! it is a settled thing."

"Pardon me, gentlemen," observed Cleveland; "the thing is not quite settled. The consent of one humble individual, insignificant indeed in himself, but apparently not altogether unimportant in the present arrangement, has not yet been asked; and, I am sorry to add, can never be given. Gentlemen, I will freely confess, that I entertain a great distaste to the nature of the bet which has just been made; and I am sure that, by to-morrow morning, you will all sympathize with my repugnance. Under

these circumstances, you will not be surprised that I should peremptorily decline the office which has just been conferred upon me."

Cleveland's refusal, however, availed him but little. The majority of the company had now become violently excited on the subject. Its decision appeared to their wine-affected imaginations, the most desirable, the most important, and the most necessary event in the universe.

Unabashed by the dry and peremptory manner in which Cleveland had couched his refusal, the party surrounded him,—flattered,—coaxed,—besought,—wearied him with prayers and entreaties.

He found himself placed in a position, of all others the most disagreeable to a naturally polite and good-natured man : that is, opposing his own taste and inclination to the wishes of a whole company. His obstinacy was not equal

to their pertinacity. He yielded, (as thousands have done before in similar circumstances) against his own better sense, to the desires of the majority. The volition of one man can never withstand the accumulated will of an unanimous multitude.

“Have you ever seen *La Gabrielle*?” inquired Montolieu, with eager triumph, of the over-persuaded Cleveland.

“Yes, frequently.”

“Where? How?” demanded Montolieu.

“I paid for the sight—but not quite so dearly as our friends, the Count D’Ostalis and the Duke de Fronsac, have done. I saw her on the stage, from the front seat of the orchestra; and I must own, indifferent as you think me, I have been frequently tempted to renew the spectacle.”

“Ha! you admire her, then?”

"I think her the most perfect model of physical beauty I have ever seen, alive or dead,—in stone, on canvas, or in flesh." ?

"You hear him, Duke," exclaimed Montolieu; "you hear your own umpire. In the excess of my magnanimity, I will let you off the bet for nine hundred louis."

"You had better reserve your magnanimity for your coming defeat," replied the Duke. "I hear indeed what my umpire says; and I, in his position, (that is to say, not having seen the beauty whom I pitted against La Gabrielle) would be content to echo his opinion."

"And when shall the bet be decided?" asked two or three of the party.

"Between this evening," answered the Duke, "and the next monthly revel, I will give the umpire the power of forming a comparative estimate of the two beauties. Monsieur Cleve-

land then, by this day month, will be prepared to make his award."

Cleveland reluctantly gave his assent, and the party broke up.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAGLIOSTRO.

THE Count, unlike the rest of the company, had not taken much interest in the progress of the bet, nor did he anticipate with much excitement its ultimate decision. His thoughts were occupied with the suggestions the Chevalier de Crespigny had let fall. He had taken a private opportunity to request the Chevalier to inform him of Cagliostro's address, and that gentleman had been good enough to consent. At the period of Cagliostro's former appearance in

Paris, he remembered the Marchioness to have expressed much curiosity respecting that singular personage, and to have regretted that she had not taken an opportunity of witnessing his feats of skill. Early on the morning which followed the Duke de Fronsac's revel, he commenced his enterprize.

Cagliostro lodged in the Rue St. Honoré : it was the first floor over a gunsmith's shop. Count D'Ostalis mounted the staircase with a feeling of disappointment at the common-place appearance of the premises. He knocked at the door ; it was opened by a lacquey, in a genteel, but ordinary livery. He requested to know whether the Count Cagliostro was at home. The lacquey asked for his card, and saying he would see, left Count D'Orsalis, to his infinite indignation, standing alone on the staircase. He soon returned with the gracious announcement,

that his master would be happy to see Count D'Ostalis. The latter followed his conductor, and was ushered into a comfortable, though plainly furnished room. He looked round with great disappointment. The apartment was not hung with Egyptian or even oriental tapestry, as he had expected. There were no stuffed crocodiles, or lizards, or flying fishes ; no black circles ornamented with the signs of the Zodiac, nor even a parchment scroll inscribed with magic characters. There were none, in short, of the ordinary paraphernalia of a modern conjuror. A few portable bookcases looked as if they had been introduced by the present occupant. Two tables also, in the corner of the room, were covered with chemical apparatus, electrical machines, and other philosophical instruments.

A door opened opposite to that by which Count D'Ostalis had entered, and a tall remark-

ably handsome man, of about forty years of age, made his appearance. His figure was athletic, and unimpaired by the obesity of middle age. His strong jet-black curling locks of hair, mingling with plentiful whiskers of the same colour, gave an air of almost supernatural lustre to his wild, dark, restless eyes. His brow was broad, prominent, and open,—though not high or elevated : his other features were symmetrical, and constantly changing their expression, though most commonly softened with a smile. His dress consisted of the apparel then fashionable among the higher ranks, and was remarkably rich and magnificent.

“After all,” thought Count D’Ostalis, “though he looks more like one of ourselves than a magician, the Marchioness would only have laughed at a conjuror with a false beard and a silver wand.”

The Count D'Ostalis spoke first. "Have I the honour," said he, "to be in the presence of the celebrated Count Cagliostro?"

Cagliostro bowed assent, and motioned his visitor to be seated, at the same time setting him the example.

"Monsieur," exclaimed D'Ostalis, "I have a request to prefer, which, considering the formality of my present visit, may appear strange and ridiculous."

He had been so thoroughly quizzed at the Duke's, that he began to be half ashamed of his mission.

"Make your request, Count D'Ostalis," answered Cagliostro, in a lofty and yet melodious voice; "there is nothing strange or ridiculous to me. I have burrowed to the hearts of the eternal pyramids, and there found dried ashes and preserved snakes; I have penetrated to the

centre of the most brilliant courts in Europe, and reptiles were there also. In the loveliest Oasis of sandy Arabia, I found a golden, glorious fruit, the same as that which tempted our first parents: I cut the glowing, blushing rind, and found a grub at the core. I have dissected the Grand Master of the Maltese Knights, and found worms there too. Make your request then, Monsieur,—make it without hesitation: there is nothing strange or ridiculous to me.”

“ Good,” thought the Count, “ this will do—this charlatanry is of the mind—this will please the Marchioness.” He resumed aloud: “ I am connected with a beautiful lady, not by the ties of the Church, but by certain silken links, which Monsieur Cagliostro, as a man of the world, knows are a deuced deal stronger than the matrimonial fetters. Well! she is the most ennuyée woman in all Paris; which is strange

enough, considering whom she has for a lover, and she has enjoined me, under sentence of eternal banishment from her sweet presence, to purvey her some novelty. I frankly confess my exertions in pursuit of that object have entirely failed. Despairing of all other means, I seek the aid of Monsieur le Comte Cagliostro."

"You have done well," returned Cagliostro.

"Is there such a thing as novelty in the world?" asked Count D'Ostalis.

"There is, and there is not," answered Cagliostro. "If you ask me, is there novelty as an absolute entity? I reply, no;—but if you say, is there novelty as a relative existence—I answer, yes! All matter is eternal, and incapable of annihilation. Every atom which is to-day, must have been yesterday, and will necessarily be to all eternity. Nay more, every imaginable combination of matter, every conceivable arrange-

ment of thought, must have had its prototype and predecessor in the infinite series of by-gone ages. The very ideas now passing through your mind; the very words I am now using, have perhaps agitated the brain, and moved the tongue, of some former beings, in a remote star, a thousand billions of years before the first and oldest of the pre-adamite worlds emerged from chaos. Absolute novelty then is an impossibility—a contradiction in terms—a solecism—a chimera—a word without a corresponding existence in the universe of things—”

“Spare me, my dear Sir,” cried Count D’Ostalis, rubbing his forehead in an agonized manner; “you have taken away my breath, I will be content with relative novelty—the absolute makes my head ache. Half of what I have heard would infallibly drive the Marchioness mad.”

“Relative novelty is the sentiment of surprise with which one contemplates objects for the first time. Nothing is new to me, who have felt all, seen all, and considered all : but many things are doubtless new to a Parisian lady, who has most probably felt very little, and not thought at all.”

“Parbleu !” cried the Count, “such language will be a novelty with a vengeance to a beauty sated with the choicest flattery in Paris.”

“Do not alarm yourself, Monsieur,” replied Cagliostro, “I should as soon think of feeding a linnet on beefsteaks and port wine, as offering truth to a woman. But you have not yet communicated her name and degree.”

“The Marchioness de Montolieu—an Italian by birth.”

“Good !—I am well acquainted with the lady.”

“Humph !” said the Count, rather dryly. “Pray, Monsieur, will you give me a cursory idea of the mode in which you intend to astonish the Marchioness, for that, I believe, was your definition of relative novelty. To what point, may I ask, have your studies been lately directed ?”

“Studies !” exclaimed Cagliostro. “But I pardon the insult. This is the first time you have seen Cagliostro. Henceforth, Count D'Ostalis, know that the imbecile laborious disciples of the inductive philosophy, who consume their life in poring over isolated facts, and then timidly venture, towards the termination of their career, to publish a few partial uncertain inferences, may indeed be said to study !—I scorn the word, as much as I scorn the system of which it is the basis. I, long ago, even in the period of my burning youth, discovered these awful and mysterious prin-

ciples of abstract truth, upon which all wisdom must be founded—from which all knowledge must be derived. And having once mounted to this sphere of pure and perfect intellectual light—having once touched this dazzling and sublime point, where the thousand different paths of thought meet and converge—where the many-coloured, and apparently dissimilar, rays of poetry, mathematics, logic, and physics, blend into one simple and effulgent whole,—I can with ease descend by the *à priori* mode of reasoning, upon any particular point of knowledge I may wish to attain.”

“ Parbleu !” cried the Count ; “ that would be an excellent school for us nobles, who wish to know every thing without learning any thing. The Marchioness will very likely attend a course of lectures. By the by, in what character shall I represent you to her ?”

“ As a true philosopher.”

“Bah !” cried the Count D'Ostalis. “Nothing can be more insipid, more hackneyed, more worn out, than the term philosopher. Not a journalist in Paris, who scribbles for his daily bread, but terms himself a philosopher. Yet, setting aside pretenders, we are overrun even with real geniuses :—I am sick of your D'Alemberts, Leibnitzs, and Newtons.”

“Ay,” returned Cagliostro ; “but I differ from the vulgar herd of geniuses in this respect. Their object in seeking truth was to enlighten their follow-creatures. The absurdity of their end soon extended itself to the means they used. Their success was limited and circumscribed. Their souls were clogged in their flight towards the empyrean of truth, by the weight of the brutal and earthly minds they endeavoured to carry with them. Now, my object in seeking truth (or rather in contem-

plating it, for search is unnecessary with me), is to elevate and glorify my inner-self, while I, in my esoteric practice, endeavour to mystify and degrade mankind."

"Humph!" answered the Count D'Ostalis. "A suspicion of the real fact has once or twice crossed my mind during the conversation I have had the honour of holding with you: but I care not. Mystify the Marchioness—that is, astonish her with something new, and I am content."

"Let the Marchioness," said Cagliostro, "repair, at any time to-morrow, either alone or attended, to this my humble domicile, and your will—mark me, I say your will—not the Marchioness's—shall be accomplished. Will that suffice you?"

"It will," answered D'Ostalis, briskly. "Violently as I am in love, I am rational enough to prefer my own gratification to that of my adored."

“ But I am not so satisfied,” said Cagliostro.
“ There is one little preliminary condition, which must be immediately performed by you.”

“ What is that ?”

“ The payment of fifty louis.”

“ Humph ! It will be time enough,” observed Count D’Ostalis, very gravely, “ to ask for the gratuity when the service is performed.”

“ Not at all so—I shall then demand a repetition of the compliment.”

“ Monsieur Cagliostro,” returned the Count, sarcastically, “ seems not to confine his partiality for the *à priori* system to matters of abstract speculation. He wishes to apply it to money affairs, where he no doubt expects to find it productive of the same rapid profit that it brought in philosophy. Now, in this case, I own I prefer the Baconian mode of operation—that is, first perform your experiment, then draw the results, —or, in other words, the hard cash.”

“These are vain words, Monsieur le Comte. My demands must be implicitly complied with.”

The Count hesitated.

“You distrust me?”

The Count shrugged his shoulders.

“Hear me—your distrust shows a certain knowledge of human nature; but it betrays an ignorance of those great principles of action that are the hinges, if I may so express myself, upon which the world must turn. You think me a scoundrel—I think you a man of fashion—so our moral estimate of each other is pretty much the same. But were we the worst of felons, we must still trust one another, if we would act in concert.”

“There is some truth in your reasoning,” replied Count D’Ostalis, somewhat ruefully; “but I always notice, in these matters, that the man who receives the money, moralizes much more calmly than the one who pays.”

“The remark is indicative of an observant mind,” said Cagliostro, with an air of candour ; at the same time extending his dexter hand in the true professional style—the elbow closely nestled in the side—the palm gently hollowed into an elegant little cavity, for the reception of the money—the fingers vibrating with amorous eagerness to clutch the much-loved metal.

Count D'Ostalis slowly paid the amount. The digits of the great master of *à priori* reasoning hermetically closed over the sum ; while a gracious and intelligent smile mantled over his countenance. The Attorney-General himself could not have received his “quiddam honorarium” with a better grace.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHARLATAN PUT TO THE TEST.

COUNT D'OSTALIS met his capricious task-mistress on the appointed evening with an exulting heart. The sentiment of triumph is the most exquisite of all terrestrial feelings—no matter how wide or how narrow the sphere of action—no matter how rich or how vile the prize—the boards of a theatre or the floor of the senate—a game at cards or a speculation for millions—a harlot or an angel—a scuffle in the street or an empire-deciding battle—success

is still success—the nectar of life ; and a few drops of this immortal liquor, poured into our cup, enables us to endure its bitterness,—wins us, in spite of reason, to live on, and consoles us for the long, long years, of wasted labour and ulcerating disappointment.

Yes, it was with a sensation of triumph that Count D'Ostalis sought the Marchioness ; for he too had succeeded in his own immeasurably small way : when great was his astonishment and indignation to find that she had forgotten, or affected to have forgotten, the whole affair. So full, however, was his mind of the singular character with whom he had lately come in contact, that in spite of his anger he could not forbear chattering about Cagliostro.

“ He is the most overpowering talker I ever met with. Your friend, or rather enemy, Diderot, is nothing to him. Start any topic you

please, then change the conversation to the antipodes of the former subject; on each or both, he will burst upon you like a snow storm—wrap you in a whirlwind of ingenious nonsense—lift you far above the regions of comprehensibility—then dash you down to earth with some bitter sarcasm. If his deeds are only in the fiftieth degree commensurate with his words, you will be most furiously amused, my dear Marchioness."

Madame de Montolieu listened to the Count with surprise. She had never heard him speak with such vigour and energy before. The Count, who was imitative as a monkey, had in fact imbibed some portion of Cagliostro's style. The Marchioness's curiosity was roused, not so much by what he actually said, as by what he appeared to feel. She knew that light and frivolous minds are not easily susceptible of any

deep impression ; and she felt curious to see the being who had so strongly excited the Count's enthusiasm. She began to hesitate, and we all know in what manner the woman who once hesitates between a sense of propriety and her own inclination, always ultimately decides.

“ Well, Count,” said the Marchioness, “ but supposing I were even inclined to attend to the mysterious and philosophic appointment you have thought fit to make for me, (which I most certainly shall not) how am I to effect my purpose ? I cannot go there without a female companion, and to take one, is to betray my folly to all Paris.”

“ True, Madame ; and even supposing that you could find such a phoenix—such an eighth wonder of the world—such an impossible paragon as a woman who could keep the secret of a female friend, it might not be. You must go

there alone, or attended only by me,—so wills the inflexible Cagliostro.” This, as the reader will recollect, was not strictly true; but the Count saw she was yielding, and determined to press his advantage.

“ Alone, or with you,” said the Marchioness musingly. “ The company of a savage is preferable to utter solitude—at least so said Robinson Crusoe, who must have understood the matter after twenty-eight years study. Yes, Count, you shall accompany me.”

“ Highly flattered.”

“ You will at least protect me from every one but yourself.”

“ Ah ! Madame,” responded the Count, bowing, sighing, and smirking all at once.

“ Stop, Count; this will not do. Curiosity is my *only* weakness—at present. I am going to meet this strange juggler you speak off—not

you. Do you understand me, Count ? May I trust you ?”

“ By all that’s sacred !”

“ What is sacred to a Frenchman of the eighteenth century ?” replied the Marchioness thoughtfully. “ Do not your nation hold that in love and war every stratagem is allowable.”

“ No, Madame,” retorted the Count ; “ that is an Italian proverb.”

“ Well, if the maxim be of Italian origin, it is of European application.”

“ I swear upon the honour of a Frenchman,” cried D’Ostalis with great energy, “ that you may trust me.”

The Marchioness burst into a laugh. “ Ha ! ha ! ha ! I believe that is the most awful adjuration which the vain Gallic race are capable of conceiving. Well, I will trust you, Count—not because you swear, but because, though

a terrible coxcomb, I believe you to be a gentleman."

The Count's eyes glistened with pleasure. The Marchioness looked as if she more than half repented of her promise. "Alas! alas!" said she with slow accents, as if rather soliloquizing than speaking, "I think I must be a lineal descendant of Eve. What a terrible passion is this curiosity—more dangerous even than vanity. How paltry, how contemptible its bait! Yet to a mind sunk in languor and ennui, how irresistible! How I wish I had children to amuse me! Unseduced by the allurements of guilt, I am consenting to wear its appearance—for what?—an hour's pastime—for the spectacle of some new folly, which will not last five minutes; and yet with which I shall most probably be tired before it is finished."

The next evening the Marchioness went

early to the Opera. It had been arranged between her and the Count that she should pretend indisposition; that Count d'Ostalis should feign to escort her to her carriage; and that instead of summoning her equipage, he should call a fiacre, and proceed without delay to Cagliostro.

According to the time she was detained there, the Marchioness would have the option of either returning to the opera, on the plea that her headache had left her, or going home and directing her maître-d'hôtel to scold her coachman for neglecting to attend the imaginary summons. The plan succeeded admirably. The fiacre was procured, the Marchioness, muffled up in a new cloak which she had never worn before, and which it may be conceived she resolved never to wear again, stepped into it with the Count, and soon arrived at Cagliostro's lodgings. The door was opened, and they were

received, not by the lacquey whom Count D'Ostalis had seen on his first visit, but by a young and handsome page, somewhat fantastically attired.

They were ushered into the same room in which Cagliostro had received the Count. The furniture was not changed. The portable bookcases were still standing on one side of the room, while the philosophical instruments occupied the other. A single lamp, suspended from the ceiling, gave a moderate but sufficient light to the apartment.

"There is nothing very alarming in the appearance of the conjurer's premises," cried the Marchioness, seating herself on a sofa.

"Did you observe," said the Count, placing himself by her side, "the page who received us? Did it not strike you that he, or rather she, did not wear the garb of her sex?"

The Marchioness did not answer the question, but she rose up—took a volume from the book-case—placed it on a chair—then said : “ Go to that chair, Count, and quietly read that book, without speaking, until your famous magician deigns to make his appearance. Remember the honour of a Frenchman.”

The Count sighed, but obeyed the order. It may be imagined that he did not peruse the volume with much interest: he, however, had the patience to retain his position for about ten minutes. At the end of this time, he stole a glance at the Marchioness. Her eyes were fixed on her book, but she was smiling.

“ Pardon me, Madame,” said he; “ but I shall die of weariness, if I sit here another five minutes. Will you allow me to examine the instruments on that table?”

“ I think I may permit you that indulgence.”

The Count rose,—refreshed himself with a tremendous yawn,—and then, approaching the table, began to handle and examine the various instruments with which it was strewed. He incautiously laid his hands on an electrical jar, which, either by accident or design, had been left charged, and received a smart shock. He immediately executed a most vigorous caper, that was not at all in keeping with his usual languid movements.

“That rascal Cagliostro! I see how it is. He has bolted with my fifty louis, and left these accursed instruments here to assassinate me!”

The Marchioness had a good deal of scientific knowledge, which she concealed with as much care as the Count did his good sense. “Bah!” cried she, laughing; “it is only an electrical jar. Why do you touch and finger every thing, like a child? But in good truth,

Count, I am tired of stopping any longer ; I have waited for your moral enchanter a quarter of an hour, which is fifteen times as long as I would have waited for a king. So I insist upon it, that you run down stairs, and either find Cagliostro, or our fiacre. I am exceedingly obliged to you for the brilliant entertainment you have afforded me. It is an admirable reward for the risk and peril I have encountered to get here."

The Count bit his lips, and approached the door, for bells there were none. He twisted the handle, he shook it—still it did not open.

"By heavens !" exclaimed he, "it is locked."

The Marchioness did not scream, but she became extremely white.

"Count D'Ostalis, unless you would have me consider you the most worthless and perjured of human beings—open that door."

“On the honour of a Frenchman !” began the Count——

“Stop, Sir, you have given that pledge once too often. Will you deny that you are a party to this infamous trick ?”

“I will swear that I had no hand in its contrivance. That I am a party, together with yourself, to the trick,” added he, ruefully, “as a fellow victim, is as little my choice as it is your’s.”

“Then instantly break open the door,” said the indignant and frightened Marchioness.

“Parbleu ! Madam ; birth may make a man a count, but it does not make a man a locksmith. Besides, I have no tools,” said he, stretching forth a pair of extremely white and useless-looking hands.

“Take anything,” replied the agitated lady.
“For God’s sake make the attempt, or I am

lost." She snatched up a brass rod, that was lying among the philosophic instruments, and thrust it into his hand. There—there—that will do—only try."

Rather to pacify the Marchioness, than from any hope of succeeding, the Count began pecking and tapping at the lock, in a most helpless and ludicrously inefficient manner.

The Marchioness clasped her hands in despair. Suddenly her eye fell upon the other door of the apartment. "Perhaps that is not locked," said she, darting forward. She opened it—advanced a step—uttered one piercing shriek—and, staggering back into the apartment, fell senseless on the floor.

The Count, who had turned round at her cry, rushed forward. The door opened into a long dark passage, at the end of which the Count saw, illuminated by some strong light, a young man of surpassing beauty, habited in an

almost savage apparel of goat-skins. He had scarcely time to snatch a single glance at this appearance, when the door closed to, with tremendous violence; at the same moment, the door which was locked flew open, and Cagliostro entered, with a smiling countenance.

“Good evening, Count D'Ostalis,” said he, in a brisk tone of voice; “the fifty louis, if you please.”

“Monster!” exclaimed the other, who was kneeling beside the insensible Marchioness. “Dare you ask a reward for murder?”

“A sense of duty to my own interests,” quietly replied Cagliostro, “will prevent me from rendering you assistance, until the fifty louis are paid.”

“There, ruffian,” cried the Count, tearing from his pocket a heavy purse, and throwing it at him: “now, help your victim.”

Cagliostro walked with great composure to the table, and, taking up a jug of water and a goblet, approached the Marchioness, and dashed two or three goblets-full over her pale face. He then forced a portion of the pure element down her throat.

The Marchioness at length uttered a deep sigh, and opened her eyes.

“There !” said Cagliostro. “It is nothing ; or, at least, is now over. Farewell, Count ; Madame de Montolieu will never ask you for novelty again. Adieu, Sir ; your fiacre is waiting at the door.”

By this time, Madame de Montolieu was much recovered. The Count began to pour forth a profusion of apologies. Could he have had the slightest suspicion of what would have been the result of this fatal spectacle, he would have died ten thousand deaths, rather than have exposed her to the shock.

He solemnly assured the Marchioness, that he had not the smallest participation in the scene which had just happened.

“Make no apologies,” said the Marchioness, faintly; “It was my own fault. A sudden spasm shot—that is—I mean, a sudden fright shot across me. Take me away—not back to the opera. No—no.—I must go home—I am ill.”

As there was nothing very frightful in the figure which Count D'Ostalis had witnessed, he was disposed to attribute the swoon and subsequent agitation of Madame de Montolieu, rather to some association connected with the appearance, than to the mere spectacle itself. His curiosity was much excited; but when he saw the exhausted state of the Marchioness, and her evident disinclination to afford any explanation, he had sufficient delicacy to forbear

putting any questions on the subject : there was therefore little conversation between them as the fiacre proceeded to the Hôtel de Montolieu. He there explained to the domestics that their mistress had been suddenly taken ill at the opera, a story which her appearance corroborated ; and that her equipage not having arrived, he had been compelled to bring her home in a fiacre.

CHAPTER X.

THE INTERVIEW.

It was evening; Cagliostro sat alone in his chamber, musing on the events of the preceding evening. A lady was announced.

“ Her name?”

“ She declined giving it, Monsieur le Comte,” answered the lacquey, “ but says she is well known to you.”

“ Show her in.”

A female, so muffled and veiled, that neither

face nor figure could be recognized, entered the apartment with unsteady and irresolute steps.

Cagliostro rose, and assisted her to a chair. The stranger accepted the courtesy, and after two or three preparatory efforts to speak, at last said, in an agitated and tremulous voice,

“Is Monsieur le Comte de Cagliostro disposed to assist an unfortunate lady, who throws herself on his generosity?”

“Never yet was such an appeal made to him in vain !”

“For any trouble which I may give,” said she producing a weighty purse, “I shall be most happy to compensate.”

“Make your request first, Marchioness de Montolieu ; it will then be time for him to form his demand.”

“It is in vain to deceive you, Count Cagliostro,” said the lady, removing her veil.

“The tones of that voice,” gravely observed Cagliostro, without any approach to gallantry in his manner—“once heard, would never be forgotten.”

“Count Cagliostro,” resumed the Marchioness, still speaking with effort, “it is not with the idle intention of deriving amusement from your talents that I have to-day ventured hither at a risk.—Oh, God ! my heart grows sick at the thoughts of discovery : but I am haunted by a horrid anxiety—a restless, feverish, burning, uncertainty, to which even my present fears are preferable. I cannot eat—sleep—think—live—unless I am satisfied. Is he—I mean is the person whose effigy you last night exhibited to me still alive ?”

“He is.”

“In what country ?” faintly asked the Marchioness.

“ In France—at Paris.”

“ Oh God ! and his name ?”

“ Is at present Count Cagliostro.”

The Marchioness uttered a subdued cry, and covered her face with both her hands, while the tears forced their way between her slender fingers.

“ Peruse these features ;” said Cagliostro, gravely and even mournfully : “ can you not yet discover in the charlatan some of the lineaments which charmed you in the saint ?”

The Marchioness’s anguish seemed to increase.

“ Be comforted, lady,” said Cagliostro, “ you are not the first by millions, who has mistaken an impostor for a messenger of the Deity.”

“ May we not with justice,” said the weeping Marchioness, “ complain of Providence, when we are permitted by one single act to render our whole lives miserable ?”

“ I leave those questions to theologians, seeing that the justice or injustice of our complaints does not affect the misery of the result. But know, if it is any consolation to you, that of all my misdeeds I repent me of this one alone: believe me there was no premeditation, no deliberate intention to injure. I was apprenticed in my youth to an engraver at Florence; a neighbouring painter, whose powers of execution were greater than his conception, selected me as a model for that fatal picture, which was placed in the cathedral of a neighbouring town. In the frolicsome rashness of youth, I threatened to exhibit myself under the picture on some high festival. My master, and his friend, the painter, were frightened, and took the trouble to repurchase the picture and to send it to Rome, where it went for half its value. They indemnified themselves for their loss and trouble with the

saint, by inflicting a tremendous thrashing on the original, which compliment I have since repaid a thousand fold. Indignant at this treatment, I fled to an old uncle, who was gardener at the convent of St. John ; there, by an extraordinary coincidence, I again found the picture. My mad and mischievous spirit urged me to play a part which I now deeply regret. The rest you know. You see we are all the beings of circumstance : the hero is its creature—the criminal its victim.”

“ If you regret, as you profess to do,” said the Marchioness mournfully, “ the suffering you have occasioned, you will not increase that misery, by revealing events now known, I trust, only to yourself.”

“ Lady, your secret is safe in my hands—safer than it would be in the keeping of many a titled scion of nobility.”

There was something in the tone of Cagliostro's voice that wounded the Marchioness's feelings; for she burst into a fresh torrent of tears, and exclaimed, with an irresistible burst of natural feeling, "Oh, God! that I should live to see my honour in such keeping!"

"Madame de Montolieu, you do me injustice,—you know not what you owe to my forbearance. I love you—nay, start not, nor cover your face with your hands—yes, I love you—have loved you for years: who has so good a right? Yet, tell me, have you ever been insulted by the admiration of Cagliostro? Have you ever been tormented by marks of his attachment? Has he ever intruded himself into your presence? You—not I—sought this interview. I was content to behold you, as the moth watches the star. Yes, amid the splendour of the opera, surrounded, as you were, by

the minions of fashion, there was an eye that still gazed at you from beneath, with quiet, yet intense adoration. Many a night as you stepped unconscious from your gay equipage, there was a heart amid the crowd, though you were never troubled with the knowledge, that would have given worlds for the short pleasure of assisting you to alight : yet the man who felt these passionate emotions, kept them suppressed for years in his heart's core, because their slightest manifestation would have been injurious to your happiness. He does not ask you to return his feelings, but give him at least some credit for delicacy and generosity."

There was a long pause, during which they both gazed on each other with an expression of countenance that would have been difficult to define. A crowd of jarring and indistinct emotions seemed struggling there for predominance. The Marchioness first broke silence.

“ Pardon me, if I have offended you. Though late, I indeed do justice to your generous self-denial; you said well, that we were indeed the beings of circumstance: would we had met under happier auspices.—Monsieur de Cagliostro, in a career like yours, money must be always valuable, and is likely to be sometimes wanting. Oblige me by accepting this trifle.” She produced the purse before alluded to. “ It is needless to say I do not offer it as a bribe. I am well aware that had you been so inclined, you might long since have extorted from me my last livre. I offer it to you frankly and freely, as a proof of my regard.”

“ Never !” said Cagliostro, turning away from the proffered gift. “ Money, I will confess, is not an object of indifference to me; and save that I scorn to wring it from the poor and oppressed, I am not very scrupulous how I obtain it. Yes, before now, I have, perhaps,

invaded property—property forsooth !—what is property but a right created by craft and power to appropriate to themselves the fruits of others' labour. But not from you, Erminia de Montolieu, will I receive a single denier."

The Marchioness was touched in spite of herself. "Accept, then," said she, "a ring, which can have no value but what it derives from the intention of the donor."

Cagliostro took the ring, and respectfully pressed it to his lips.

"Farewell, then, Monsieur de Cagliostro, for ever. It is better for both that we should not meet again."

The Marchioness rose to depart, but she stopped short near the door, and seemed overpowered with agitation.

"Monsieur," said she, her voice almost choaked with emotion, "I have not yet sum-

moned courage enough to put the question that lies nearest my heart, but I could not depart without. The question is one of shame and agony, but though the effort cost me my life, I will utter it. You seem, unknown to myself, to have watched my course through life,—can you reveal to me the fate of the unfortunate being to whom my guilt gave birth?"

"Alas! Madame, I have spent years,—years, which the world deemed were far otherwise employed, in vain attempts to unravel the mystery. The pursuit of this knowledge has been the object and the torment of my existence."

The agitation in the Marchioness's countenance gave way to a look of blank disappointment. "So dies," said she, despairingly, "the last hope that lurked at the bottom of my heart. The vain, wild hope, that prompted me to seek this interview."

“ Do not despair, lady,” said Cagliostro ;
“ believe me, I will never cease my exertions until I have either ascertained her present fate and condition, or till I am satisfied that she has ceased to exist. Success, though late, must come at last to the undaunted and persevering. When that happens, may I hope for the honour of another interview ?”

“ Oh ! yes, yes,” replied Madame de Montolieu hurriedly ; “ ask anything *then*—yes—I will see you then ;—I care not for fame, I care not for danger, could I but once see her, hear the tone of her voice, though but for a single moment, I could afterwards die in peace. But time presses—I must be gone.”

“ Farewell, then, until I shall be able to afford you that pleasure.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE OLD RAKE AND THE YOUNG MISANTHROPE.

It was not long before Cleveland received a polite message from the Duke de Fronsac, requesting to know whether he had leisure enough to undertake a short journey into the country. Cleveland understood the intimation; and though still averse to perform the part which had been so vexatiously thrust upon him, he felt that he could not now, without betraying a ridiculous infirmity of purpose, recede from his engagement. Under this conviction, he

repaired to the Hôtel de Fronsac. The Duke received him with much affability, and apologized with much earnestness for the plebeian nature of the conveyance to which they should be compelled to resort.

Circumstances prevented him from using his ordinary travelling equipage on the present occasion. To perform the journey on horseback was tedious and fatiguing in the extreme, so that there remained no resource but the public diligence. He had, however, endeavoured to secure Monsieur Cleveland as much as possible from contact with the canaille, by engaging the coupé, or fore-part of the vehicle, for their exclusive use.

Cleveland expressed his perfect content at the arrangements which had been made ; but intimated his surprise that the Duke, who thought more of such things, should condescend to dispense with his usual travelling comforts.

“The truth is, my dear Sir, that I drop my dukedom in Champagne, and content myself with the more moderate title of Baron de Voisenon. You must be aware how soon my real name would be divulged, if I travelled with half-a-dozen idle chattering domestics.”

They journeyed in silence for a few miles; at last the Duke began to talk.

“The world would call me very imprudent, Monsieur Cleveland, if they knew where I was conducting you. They would say, that the shepherd, who shows the wolf to the fold, may thank himself if his sheep are stolen.”

“Methinks, you selected a strange animal for your umpire,” returned Cleveland, smiling; “I can only say, that the wolf came hither against his own inclinations; and would even now willingly turn back, if exonerated from his promise.”

“ I merely spoke of the light in which the vulgar would regard the transaction ; for myself—or rather to continue the metaphor—for my lambs, I entertain no apprehensions.”

“ Do you approve, then, of the sentiment of the ancient, who said, ‘ I possess Lais, but Lais does not possess me’ ?”

“ Not at all,” returned the Duke, laughing ; “ but I do not think you are likely to disturb me in the possession of my Lais. Now, don’t look affronted. Shave off your whiskers, and no young man of my acquaintance would better enact the part of Apollo. But know, my young friend, that an Apollo is not so puissant a personage among women as a Venus is among men.”

“ I had always imagined,” said Cleveland, much amused at hearing the old roué discuss so delicate a subject, “ that women set much value on external appearances.”

“ If you mean silks, satins, and other millinery for their sweet frames, you are right. I believe they prize dress more than all things, either in the heavens above, or the earth beneath. But if you allude to masculine beauty, trust me, the dear creatures are far too much engrossed with procuring admiration for their own charms, to have either time or inclination for admiring you. I again apologize for my rudeness, in deprecating an article of which you possess so large a stock.”

“ You do not then regret your departed youth?”

“ Pardon me,” said the Duke, with seriousness; “ I never said that. No, I frankly confess, my dear Monsieur Cleveland, that I envy you—I envy you your compact and vigorous frame, which laughs at fatigue; I envy you the firmness of those youthful nerves, which brave excess with impunity—to which nothing brings

satiety,—in a word, I envy you your superior capacity for enjoyment.”

“And yet you do not think that these qualities are likely to obtain, or, at any rate, insure success.”

“Exactly so,” said the Duke. “Armed with a handful of gold, I would fearlessly enter the lists with one, who rivalled Antinous in form, and De Grammont in manners.”

“Was there not a period,” said Cleveland, “in your life, when you held a different opinion?”

“Never,” said the Duke; “though there was a time when my cheek was as fresh, and my frame as elastic, as your own. Unintoxicated with my youthful blood, I read the sex aright from the beginning. I purchased my first conquest like Philip of Macedon—I found no fort impregnable, where I could introduce a

bagful of gold. By these means my reputation became considerable. It grew so great, that at last my notice brought with it notoriety, and even fame. From that moment my career has been uniformly triumphant."

Cleveland recollected the success which he had constantly heard ascribed to the Duke; and felt, that whatever was the fact, he had at any rate not exaggerated his reputation. The Englishman was silent. The unbidden memories of past events rose to his remembrance, and brought unwelcome confirmation to the Duke's doctrines. His countenance became thoughtful and gloomy.

The Duke saw that the conversation was painful, and pursued it with malicious animation.

"Why," said he, "do we call the personages we read of in romances—who entertain dis-

interested attachments for each other—heroes and heroines? Why—but because we feel that they are something more than men and women. Everywhere, except in novels, marriage is a matter of bargain and sale. In every age, in every country, a pecuniary consideration is the basis on which the transaction is founded. The very laws, in most countries, hold marriage to be a valuable consideration. In uncivilized lands, where the passions speak a plain and direct language, the lover openly buys his spouse for so many skins, or so many bows and arrows. In the politer regions, settlements, dowers, handsome establishments, and position in society, constitute the actuating equivalent. But descend a little lower in the scale of society. Marriage, though the only traffic which is recognized by the sex as legal and honourable, is not the only commerce they practise ; and the principle which animates the contraband dealers

is so obvious—so frankly avowed by themselves—and presses with such singular severity on the other sex, that all disguise is ridiculous. Everywhere man intrigues from the love of pleasure, and woman from the thirst of lucre.”

“Are we then more high-minded than the other sex?” said Cleveland, thoughtfully.

“Not a jot. Man freely sells whatever it is in his power to dispose of—he sells his labour, his talents, his integrity, his limbs, his blood, his life, his liberty; but his passions on certain points are not his own to sell. They are not his slaves, but his masters. They sell him, and insist upon being maintained at any cost.”

“But are women always voluntary agents in these matters? In marriage, are they not the victims of parental avarice? and elsewhere, do they not fall a prey to poverty and destitution, rather than to mercenary dispositions?”

“Such I know is the first and most sacred article in the veracious code of novelists, poets, and romancers. It is true that the bride’s inclinations are never consulted in France; the parents manage the whole affair. And this practice, according to my views, saves the young lady the trouble of selling herself; and, according to your’s, the disgrace. But other countries manage these affairs otherwise. In England, I am told they allow the young beauties to choose for themselves; and what happens there? Monsieur Cleveland, I pray you inform me truly, whether heirs-apparent are a very despised class of beings?”

The features of Cleveland underwent a momentary contraction, as if a sudden spasm of pain had shot across his breast. Quickly, however, recovering himself, he replied, “Whenever I cannot speak of my fair countrywomen with unqualified approbation, I am determined

to be altogether silent. Yet, whatever may be my own private opinion on these matters, I am surprised to hear you, of all men, avow such sentiments."

"Why so?"

"I should have imagined, that such melancholy convictions respecting the sex were inconsistent with the ardour with which you pursue them. If I hold these doctrines, they are in keeping with the apathy that you declare to be my chief characteristic. I carelessly pluck the fruit that lies within my reach; satisfied that the more distant prizes will not reward the trouble of acquisition. But you spend your whole life in a vain chase after what you denounce as worthless. For a man of gallantry like you, to pry so curiously into female motives, is surely acting like the child who cut his drum to discover the secret of the sound."

“ But my toys,” said the Duke, smiling, “ do not charm me the less, because I am acquainted with their interior mechanism. When I listen to protestations of love and gratitude, and drink in with my ears vows of unalterable constancy—what care I whether they be true or false? Their sincerity does not affect the silver sweetness of the sound. Besides, I never intend to put them to the test. When I go to the theatre, do I the less sympathize with the sorrows of Merope, because I know that, when the play is over, Mademoiselle Ninon will compose her features—go home—make an excellent supper—and punctually call at the end of the week for her accustomed salary?—You see the analogy is strong.”

“ I quarrel with no man’s taste,” said Cleveland, gravely; “ but to me it seems clear, that he who has once enjoyed the reality, will never

be content with the fiction. The bacchanal, who has tasted the generous extract of the grape, will not afterwards be satisfied with water coloured to the same hue. The lovers of nature would smile indeed, if you should offer them the canvas mimicries of the painter, as a substitute for the rocks and woods they adore. But it is useless to multiply comparisons."

The Duke, while he affected to contradict Cleveland's opinion, seemed to take a secret delight in confirming and fixing them.

"We agree then in our theories," said he; "but how widely do we differ in our practical inferences. You, though too polite to be a cynic, and too wise to be a reformer, pass through life without relish; because you do not find the world peopled with beings exactly resembling the archetypes of your own poetical imagination. I, on the contrary, have all the

enjoyment of a thorough dupe ; while I escape his disappointments and mortifications, and superadd the pride and the pleasures of philosophic penetration."

The Duke de Fronsac and Cleveland had thus arrived at the same conviction, though by different paths. The bitterness of disappointment had induced these melancholy conclusions in the one, while they were the natural and necessary effects of libertinism in the other. In estimating human nature, all men are chiefly influenced by the manner in which they imagine themselves to have been personally treated by their species : and if a libertine judges by his own experience, he must, at last, unless he be the most contemptible of gulls, arrive at the miserable, deplorable opinions respecting women which the Duke so coolly avowed. But let none but the base and low-minded lose their faith in

the existence of human virtue. Cleveland, as his companion acutely remarked, took no relish in life, because he found nothing there which realized the expectations, or satisfied the demands, of his own pure and generous mind. The Duke, on the other hand, disbelieved in virtue with impunity; for he had degraded and depraved his tastes down to the standard of his opinions; or, perhaps, they were naturally on a level. Far from regretting the corruption which he declared to be universal, he exulted in the thoughts of the influence, which, through the medium of his immense fortune, it placed in his hands. But though the sentiments he expressed were quite sincere, the pleasure which he felt in their utterance was probably not the only motive which induced him to turn the conversation on so delicate a subject. His penetration had long ago made him acquainted with Cleveland's cha-

racter : still, in spite of this artificial coldness of disposition, and in spite of his conviction of the nullity of masculine beauty, he perhaps felt some misgivings as to the consequences which might arise from the introduction of Cleveland to the secluded beauty. It was most likely, therefore, with the view of rousing the latent feelings of dissatisfaction which he knew to exist in Cleveland's mind, and of exciting anew his disgust, at fresh illustrations of the mercenary nature of women, that he had so broadly and offensively declared his opinion of female venality.

In due time they arrived at the conclusion of their journey. Dismounting from their vehicle at a small, but pleasant village, they gave their portmanteaus and other luggage to a peasant, and proceeded to climb the hill, at the foot of which the village was situated. On reaching

the brow, a scene of great beauty burst upon their view. An immense extent of flat, but exceedingly fertile country, lay before them: golden corn fields, emerald and purple vineyards, luxuriant pastures thickly dotted with cattle and woods waving to the summer breeze, kept stretching on in interminable variety,—all gradually growing smaller and smaller, until their exceeding minuteness would have defied the accuracy of the most skilful painter; and yet, from the shortness of the distance, and the surpassing clearness of the atmosphere, each object looking as bright, and as distinct, as if it lay immediately beneath his view. People may talk as they will of mountain scenery, nothing is more beautiful than a level country, if you can but get a single hill from which to take your view. No doubt you may climb higher, and see farther in a

mountainous district ; but the surrounding rocky ranges conceal the intervening vallies, and the surface of ground presented to the eye is not nearly so extensive or so beautiful. Seated on a natural step as it were of the hill, and still commanding a most extensive prospect, stood an old and ivy-covered château.

“ Behold,” said the Duke, “ my *parc aux cerfs*.”*

“ Good God !” thought Cleveland, “ is it in the centre of this terrestrial paradise—this spot

* The *Parc aux cerfs* was a retired chateau, dedicated to the pleasures of Louis XV. Young girls of tender age were purchased, or taken away from their parents, for the express purpose of regal prostitution. They were kept in complete ignorance of the real rank of their lover ; and if unhappily for themselves they penetrated the secret, they were forced into a convent for the rest of their lives. Those of a simple or less inquiring disposition, were allowed to leave the place after a certain time, and were presented with dowries or pensions.

so crowded with all that evidences the bounty and loveliness of nature, that a cold-hearted libertine has the will and the power to fix the scene of his purchased joys and unhallowed orgies !”

CHAPTER XII.

THE VICTIM.

THE housekeeper welcomed the arrival of the two gentlemen at the château. She was a middle-aged female, whose figure, in spite of its present unwieldiness and obesity, had evidently once possessed no inconsiderable share of excellence. Her complexion was prodigiously red and fiery; her eyes overflowing with moisture; the rest of the face fleshy and bloated. Her manners were bustling, important, and over-civil: in every thing she did or said, there

was a provoking air of intelligence, which was inexpressibly annoying to Cleveland.

“Where is Mademoiselle Antonia?” said the Duke.

“She is in the garden—I will go and send her to Monseigneur.”

She went out, and a few moments afterwards the door opened, and a girl of about sixteen made her appearance. Prepared as Cleveland had been to behold a very lovely specimen of humanity, he was completely dazzled and overwhelmed by her extraordinary beauty.

She was a brunette, possessing to the fullest extent all the peculiar advantages of that style; — the exquisite fineness of skin, the rich warm complexion, the soft dark lustrous eyes, the jetty ringlets. In addition to these important points, her features were formed with that Grecian regularity, that perfect symmetry,

which we so seldom see in living beings, that we are sometimes tempted to suppose it the mere offspring of the painter and sculptor's imagination. But Antonia possessed a beauty which is much more rare among the higher ranks of society than a fascinating physiognomy. Among the wealthier classes of almost every country, you will see abundance of angelic faces, but very few really good figures can be found. The habits and modes of education which prevail among these classes, restrain young females from taking the exercise that can alone develop that exquisite muscular fulness, without which there may be grace, but can be no beauty.

No doubt, the young ladies are much better occupied in practising concertos, and sitting on high-backed stools working samplers; but still it is a pity to see so many lean throats, scraggy shoulders, thin bosoms, spare flaccid arms,

crooked spines, unequal hips, and rickety ankles, more especially when surmounted, as they are in many cases, by such sweet and interesting countenances.

It is not enough to call Antonia's figure faultless,—it was noble—it was glorious—it was perfect. It is nothing to say, that no man under thirty could have surveyed it without emotion. The most envious woman, the most stupid child, could not have gazed on it without pleasure—a pleasure arising from the gratified perception of extreme beauty, and exquisite harmony of proportion. Her dress, too, or rather undress, was admirably contrived to display her charms. She had not formed her raven curls into a mass of pomatum and powder, as the fashion of the day imperatively required—a hideous and disgusting practice, which some prematurely grey-headed and partially-bald

beauty first introduced, and which the rest of her countrywomen, unlike the sapient foxes in the fable, who declined to dock their brushes at the interested solicitation of a tail-less brother, eagerly followed and adopted. She wore a sort of fancy dressing-gown, rich and striking enough in its way, but which a Parisian lady would have deemed an indelible dishonour to have borne anywhere but at her toilette—

“ Leaving every beauty free
To sink or swell as heaven pleases.”

How different from the preposterous hoops which were then worn, and which assigned to all women, whether young or old, stout or slender—whether they were bent dowagers of seventy, or married ladies about to increase their family, or slim virgins of sixteen—one uniform and hideous rotundity of figure.

Cleveland gazed on Antonia's beauty with

melancholy interest. "Can it be," thought he, "that this bright creature is doomed even from the first flush of youth to lead a life of infamy and misery, thinly gilded over by precarious splendour? Are those charms, so fit to have inspired the purest enthusiasm and affection, destined only to sate the worn-out appetites of a loveless debauchee? Will nature and fortune never cease playing at cross purposes? Why is the man whom fate sentences to play the part of underling, tormented with a genius to make him discontented and miserable? Why is the woman whom circumstances are certain to place in the power of the vicious and the corrupt, cursed with the fatal gift of beauty?"

The subject of the foregoing reflection, when she espied who was in the apartment, ran up to the Duke, and received from him the embrace,

which at that day was the ordinary mode of salutation among intimate acquaintance.

“ Allow me,” said the Duke, turning round with a triumphant air to Cleveland, “ allow me to introduce my friend Monsieur Cleveland, an English gentleman.”

Antonia curtesied with that peculiar grace that all her movements exhibited.

“ And how, Antonia,” said the Duke, “ have you been passing your time since I last saw you ?”

“ In counting,” replied Antonia affectionately, “ how many days would elapse before you returned.”

“ Is this hypocrisy or infatuation ?” thought Cleveland.

“ You will make me vain, Antonia,” said the Duke, glancing another triumphant look at Cleveland.

"Nay, you are laughing at me," replied Antonia; "the natural gratitude of a simple girl can hardly be a very intoxicating homage to the Baron de Voisenon."

"Gratitude!" thought Cleveland, "that is strange—gratitude for seducing her, or purchasing her from her parents!"

The Duke no longer looked triumphant, but hastened to change the subject.

"Well, Monsieur Cleveland, what think you of my château; it is a fine old building, is it not?"

"Pardon me, Duke, but I have not yet had time to examine your mansion; my attention has been absorbed by a fairer object."

To Cleveland's extreme surprise, a deep blush overspread Antonia's countenance.

"Unhappy inconsistent girl!" thought he, "you have ceased to feel shame at the loss of

innocence, and yet blush at a commonplace compliment."

"Blush away, Antonia!" cried the Duke, "you look charming—all the perfumers of Paris will hardly match such carmine as that. By heavens! Cleveland, I shall make you teach me the art of manufacturing these pretty nothings."

"Are you sure, my dear Baron," interrupted Antonia, "that they would have the same efficacy from your mouth?"

"Indiscreet, too!" thought Cleveland, "with all her affectation of affection."

"Pray, Monsieur Cleveland," said Antonia, "is it true what I have read in some travels, that in your country the single women are allowed to partake of the pleasures of society with as much freedom as the married ladies?"

Cleveland assured her that such was undoubtedly the case.

“ Ah ! England must be a delightful country for such personages as myself.”

Cleveland felt it no part of his duty to explain to the young lady that personages like herself were rigidly excluded in England from respectable society ; so he was silent.

“ My dear Baron,” said Antonia, turning to the Duke, “ let us make a voyage to England.”

“ Alas ! Mademoiselle,” said Cleveland, “ the change of atmosphere will not improve my friend. We have the reputation of being one of the most jealous nations in Europe.”

“ A jealous nation !” repeated Antonia, with a puzzled air. “ But what of that, Monsieur ? I did not speak of jealousy.”

“ Yes, Antonia,” said the Duke, interfering in some confusion ; “ you did—or, what is the same thing, Cleveland did. In fact, I am jealous, my dear Antonia—very jealous ; I wish you to live wholly for me.”

“ Here is a pretty confession,” cried Antonia, laughing. “ Well, I’ve sometimes suspected, when you were talking of the impossibility of breaking through the usages of society, that you wished to keep me all to yourself.”

“ A not unnatural feeling under existing circumstances,” thought Cleveland. “ I wonder the suspicion never crossed her mind before.”

The Duke smiled, but made no answer.

There was an unaccountable air of embarrassment and timidity in his demeanour on the present occasion, which was alike inconsistent with his general character, and the usual boldness and self-possession of his manners.

An awkward pause in the conversation ensued, which Cleveland broke, by making an observation on the beauty of the prospect, which the windows of the château commanded.

“ Yes, it is lovely,” replied Antonia ; “ and I

have often gazed on it with delight ; but, somehow or other, all solitary pleasures so soon weary me. I am afraid I have no imagination—for, after awhile, I turn away from yon varied landscape, to play with my kitten or my squirrel. Even they have more sympathy with me than the woods and fields. They fondle me when I caress them, and bite and scratch me when I tease them ; but whether I am sad or merry, yonder rich scene always smiles upon me with unmoved and unregarding loveliness.”

Cleveland was forcibly struck with her remark. “ Yes,” rejoined he, “ you are right. Life alone can sympathize with life. It is in vain that, in our moments of misanthropy and disgust, we would endeavour to dispense with the companionship of man. It is in vain that we rush into the untrodden solitude, and there pour forth the long hoarded feelings of our

bursting hearts. The rocks and forests answer us not—soothe us not. And if poets dream they do, they mistake the echoes of their own overwrought imaginations for the responsive voice of nature. Yes, you are right, Mademoiselle, the company of the humblest of our four-footed creatures is preferable to perpetual solitude.”

Antonia might be said rather to drink in than to listen to this animated commentary upon her feelings. It was caviare to the Duke, who was no more than a sharp, sensible, wily man of the world, and, consequently, unable to appreciate such feelings; but he began to take umbrage at the pleasure which they obviously took in each other's conversation.

“All this poetry,” quoth he, sarcastically, “means, I presume, when translated into the language of common sense, that Monsieur

Cleveland's society would be a great improvement on the company of hills, trees, squirrels, and kittens."

Antonia's countenance was instantly dyed of the deepest crimson—and this time, her features wore an expression, which showed that the blush was the result of pain.

"Inconceivably strange!" thought Cleveland, "that the loss of virtue should be compatible with the retention of such exquisite sensibility."

"A pretty compliment," resumed the Duke, "you have just paid to my powers of companionship—even that beautiful blush shall not prove your pardon. You confessed yourself reduced to herd with quadrupeds, and yet never, in your utmost distress, bethought yourself of my society."

"Ah! my dear Sir, do not be jealous," said Antonia, in her most winning manner. "But

the truth is, you are the worst companion in the world for a sentimental young lady—you are so bitter and hard-hearted in your conversation ; though in your conduct, I freely confess, that you are kinder to me than any father could be.”

The word father jarred upon the ears and feelings of the sexagenarian lover : he made a gesture expressive of irritation, and said, in an acrimonious tone : “ Well ! instead of so much fine feeling and poetry, which though they may mystify the brain, cannot satisfy our hunger,—suppose you give Monsieur Cleveland and myself a little substantial refreshment after our long journey.”

Antonia obeyed this ungracious request with the utmost cheerfulness, and summoned to her councils the red-faced housekeeper, of whom we whilome spake. A splendid collation soon made its appearance.

A variety of interesting conversation between the Duke, Cleveland, and Antonia, followed the repast. The young Englishman was much struck with the extraordinary natural talents displayed by Antonia. He was astonished at the liveliness and originality of her conversation; but the quality of all others which impressed him with admiration, was the utter absence of all affectation or conceit—that epidemic disease of genius. His commiseration was soon deeply excited, by the view which he took of her future fate. To behold so clear and noble an intellect—so pure and delicate a spirit, shrined in a form which might have tempted the sons of God, as of old, to leave their own bright spheres, and prove the pleasures of terrestrial love, — to behold her entering that fatal career, which must eventually tarnish her beauty and corrupt her soul,—irresistibly filled him with melancholy. But, by

degrees, doubts and suspicions as to the real nature of her connexion with the Duke, began to steal over him. He could not reconcile the unrestrained ease and innocence of her manners with the position which the Duke represented her to occupy. If she had fallen, she was evidently not depraved or vicious. Yet, she freely approached subjects of conversation, which, in her supposed situation, the smallest remains of delicacy would have made her avoid with the most scrupulous caution.

Every look, word, and tone, indicated the most perfect tranquillity of conscience: no external wincing betrayed the inward sore. Her demeanour towards the Duke was affectionate, but filial; her attachment was obviously that which a daughter entertains for a father, or a ward for a guardian; not that which a mistress feels, or affects to feel, for a lover. The Duke's

manner tended to corroborate the inferences which Cleveland was disposed to draw from Antonia's behaviour : his confusion and irritation whenever she alluded to the obligations she had received from him, and the filial gratitude which she felt in return, seemed to indicate that he wished her affection to be attributed to other motives ; at least, his strange embarrassment on these occasions appeared inexplicable upon any other supposition. But when after much cogitation and infinite reasonings upon the minutest particulars of her conduct, he at last arrived at the conclusion, that she was still pure and innocent, an awkward question would suggest itself, how long would she remain in that state ? By some unknown means she had evidently been placed in the Duke's power, and was moreover bound to him by the strong ties of gratitude. He knew this nobleman, both from the reports

of others, and indeed from his own confession, was lax in his opinions, and unscrupulous in his practice,—a roué, whose best morality was a sort of systematized selfishness ; whose highest idea of self-denial was the postponement of a small present pleasure to a greater future one ; the only efficient checks on whose passions were the legal consequence of his acts : and even the narrow operation of this restraint was much diminished by the man's natural physical hardihood, his high rank, his boundless fortune, and the extensive influence which he enjoyed both with the court and the magistracy. The laws of France, anterior to the revolution of seventeen hundred and eighty-nine, were mere cobwebs, which entangled only the small flies, and constantly allowed the great ones to break through. How was an isolated, friendless girl, ever to obtain justice against the powerful, wealthy Duke

de Fronsac?—the idea was preposterous. He was not in his own country, where strict and impartial justice is freely dispensed to every body who can afford to pay for it. Here an usurer might lavish his whole fortune in vain, to procure justice from a court lord: influence predominated even over money. Yes; Antonia's fate, even if not already sealed, was certain, if she remained much longer in the Duke's hands.

Well, then, should he advertise the unsuspecting girl of her real situation? should he warn her of her peril, and aid her to escape? At this conclusion, another train of ideas rushed across his mind, the result of that selfish and bitter wisdom, which experience teaches in the school of disappointment. Why should he interfere? what business was it of his? Was it not the fixed and eternal decree of nature, that the hawk should tear the dove—that the wolf

should devour the lamb—that the vigorous plant should absorb the strength and moisture of the weaker shrub beside it—that the strong and the powerful, in short, of all kinds and species, should prey upon and destroy the weak and helpless? And was he to step forward and attempt to thwart the operations of this universal law, and say, “No act which militates against my peculiar notions of morality shall be performed within the sphere of my intelligence.” Idle and ridiculous idea! worse than Quixotic madness! Better at once, like La Mancha’s knight, clap the barber’s bason on his head, and sally forth on a lean mare, against the surrounding windmills,—less extravagant by far than to approach the enormous mass of human misery—a mountain to which the highest peak of the Andes is but a molehill—and plucking from thence a single pebble, to imagine that he had

diminished the mountain's bulk. Aye, but supposing that pebble were a precious gem, which he wished to win for his own coffer? That would alter the affair, would it not? True, but was this the case? Could it be, that he, the apostle of philosophic indifference—the stoic of the world of fashion and pleasure—could it be, that he, without the excuse of boyish blood, was about to commit the ineffable folly of falling in love? Was he again going to pin his heart and happiness on a girl's sleeve?—no, no; let the Duke devour his prey in tranquillity—why should he interfere? Suppose he broke the meshes of the web which detained the bright and gilded butterfly, what would be the result? The spider-like duke would rearrange his plans, and speedily catch another, as beautiful—no, not as beautiful—that was impossible, but as deserving of pity: so, after all, this feat of dis-

interested benevolence and heroic generosity, would resolve itself into a substitution of one innocent victim for another, who was not the first by millions, nor would be the last by myriads, that was sacrificed to the gratification of a stronger fellow-creature. Besides, and above all, was he certain that she would thank him for his interference? Was she so unlike her sister moths, as to be insensible to the glare of wealth, the tinsel splendour of rank? When raised to the station of mistress to the Duke de Fronsac, she might be very likely to consider herself as the most enviable, not the most wretched of women.

Such were the contradictory reflections that passed through Cleveland's mind, when he retired at the close of the day to rest.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WARNING.

THE next morning the Duke asked Cleveland whether he had passed sufficient time in Antonia's company to form a fair estimate of her charms, and to qualify himself to pronounce the decision which was expected from him respecting the comparative merits of the rival beauties?

Cleveland answered in the affirmative.

The Duke then intimated that he would not detain him one moment from the pleasures of Paris.

Cleveland understood the hint, and announced his intention of immediately returning thither. Antonia frankly expressed her surprise and regret, that Cleveland would not prolong his visit. The Duke appeared to be animated by the same feeling, but seemed so convinced of the inflexibility of Cleveland's resolution, that he abstained from all repetition of his entreaties.

On arriving at the village in the vicinity of the château, Cleveland reluctantly commenced his journey. At every step the horses took, fresh arguments against the impolicy and uselessness of interference suggested themselves ; but all this time his inclinations to warn Antonia of her impending danger were increasing in a still greater ratio. At last, after he had proceeded four or five miles, he determined not to put it out of his power to interfere, in case, after farther consideration of the subject, he should be disposed

to adopt such a course. With this view he discontinued his journey, and alighted at a small auberge by the road side.

When he had concluded his arrangements with the landlord, he strolled forth, with the intention of coming to some determination during his walk. Involuntarily, perhaps almost unconsciously, he began to retrace the road to the château. He had certainly no fixed and definite plans in taking this path. He had no scheme to execute when he should have reached the château; nevertheless he continued to pace along; his mind still occupied by contending thoughts, without being able to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion. At the expiration of two hours he had reached the summit of the hill, which was described as overlooking the château. He now no longer, as when he first stood on that eminence, surveyed the prospect

below, but fixed his eager gaze on the château and its surrounding inclosures, with feelings that he was ashamed to analyse or define. Why had he returned to that spot? A mocking spirit seemed to ask him what was his real motive? Was it not a vague half-formed wish to see Antonia once more? Was she not in truth the magnet which had attracted him thither? Had then all the philosophic vows and resolutions which he had sworn in the hour of bitterness and disappointment melted into thin air? Did not the present moment see him skulking about a mansion, where he was not wanted nor invited, in the hopes of catching a short and furtive glance of one who had never given him the smallest encouragement? Indignant at his weakness, for such his conduct now appeared to him, he turned to depart.

By what infinitely slight events is the whole

future course of our destiny directed ! Upon what inexpressibly trivial accidents hangs the misery or the happiness of half a century of coming existence ! He turned to depart. A minute more had seen him gain the other side of the hill ; he would have retraced his road to the auberge in hasty anger at his own indecision and vacillation, would have set off for Paris by the next conveyance, and would have forgotten the whole affair in a week. He turned to depart,—but before his lingering and reverted eye had quite lost sight of the grounds which surrounded the château, he espied a female figure strolling at their extreme verge. He felt certain it was Antonia. In an instant his former decision was reversed. Hitherto his mind had been swayed to and fro by inclinations and ideas of almost equal weight and power. A new impression strikes his senses : the idea is con-

veyed into his mind, flung into the wavering balance, and the scale is turned. He made a circuit to avoid the observation of the inmates of the château, and soon arrived at the spot. His conjecture proved to be well founded. It was Antonia. She seemed also to be wandering in a musing meditating mood.

Her eyes were fixed on the ground. At his approach she raised them,—a smile of pleasure irradiated her face; Cleveland saluted her.

“ Ah !” cried she, “ to what lucky accident do we owe this unexpected pleasure? Have you yielded to the Baron’s entreaties to renew your visit ?”

“ I came hither, Mademoiselle, uninvited. The Baron, as you call him, dreaded nothing so much as that I should prolong my visit ;—had I complied with his feigned entreaties, he would speedily have retracted them.”

“ I presume,” said Antonia coldly, “ the Baron has excellent reasons for his conduct.”

“ No doubt,” observed Cleveland, “ he has reasons strong and sufficient—for their moral excellence I think you can hardly vouch.”

“ May I ask, Monsieur, if your sole purpose in coming hither was to insult my best friend and benefactor ?”

“ Your attachment, then, is founded on gratitude—no warmer sentiment has mingled with your feelings ?”

“ What warmer sentiment,” replied Antonia, growing somewhat irritated at the continuance of this strange conversation, “ what warmer sentiment can exist than the affection borne towards a father by the child of his adoption ?”

“ Poor innocence !” muttered Cleveland, “ you will be soon taught to feel or feign a deeper and stronger emotion.—You do not

then wish or aspire to be the Baroness de Voisenon?"

"By what right," replied Antonia, "do you put such strange and idle questions? But if the gratification of such frivolous curiosity can give you pleasure, know that I entertain no other feelings to the Baron but those of gratitude and filial affection."

"I presume then, Mademoiselle," continued Cleveland, "that you have still less inclination to become his mistress?"

"Begone, Sir," exclaimed Antonia, her eyes sparkling and her cheek crimsoned with indignation. "Begone; I deserved this when I continued to listen to you after you had spoken slightly of the Baron. The man who can malign his absent friend, may well take pleasure in insulting an unprotected female."

"Listen to me, young lady. The man whom

you fondly rely upon as your parent, has not even communicated to you his real name and station. He is no other than the celebrated Duke de Fronsac—a name renowned in the annals of gallantry. He represented you to me as his mistress—start not, but hear me. The confident innocence of your manner excited my doubts as to the reality of the fact. Some traits in the Duke's behaviour confirmed my suspicions. I determined to apprise you of your condition; I have accomplished my design, and I now bid you adieu."

"Stay, Sir, one moment," said Antonia faintly; "Oh God! my brain turns round!—what proof can you give of this horrible tale, that I should all at once cease to confide in one I have trusted so long?"

"None," answered Cleveland coldly; "disbelieve me if you like, till time confirms my story."

“ Pardon me, Sir, I naturally believe with bitter reluctance a statement that deprives me of the only friend I possess in the world. If the Baron be, indeed, the cruel profligate you describe him, allow me to say that I only know you as his intimate and chosen companion ;—it is not an unjust rule by which we form an opinion of a man from his voluntary associates. Your pursuits and amusements can hardly be very different from his own ;—why should you feel such indignation against what must be a common occurrence in both your lives, as to induce you to take part against your friend ?”

“ Faith ! I scarcely know myself,” returned Cleveland, “ if it is not the worst act I ever performed, neither is it the wisest. Had the Duke wooed you openly to become his leman, as our old ballads say, you would have heard no homilies from me when you had accepted his

suit; but I thought you had hardly the fair average chance of escape or resistance, when unaware of your position; nevertheless, pray impute my interference to what motive you will—a sudden fit of officiousness—a passing whim—an idle freak, derived from a natural instinctive love of fair play;—and this reason is perhaps the true one.”

“Would, Sir,” rejoined Antonia, in an agony of indecision, “would that you had either never awakened these suspicions of my benefactor, for such I must still call him, or else had proof sufficient to confirm them. Is it possible to conceive, that any human being could for years keep heaping favours on another only to destroy him at last?”

“Yes,” quietly replied Cleveland, “it is very conceivable. The custom is not even peculiar to civilized people; the cannibals are wont to fatten their victims before they devour them.”

“ You do not regard the services of the Baron in that light : my father was his friend, an Italian nobleman, who died suddenly in embarrassed circumstances. The Baron has supplied his place with more than a parent’s care—educated, protected me : no, no—I cannot, will not, doubt him. I would rather persist in the belief of his truth and goodness, than owe my escape to the violation of all the most cherished feelings which have hitherto constituted my happiness. Farewell, Sir ; I do not impugn your motives, but I will trust rather to deeds and actions, than to unsupported suspicions and surmises.”

“ Be it so, Mademoiselle ; I expected no other result from my thankless mission. If, in the meanwhile, a new spirit should come over your sole protector—the innocent and single-minded Baron—and should you find his future conduct savour more of gallantry than benevolence, you may possibly be at a loss for allies. I do not

call myself a friend; I am not anxious to force myself on you as such; but if my money, advice, or protection, can avail you, fear not to remind me of my present offer. I live in the Rue de Bourgogne, Paris; Mademoiselle, I have the honour to wish you a very good day."

With these words he departed, little satisfied with the impression he had produced on Mademoiselle Antonia's mind; but more than ever convinced of her exceeding and superlative beauty.

The reader may, perhaps, be surprised at the cold and even callous tone adopted by our hero during the foregoing interview. But Cleveland took a morbid and perverse pleasure in affecting an appearance of apathy and insensibility. A portion only of this character was genuine. No doubt many of his feelings were seared by disappointment, or worn-out by premature and

overwrought excitement; but he was very far from being the cold-blooded marble-hearted man that he delighted to represent himself.

By the premature death of his parents, Cleveland was left at an early age uncontrolled master of himself and a handsome fortune.

He was immediately surrounded by a host of friends, who all seemed eager to instruct him in the art of enjoying life and spending money. Conscious of possessing many engaging personal qualities, Cleveland thought all this attachment exceedingly natural, and the idea of imputing any portion of it to selfish or designing motives never entered his head. What a career was before him ! What a delightful world seemed to him this planet called earth ! Bold and impetuous, fearing nothing but dulness, thirsting after excitement,—let him but catch a glimpse of aught that wore the appearance of pleasure,

and he rushed at the object, as a young lion flings himself on his prey. We have said he was courageous by nature ; had he been menaced on every side by pains and perils, he would still have stood firm and undaunted ; but fenced as he was with such triple armour against the shafts of misfortune, and placed in an Eden of hope and happiness, was it to be wondered at if he felt himself invincible to care or sorrow ?—if, in the plenitude of his youth, strength, popularity, and riches, he bid defiance to all earthly ills ? He doubted the very existence of evil. True, he sometimes met even in his gay circle with hollow eyes and furrowed cheeks, and voices whose tones were dreary, and spoke of past misfortune. But what of them ? They were bilious or ill-tempered. True, as he sometimes caracolled on his fiery steed along the sunny highway, he was startled by the aspect of disease

and misery—what of that?—the poor wretch was an exception to the general law of happiness. Then flinging to the beggar an amount of pecuniary relief which made the mendicant deem his benefactor either mad or drunk, he chased the unpleasant image from his mind, and passed on to new pleasures. No—no—misfortune and sorrow could never reach him;—his own resources were immense—inexhaustible—and even should they be drained by his boundless prodigality, had he not a crowd of friends, who would all lay down their lives and fortunes to serve him? He could not for a moment doubt they would—they had told him so themselves!

No marvel that he was popular among his associates. Was any costly scheme of pleasure suggested to Cleveland, he never rested till he had executed it. Was a villa on the Thames to be purchased for some summer amusement—

“Cleveland’s your man.” Was a magnificent fête to be given to all London, with the laudable intention of utterly blasting a score of obnoxious individuals, who were to be excluded from it, or of putting one or two leaders of fashion to a slow death, by the lingering pangs of envy—“Cleveland will enjoy the idea.” Did an economical admirer of the old masters lament his inability to purchase some gem of Coreggio or Titian—“Get Cleveland to buy it; he will be tired of it in a month, and sell it you for the value of the frame.” But for all this, Cleveland had his reward. He was unanimously pronounced, by a band of impartial, disinterested friends, to be the finest fellow in the world. What head could withstand such intoxicating flattery? On spurred Cleveland, and, the faster he galloped along the road to ruin, the more animating were the cheers,

and the more deafening were the huzzas. When he got to the end, the applause ceased. The mode in which this event took place was as follows. A dear friend of Cleveland's had a favourite racer, who for two years had carried all before him. As an ingenious device of extricating Cleveland from his embarrassment, he proposed that the latter should purchase, at a considerable sum, this phoenix of horses ; assuring him, that he was the only person in the world whom he could endure to see in the possession of such an inestimable treasure. The result may be guessed. Cleveland bought the horse, backed it largely, and, for the first time since its birth, the animal was distanced. Dispirited at his ill luck, Cleveland called on his brother in misfortune, the seller, who he supposed had backed the animal to a greater amount than himself. Never was a man more

mistaken. By a sudden inspiration of prudence, the friend had reversed all his plans about a week before the race, and though he had not thought it worth while to communicate so trivial a fact to Cleveland, he now asked that young gentleman to wish him joy of his success. Cleveland could not refrain from some bitter remarks. The friend retaliated by the utmost rudeness. Cleveland demanded satisfaction, and received it in the shape of a bullet in the hip. During the first days of his illness, he wrote to a young lady to whom he was engaged to be married, and, after apprizing her of the loss of the greater part of his fortune, released her from all the promises which she had entered into with him. At the same time he intimated, that if he could persuade her to voluntarily renew their past engagement, he should deem his other misfortunes of little consequence.

His fever increased so much, that it was thought advisable to keep back the answer.

At last the leaden pellet of satisfaction was extracted, and the patient began to recover.

On leaving his sick room, the first news that saluted his ears, was the marriage of his jockey friend to his betrothed. The effect of this blow was at first overwhelming. He shut himself up in a dark room, and determined to turn misanthrope, like Timon of old. Accustomed to a round of perpetual excitement, he found this occupation unendurably dull ; so he cleaned and furbished his duelling pistols, and began to moralize about suicide. What step he might next have taken, it is impossible to say. His lucky star saved him the trouble of deciding, and once more placed at his disposal the means which he had so recklessly flung away.

A man of science, who thought the greatest

happiness in life consisted in chipping off the corners of rocks, and then ascertaining, by a difficult, tedious, and troublesome process, of what elements they were composed—in other words, an eminent mineralogist—had, a short time back, requested permission of Cleveland to examine and inspect one of his deeply mortgaged estates in Cornwall.

Cleveland, who laboured under a physical incapability of saying no—who never refused any request, whether reasonable or the reverse, of course granted his consent. The mineralogist fell to work with his accustomed activity. Prying, poking, and chipping, with ceaseless vigilance, in every hole, nook, cranny, corner, slip, chasm, and cave, that the county contained; and then pulverizing, fusing, dissolving, precipitating, filtrating, and weighing the chips,

with as much care and anxiety as if his life depended on the particular number of grains of silica and alumina which each fragment contained. He had not pursued this exciting avocation more than a few days, when he discovered a tin mine, where no human being had ever suspected one before. A mining company greedily bought the property, at an enormous price, and Cleveland, after paying all his incumbrances, found himself a richer man than ever.

His first care was to present the scientific rock-chipper with a munificent present. His second, was to determine what course of conduct he should pursue on his return to the world. He arrived at the sage conclusion, as is usual in these cases, that the reverse of wrong must be perfectly right. "I can neither live in a dark room, nor in the desert, like Timon. I quite

agree with Apemantus, a gentleman can't dispense with servants.

———“ ‘What, think'st

That the bleak air, thy boisterous chamberlain,
Will put thy shirt on warm ? Will these mossed trees,
That have outlived the eagle, page thy heels,
And skip when thou point'st out ? Will the cold brook,
Candied with ice, caudle thy morning taste,
'To cure thy o'ernight's surfeit ?'

I must live with mankind ; but henceforth my intercourse shall be regulated on a new principle. They are excellent acquaintance, but dangerous friends. I will amuse myself with them as companions, but will never again sacrifice my interests in the hope of winning their attachment. It is a bad speculation to attempt to purchase sympathy.”

Cleveland might imagine these sentiments to be the effect of philosophy, guided by experience ; but they were, in truth, the result of pride and

wounded feelings. Nothing annoyed him more, than to insinuate that he was at all affected by the perfidy and defalcation of his friends. The more he suffered, the more anxious was he to conceal his pain, under the mask of insensibility and carelessness. He could not endure that they who had trampled on his tenderest feelings, should farther insult him, either by pity or scorn.

Society was completely deceived, and never entertained the slightest suspicion of the tumultuous host of angry and lacerated emotions which were struggling and writhing beneath that imperturbably calm exterior. No doubt time, "the only comforter where the heart hath bled," at last assuaged the bitterness of his feelings; but Cleveland's youthful eagerness, and excitability of character, never returned. He had become remarkable by his peculiar

manners. Perhaps vanity had induced him to retain them. Perhaps, though his wounded spirit was healed, there still remained a tenderness and soreness about the scar, which made him shrink from intimate and familiar contact with mankind. Perhaps he gratified some secret grudge, which lurked at the bottom of his heart against mankind, by showing a contemptuous indifference to all that excited their hopes, fears, sympathy, and admiration.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DECISION.

AT length the day arrived on which Cleveland had promised to pronounce his decision. The party who had assembled at the Duke de Fronsac's hotel, were pretty nearly the same as on the previous occasion. Cleveland came late. Hardly were the common salutations over, when his opinion on the respective beauties was eagerly demanded.

“Hail, gentle Paris!” cried the Chevalier de Crespigny, in a mock-heroic voice; “to

which deity hast thou assigned the apple? to the goddess of the town or country?"

"I have no hesitation in saying, that the young lady to whom I had the honour of being introduced by the Duke de Fronsac, very far exceeds in beauty the celebrated La Gabrielle—"

A shout of admiration, for which it would be difficult to discover any reasonable cause, followed this announcement.

The Marquis de Montolieu bit his lip, and said: "Monsieur Cleveland, you had not finished speaking;—you were about to add something."

"Yes," replied Cleveland; "since I have undertaken this office, it is expedient I should perform it with justice. I still entertain some doubts, whether our noble host can in strictness claim the victory, and call upon his antagonist to pay the bet."

“ Explain yourself,” cried a dozen voices.

“ The Duke de Fronsac described the lady, on whose beauty the bet was laid, as being under his protection ; using that phrase, not in its moral and literal acceptation, but in its most significant and fashionable sense. Now, the lady does indeed appear to be under his protection, but, as far as I could judge from her manners and conversation, is not, in plain terms, his mistress.”

“ This changes the whole affair,” said the Marquis de Montolieu, “ and must be explained.”

“ The Duke is accused of virtue,” observed Beaumarchais ; “ he must instantly vindicate his character from so heinous an imputation.”

“ Who,” exclaimed the Chevalier de Crespigny, “ that knew the Duke de Fronsac, could ever have anticipated that he would one day

fall a victim to his own morality, and lose a thousand louis by his excessive chastity?"

"The most dissolute martyr that I ever had the honour to form an acquaintance with!" exclaimed Count D'Ostalis, taking a pinch of snuff.

"A rare and exquisite trait of modern manners!" said Crespigny. "There has been nothing like it since the days of Scipio."

"Beaumarchais!" cried another, "do not let such self-sacrificing virtue be lost to posterity for want of an historian. I conjure you, by the memory of the eleven thousand virgins, to publish a short account of the matter. You can entitle it the "Continence of the Duke de Fronsac," or "The Grape-bearing Thistle."

"Gentleman," said the Duke de Fronsac, "I am sorry to stop the present current of sparkling things, even though it is flowing

against myself. But as the Marquis de Montolieu requires, and is in fact entitled to, an explanation, I will give it. The young lady whom I introduced to Monsieur Cleveland, is indeed, as he has intimated, a true maiden, pure and spotless, and intact; and the discovery of the fact does remarkable honour to his penetration. But is she on that account not to be considered as mine, when I have absolute and complete controul over her destiny ? Circumstances have placed her in my power as effectually as this fragile glass, which I hold in my hand ; and I can make her mine, in any sense, whenever I please. Can it be said that the delicacies which crown our festive table—which were purchased by us, and prepared for us—which only await the first revival of our languid appetite—are not our own, because we have not actually devoured them ? Will it be said that

the fruit tree, which we have trained up, and cultivated with unceasing care, in the most sheltered recess of our garden, is not our own before we have plucked the produce?"

"A very instructive and philosophical parallel," observed Count D'Ostalis, with great gravity.

"Humph!" said the Marquis; "a meal can't elope from your board; nor a fruit tree climb over your garden-walls; but a young lady may do both."

"Nay," cried the Chevalier de Crespigny; "I think De Fronsac's argument fair and plausible enough."

"The matter," said the young Vicomte de Valmont, with affected solemnity, "had better be submitted to the parliament of Paris."

"No!" interrupted Beaumarchais; "the question is too delicate and dignified for the

decision of the lawyers. I say, refer the case to the Sorbonne."

"I demur to that proposition," cried the Duke, laughing; "the right reverend theologians would all demand a personal interview with the personages of the case; and I fear they would corrupt my little angel. What say you, Marquis? would you trust them with La Gabrielle?"

"Be assured," interposed the Chevalier, "they would never ask to see La Gabrielle. No doubt most of them are well acquainted with her already. La Gabrielle, with her wild imagination, is just the girl to have patronized an archbishop, from an innocent love of variety."

A thousand similar impertinences followed these sallies. At last the indelicate controversy was settled, by a suggestion of the Chevalier

de Crespigny. He proposed, that when De Fronsac should declare the fruit to be plucked, that the Marquis should pay the amount of the bet; but until that event should take place, the wager should be considered as undecided.

CHAPTER XV.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR MARQUIS,—

So you call yourself old! old forsooth! Old at fifty!—no, my dear Marquis, you are not old, but certainly mad to talk or dream of old age at fifty. Why fifty is the prime of life!—the meridian of existence! Nay, if you doubt the assertion, I will prove it to you. Suppose a man of good constitution, guarded by some supernatural power against all external accidents and internal disease;—pray

how long would such an individual live before he died of downright old age?—why a hundred years at least. This period, then, is the natural term of human life.

I admit that very few attain this advanced age, because a thousand plaguy diseases cut people short before their whole thread is unravelled. Look how fever, consumption, and a host of other ghastly tyrants, mow us down like grass.

Nevertheless, I repeat my assertion, that if these frail machines of flesh and blood, which we call our bodies, could be secured against all accidental and premature causes of death, and were allowed to puff in and out the vital air in peace and safety, until they gradually tumbled to pieces before the mouldering touch of our only legitimate and inevitable destroyer, extreme old age, a century and upwards would be the ordinary space of human life.

What, then, do you mean by writing to me about the dark and lengthening shadows which every object at your time of life must be expected to wear? Our time of life, forsooth! Have I not proved that our time of life is the meridian of existence? Well, then, there can be no shadows at twelve o'clock in the day; the thing is astronomically impossible. When you fancy you see shadows, you are in reality contemplating the gloom of your own mind. It is the darkness of your own eye that makes the scene appear obscured.

You tell me you no longer feel sufficient spirits and activity to carry on intrigues. Admitting the fact, what is the moral? Simply this, that you must henceforth manage to procure pleasure without intrigue. In fact, the trouble of wooing a woman in due form,—of breathing ardent sighs and whispering tender

speeches, is only fit for boys of twenty, who are oppressed with a superabundance of life. Men of our age (that is, in the prime of life) ought not to waste their vitality in such unprofitable gambols. Not that I like ready-made love either. That dish is only suited to the glutton, and would speedily disgust refined epicures like us. What course remains to be adopted, you will then ask? In answer to this question, I will relate to you a trifling passage in my life, over which I trust you will ponder, and grow wise by example.

Four years ago, I chanced to be travelling through the Papal States. In passing through a hamlet on the road to Perugia, one of the wheels of my carriage came off, and I was forced to halt till the injury could be repaired. My vehicle was dragged to the village blacksmith. As I was watching the slow processes of the

furnace and anvil, a child's shrieks were loudly heard. The door of the smithy was thrown open, and in rushed a young girl, pursued by a furious virago, who was brandishing aloft a formidable stick.

The former, in an agony of terror, cowered at my feet, clasped my knees, and entreated me to save her; before I could interpose, the woman—(in fact she was so absorbed by rage that I do not think she saw me)—came up with the object of her pursuit, and aimed a tremendous stroke at her head. It took effect, however, not on the girl's head, but on my unfortunate leg. The blow nearly swept me off the ground. For five minutes I swore at her in good native French; for the Italian oaths did not come fast enough for the occasion. At last, when I became sufficiently cool to use the imprecations of her own language, I asked the woman how

she could be such an execrable brute as to strike her daughter with a cudgel, which, however well it might be adapted for the fustigation of her own brawny shoulders, could not be applied to a tender girl without endangering her life. Frightened at her mistake, and half ashamed of her cruelty, she mumbled in a deprecating tone that the child was none of her's. The smith, hearing his wife attacked on this point, came forward and said, "Monsignore, it is a hard thing to support the burthen of a child which is not your own." "How," said I, "not your own?" "No, Monsignore; she was brought here by a holy father, nearly ten years ago, seemingly only a few weeks old. He bid us take all manner of care of the infant, and gave us a handsome sum of money. He then told us he would call again that day six months, and give us as much more. The father punctually

returned on the appointed day, asked if the child was well, put down the money, and set off again without interchanging another word with us. We think the girl must be the by-blow of some fine lady." "Why, then," said I, "how is the child a burthen to you; you are well paid for your care?" "Ay, so we were for eight good years, and then nobody could treat the child better than we did; but for the last two years we have never seen monk or money." "And since that period, it is evident that nobody could have treated the child worse," rejoined I.

"Why, no, Monsignore; the child is a good child, and we like her well enough; but times are hard, and we have children of our own; and Marguerite, though a good creature in the main, yet is a little hasty now and then." "Hasty, indeed!" quoth I, still rubbing the injured member. I forget what answer the

smith made, for by this time I had begun to contemplate the girl, who watched in trembling anxiety the result of my interference. I thought I had never seen anything so beautiful. There she stood, her long black curls hanging in picturesque dishevelment over her transparent brow; her cheek crimsoned with exertion; her bright eyes shining with redoubled lustre through the crystal tears, which their long silken lashes detained. Her figure, though as yet childish, gave promise of the greatest beauty, when a few years should have developed the characteristics of womanhood. The sight was touching. Suddenly a bright idea flashed upon me. Here was beauty, greater than that which had turned the heads of kings, and influenced the destinies of mankind, kicked and tossed about the world, and cudgelled every day like a jackass. Why should I not stretch out

my talons, and claw up this lovely unappropriated morsel as my own property. Like you, my dear Marquis, I had begun to weary of the trouble and the risk which intrigue required; and yet was too nice to content myself with the beauty which is openly sold in the market to the highest bidder. Here was an admirable opportunity to make my own, an Helen, who, when once seen and known, could not be carried off without encountering a world of fatigue, and outfacing a world of rivals. I might easily take this young girl under my protection, and educate her, until she was as accomplished in mind as she was beautiful in body. The thought was no sooner conceived than executed. I offered Vulcan to take the child off his hands. He gladly caught at the idea. The bargain was soon arranged; and, for the moderate sum of ten crowns, I secured the prize. So much for the story. Now for

the moral. Virtue, you see, is its own reward. My foresight and patience are now about to reap an ample reward. The pretty child has expanded into a beauty fit to drive you mad. And now I hold in my grasp a treasure, which the power of kings might fail to procure.

For where will you find beauty and accomplishment, united to the most perfect innocence, and, from the force of circumstances, ready to surrender without the bribe of matrimony? Do you feel inspired by the spirit of imitation, or is your melancholy so invincible as to incapacitate you from following in my track? Write soon, and send me better news of yourself.

DE FRONSAC.

LETTER II.

My dear Marquis,

So your curiosity is excited by the account which I have given of my Italian

heroine. You want to hear some farther details respecting her character and person. You are desirous to know how I have educated her, and so forth. I have no objection to satisfy your inquiries, though, perhaps, it would have been more prudent to have always maintained silence on the subject. In fact, I experience a strange pleasure in talking about her. What an inconsistent feeling is that which urges us to boast of a treasure, which we most jealously seclude even from the eyes of our most intimate acquaintance. We are well aware, that the knowledge of our possession, at the best, will only excite envy, and will perhaps endanger the safety of our hoard. Still we cannot bridle our exultation, nor refrain from putting forth these hazardous vaunts. Now, then, for some account of Antonia's education. I begin with that which may be called the physical part of it. In this respect, nature had done much for

Antonia, and it was easy to second her efforts. I was determined she should never resemble the sickly, artificial, padded, painted beauties, who totter, for they cannot walk, through the drawing-rooms of Paris. We may compliment such women, when we mingle with them in the illuminated saloon; but, in spite of our affected adoration, we have but little desire to meet them elsewhere. There is no real and permanently pleasing beauty without health and strength. To these points, therefore, I particularly directed the attention of her attendants. Facilities were afforded for every sort of active exercise; and no difficulty was found in inducing the pupil to avail herself of them.

Youthful health delights in activity and motion; and the superabundant vitality of young limbs would no doubt impel girls, as

well as boys, to perpetual muscular exertion, were not the former restrained by the sapient admonitions of some starched governante, who compels them to sit the livelong day as motionless as stone Saints in their niches, under the idea of improving their manners. What a mistake to suppose that exercise renders the figure coarse and clumsily robust ! The partial and unvarying exertions required in some of the avocations of the labouring classes, may have this effect ; but the spontaneous changing motion of every part of the frame in turn, which is dictated by nature, conduces as much to grace and beauty, as to vigour and health. Well, be this as it may, my system has thriven wonderfully with Antonia. Her every movement is free and unrestrained. Her walk is as easy and graceful as that of a young fawn. Oh ! how unlike the stiff, mincing, affected

gait of which the Parisian women are so proud. French tournure, forsooth ! certainly very different from nature's tournure, and no doubt very superior. Alas ! alas ! will there ever arise a race upon this earth, so civilized as to discover that they cannot improve upon nature ? As for her face, and figure, it is in vain for me to attempt their delineation. The pen cannot describe them—no, nor the pencil neither. If you were a young painter, madly in love for the first time, I would tell you to imagine it, but nobody else could. Eve, when she came fresh from the hands of her Maker, could not have been more beautiful. I gaze on her with an admiration so intense, and perfect, and feel such an unbounded luxury in the contemplation, that I almost sigh to reflect, that a time will come when possession will have dulled the ardour of my feelings. I sometimes think, I

had better admire on for ever, and not risk so fine and delicate a pleasure by seeking a fuller, and more palpable enjoyment. Now turn we to the education of her mind and disposition. For after all, beauty, though an indispensable requisite in a mistress, is not the only, nor even the greatest source of lasting attraction. I—even I—a notorious sensualist—a professed roué—a doater on the voluptuous swell, and rounded contour—even I confess, that it is the power of the mind within, and not the external form—all lovely as it may be—which captivates. By this expression, I do not mean mere intellectual ability—a knowledge of physics, or metaphysics, or a genius for the fine arts. I mean by this term, a double portion of informing spirit—of vitality, which overflows in an intense perception of what is beautiful, and an exquisite sensibility to pleasurable sensations.

Such was the disposition which I wished Antonia to possess. With this object I surrounded her with every thing that would stimulate the imagination, and awaken the senses. The accomplishments, in which I caused her to be instructed, were all made conducive to this end. I took care, indeed, to select masters, who from their age and ugliness were not likely to play the part of Abelard. But, in drawing, the most voluptuous designs and statues were given to her, as models to copy. In music the most melting and soul-subduing airs were chosen for her performance. Books, however, are the agents which exert the most potent influence over a mind brought up in solitude. And what sort of works do you think I gave her? I am almost ashamed to relate my wickedness. I turned her loose into my library, and gave her unlimited access to every author.

Well, where was the harm? I set her in a garden, where there grew wholesome fruits, as well as poisonous plants. The bane and the antidote were both before her. I left her at liberty to choose between what was good, and what was evil; *I* did not bid her hang for hours over the pages of poetry and love: *I* did not suggest to her the study of those comfortable sophists, who swear that practical philosophy consists in the indulgence of our passions. *I* never recommended to her perusal those moral novelists, who, during nine-tenths of their works, excite the imagination by the warmest descriptions, and then think they have sufficiently guarded their readers against the inflammatory effect, by the cold insipid moral contained in the last page. Her will was free; and if the serpent of desire and curiosity coiled round her heart, and stifled her discretion, was

that my fault? Could any christian soul condemn my conduct? But what is the result of the system upon Antonia? Why precisely what you might have anticipated. She is a glorious illustration of what I was vainly endeavouring to explain, in the first part of my letter. She is the most lively and susceptible of human beings. Mind and body are alike strung to the highest pitch of sensibility: the slightest expression of disapprobation will instantly pale the ruby glow of her cheek.—Utter a sound of kindness, or praise, and her quick blushes will tell you more eloquently, than words, how keen a pleasure she experiences. A look will suffice to make her happy or miserable. Her education has been the reverse of that which is generally given to women of rank. The convent is their school; there they are brought up, as it were, in a moral icehouse. Every thing

that can inspire romance, or kindle desire, is rigidly excluded. They grow up as cold as polar plants. The boon promised for their self-restraint is the hope of a splendid alliance. Thus, no strong feeling is allowed to flourish in the bosom. You will nevertheless tell me, that the court of Louis the Sixteenth, is as dissipated as any in Europe. True; but this does not arise from the temperament of the women, but from the license of the times. Examine the motives of these fair libertines, and you will find them to be founded on avarice and vanity. When these feelings are absent, they generally remain chaste—not from the love of virtue, but from the want of passion. Parbleu ! I would rather wed St. Anthony's wife of snow, than live tête-à-tête for a week with one of these passionless sinners, or still more passionless prudes. Oh what a contrast

to Antonia ! At this moment I am feeding my eyes on her fair proportions. She is playing on the harp. I feel life and warmth communicated to me by her presence, as palpably and as distinctly, as sounds are conveyed to my ears from the instrument which she so gracefully touches. But she has ceased playing, and challenges me to take a walk. I must break off.

DE FRONSAC.

LETTER III.

My dear Marquis,

What do I intend to do with her ?
Well done, innocence ! It is refreshing to hear the libertine of half a century, propound such a pure, simple, naïf question, to a brother roué ! Do with her ? let your own conscience answer the question. What would

you do? or rather what *have* you done, with every pretty girl you were fortunate enough to get within your clutches? But no! you are candid enough to confess, what indeed is notorious to the whole world, that you have been a terrible fellow in your time. But then, it appears, that all your wickedness was committed on the spur of the moment, as occasion tempted you. And as no sinner can endure any but his own peculiar style of vice, you disapprove of my systematic deliberate seduction, coolly premeditated beforehand. But, my virtuous friend, if there is no harm in shooting a pheasant, when you meet it in the field, there can't be much villainy in keeping a preserve. Prithee spare me any farther expostulations on the subject. In the first place, I suspect morality to be a somewhat scarce and precious article with you. It is therefore a pity to waste it upon an incor-

rigible sinner like myself. Secondly, whatever be your amount of the commodity, you certainly need the whole stock for your own private use. Besides, joking apart, all attempts to deter me from the execution of my piquant and well imagined schemes, are useless. If any thing could have won me from my purpose, the manners and conduct of the girl herself would long ago have had that effect. Her feelings towards me exhibit so much pure, genuine affection. Her voice and demeanour, whenever we talk about the future, display such entire and innocent confidence in the goodness and kindness of the fictitious plans I sometimes affect to arrange for her, that I am almost touched. An uneasy compunctious sentiment seems to circle round my heart, and impedes for a moment the due circulation of my blood. But I have only to throw a moment's glance at her rounded arm,

her indescribable ancle, any part, in short, of her angelic figure ; and an overwhelming torrent of desire sweeps away the troublesome feeling, with as much ease as a regiment of guards disperse a half-starved mob shouting for bread and liberty. However, as yet, she has been treated kindly ; and perhaps gratitude is naturally dictated by the sense of benefits received. But I will tell you what puzzles me, I constantly perceive both in her conversation and actions, strong emotions of pity for vulgar miseries, which it is ridiculous to feel, and bad taste to express ; bursts of enthusiasm for a parcel of chimerical virtues, and impossible characters ; above all, fanciful traits of what, for want of a better term, I will call conscientiousness, in defence of which she always becomes most amusingly earnest and serious. Now, as she has had no moral pedagogue, no canting governante, set

over her, whose applause it is necessary to win by such ebullitions of virtue, I will confess I am surprised by these traits of character. That she should be accomplished, clever, imaginative, and susceptible, is very natural. These qualities are the direct result of her education. But where the devil did she get her morality from? Not from me certainly, and still less from Madame Gisquette. Neither do I think that the old dolt of a priest, whom I allowed to superintend her religious duties, was the man to teach her these flights. Are then our moral sentiments born with us, and do they constitute a portion of our being? Are they, when naturally strong, able to develop themselves under the most unfavourable circumstances? Are Helvetius, Grimm, D'Holbach, and our other fashionable philosophers, all wrong, when they swear that justice and charity are nothing more than artificial feelings, formed by policy, and

inculcated by education ? Can notions of self-denial spring up in the Paphian bower ? Can ideas of honesty and generosity develop themselves in a robber's den ? Upon the honour of a Duke, when these reflections first crossed my brain, I actually pondered over the matter seriously and heavily for upwards of five minutes, but strange to say, I could not arrive at any satisfactory conclusion of the question. I think I am naturally fond of abstruse topics. Had fate made me a poor devil of a scribbler, compelled to write for his daily bread, I am certain I should have indited a dozen tomes upon this very subject. Thanks to omnipotent Fortune, she has enabled me, by her gifts, to make a better use of my time. But touching these same innate moral feelings, if indeed they have any real existence, I suspect that nature sent me into the world without my fair share of them : for except the slight and transient twinges

which I just now described to you, I never yet felt anything which resembled a conscience. You have well characterized my penchant for the other sex, as my ruling passion. Yes ; it is emphatically my ruling passion ; and yet you are inconsistent enough to ask me to control its excessive ardour. How rule the ruler ? It governs me, you say, and yet you would have me govern it. Is it possible for the smaller power to dominate the greater ? It would cease to be my ruling passion if I could overrule it. My appetites are absolute monarchs, and possess the full measure of viciousness and self-will, usually displayed by such personages.

Yes, this passion that you speak of, is indeed the master-feeling of my soul. Like Aaron's rod, it swallows up all the other vices. If I have ever seemed to seek the extension of my influence at Court, be assured it was to gratify an ambitious mistress. If I ever intrigued for

places and pensions, it was because my lavish gifts had for a moment drained my patrimonial resources. No matter which way the ripple on the surface might appear to tend, the true current of my soul always has, and always will, flow in one direction. And you talk to me of changing my pursuits.—Bid a tiger or a vulture refrain from blood, and satisfy their carnivorous maws with fruits and flowers. I must act according to my nature. Other men complain of satiety and weariness: I feel none. Each new beauty seems lovelier than the last; each fresh adventure seems to promise a richer harvest than all its predecessors. Though my whole life has been devoted to pleasure, I have not satisfied a tithe of the innumerable longings of my heart; I have not executed the twentieth part of the caprices and devices of an inexhaustible imagination. And why should I abstain from that which to me is the breath of life—

the essence of my existence? What reason do you give? what reward do you offer? You won't venture to urge religion as a rule of conduct, to a French nobleman, in the year seven-hundred and eighty-eight? But even did I believe in the common people's creed, its hopes and promises would exercise but little influence on my mind. I can scarcely conceive, and do not at all envy, the metaphysical delights of disembodied spirits. For the possibility of obtaining such airy uncertainties, I should certainly never forego the palpable joys of this visible diurnal sphere. Mahomet's paradise might indeed have tempted me. As to morality, if I am so constituted as to derive more pleasure from the gratification of my passions, than the satisfaction of my conscience, the fault is in nature, not in myself. My mental conformation is vicious, and my acts correspond to my organization. With respect

to law and opinion—I keep within the letter of the first ; and as to the second, I am satisfied with that portion of esteem, which, in a profligate age, rank and riches will extort for me, in spite of the utmost licentiousness, from my contemporaries. Thus, you see my heart is cased in triple armour. There is not a single vulnerable part where your shafts can enter. No—Antonia's fate is settled. If the career I have marked out for her, be compatible with what she dreams happiness—well and good—I am heartily glad of it ; but if it be not—why, her fate is still fixed. Your remonstrances have actually hardened me in my resolution ; for, out of compliment to you, I have weighed them in the balance of reason, and found them wanting.

DE FRONSAC.

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CHAPTER XVI.

THE HYPOCHONDRIAC.

IF Cleveland's ruling passion were termed a love of popularity, the word would hardly express the full extent of the principle which naturally predominated in his breast. His was not the cold ambition of the scholar or the statesman, to shine or rule. The bare admira-

tion of his fellow-creatures would never have contented him. He wished to engage their attachment—to attract their sympathies—to be the centre of many affections—to create for himself a new and happier existence in the bosom of all around ; and to find in their hearts a responsive echo to every tone of thought or feeling which vibrated in his own. Vain hope ! Desperate alchemy ! it were easier to transmute the dull ingot of lead into its own weight of pure and refined gold, than to coin the sordid mass of selfishness, which calls itself the world, into true and sterling friends. Yet Cleveland, like the adepts of old, was happy in his golden dreams, while he continued the impossible pursuit. But he pressed on in his career with too much eagerness ; and the cold, disenchanting touch of poverty, dissipated his visions. In the bitterness of his disappoint-

ment, he swore never to renew them; and whenever they again began to rise, in distant but tempting prospect, he sternly and contemptuously turned away.

And this is the result of the much-lauded wisdom of experience—a thousand times more fatal to our happiness than all the errors of continued folly. To seek exemption from care and sorrow in insensibility, is as unwise as to cut off the hands to prevent the fingers from being pricked.

When Cleveland endeavoured to steel his heart from all impressions, whether of joy or pain, and to live in the world as if he were an unconcerned spectator of its doings, and not a deeply interested actor, he should have remembered Rochefoucault's profound observation,—
“ That people endued with strong passions, are happy under their influence, and miserable

when cured of them." This is the reason why disappointment exercises so deadly an influence over the mind. It is not that the acquisition of the toys which we aimed at, could have exerted much effect on our happiness, but the failure to obtain them chills us from the prosecution of that pursuit, where content and mental health were unconsciously found. To lose the baubles themselves is nothing—but to lose the spirit and inclination to renew the chase, is indeed misery.

Cleveland began to lose his relish for existence. He had so long accustomed himself to check every feeling of expectation or hope, that at length the sentiment ceased to arise in his mind. He no longer looked on the future with the eyes of other men. He beheld in it no bright vistas of coming happiness—no charming back-ground of content and repose.

He saw in it nothing but a continuation of the dull and insipid realities of the present. The word to-morrow had no magic for his ears. To him it was nothing but a monotonous repetition of to-day—a tedious counterpart of the past hours, which had already disgusted him. And cut off from the hopes of to-morrow, who is satisfied with to-day? None—not even the happiest of mén. To-morrow! Beautiful word of hope—sweet sound of promise—ever renewing dawn of an anticipated career of happiness, 'tis thou, and thou only, that reconcilest us to existence!

An invincible lassitude took possession of Cleveland's mind. All his faculties seemed involved in torpor. The ordinary routine of amusements in which he had hitherto mingled, was now gradually abandoned. He shrunk from pleasure as a fatigue. He shunned society.

Conversation became odious, and seemed only to increase the disgust and weariness with which every object seemed to inspire him. His heavy hours were passed in fits of gloomy abstraction, or sullen reverie. At night, his mind, restless and irritable from the want of wholesome excitement during the day, was unable to enjoy the customary repose of slumber. In vain did he stretch himself on his feverish couch, with a desperate determination to sleep. In vain did he endeavour, by every artificial expedient, to win his uneasy spirit under the influence of "nature's sweet restorer." Hour after hour did the dull melancholy chimes of some neighbouring church sound upon his wakeful ear, and tell him how slowly the tedious night was wearing away. It is not surprising, that the reflections which suggested themselves during these involuntary vigils should be of the gloomiest cast. Solitude is a

fearful thing to thoughtful minds. By solitude is not meant the mere absence of human beings. The solitude of the library, the laboratory, and the studio, is peopled by the most delightful of all companions—ideas of knowledge, of power, and beauty, which throng upon us thicker than the motes that sparkle in the sunbeam. By solitude is meant, that state of loneliness, in which, from some cause or other, we are compelled to look within our own bosoms, and reflect. In society, there is an artificial stimulus, arising, perhaps, from the close contact of mind to mind. A mob, no matter of what class it is composed, is always excitable. The gaiety and petulance of one encourages and inflames the others. Our spirits act and are reacted upon by each other, until they are wound up to a pitch of exhilaration and excitement, which they cannot for an instant maintain when alone.

The combined joyousness of all is discharged, like the electric spark, through each. We are inspired—we gracefully jest away our heaviest cares, and moralize over our worst misfortunes, with scornful and philosophic mirth.

Without effort or fatigue, all our energies are arrayed, and on the alert. Every faculty spontaneously exerts itself to dazzle and delight. The overflowing fulness of our hearts is vented in a thousand obliging speeches. We scatter compliments on every side ; we flatter all around, and are repaid with an abundant shower of adulation ; until cheered, elated, and encouraged by the delicious commerce, we almost persuade ourselves that we really are what we appear, and what others believe us, to be.

It is in the hour of darkness and solitude that the demon of unquiet thoughts arises, and,

overshadowing our souls with his gloomy pinions, whispers despair. It was such a fiend as this that brooded over Cleveland's mind during the interval of his broken repose. A still small voice, which he could neither shut out nor silence, seemed ever muttering in his ear, taunting his joylessness, and tempting him to die. "You *must* hear me," it seemed to say, "for I am your own reason. You may drown my warnings for a time, in the clamour of noisy gaiety; but, sooner or later, their realization will sting you into attention. It is in vain that you stifle my voice to night with other thoughts; at some period or other it must be heard. Will you listen in preference, to your hopes? Have they not always deceived you? If they raised you for a moment, ~~was~~ it not for the purpose of plunging you into an abyss of disappointment? Did not my fore-

bodings on each occasion prove true? Will you trust them again? No—you must be abused by this time.

“Stripping off, then, the false colours with which hope adorned the scene, let us examine the prospect which lies before you. How do you pass your life?—In a dull round of petty duties and of insipid pleasures. Do you derive content or even satisfaction from their performance? If so, why are not your eyelids now sealed in balmy slumber? What will the future be? A dull re-enactment of the present. Nay, scarcely so—for the colours will be faded—every trace of gilding worn off—and the last poor remains of pristine novelty and brightness completely effaced. The first draughts of life’s cup have sickened and disgusted you. You nauseate even the comparatively clear liquor which sparkles at the top; and yet with insane perse-

verance you still drain the bowl, and hope to find happiness in the dregs. Would you live your past life over again? You shudder at the idea. Then why live out the remainder, which in all probability will resemble the commencement? Why should you think that the weakness and infirmity of old age will succeed in attaining what the strength, activity, and energy of youth failed to grasp. Apply the common doctrine of chances to the matter. For eight-and-twenty years you have played at a certain hazardous game called life, with varied, but on the average, bad success. The amount of painful sensations dealt out to you has far exceeded those that were pleasurable. The black days assigned to you have been more in number than the white. What is the fair inference which, on the ordinary principles of calculation, you would draw from such experience? Nothing

less than this, that life is a losing game. And is it rational to expect that the nature of the speculation will be changed, and the proportion of good and evil reversed, because you still persist in continuing your stake? Is the motive which induces you to persevere the dictate of reason or common sense? or is it the blind instinct of hope—an unreasonable confidence in your own good fortune—an infatuated persuasion of coming luck, similar to that which urges the gamester to risk his last shilling on the hazard of the die?

Which way will you escape the weariness of life? You will choose some object of pursuit—good. Ay, and a noble one—better still. You will dedicate yourself to the benefit of mankind—glorious idea! You are prepared no doubt for the brutal ingratitude of those whom you attempt to serve. You are prepared also for the sneers and opposi-

tions of those who feel and resent your generosity, as a tacit reproach on their own insensibility. But can you reconcile yourself to the idea, that all your exertions and sacrifices will not ultimately produce one iota of practical good to the race for whom you are labouring? You may fall a martyr in the attempt; but you will not advance the cause one inch. Look how little the wisest laws and institutions have been able to effect. The mountain of human misery remains undiminished. What can an individual do?—nothing—absolutely nothing. He might as well thrust his hand into a torrent, and fancy that he stopped the speed of the waters. Often your benevolence creates and multiplies the very evil it was intended to banish. Charity begets beggars. Give away your whole fortune to mendicants, and you will make a thousand paupers, besides yourself.

“ Will you devote yourself to the acquisition of power, and make ambition your God ? He is a stern and selfish deity—difficult to propitiate, capricious to reward, oftentimes giving to baseness and subserviency what he denied to talent and merit. Remember the serpent creeps higher than the lion can climb. A thousand different events must cooperate in your elevation. You must be born at fitting time, placed in the particular country which affords a favourable theatre to your talent. A spark falls in the desert and is extinguished ; it lights on a forest and causes a conflagration. Had Cromwell been born fifty years sooner or later than he actually was, he would have lived obscurely, or perished ignominiously. If Turenne, Condé, Marlborough, or Eugène, had served their respective countries as privates instead of officers, how different would have been their career !

“ But he who unites talent to perseverance will always distinguish himself. True—you will be famous then? Know that in the whole circle of human delusions there is no phantom so unreal and evanescent as glory. You consume your life in exertions compared with which the labour of a galley-slave is a jest—for what? To attain the admiration of the very beings, whose intellects you despise, and whose vices you detest. And were the approbation of these judges an adequate reward—you hear it not—see it not—feel it not. You may be celebrated at the antipodes, and posterity may build you monuments; but in your own immediate circle, among your own intimate associates, on whom the comfort of your existence depends, your superior talents will draw down upon you hatred, envy, and depreciation, as surely as your statues, if you have any, will cast shadows when

the sun shines. Further than all this, the intense and unceasing efforts requisite to attain eminence in any department of art or knowledge, beget an irritability of nerve, which renders its possessor the unhappiest of mankind. If you doubt the fact, read the biography of genius ; and you will find that those records contain a complicated mass of calamity and suffering, not to be paralleled in the annals of criminals. Be warned by their example ; expel from your heart that restless consuming madness called love of glory. Rather drink, game, or debauch :—nay, shrink not contemptuously at the mention of these pursuits : low and criminal as you may deem them, how many of the most gifted of our unhappy race have sought refuge in these vices from the weariness of life, and have preferred the indulgence of such gross passions to the prosecution of those high and

glorious schemes which their talents entitled them to form, and would have enabled them to accomplish.

“Lurks there no moral beneath this incomprehensible infatuation? Does not it seem, as if these powerful but erring spirits had not found the reward they expected in the dazzling paths that they first trod, and that in the bitterness of their despair they sought a coarse brute-like felicity from physical excitement?

“But what avail these reflections? They only serve to confirm the miserable truth, that existence is one long conflict with evils, that must at last overcome us. *Pain is the animating principle of the creation.* We are born in *pain*. We die in *pain*. From the cradle to the grave, *pain* is our constant companion, our primary impelling principle, our overruling and controuling governor. It dallies with us, as a wild

beast sports with its prey. For a moment we seemed to have escaped—to have eluded its power ; but the least indiscretion, and its talons are again plunged into our side ; until, at last, having tortured us for the allotted term of three score years and ten, it strikes the mercy-blow,* and we become a heap of carrion, that the nearest and dearest of our friends cannot survey without feeling their gorge rise. And knowing all this, and feeling much more, you still live !”

Such were the temptings that continually assailed Cleveland, as night after night he lay stretched upon the rack of his own uneasy thoughts. “ I must be ill,” said he ; “ some latent disease disturbs my repose ; and my want of sleep renders me melancholy.” With this view of his case, he went to the most

* The coup-de-grace.

famous physician in Paris. "Examine me well," said he, when introduced to the man of science; "and tell me whether my state of health be good." The physician looked at his tongue, felt his pulse, punched his chest, slapped his limbs, and made divers enquiries which were satisfactorily answered.

"You need not alarm yourself," he said to Cleveland, "if your frame does not glow with the brilliant health of a mountaineer; if your skin has not the clearness, nor your muscles the tone which belongs only to him who is taking constant exercise in a pure atmosphere; yet you have as much health as is, perhaps, compatible with a residence in a crowded metropolis, and an habitual participation in its enervating pleasures. What more do you expect or want?"

"I want good spirits and cheerfulness during the day, and quiet sleep at night."

“ Then at present you have neither of those blessings ? ”

“ I have not. ”

Again the physician renewed his inquiries concerning the patient's mode of life, diet, &c. ; but he could elicit nothing which afforded a satisfactory explanation of his patient's symptoms.

“ The disease must be in the mind ; some recent misfortune still haunts your memory and troubles your imagination. If so, time and occupation are the only remedies I can suggest ; but they are specifics of tried efficacy. And when you are quite recovered, you can amuse yourself like the lady in Voltaire's story, by erecting a monument ‘ à celui qui console. ’ ”

“ Your surmises are unfounded—for many years past my life has been, what the world would deem and call, a career of uniform prosperity. ”

“Then you must be labouring under hypochondria,” said the physician.

“What is that?”

“A most strange, and insidious malady, often attacking those who are otherwise most favoured by nature and destiny; sapping the springs of enjoyment, and bringing upon its victims, even in the prime of their life, and the zenith of their fortune, all the hopelessness of old age, without its protecting insensibility.”

Cleveland was surprised at the energy with which the physician uttered this description.

“You speak feelingly,” said he.

“I have reason to do so,” returned the physician, with a somewhat dismal expression, “since I have been struggling all my life against the complaint, and should long ago have fallen a victim to it, but for the constant occupation of mind and body, which my pro-

fession enforced. Often my friends wonder, why I persist in supporting the fatigues of an extensive practice, and do not rather retire to enjoy in repose the fruits of my success. But I am well aware, that it is only by excessive drudgery, that I can keep the fiend at arm's length. As it is; if I am left alone, and unemployed for half-an-hour, I am ready to hang myself."

"But if a patient declines your remedy of incessant drudgery, have you no other succedaneum?"

"The priest bids you have recourse to prayer—the philosopher exhorts you to exert your reason—I have sometimes tried, or fancied that I tried, the latter expedient. May *your* efforts be attended with better success than mine were."

Cleveland took his leave, but little consoled

by the interview. He saw the ludicrous improbability of obtaining assistance from the practitioners of medicine, when the most celebrated of their number avowed his inability to cure the disease in his own person. Indeed, the last remedy he suggested, was hardly worthy of his acknowledged skill and shrewdness. A propensity to speculate over nicely on subjects which are rather matters of feeling than of reason, is in itself a strong symptom of mental disease. The physicians say, that the healthy man is he, who does not feel that he has a stomach; and that a disposition to reason on the digestive process, and to study the rules of diet, is a certain sign of dyspepsia. The same principle holds good with reference to human felicity. The really happy man is he who enjoys life without reflections on its nature, object, or utility; while a tendency to philoso-

phize on existence, and to institute curious and inquisitive investigations on its various pains and pleasures, is a sure indication of a dissatisfied and troubled spirit. It is the restlessness of internal pain, that sends us prying into the dim and misty regions of metaphysical speculation ; from whence we always return, like Byron's Cain, baffled in our high researches, but more than ever exasperated with the *actual* world.

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO NEGATIVES MAKE AN AFFIRMATIVE.

THE amusement for which Cleveland retained the greatest relish, was the Opera. The music seemed to inspire a wild and tender melancholy, a mingled sense of beauty and sadness, which was not without its peculiar charm ; and was at all events preferable to the dull listless despondency, under which he ordinarily laboured. Unbidden tears would rush to his eyes during the performance of some beautiful passage. His stuffed bosom felt relieved ; his heart grew

soft, and once more throbbed as it was wont in youth: the visions of earlier happier days, flitted palpably before his eyes. For a moment he was almost happy; but the strain ended, and all vanished. It may be questioned whether this momentary exhilaration was beneficial to Cleveland: for though it appeared to tranquillize and sooth his troubled spirit for a time, yet by increasing the morbid sensibility of his mind, it probably aggravated rather than palliated his disease.

The opera had finished, and Cleveland was again thrown upon himself. Whither should he direct his steps? He shrunk from the solitude of his own domicile; yet the irritation and tedium of company were still more unendurable. He traversed the deserted and dimly-lighted streets at a rapid pace, careless whither he was going, so that he could by the violence

of his physical exertions suppress the crowd of jarring thoughts within. At length, without having purposely directed his course that way, he found himself on the Pont Neuf. The sudden transition from the narrow lofty street, which allowed the passenger but a slender glimpse of heaven, to the free open space on the bridge, induced Cleveland to pause, and survey the scene around him. It was a beautiful summer's night. The lights on the Quais were mostly extinguished. A few, however, shot their trembling radiance on the smooth dark waters of the Seine, as they swept stealthily, and swiftly, under the bridge. The moonlight slept upon the huge mass of surrounding buildings, and gave them a solemn and unearthly character; an effect which was much enhanced by the striking solitude which now prevailed in a place which was usually so busy

and crowded. While, above all, spread the dark azure canopy of heaven, spangled with its glittering and innumerable lights. Despite his gloom, Cleveland felt the influence of the scene. A sense of beauty stirred his heart; but the emotions which followed were still sorrowful and despairing. Long and earnestly did he gaze on the starry concave. So intense was his contemplation, that at last his bewildered and overwrought spirit seemed almost to mingle with their placid rays, and to hold actual converse with the unconscious luminaries.

“Glorious and immortal host,” he mentally ejaculated, “the least of whom is a universe, of which we can neither compass nor comprehend the minutest atom.—Mysterious orbs ! of whom science tells us nothing, save that ye are vast and mighty.—Grand and unimaginable worlds ! whose last faint rays, transmitted athwart yon-

der blue infinity, are still a wonder, and a delight to the dwellers on earth, and form the only spectacle on this dull globe, which never wearies the eye or heart of man.—Are ye places of suffering and torment for beings as frail and wretched as myself? or are ye, as I would fain think, the bright abodes of a pure and perfect race? Oh! that my soul had the wings of a dove, that it might fly away from this mansion of care, and settling on your silver shores, enjoy the peace of the blessed! Oh! that my troubled spirit, freed from its clayey prison, could traverse yon intervening space, and attain your havens of rest.”

As these passionate aspirations passed through Cleveland's breast, he cast his eyes on the river beneath. A sudden, and overwhelming impulse urged him to plunge into the dark rapid current. His reason offered no resistance—in

fact it had long ago obscurely indicated such a step, as the only and natural termination of his wretchedness. A subtle but overpowering desire for peace, like the pleasing but irresistible sensation which impels us to sleep after long vigils, or violent fatigue, pervaded his heart and brain.

He was about to mount the balustrade of the bridge, when an approaching footstep broke upon his ear. He turned round. It was a female, apparently young, to judge by her step and figure ; but her face was closely veiled. It was so unusual for the ladies, who walked the streets of Paris alone, and by moonlight, to conceal their faces from observation, that Cleveland's attention, absorbed as he was in his own feelings, was attracted by the circumstance. His curiosity, however, was not so much excited as to induce him to take any farther

notice. So, shrouding himself in a recess of the bridge, he quietly waited till the new comer should leave him in quiet possession of the ground. The female was equally regardless of Cleveland, and passed on to the other end of the bridge. There she stopped, and cast some furtive glances on either side, apparently with the view of ascertaining if any body was in sight. She seemed aware of the vicinity of Cleveland, and began to loiter about, as if she expected that he would depart, and leave her alone. This manœuvring continued for some time, each party seeming determined to outstay the other. At length a suspicion flashed across Cleveland's mind, that the stranger had sought that spot with intentions similar to his own, and only waited his disappearance to put her resolution into execution.

A strange impulse of curiosity urged him to

try if this surmise was well founded. With this view, he pretended to depart, and walked out of sight for a moment—then turning back, he rushed with the speed of lightning to the spot where the female had been standing.

His conjecture was right. She had already climbed on the balustrade; her arms were raised to Heaven in the attitude of prayer, as if imploring forgiveness for the act she was about to commit. Another moment, and she would have plunged; when Cleveland sprang up, and dragged her down. The shock was too much for her already excited nerves; and, uttering a faint scream, she fainted in his arms.

Perplexed as he was at his situation, and serious as was the occasion, Cleveland could not refrain from reflecting on the singular inconsistency of his conduct. A minute ago he

was on the point of committing suicide himself; and now he interfered, with the utmost eagerness, to prevent another from putting a similar intention into practice. So true is the maxim of Napoleon, — “ Rien ne refroidit comme l'enthousiasme des autres.” The moment we see our own madness exhibited by another, we are struck by its absurdity. In an instant he had lost all his taste for suicide; though he would not have confessed the fact even to himself.

“ Ridiculous inconsistency !” muttered Cleveland to himself, as he supported the lifeless girl in his arms, hardly knowing what step to take next. “ What right had I to prevent the poor girl from seeking a remedy I was about to administer to myself? It is in vain we reason and philosophize ;—to the last moment of our existence we are the fools of custom and circum-

stance ; and, in the hour of action or excitement, our grandmothers' dogmas supersede all the fine-spun deductions of reason."

The female's swoon was of very short duration. It did not last for half a minute ; when, recovering her consciousness, she disengaged herself from Cleveland's arms, before he had time to lift her veil and examine her features. But even in this short interval, he had been able to remark the grace and symmetry of her rounded form.

" Thanks ! thanks !" she exclaimed, in a faint voice. " I am well now ;—pray leave me."

" Not till you have promised not to repeat your late attempt."

" I promise, then.—I give you my word I will not," said she, turning to retire.

" Yet stay," said Cleveland ; " answer me

one question, and I will allow you to depart. What was the motive which urged you to self-destruction?"

"My particular griefs can hardly interest an entire stranger."

"More than you imagine. But I will set you an example of confidence. I came to this spot with pretty much the same intentions as yourself. Your presence suspended my purpose. Your attempt gave a new direction to my thoughts. A sudden and most inconsistent impulse, for which I cannot account, prompted me to arrest your design. And now I am possessed by an irresistible desire to know the circumstances by which you were induced to attempt suicide. I know not why, but I feel as if there were some strange connexion—some subtle and mysterious link between our fates. Besides, having forced you to endure life, I would now fain make life endurable."

The unknown shook her head mournfully. "I distrust," said she, "the generosity of your sex. Woe to the unprotected woman, who accepts an obligation from a man. Sooner or later an unworthy recompense is always demanded for the insidious gift."

"What ! railing at our true—open—honest—constant—single-minded sex? Nay, then, I need ask no farther. The cause is clear. It is the old story of seduction, desertion, and despair."

"On the contrary, my tale is one of denial, pursuit, and persecution."

"And was a leap from yonder balustrade your only means of escape?"

"Such is my poverty, and such the malice and ingenuity of my foes, that every other outlet was—alas ! is still—shut up."

"This purse," said Cleveland, producing

one, "will be of service to you. It contains, I believe, some large notes."

The unknown contemplated him for some moments, as if to read his motives.

"Are you serious," she at length said, "in bestowing such a gift upon an utter stranger, whom you may never probably meet again? Above all, do you offer it freely and unconditionally?"

"As freely as ever captive tendered his ransom. As for conditions, ere a week has flown, I shall most probably be—where I took the liberty to prevent your going—at the bottom of the Seine. Take it, and be happy. But, while labouring under the ills of poverty,—and I deny not that they are many and bitter,—still, thank God that you are exempt from evils which no accession of fortune, and no change of external circumstances, can remove or palliate."

“It is hard,” rejoined the other, “that Monsieur Cleveland, who seems so anxious to mitigate the afflictions of others, should be so unhappy himself.”

“Ha ! you know me, then ?”

“This evening is not the first time I have experienced that innate spirit of generosity, which was so little to be expected in a friend of the Duke de Fronsac.”

With these words she removed her veil, and the pale light of the moon disclosed to Cleveland the unrivalled features of Antonia.

“Do I dream ?” exclaimed he ; “or do I behold Mademoiselle Antonia ? By what strange vicissitude is De Fronsac’s favourite, whom I last saw surrounded with ease and splendour, converted into a midnight wanderer, meditating suicide ? My warnings then proved true ?”

“They did : and permit me now to apologize

for the rudeness with which I treated you, when you so generously apprised me of my impending danger. But how could I believe, that the man, whom for years I had loved and venerated as a father, would suddenly assume the character of an unprincipled libertine? I will spare you the relation of his odious importunities and depraved arguments. You may conceive they did but increase my disgust. At last he changed his tone, and uttered the most fearful menaces. He execrated me as a low-born, ungrateful brat, whom his weak kindness had pampered into a rebel. Finally, he threatened to expel me from his roof, and leave me to starve."

"And he had the cruelty to execute this menace?"

"Such an act would have been comparatively honourable. But he did not intend to let me escape so easily. Finding all other

means ineffectual, he resorted to the most brutal and unmanly violence; when Heaven, in its mercy, sent the priest, who was in the habit of attending the inhabitants of the château, to my assistance. With a courage, which, under the circumstances, I can call nothing less than sublime, he interfered in my behalf; reproached the Duke with his villany, and escorted me out of the château. But here, alas ! his power to assist me ended. He was afraid to let me remain on the Duke's domain; and, thinking that I might best elude my persecutor in the obscurity of a metropolis, he sent me to Paris. He gave me a letter of introduction to a woman, whom he described as poor, but honest; and who, he said, would, for a small remuneration, allow me to board in her house. Alas ! she did not merit the priest's eulogium. For some time I supported myself with the produce of my pencil——"

“ Good Heavens ! Why did you not apply to me for assistance ? Had you forgotten my address ? ”

“ I cannot say I had,” replied Antonia, slightly blushing ; “ but one of the insults which the Duke heaped upon me, was an insinuation, that my resistance to him was occasioned by a secret attachment to the guest whom I had only seen one day.”

Cleveland, whose eyes during the narrative were fastened upon her beautiful and expressive countenance, felt his heart beat at the mere suggestion.

“ I determined,” resumed Antonia, “ not to take a step which might lend a colour of truth to his suspicions. Besides, you might have proved a more dangerous protector than even the Duke—I did not dare to trust you—nay, I did not dare to trust myself. I therefore persevered in my labours ; but the Duke discovered

my retreat, and the expedient by which I supported existence. His first care was to undersell me with all my employers. I could no longer find purchasers for a single drawing. He then corrupted my hostess. She offered to lend me money, which I imprudently accepted; and she now threatens, unless I seek the Duke's protection, to throw me into prison."

Cleveland heard her story without surprise, for he knew De Fronsac; neither did he waste any indignation on the Duke's conduct; for he knew a hundred others of his acquaintance, who, placed in a similar situation, would have acted in the same manner. Nevertheless, he felt a sentiment of interest in the fate of the unhappy girl, with whom he had thus strangely been brought in contact. Before they parted, he extorted from her a promise that she would meet him on the morrow. She consented.

Those, who have never felt the iron gripe of necessity, may condemn her conduct ; but others, better acquainted with the world, will pronounce that, in certain crises, life offers but one alternative to the wretched—death by their own hands, or submission to circumstances. It is easy for a person, surrounded to satiety by all the comforts of life, to make the magnanimous declaration that they would sooner starve piecemeal than be guilty of such and such acts. Let them wait till they are tried. To execute such a resolve is as impossible as to refrain from crying out when torn to pieces by the rack. Yet though Antonia yielded, it was at least with apparent regret.

“ I am afraid,” said she, “ I am about to place myself in the power of a protector even more dangerous than the Duke de Fronsac.”

“ In placing yourself in my power,” replied

Cleveland, "you have in reality secured your safety. In the vulgar language of the world, you are indebted to me, and owe me some return; but, in reality, I am the party who has gained by this interview; since you have inspired me with an emotion of interest which has long been a stranger to my bosom. But at all events, possessing, as I hope I do, some few grains of generosity, I should as soon think of availing myself of the advantage of my superior physical strength, as of abusing the influence which accidental circumstances had conferred on me."

Antonia would have been charmed with the delicacy of this sentiment, even had it proceeded from the mouth of De Fronsac; but coming, as it did, from a man under thirty, and to whom she was already bound by the obligations of gratitude, it reached her heart.

Cleveland's first care was to hire some comfortable but retired lodgings. His next to engage an old woman, who usually officiated as his laundress, to enact the part of chaperon and duenna to Antonia. These arrangements were both completed before he met Antonia. The latter was soon installed in her new domicile, which it was agreed she should consider as her home, until circumstances should offer a plan more suitable to her age and sex. Cleveland respectfully and delicately requested permission to visit her ; Antonia made but a faint opposition. She was young, unversed in the world's customs, and a stranger to the rules of etiquette. She threw herself wholly on Cleveland's honour, and trusted to his sense of propriety.

Cleveland became, as might have been expected, Antonia's daily visitor.

What a wonderful thing is love, especially in

its first conception. Here was a man who had lived from his youth upwards with the wise and the great, who had tried every pursuit, and exhausted every pleasure, and had found all stale, flat, and unprofitable. So deeply was he disgusted with every phase and modification of life; so utterly did he despair of attaining even a moderate degree of happiness in any, that he looked upon life as a burthen. He had endeavoured to get rid of it as a disease; and now, how and where was this fastidious, indifferent, sated poco-curante, spending his time, day after day? In a tame insipid conversation with a young and inexperienced girl,—a conversation inspired by no ulterior motive,—carried on for the mere purpose of amusing the passing moment,—maintained solely for the present pleasure which it afforded to both parties. Yes—the conversation was flat and insipid; or at

least would have been so to any third person but the old woman who had been hired to endure their tediousness. And yet both Antonia and Cleveland possessed great natural abilities; and one had seen much of life.

Their talk turned chiefly on themselves. Sometimes it consisted of idle plans for the future regulation of Antonia's life. One day it was settled she was to be a prima donna. Another time, she was to be a female Raphael. At another she was to be an abbess. Sometimes Cleveland would reveal glimpses of his past life, to which the other listened with the intensest interest. But oftener than anything else the conversation was occupied with developing their mutual feelings. They were never weary of unfolding to each other their most hidden emotions, and explaining the respective peculiarities of their dispositions. All these matters were

certainly light and trifling. Where then was the spell which bound him, who had turned away so contemptuously from the most dazzling of life's other enchantments! Where was the charm that fascinated him, whom nothing and nobody could please?

He analysed his feelings; and he found that in conversing with Antonia, one subject was just as delightful as another. He felt, that with her, he could have discussed the difference between the Homousians and the Homoiousians,* with the greatest interest and animation. Her presence alone was sufficient happiness to him. He wished for nothing more. To see her—to be in the same room with her—was enough. To listen to her when she spoke,—to

* See Gibbon on the mighty schism between these two sects; who, for the difference of a vowel, tore the Christian world to pieces.

gaze upon her when she was silent,—to watch her when she moved,—to contemplate her when motionless,—it mattered not which of these occupations employed him. Either, or any of them, made him happy—unboundedly happy—happy beyond what he had conceived to be the extreme limits of human enjoyment. He would not have exchanged five minutes of such placid delight, for all the noisy tumultuous pleasures that ever shook a palace. Sometimes they drove, accompanied by the *bonne*, a short distance from Paris, and took a country walk. The ruralities, in the vicinity of a metropolis, are seldom very attractive; but what signified their intrinsic merits? Her company hallowed even the vilest object that met his eye. Not a stick, not a stone, not a shrub, not a tree, not a stile, but it immediately became sacred in his sight, if he had seen it whilst enjoying her

society. Months afterwards, when he visited the place alone, the aspect of a rude rustic bench, on which she had once rested, shook him—the stoic Cleveland—even to tears. Good God ! how mutable are our strongest feelings ! A week ago, this man was on the point of seeking a muddy death at the bottom of the Seine,—and now he hoarded life as a miser would do his treasure.

Could they always have remained in this state, they had been happy. But sooner or later love inevitably becomes alloyed with passion ; and passion tends to possession ; and possession (such is the unhappy nature of our mortal frame) reacts injuriously upon our love, tarnishing the glory and destroying the divinity of our idol.

When Cleveland first took Antonia under his protection, he never for a moment harboured

any idea of making her either his mistress, or his wife. The pity, naturally excited by the spectacle of unparalleled beauty overwhelmed by unmerited distress, was the only motive that prompted his conduct. Melancholy, weariness, and disgust, had temporarily dried up the sources of desire and pleasure. Cleveland never suspected that any danger could arise from his intimacy with Antonia. His passions seemed dead—Alas ! they were only asleep. The beauty of Antonia woke them to redoubled life. He was surprised, but not alarmed. He thought he could control his feelings. He might still, he thought, with safety, fill his eyes and heart with her loveliness. He might still listen to the music of her voice. With this he would be content. He would say to the rising spring-tide of passion ;—thus far shalt thou go, and no farther. Canute's attempt to stay the

flowing waves with his royal chair, was not more ridiculous. We may avoid temptation, but we cannot subdue it. Once let the enemy get possession of the throbbing citadel—once let all sally-ports and outlets of the body be filled with a torrent of hot-bubbling blood; and, if you are under fifty, you may abandon all hopes of resistance. Most wisely are we taught to pray not to be led into temptation. We are not directed to supplicate for the power of overcoming temptation, because this is impossible without ceasing to be men.

But what opposition did he encounter from Antonia herself? What resistance did the fair girl make? None at all—not the least—not the slightest.—If Cleveland had drunk deep of the intoxicating draught, she had drunk much deeper. The slightest expression of his will, was to her as a law of her being. The least

indication of his wish was revered, like the fiat of a divinity. She had no suspicions—no distrust of his intentions. So deep was her confidence in his love, so boundless was her admiration of the whole man, that the idea of guilt or shame could not exist in her mind with that of his beloved image. Had he asked her to sacrifice her life—her happiness in this world—or her immortal soul in the next, she would have instantly consented. Had he pointed the instrument of death to her breast, she would not have turned away—she would have smiled in unutterable love. Death would have been sweet from his hands.

To love and to be loved in early youth, when soul meets soul; when heart answers to heart; when sense, sympathy, spirit, and feeling, are all condensed upon one dear object, who reflects them back! Transcendant happiness! When

once tasted and enjoyed, we may thank God, and die ; for all subsequent pleasures are flat and insipid.

Well—bitter as is the price we pay for this gratification,—heavy as is the penalty, which the hated laws of society inflict on the woman, who thus errs, Antonia did perhaps wisely, as well as lovingly, in snatching a few brief hours—in plucking a few sweet flowers, from the barren waste of existence, at all costs, at any hazard, and in defiance of the world's law. Ay—the hope of fame is sweet to the vain—power may seem a noble object to the proud—and the desire of the miser is insatiable. But in looking back upon all these pleasures, we feel that they were mere phantoms, which mocked the touch ; there was nothing in them which satisfied the thirsty longings of the heart—nothing which quenched the feverish aspirations

of the soul. No—throughout the whole progress of this detested journey—this accursed pilgrimage called life, there is but one god-like joy, which any mind of sense and spirit would wish to repeat. It is—away with the paltry delicacy of shuffling phrases, and ambiguous expressions—it is the full, free, unrestrained, entire, and perfect, moral and physical possession of the being we love.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A VISIT FROM THE POLICE.

ABOUT six weeks after the Marchioness de Montolieu's interview with Cagliostro, the Count D'Ostalis was one morning informed by his valet, that two strangers, who had declined giving their names, were waiting in the saloon below to speak to him.

The Count, who had just achieved a most successful toilette, and was meditating in what particular sort of idleness he should employ the day, heard the announcement with visible vexation, and bid his valet tell the visitors that he

was engaged. The man hesitated, and stated that he had already assured the strangers that his master was busy ; but that, nothing daunted at this information, they had peremptorily declared their determination to see him before they left the house. He further added, that he suspected the strangers to be some of the higher agents of the police. Uneasy at this latter intelligence, the Count instantly hurried to the saloon, where he found the strangers placidly awaiting his arrival. They rose with civility on his entrance, and saluted him.

“ I have the honour,” said the one who appeared to be the leader, “ to serve his most Christian Majesty Louis the Sixteenth in the capacity of Sub-Lieutenant of the Police.”

“ The King is happy in possessing such a servant,” said Count D'Ostalis, whose habit of complimenting was inveterate.

The officer bowed with an air of profound gratification. Count D'Ostalis returned the bow ; and the officer seemed to feel the honour of being bowed to by a Count.

“Count D'Ostalis,” resumed the Lieutenant, “it is an unpleasant duty to intrude on the leisure of so polite a nobleman as yourself ; but I come on an errand of great importance. You are no doubt aware, that about two years ago, a certain adventurer, named Joseph Balsamo, but assuming among other appellations the title of Count Cagliostro, was implicated in the famous and atrocious affair of the necklace.”

“The transaction was the talk of all Europe,” observed the Count.

“Unhappily it was,” continued the Lieutenant ; “no doubt you are also aware, that though this crafty charlatan contrived to elude the justice of his country, and to obtain from the lawyers who tried him a verdict of acquittal,

his most Christian Majesty thought fit to banish him as a dangerous character from the realm of France, and to prohibit his return under the severest penalties."

"Such I have understood was his Majesty's pleasure," replied the Count.

"And yet, Count D'Ostalis, we have received private information that you have, within the last few months, not only seen, but even conversed with and visited, this supposed exile."

"The information was correct," replied the Count without hesitation. The Lieutenant and his follower exchanged looks of astonishment.

"Was it not the duty of a loyal man to have forwarded information to the police?"

"How could I tell," replied the Count, "that he was obnoxious to you? How did I know but that the King had permitted him to return? He did not seem to affect concealment."

"Can you remember," said the former, "the

day of the month on which your visit took place ?”

“ The beginning of June.”

“ This is incomprehensible,” says the Lieutenant in an under voice to his follower ; “ do not our letters from Berne state, that in the early part of June this arch-juggler Cagliostro was then resident in that city, and openly carrying on his usual practices ?”

“ They do,” returned the other, in the same suppressed voice, “ and I would stake my life on Legendre’s fidelity. If his information be unfounded, he is deceived himself. Cagliostro must either have a double, or possess the power of ubiquity.”

“ Be pleased to tell us, Monsieur le Comte,” said the Lieutenant, again addressing himself to D’Ostalis, “ how your interview with Cagliostro originated ; by what means you became aware of his presence in Paris ; and from what

motives you were induced to communicate with him ?”

“ At a réunion,” replied D'Ostalis, “ held at the Duke de Fronsac's, the conversation turned on Cagliostro ; and a certain Chevalier de Crespigny told me, that the individual who had been celebrated under that name was then in Paris, and gave me his address.”

Again the Lieutenant and his follower exchanged looks of extreme surprise.

“ Wonder on wonder,” exclaimed the officer to his satellite ; “ why this Chevalier de Crespigny was our informant on the present occasion. Pray, Monsieur le Comte, is this Chevalier a friend of yours ?”

“ By no means,” said the Count. “ I have only met him at De Fronsac's.”

“ This must be looked to,” said the Lieutenant, taking out his pocket-book, and making

a memorandum. Count D'Ostalis then detailed the whole of his adventure with Cagliostro, omitting only the name of the Marchioness de Montolieu.

"And who was the lady who evinced so much emotion at this simple piece of jugglery?"

"Excuse me," said the Count.

"Monsieur le Comte," said the Lieutenant firmly, "we honour your delicacy, but the name must be revealed. The public interest is a paramount law, to which every other consideration must give way. Nay, the safety of the lady's reputation will be best consulted by yielding to my request. For if we are forced to make farther researches, the whole affair may become known to persons for whose discretion I cannot answer."

Thus pressed, the Count D'Ostalis, after much hesitation, gave the name of the Marchioness.

“Could you identify the apartments where this strange scene took place?”

“Most certainly,” replied the Count.

“Then let us instantly hurry there,” exclaimed the Lieutenant. “If we cannot catch the fox in his hole, we shall find it still warm. At all events, that is the spot where we shall best trace his machinations, and obtain intelligence of his movements. We are three, and well armed. Duperron, lend the Count one of your pistols—let us lose no time—every moment is precious. The fiacre we came in, waits at your porte cochère, Count.”

The Count D'Ostalis saw that he should only expose himself to suspicion by betraying any reluctance to accompany the Lieutenant. He therefore shrugged his shoulders, and prepared to follow him, with as good a grace as possible.

The fiacre drove rapidly, until it reached the Rue St. Honoré.

“That is the house,” said the Count, “in which Cagliostro lodged.”

The fiacre was stopped. The party entered the shop.

“Are you the proprietor of the apartments over this shop?” said the Lieutenant to the master of the shop.

“Yes, Monsieur.”

“Are your lodgings occupied at present?”

“No, Monsieur; they have been vacant a fortnight. I should be happy to let you have them at four louis a week.”

The Lieutenant and his follower gazed at each other, with an air of helpless disappointment. At length the former said to his assistant: “Run up stairs, Duperron, and take a glance at the rooms.”

The follower obeyed. He soon returned; and whispered to his leader, that the apartment presented no traces of having been recently occupied.

“What was the name of your last lodger?” said the Lieutenant.

“He was a Swiss baron, whose usual place of residence is Berne. He called himself Baron Walden.”

“Describe his appearance.”

“A tall old man, with grey hair.”

“Are you certain, Count, that this is the house?”

“Perfectly certain,” replied Count D’Ostalis.

“Did the Baron receive many visitors?” said the Lieutenant to the master.

“I cannot say,” answered the latter; “for he was waited upon by his own servants; and I had but little communication with him.”

The Lieutenant looked distressed, like a hound at fault. "Come," said he to his follower, "let us go. Nothing more can be done here. I watched the man closely while I put my questions ; and if, with that unconcerned visage, he be in the remotest degree privy to Cagliostro's proceedings, I have scanned the face of guilt for twenty years in vain."

He then briefly informed the master of the house, that he did not feel disposed to take the apartments on the terms demanded ; and the party vacated the shop, leaving the owner in a state of great surprise and indignation at the authoritative style of their questions, and the ultimate rejection of his lodgings.

The party mounted the fiacre, and drove towards the Hôtel D'Ostalis.

The Lieutenant's face was thoughtful and gloomy ; the follower seemed to consider it

necessary to compose his features after the fashion of his superior. The Count D'Ostalis, though not naturally proud or supercilious, so completely lived, and had his being, in the fashionable circles, that he was absolutely incapable of conversing with any one who did not move in that sphere, and understand its peculiar language. The party therefore rode along for some time in silence. At length, the strength of the Lieutenant's feelings seemed to compel him, by an irresistible impulse, to speak. Apparently he was rather actuated by a desire to express his feelings, than by any expectation of obtaining the applause or sympathy of his audience; for his eyes were fixed on vacancy while he spoke.

“What would Monsieur de Sartines (Minister of Police under Louis the Fifteenth) have said, if he had seen our morning's work?”

Strange times !—fearful times ! Things cannot remain as they are, that is certain ; and what will be the result of change ? God only knows, Monsieur le Comte. The country is ruined.”

“ Upon my honour,” replied Count D’Ostalis, with a slight yawn, “ I can’t agree with you : I see no symptoms of change. Is not society as brilliant as ever ? Are not our saloons as crowded, our costume as splendid, and our conversation as pointed and witty, as in the time of the ‘ Grand Monarque ’ ? It is true, our opera has lately suffered some terrible losses ; but it still continues to be a glory to our own country, and a wonder to all others.”

“ Yes,” answered the Lieutenant, with bitterness ; “ the world’s outside is still gay enough, I grant. True, the sun is shining, and the sky is bright ; but methinks I sometimes hear the rumbling of an approaching earthquake. Yes

—France is ruined. The secret police is losing its power. There is a spirit abroad, which we have in vain endeavoured to lay: we suppress it in one place, and it bursts out in another. Something is ever stirring beneath the surface of society. We see the ferment, yet we cannot stifle the ebullition; nor, which is worse, can we discover its source. We are surrounded by plots, of whose existence we are well aware; and yet we cannot penetrate their ramifications, and reach their authors. Yes—I repeat it: the secret police—the key-stone of the arch on which monarchy rests—the real sceptre by which a wise government governs—the secret police, has lost its power.”

“And yet it seems to me,” said the Count, “that you apprehend, imprison, and hang, as many rogues as usual.”

“Do you imagine, Monsieur le Comte, that

the immense police of this great kingdom is kept up for the purpose of protecting society from vulgar depredations against life and property? Think you that we spend millions of livres, and employ thousands of agents, to hunt down a few burglars and pickpockets? Such gentry are easily dealt with. The whole society, with the exception of their own miserable associates, are at war with them—are interested in exposing and punishing them. As it is, not ten in a hundred escape detection; and were we not occupied with other and higher matters, not one in a hundred would elude justice.”

“ Truly,” replied the Count; “ I always fancied, if one may hint such an opinion without offence to you, Monsieur, that the apprehension and suppression of such individuals, were the main object, and chief business of a police establishment.”

“You are mistaken, Count;—no doubt it forms a part of our duties, to guard as much as possible the throats and strong-boxes of the good citizens of Paris; but a much higher charge also devolves upon us—that of defending the country, or, in other words, the government, against its domestic foes. Thieves and robbers are bad persons, no doubt, but they do not upset governments.”

“And who are they whose efforts tend to that result?” asked the Count.

“Ruined nobles,” answered the Lieutenant; “who, being scouted by their own order for their vices, determine to be revenged upon it by their crimes. Fanatic philosophers,—who would pound the whole edifice of society into dust, in order that they might have the pleasure of re-arranging the scattered atoms into mathematical lines. Believers in human perfectabi-

lity—mad and disappointed geniuses, whose writings infect all who read them with contagious insanity. Turbulent and restless spirits,—who plot at home, because they have not the opportunity of fighting abroad. Desperate adventurers, to whom any change must be acceptable. These, and a thousand such, make the first breach in the time-honoured institutions of the country. When that is accomplished, the rabble rush in. Both besiegers and assailants are involved in common ruin, and a scene of undistinguished carnage and plunder ensues.”

“ But does Cagliostro come under any of the classes you have mentioned ? ”

“ Be assured, Count, that it was not without bitter proof, both of his inclination and ability to be dangerous, that his most Christian Majesty banished this man from France. Some

of his intrigues we have actually detected ; and we have strong reasons for believing, that he is the prime mover and agent in a series of dark and traitorous machinations, which a Prince of the ——”

Here the attention of the Lieutenant was attracted by a loud and significant cough from his follower. He seemed to take a hint from the signal, for, instead of finishing his accusation against Cagliostro, he recurred to his former subject of conversation.

“ No, Monsieur le Comte, the true business of a police is, first to protect the country,—that is, the government,—and afterwards its subjects. To watch the first symptoms of disaffection ; to crush, in the outset, the smallest expression of discontent ; to ascertain and identify the few troublesome spirits, who are the leaven that causes the mass of society to

ferment : for passive obedience is the general rule of mankind, and rebellion only the exception. To find out such characters, and to have them cared for—such are the real duties of an extensive police in an absolute monarchy. To chase petty-larceny rogues is a very secondary consideration. In the time of Monsieur de Sartines, his late majesty, Louis the Fifteenth, betted one of his courtiers, that the police would apprise themselves, if they chose, of the manner in which he spent his time for a whole week, let him take what precaution he would.”

“ Did the king win the wager ? ” asked the Count.

“ He did.”

“ And now a banished outlaw is able to elude your utmost efforts to apprehend him ? ”

The Lieutenant shook his head, and looked dismal. “ What is the cause ? ” resumed the

Count, “of the diminished vigour of the police?”

“Want of funds, Monsieur le Comte. The Government is embarrassed.—How can the annual deficit be reduced? ‘We will not register your edicts,’ say the Parliaments. ‘We will not pay the taxes, unless the edicts, which impose them are registered,’ cry the people. ‘We will not surrender a single livre of our grants and pensions,’ reiterate the courtiers. The money is not forthcoming; and the retrenchment falls, not on the expenses of the Court, but on the effective force of Government. The salaries of our agents are in arrear—our secret-service money is withheld, and we are powerless. At this moment, Monsieur le Comte, the Government—that is the police, for in a monarchy they are identical—resembles an old lion destitute of teeth and claws, and

terrible only in appearance. If we are still obeyed, it is rather from the force of habit and the recollection of our ancient strength, than from any power which we at present possess to enforce submission."

"This is all very shocking," said the Count, taking a pinch of snuff, "and may be very true ; but the weakness of the police does not prevent me from going to the opera ; and it seems to me, that the king can do the same ; although he does not possess, like his grandfather, the power of informing himself how every noble in the kingdom passes his time. There is still some comfort."

"Ah, mighty fine, Monsieur le Comte," replied the Inspector of Police, "you, like all the rest of your class, are blind to your own true interests. You do not support the monarchy with earnestness and cordi-

ality. But if the bourgeoisie sweep away the monarchy, will they respect your privileges? your seigneurial rights gall the peasant, far more than the king's Lettres de Cachet. But we have arrived, I see, at the Hotel d'Ostalis. Monsieur le Comte, I beg a thousand pardons for the trouble which, in the performance of the king's service, I have been obliged to give you, and have the honour to wish you good morning. Yet, before we part, pray inform me whether I am likely to find the Duke de Fronsac at home: I must enquire about his friend, the Chevalier de Crespigny." The Count stated that the Duke seldom left home until an hour later; and the Lieutenant of Police and his myrmidon drove off.

CHAPTER XIX.

ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

IN the evening, Count d' Ostalis betook himself to the Théâtre Français. He had no particular motive for preferring that theatre to any other ; his visit was the pure result of what, for want of a better term, we call chance. On entering the orchestra, the first person on whom his eye fell was the Duke de Fronsac. The Count instantly made his way to this latter personage, with the view of ascertaining the result of the Lieutenant's mission. The piece represented on the

stage was "Le Fils Naturel," one of Diderot's plays, written in the style which the critics of the day called "La Comédie larmoyante."

The Count could not suppress his impatience to tell his story. "You do not seem much entertained, De Fronsac, with this lachrymose comedy: listen to me—I will relate a scene from real life, in which I played a part this morning, a thousand times more exciting and mysterious than what they are enacting on yonder stage."

"I too have had an adventure," said the Duke.

"My dear Duke," said the Count, imploringly, "let me tell my story first."

The Duke smiled, and bowed consent. The Count then proceeded to detail the visit of the police, and their fruitless search in pursuit of Cagliostro. He further related the substance of the conversation which took place between himself

and the officer, on their way back to the Hôtel D'Ostalis.

The Duke listened with deep and earnest attention.

“ This is a strange story,” said he, “ that Cagliostro, after such a narrow escape from the vengeance of an exasperated and despotic court, after getting quit for his intrigues in the necklace affair with such an easy sentence as banishment, should have had the temerity to return to France, and again put his head into the wolf's mouth ! It seems really incredible. But that he should have eluded all the researches of the police appears still more extraordinary. My adventure is the sequel to yours ; but instead of explaining anything, it makes the matter ten times more dark and mysterious.” The Duke then stated that the same officer, who formed the hero of Count D'Ostalis' story, had subsequently called

upon him, and made divers enquiries after the Chevalier de Crespigny.

“ I shall never forget the man’s face when I told him, I first met Crespigny at the Palais Royal, where the Duke of Orleans introduced him to me as his particular friend; and that Monsieur le Chevalier had set out for Switzerland four-and-twenty hours ago. He looked like a chess-player when stale-mated; or rather like the respectable proprietor of a rich fruit garden, when caught in one of his own man-traps. Never did one of his own victims, when arrested by the strong gripe of the thief-catcher, exhibit a whiter face.”

“ It is pretty certain,” said the Count, “ that the information forwarded by Crespigny, was purposely meant to send the good Lieutenant on a fool’s errand.”

“ Clearly,” said the Duke; “ the affair seems

to have been got up in utter mockery of the existing government, for the mere sake of bewildering and confusing the police. The Duke paused a moment, and then added in a thoughtful tone: "I seldom take notice of public affairs; but I confess this strange decay in the power of the police makes me feel uneasy. The Lieutenant was right; there is a storm brewing. The government, though it apparently continues with unimpaired prerogatives, declines every day in actual strength. It is evident to me, that the government cannot even collect the already existing taxes, and dare not enforce the edicts which it has forcibly registered. Still money must be had; fresh taxes must be levied; and the result of all these difficulties and distraction, will be the convocation of the States-General."

"Never!" said the Count D'Ostalis, with a

self-sufficient shake of his head; "the king might as well lay down both crown and sceptre."

"Shall I tell you a secret," rejoined the Duke; "the measure is already determined upon. The Archbishop of Toulouse has tried every expedient in vain: he has exhausted all the resources of his rash and incapable mind; and lest any successor should cast shame on him, by effecting what he has failed to perform; he is resolved to throw up the remaining chances of the game, and to recommend himself the Convocation of the States General. In less than a month you will see an order of council to that effect."

"After all," said the Count, "what harm can result from a meeting of the States. They will vote the necessary supplies, and then separate."

"Trust me," cried the Duke, "the king will

not so easily dismiss the demon he has evoked. I do not in my conscience believe that either moderation or stupidity are the predominant characteristics of the French nation."

"Well," returned the Count, if they do abolish lettres de cachet, and otherwise clip the King's claws, which are in my opinion a little too long and sharp at present, I think I could pardon them."

"Admitted," said the Duke; "but this same process of clipping has such extraordinary fascinations for popular politicians, that when they have once commenced the practice, they never can be persuaded to leave off. Suppose, when they have shortened the King's claws, they should take it into their heads to dock your Countship's crest?"

"That would be awkward," replied the Count, who seemed struck by the observation "I should remonstrate with them."

“ Ay,” sarcastically rejoined the Duke, “ just as a lamb remonstrates beneath the talons of the eagle, and with the same effect. No, Count D'Ostalis, believe me, the consequences of this measure are incalculable.”

“ Yet the necessity for it,” said the Count somewhat pettishly, “ is your own fault. Why did you not, as one of the Notables, assent to Calonne's plans, and enable him to carry them into execution ?”

“ I would have done both,” replied the Duke, but was overruled by my colleagues. In truth they were disgusted at the boundless profusion with which Calonne had wasted the Royal treasures. He allowed Monsieur and the Count d'Artois to help themselves to the tune of sixty or seventy millions of livres. As to Marie Antoinette, her pleasures had cost the country . double that sum. Take a single instance. As a delicate compliment to the Countess de Po-

lignac, the Count received on one occasion a gratuity of six hundred thousand livres for the valuable public services which he had performed in the capacity of maître-d'hôtel to his own wife. What the minister's own share of the plunder amounted to, God only knows."

"Will the Archbishop," asked the Count, "remain minister?"

"He anticipates as much," said the Duke; "but that is not the only miscalculation he has made since he became first minister."

"Then who will succeed him?"

"The author of the *Compte-rendu*," replied the Duke, "the banker-minister, Monsieur Necker."

"Good," said the Count; "the very man that the occasion requires."

"Do you speak as a friend or an enemy of the present system. Necker is a good stock-

jobber, but a bad minister. As a political pilot he is well intentioned, but imbecile ; and will run the ship on every single rock and sandbank that lies in the troubled sea before us."

" My dear Duke," said the Count yawning, " until the present moment I never found you dull. I consider you to be the most magnificent sinner in Europe ; and I, as an humble dabbler in vice, of course feel the utmost reverence for your character. I would bear more from you than most men ; but I feel myself utterly unable to endure any farther disquisitions on ministers, pilots, or states-general. If our heads must ache, let it be with wine, and not with politics. Will all these dreadful calamities happen to-night ?"

" Perhaps not," said the Duke.

" To-morrow ?"

" No."

“ The day after ?”

“ No.”

“ Then let us be happy,” said the Count,
“ till the end of the week, and leave the future
to take care of itself.”

“ Well, perhaps, the resource of the hunted ostrich is the wisest we can pursue on the present occasion. To change, then, the topic, or rather to resume our original subject, tell me something more respecting this singular character, Cagliostro. What was the style of his address and conversation during the interview you were fortunate enough to obtain with him ?”

“ His manners were captivating,” returned the Count ; “ his elocution was rapid, dazzling, overpowering. He seems willing to initiate you in all the mysteries of his craft. He affects to explain everything intricate or puzzling with the greatest frankness ; but after you have lis-

tened to him for a few minutes, you perceive that he is only deluding your understanding with chimeras, and laughing at your vain efforts to follow his meaning. If you attempt to sift his discourse, or fix him to a particular point, he envelopes you in a cloud of words,—first whirls you into the airy regions of abstract speculation, then drags you through a dark chaos of past facts and opinions; until fatigued by the multiplicity of the ideas he has forced on your imagination, and bewildered by the labyrinth of tortuous reasoning which he has compelled you to traverse, you entirely lose your senses. Then, by a sort of metaphysical sleight, he puts you down exactly where he took you up; leaving you certain of nothing but his own surpassing power of mystification.”

“ I should like to see the man,” said the Duke, “ who has managed to create so deep an

impression upon a being as light-hearted as yourself."

"The influence," continued the Count, "which he contrived to acquire over me in a quarter of an hour's conversation, has since struck me as supernatural. I was as pliable as wax in his hands; he moulded me to what shape he pleased. He asked me for fifty louis; and I gave them. It is well he did not demand half my fortune; or I certainly should have complied with the requisition. I believe I should have let him draw my front teeth if he had wanted them; so irresistible was the fascination of his wonderful and universal genius."

"You are, indeed, an enthusiastic idolater of skill," said the Duke, laughing, "if you can persist in adoring it when you become its victim. I suppose if he had cut your throat, your ghost would have risen and complimented him upon

the anatomical precision with which he had divided your jugular. But, joking apart, I wish chance had thrown this extraordinary individual in my way; I am engaged in an affair in which a personage of this sort might have rendered me infinite service."

"I would not advise you," said the Count, "to waste your time in endeavouring to trace out his retreat; if the police have been baffled in the attempt, it is not likely that amateurs like ourselves should succeed."

"That inference, Count, is what logicians call a non sequitur," said a voice from behind. "Count Cagliostro may be willing to communicate with men of rank and honour, though he chooses to remain invisible to the minions of tyranny."

Count D'Ostalis and the Duke were seated on the back row of the orchestra, which, as

every reader who has seen the interior of a French theatre will recollect, is only separated from the rest of the pit by a slight railing. The voice came from behind. The Count turned sharply round, and saw that the observation proceeded from an individual seated in the front row of the pit, who was leaning on the partition-rail, into the orchestra. He was a swarthy, middle-aged man, wrapped in a cloak, although the weather was warm. The aristocratic bile of the Count was roused by the idea of a roturier daring to overhear a nobleman's conversation, and presuming to criticise it with such easy familiarity.

“How now, fellow,” said he, in a tone of ineffable contempt. “What means this insolence? are you drunk?”

“No, Monsieur le Comte ; I am neither intoxicated with wine, nor yet with pride, as

some, who think themselves my superiors, appear to be."

"This passes endurance," said the Count, with increasing choler. "If you are troublesome, I shall summon the police."

"Patience, most noble Count," replied the stranger. "Do you call those troublesome who would help you to your wishes?"

The Count looked about, as if to see whether the guard was at his post.

"Stop, D'Ostalis," whispered the Duke, who had not been inattentive to the preceding colloquy. "I suspect this man to be a confederate of Cagliostro's. I am certain, by the firm outline of his lips, that threats are of no service. The argument of the sun, not that of the wind, must be used to beguile that steady being of his cloak."—"My friend," continued he, addressing the pertinacious stranger, "it

seems you have taken the trouble to listen to our conversation. Are you acquainted with the individual who was the subject of our discourse ?”

“ As well as a mortal can be.”

“ Do you know the place of his retreat ?”

“ Cagliostro never retreated from his enemies ; though he may occasionally choose to be invisible to them. I know, however, his place of residence.”

“ Retreat or residence, it is all the same to us,” said the Duke. “ If you will conduct us thither, our gratitude will not confine itself to thanks.”

“ Permit me,” calmly replied the stranger, “ to ascertain, beforehand, the probable limits of your grateful generosity.”

“ Oh, do not be afraid ; we will not give you less than a louis-d’or.”

“That sum,” rejoined the other, “is far more than my intended services deserve, and infinitely exceeds what my own natural modesty would allow me to demand. But the chief I serve, knowing well my morbid delicacy on this subject, has strictly enjoined me not to accept less than five louis-d’or for directing a stranger to his residence. I dare not disobey his injunctions.”

“Poor innocent!” said the Duke, drily; “your fidelity, however, bears its own reward.”

“Moreover,” continued the stranger, “my chief, profoundly penetrated with the general uncertainty of all mundane affairs, and especially looking to the exceeding mutability of the human heart, farther enjoined me, not to stir hand nor foot in such cases, till the afore-said five pieces of gold were counted into my reluctant palm.”

“What say you to his offer, D'Ostalis?” inquired the Duke, doubtfully, of his companion. “How can we be certain that he will perform what he promises?”

“If that be your only difficulty,” said the Count, “pay him instantly what he asks. If there be any truth in the proverb, ‘like master like man,’ he is, beyond all doubt, a genuine follower of Cagliostro. This last trait savours strongly of that great man’s style. It is quite in accordance with the *à priori* system of philosophy. He pretends to reverse the inductive method, and invariably pockets the results before he performs the facts.”

“Good !” rejoined the Duke, turning to the stranger, who sat awaiting the result of their conference with great indifference. “Well, my friend, for once I will satisfy the exorbitant demands of your obedient modesty ; but Heaven

grant that my next petitioner be of the impudent kind." He then counted the pieces of money into the stranger's hand.

"I will now leave the theatre," said the man. "Do not follow me immediately, or you will excite suspicion. Five minutes hence, you will find me waiting outside, in the vestibule of the entrance."

The foregoing colloquy did not excite so much attention as might have been expected; for the conversation was carried on in low though energetic tones; and the curtain having fallen, on the termination of the first piece, there was some bustle and confusion in the theatre.

"I much fear," remarked the Duke, "that when we reach the rendezvous, we shall find neither man nor money."

"Don't alarm yourself," answered the Count; "I am certain the man was an agent of Ca-

gliostro's; and if that sublime genius has taken us in hand, be assured that the extractive process will not be limited to five louis."

"Perhaps," said the Duke, "this pretended emissary of Cagliostro's was the arch juggler himself."

"I think not," replied the other; "the man has caught a portion of his master's style, but in voice, features, and figure, bore no resemblance to him."

On reaching the appointed place, the Duke discovered the injustice of his suspicions. The stranger had already repaired to the spot, and was waiting for them.

"Now, Messieurs," said he, in a low tone, "follow me." The two noblemen obeyed the order, and picked their way as well as they could, along the dimly-lighted and dirty streets and lanes through which he led them.

At last their conductor called a coach. They entered it. The stranger made an apology for putting down the blinds, and the whole party proceeded in darkness and silence. At last they stopped. The noblemen found themselves in a quarter of Paris which was totally unknown to them. The houses were miserable and beggarly in the extreme. The few inhabitants who had not retired to rest, from their tattered garbs, and dirty villainous aspect, seemed fit tenants of such dwellings. The whole place was redolent of penury and filth. At one of the least promising of these mansions, their conductor seemed to give a peculiar kind of knock with his knuckle. The door flew open. They entered, and groped their way up a dark staircase. Suddenly they missed their conductor.

“Curses on the knave, he has vanished,”

whispered the Duke, who was foremost, to the Count, behind.

“ Shall we go back, and burst open the street-door ?” said the other, hesitating.

“ No,” returned the Duke. “ I see the light through a chink. Let us push boldly on.— Courage is generally the safest policy, and never more so than when you are in a rogue’s power.”

They felt their way up to the end of the passage which terminated the staircase. They placed their hands against the place through which the light shone. The planks formed a door, which gave way to the pressure, and disclosed to the eyes of the astonished gropers a spacious and elegant apartment, furnished with equal luxury and magnificence, and illuminated by brilliant chandeliers. The change, from utter darkness to a blaze of light, was at

first so overpowering, as to disable them from discriminating objects; and when a richly dressed personage, whom Count D'Ostalis at once recognized to be Cagliostro, advanced to welcome them, they hardly knew whether he had been previously sitting in the room, or if he had entered it at the same time as themselves from another side.

“Welcome, Messieurs,” said he, extending a hand to each. “Monsieur le Comte, this is an unexpected pleasure. That your friend should pay me a visit is nothing extraordinary: he needs my services;—but I thought, that an economical dread of the *à priori* system of philosophy would have frightened you away.”

Count D'Ostalis made no reply, but produced a pocket-book, and began to write.

“Your follower, Monsieur le Comte,” observed the Duke, “has lost no time in making his report.”

“ Oh ! Pierre,” answered Cagliostro, “ is a sympathetic valet. I have rubbed his ear with Sir Kenelm Digby’s powder, so that every thing he hears I hear also. But what is this ?” added he, as Count D’Ostalis handed him a cheque for a hundred louis.

“ A proof of my readiness to conform to the *à priori* system of money payment,” answered the Count, with a smile.

“ I forgive you, Count,” replied Cagliostro, tearing up the cheque. “ You think that the gentle fine I levied on you was meant to satisfy a base thirst of lucre. Never were you more mistaken. It is a slight penance I impose on every fresh aspirant to my acquaintance,—a sort of test by which I ascertain the real value of their pretended curiosity. If their ardour for scientific mystery will not induce them to submit to this trifling loss, I renounce all communication with them, and disappear.”

“ I understand the hint,” said the Duke.
“ D’Ostalis, lend me one of your blank cheques,
—I bank with the same house as yourself.”
The Duke filled up the cheque with an order
for two hundred louis.

Cagliostro scrutinized the document, and
then silently deposited it in his pocket.

“ Now, Count Cagliostro,” said the Duke,
“ my initiatory penance being duly performed,
I advertise you, that in this good city of Paris
—the focus of unbelief to a nation of infidels—
there exists not a more incredulous man than
myself.”

“ I pity you, Monsieur le Duc. The dog-
matic sceptic is as liable to error as the most
credulous bigot. What avails it to escape the
deception of others, if you are constantly de-
ceiving yourself. He who mistakes dreams for
reality, errs, no doubt; but not more than he

who persists in deeming realities to be dreams. Well said my old friend, Martin Luther, with whose phantasm I have so often conversed,— ‘The human mind is like a drunken peasant on horseback ; if you prop him up on one side, he falls over on the other.’ ”

“ You have talked to the founder of Protestantism ? then you affect the power of raising the dead ? ” remarked the Duke, with a civil smile of contempt. “ Do you deal in the supernatural ? that is an old trade.”

“ Monsieur le Duc,” calmly replied Cagliostro, “ what do you mean by the supernatural ? If that vague and general term, nature, has any meaning at all, it comprehends all which is throughout time and space. It implies the sum total of existing entities, whether of thought or matter. The very word supernatural, then, is a contradiction in terms—a solecism, because it

expresses that there is something more—beyond and above what it asserts : in short, that the whole does not include the parts. I cannot counterwork the smallest of nature's laws ; but I may be acquainted with certain secret principles in those laws, which are unknown to the rest of Adam's race. I can produce no phenomena which are not already inherent in matter ; but I may possess more skill in developing and applying the elementary powers, than the whole crowd of sceptics who laugh at me."

"Well done," cried the Duke, laughing ; "you have explained away part of your indiscreet declaration, in a very lawyer-like and plausible manner ; but there still remains your imprudent boast that you can raise the dead. Reason and refine as you will—draw what hairbreadth distinctions you please—you can neither realize nor justify this rash expression."

“The expression is yours, not mine,” replied Cagliostro. “I never spoke of raising the dead. Whether any portion of mind survives the dissolution of its frail and curious tenement, and whether that surviving portion retains its former consciousness, and individual identity, is a mystery which I at least have never been able to fathom. But this I know, that when the simplest arrangement of organic matter is disturbed or broken, all the theologians, poets, and philosophers in the world, were their wits condensed into a single skull, and multiplied a million-fold, could never recombine the scattered particles into their original form.”

“All this is rational enough,” said the Duke ; “but you cannot efface from my mind the recollection of your previous conversation.”

“Neither I nor any other man can raise the dead,” replied Cagliostro ; “of that be sure ;

but disbelieve upon reasonable grounds, and not from a blind vague feeling of incredulity. The whole human race could not restore life to a single blade of withered grass. How then could they reanimate the far more complicated organization of the human body? If we cannot perform the lesser task, it is clear we cannot the greater."

"Monsieur de Cagliostro," said the Duke with a smile, "we will pass, if you please, to another subject. It seems to me, that you are talking against time—I mean that you are prolonging the conversation, until you can invent an excuse for your indiscreet expression."

"I again reiterate," exclaimed Cagliostro. "that the expression of raising the dead was yours, not mine."

"Yet you spoke of conversing with Martin Luther. To do this, you must first have raised him."

“Not so,” replied Cagliostro. “By natural means I have acquired so great a power over the imagination and nervous system, that I can cause the phantasm of a deceased individual to be actually visible and audible to sight and hearing, although no real apparition be present extrinsic to the brain of the person operated upon. In a word, I can affect the optic and auditory nerves, without the aid of external impressions.”

“Let us make the experiment,” cried Count D'Ostalis, ever eager after anything that promised excitement or amusement, and glad to stop a conversation which had already wearied him. “Show us Jean Jacques Rousseau.”

“I have no objection,” said the Duke; “but I warn Count Cagliostro, that whatever success he may have obtained, in making people of irritable nerves and overwrought imaginations

the dupes of their own weakness, it is mere loss of time to attempt the same plan with me. If he wants me to see visions, and hear prophecies, he must have recourse to ventriloquism, and magic lanterns. Assuredly I shall behold nothing but what he actually shows."

"Reserve your jests, Duke, for the moment of failure," replied Cagliostro. Then turning towards the other nobleman, he observed, "Is it possible that the gay, light, unthinking Count D'Ostalis can wish to contemplate the gloomy, despairing, repining, thought-tortured, Rousseau? Is there in the moral world a secret attraction between minds of the most different quality; as in the material universe there is a constant affinity between the most opposite elements?"

"I am sure I don't know," answered Count D'Ostalis with a yawn; "I wish that instead of

moralizing, you would show me Rousseau's ghost."

"Your wish shall be gratified," replied Cagliostro; "you shall behold the Genevese enthusiast."

He went to a chest, from which he took two moderate-sized phials, and presented them to his visitors.

"You must prepare yourself by drinking these cordials," said he.

The two noblemen complied with his request. Count D'Ostalis seemed sobered by the act; but the Duke appeared determined to maintain his bravado to the last.

"I suppose, Count Cagliostro, you always keep full-length portraits of Voltaire and Rousseau ready painted on the slides of your gallantee show. By Bacchus," added he, smacking his lips, "this liquor is delicious. Can you let me

have a few bottles from your stock? Name your own price."

"I am not a wine-merchant," drily replied Cagliostro. He then went to the side of the apartment; and touching probably some secret spring in the wall, the tapestry rolled up like the curtain of a theatre, and disclosed a dark recess, filled with a quantity of unknown and uncouth apparatus. The Duke fancied that he saw huge masses of polished steel, fashioned somewhat after the shapes which are ordinarily given to magnets. Coils of wire, which were apparently interminable, together with wheels, and pullies, and the other machinery requisite for producing motion. But the darkness of the recess prevented him from viewing any object with precision or certainty. Across the entrance was placed a black couch, on which two persons might recline. The external sur-

face of this piece of furniture had the lustre peculiar to metallic substances, and seemed to be formed of a curiously woven tissue of different sized wires. Above the couch was suspended a sort of canopy, which seemed composed of the same materials.

“ Now, Messieurs,” said Cagliostro, “ seat yourselves on this metallic sofa.”

They obeyed the order. Count D'Ostalis was serious ; but the Duke burst into a fit of laughter, in which however an acute ear might have detected something forced.

Both soon reclined their heads upon the back of the couch. In another minute they began to breathe hard, although their eyes were still open. Soon they were buried in profound slumber.

How long they remained in this state, neither the Count nor the Duke could tell ; but from

what they afterwards saw, they presumed their artificial slumbers were terminated by Cagliostro himself. When they awoke, they found that extraordinary man bending over them, with looks of intense attention. With a large watch, which he held in his hand, he intently marked the time. So bewildered and overwrought were their senses by what they had seen during the trance, that some time elapsed before they could recollect where they were.

The Duke was the first to speak. "Pardon me, Cagliostro," said he with an air of the deepest respect, "for the foolish expression I was rash enough to apply to you, before I was witness of your power. It is indeed great! But how could I suppose it from your conversation? It is so common a talent in France to talk well. Nay, the very ability with which you played at words, made me doubt your practical skill in other matters."

“ Make no apologies, Duke, but tell me what saw you ?”

“ Did you not see him yourself ?” asked both the noblemen in great surprise.

“ I saw nothing,” replied Cagliostro, “ for I did not touch the sofa.”

“ That is strange,” said the Duke, “ for I still continued to view both D'Ostalis and yourself.”

“ And so did I,” added Count D'Ostalis.

“ And whom saw you besides,” asked Cagliostro.

“ We saw an old man,” replied Count D'Ostalis, “ who seemed aged with sufferings rather than years. His face, and especially his figure, indicated that he had once been eminently handsome, or at any rate interesting. His forehead was furrowed by grief or thought. His eyes were sunken, but still shone clear and

bright. His cheeks were hollow; but, above all, there were present about the mouth those deep and fatal lines which inevitably follow the bitter and repeated conflict of contending passions."

"Why, D'Ostalis," interrupted the Duke, "when did you ever notice the lines of a face before, or moralize thereon? The magic sleep has inspired him," added he to Cagliostro; "the description is however admirably exact; I subscribe to every word of it."

"And what said he?" enquired Cagliostro.

"I will tell you," said the Duke; "I recollect every syllable; his words are still ringing in my ears. At first no sound reached us, although his lips moved, and he seemed to speak. At length we heard a murmur, as of a distant voice. It approached nearer; and at last fell upon our ears, in distinct and melancholy ac-

cents : ‘ Gay and gilded oppressors of your brother-man—butterfly tyrants—silken despots—ye have lost your ancestral strength and armour, and yet dare hope to continue with impunity the feudal outrages of your stout forefathers. The career of your tribe draweth nigh to a close.’ (Here,” said the Duke, “I smiled contemptuously on the surly plebeian.) ‘ Ay,’ continued the voice, ‘ sneer, scoff, and be deaf to all that might warn you of your approaching fate. Flutter on from pleasure to pleasure, shout, revel, and be gay, even as the sinners were before the flood. A hurricane more hideous than the watery deluge is silently gathering. A darker doom than that which befell the sinners of the old world awaits but the ripening touch of time to burst upon your unconscious and devoted heads. The feudal edifice, under which ye have lived in pride and power for

eight centuries, totters to its base. In vain the walls rise strong and high. In vain the haughty turrets frown defiance on their plebeian assailants. Look to the foundations—they have long ago crumbled into dust. Hark ! the popular cannon is thundering at the gates. Kings and nobles ! it is the people's turn now—they may not be resisted.

“Ay, rush on, shed seas of blood, fill each neighbouring country with ruined exiles. Accumulate the *glorious pile of broken hearts and severed heads, until the mangled and gory heap touch the clouds. All will not avail. Never, oh ! never, shall a land inhabited by Frenchmen become the dwelling of free men. Light and cruel race !—half tiger, half monkey—ever ready to tear the hand that would caress ye, but fawning with more than spaniel baseness on the stern arm that is able to wield the rod of despotism ;—can ye

hope that the tree of liberty will flourish, when watered with the blood of unoffending victims? Do ye dream that in uprooting the corner-stone of social order ye are laying the foundations of the arch of freedom? Already ye have entered the dull and fatal circle, which reconducts the groaning nations, after much toil, blood, and suffering, to the same miserable goal from whence they started—first, tyranny and revolt—then madness, confusion, anarchy—then tyranny again.’ ”

“ You laugh at my descriptive powers,” cried Count D’Ostalis, when the Duke had finished speaking; “ I think I may compliment you on your improved memory; and yet I think I could enact the same feat myself, and repeat the speech verbatim.”

“ To the last moment of your existence,” observed Cagliostro, “ you will neither of you

forget the words which the Duke has just uttered, such is the peculiar virtue of yonder sofa."

"How do you relish the prophecy contained in the phantasm's discourse?" asked the Duke.

"It is not worth thinking about," carelessly replied the Count; "I am told that Rousseau, in his mad fits, used often to pour forth to his private friends similar vaticinations."

"The phantasm," said Cagliostro, "naturally repeats after death what its original was wont to utter during life; and both will prove true."

The Count D'Ostalis took a pinch of snuff. "Well," said he, "what will be my consolation is, that the storm won't fall till the end of the week; so, as I took the liberty to inform De Fronsac an hour ago, when he began to talk about politics, we may at any rate make ourselves happy till Sunday."

“ And what,” enquired the Duke, of Cagliostro, “ do you predict will be my own individual fate amidst the awful convulsions which the phantom predicted ?”

“ I am neither seer nor prophet,” replied Cagliostro, “ but a humble follower of science endowed with no inspiration but the resources of my own skill. I cannot answer the question in my own person, but you may ascertain the truth yourself.”

“ By what means ?”

“ Seat yourself again on yonder mystic couch,” replied Cagliostro. “ This time you will lose your consciousness ; and will not recollect anything that you may see, hear, or say. But when brought under the magneto-electric influence, you will readily answer all questions that are proposed to you respecting your own destiny.”

“ And how shall I ascertain the correctness of your report ?” asked the Duke.

“ Count D'Ostalis shall witness the process. Yet bethink you, it was not without good reason that Dame Nature hid the future from our prying eyes. The foreknowledge of your fate will not enable you to avoid it. The anticipation may affect your mind with terror—may inspire you with the profoundest caution, but all in vain. The anticipation, and the terror, and the caution, will constitute links in the immense chain of pre-ordained events—nay, perhaps, they may be made the very means of fulfilling your destiny.”

“ I should have thought,” answered the Duke, “ that a fatalism so complete as yours, would not have left me the choice of knowing my fate or remaining in ignorance: but be that as it may,” (and his haughty lip curled as he

spoke) "be assured that terror forms no part of my composition. I would rather know the worst, and be satisfied."

"That is your deliberate resolution?" demanded Cagliostro.

"It is," replied the Duke firmly.

"Be it so. Your desire shall be gratified. It is a pity," muttered Cagliostro, as the Duke walked boldly up to the couch, and seated himself on it, "It is a pity so much moral courage and such indomitable resolution never found a fitting sphere of action."

Cagliostro gave him as before a preparatory draught, and then set his machinery in motion. The Duke speedily sunk into deep slumber. His eyes still remained open, but their sense was shut; and there was something in the fixed stare of his vacant pupils that made his companions feel that he did not perceive them.

Cagliostro, having accurately marked the time by his watch, at last said in a forced and unnaturally low tone of voice, "Duke de Fronsac, enact the last scene of thine own career."

The sleeping nobleman seemed immediately agitated by the most frightful convulsions. He struggled fiercely, like one contending with a crowd of assailants. The big drops of perspiration broke out on his brow; his eyes rolled with ghastly force and rapidity, and his whole appearance assumed the aspect of a victim resisting his murderers, with desperate but ineffectual efforts. At length words found their way in broken gasps from his labouring bosom. "Drive on—who stops my carriage—over the canaille, if they will not give way—ha! what means this? Weapons!—We are beset! Pierre! Jacques, use your pistols.—Back caitiff! on your life back!—Nay, if you will—ha! ha!

ha ! I have still the other ball !—Ah ! take, take your fingers from my throat—ruffians I defy you all – spit at you—Cagliostro ! demon ! What dost thou here !”

“This is dreadful ! damnable !” exclaimed Count D'Ostalis, exasperated beyond all endurance by the horrible exhibition : “Stop this scene instantly—or I will drag him off the sofa—I will by Heavens—”

“Patience !” said Cagliostro, “you will kill him if you are rash. I will break the trance. See here—” He applied a phial to the nostrils of the agonized nobleman. The latter instantly awoke, and arose from the sofa, like a person who has just recovered from an epileptic fit,—exhausted, but totally unconscious of the fearful struggles by which he has been convulsed.

“Good God,” cried he, stretching himself, “how hot and weary I feel : what is this,” continued he, putting his hand to his streaming

forehead. "Ha! what has happened? Monsieur de Cagliostro, what has blanched your cheeks and made your lips white? D'Ostalis, why do you shake and tremble so? What has happened? what have I said?"

Neither answered.

A heart more impenetrable to fear than the Duke de Fronsac's, never beat beneath a covering of flesh; but terror is of all human passions the most contagious; and under some circumstances the infection is irresistible. A cold chill of apprehension ran through his exhausted frame, as he stood gazing on the horror-stricken countenances of his companions.

"This matter," said he, "passes the bounds of a frolic. It is not however too late to retreat. Monsieur le Comte de Cagliostro, I have a favour to ask of you. Tell me not a syllable of what you have heard or seen."

“It is unnecessary for me to make such a promise,” answered Cagliostro, as I never intended to have opened my lips. I meant to have left both the prophecy and the interpretation entirely to your friend.”

“And you, D'Ostalis,” said the Duke, “may I request your silence?”

“Morbleu ! You never made a request which I was more disposed to grant. If ever I whisper a word even to the walls of my own bed-chamber, may the small-pox strike me.”

“I do not think,” said the Duke, as though he felt it necessary to justify his conduct, “that my present desire implies a want of resolution or courage ; because a desire to be acquainted with the future formed no part of my purpose in coming hither. The object of my visit, was to ascertain the extent of a power which I thought fame had exaggerated.”

“In what manner, then,” asked Cagliostro, “do you wish to avail yourself of its influence?”

“First assure me of your assistance,” said the Duke.

“Nay,” replied Cagliostro, “I will make no blind promises. If you cannot trust my discretion, it is unwise to employ me as your ally.”

“True,” said the Duke; “will you then indulge me with an interview to-morrow evening?”

Cagliostro bowed assent.

The two nobleman then made their adieux, and retired. They found their egress easier than their entrance. The dark passage had been furnished with a lamp, which enabled them to find their way without any difficulty to the outer door. On reaching the street, they perceived their original conductor waiting for them with a fiacre. They re-entered the vehicle, and were set down at the exact spot where they at first mounted it.

CHAPTER XX.

ENLISTING A TARTAR WORSE THAN CATCHING
HIM.

THE Duke was punctual to his appointment ; he found the sympathetic valet in waiting at the place of rendezvous. The scene of the preceding night was again enacted, and the Duke found himself in the presence of Cagliostro.

“I slept well last night,” said the Duke with an air of bravado, “in spite of your incantations.”

“To business,” replied the other, in a peremptory tone.

“With all my heart,” said the Duke. “Without farther preface, I will then communicate to you the embarrassment I labour under. About six years ago, I took under my protection a young damsel of tender years, with the intention of promoting her, in due time, to the honourable post of favourite mistress—”

“Her parents sold her, then?”

“Not precisely; but those whom accident had invested with the authority of parents did so.”

“How was this?” asked Cagliostro.

“The child was supposed to be the illegitimate scion of a noble house, and was assigned to the care of a poor artizan, a smith by trade, who received twice a year a small sum for his trouble. The allowance was discontinued; and

the smith and his wife were too happy to hand the child over to me for a few crowns. It saved them the trouble of murdering it."

"And where did this human sale take place?" inquired Cagliostro, with an anxiety which struck the Duke as remarkable.

"Why do you want to know?" demanded he. "The name of the place has no connexion with the enterprise I wish you to undertake."

"How can you tell that?" answered Cagliostro, in an authoritative manner. "Can you pretend to trace the invisible and subtle links which connect one event with another, apparently the most remote and independent? Unless you treat me with unreserved confidence, it is idle to proceed."

"I am not convinced by your reasoning," said the Duke; "but it is enough that you wish to know the facts. I respect even the whims

and phantasies of clever people. The name of the village where this said smith lived, was, I think, Forni, in the district of Perugia ; and that of the man was, if I am not mistaken, Carlo Borromeo."

"Are you certain of these names?" inquired Cagliostro, in a low, hoarse tone.

"Nearly so.—But what ails you? you are as white as you were the other night, after listening to my unconscious prophecies."

"It is nothing,"—gasped Cagliostro;—"an internal spasm.—Now it is past.—The facts you have stated, Duke, are of the greatest importance. I should have understood nothing without them."

"Well," said the Duke, "enlighten yourself your own way. Let me continue. I represented myself to the girl as her guardian, and gave her to understand that she was the daugh-

ter of a decayed noble, who had once been my friend, and who was forced, from poverty, to leave her in the care of the brutes from whom I rescued her. I bestowed on her the best of educations, at least as far as accomplishments went. An old priest took care of her religion; and her morals were left to take care of themselves. All this proceeded admirably; and at sixteen the child had ripened into an absolute Venus."

"What then?" whispered Cagliostro, in a husky tone.

"You shall hear. A foolish bet, which I made when half drunk, compelled me to take a young puppy of an Englishman down to my château, where I kept her, for the notable purpose of estimating her beauty. Having been once idiot enough to make the bet, I thought I could not choose a safer person. The

fellow was like a lump of ice. Goodlooking certainly. His form and features chiselled like the statue of Apollo ; but as destitute of life and feeling as the marble of which the statue is composed. He only staid, too, a single day ; and yet, would you believe it ? this devilish girl grew warm at his sight, and, somehow or other, must have contrived to warm him. I fancy, too, that he must have given her a hint of her real situation, for her manner was certainly changed to myself after his visit. Be that as it may, the cursed bet which I had made—the source of all my misfortunes—compelled me to attack the girl somewhat prematurely. I spare you the recital of the young lady's tragedy starts, and ineffable disdain. She had never seen a play ; yet, had she been on a stage for twenty years, she could not have enacted the indignant heroine better. I tried menaces—worse and

worse. At last I used a little gentle violence—don't look so alarmed—it was very trifling—just enough to excuse her own inclinations—that's all. Well—in the most critical moment of our struggle, who should burst in but the cursed priest whom I have before mentioned. Never was anything so inopportune. I felt as though I could have subjected the fellow to every martyrdom described in our legends. I could have broiled him on the gridiron of St. Lawrence,—could have crucified him with his head downwards, like St. Peter. But what do you think I did?—why, nothing at all. Fiends and firebrands ! I am ready to go mad, when I think of my folly. I tamely allowed the accursed priest to escort her out of the château. Idiot ! idiot ! that I was. The priest forwarded the girl to some acquaintance of his at Paris. I followed her, like a hungry lion. By the time I

found her out, she had contrived to earn a living by the sale of drawings and ornamental work. I soon undersold her, and cut off these resources. The woman, too, with whom she lodged, proved accessible to money, and became very manageable. In a word, I had reduced her to the lowest pitch of penury, and was on the point of succeeding, when one night my young lady comes home with a purse full of gold—pays all her debts—and takes herself off the next morning. For some time I lost sight of her ; at last I obtained traces of her existence ; —and under whose protection do you think I found her living ?”

“ I—I cannot guess,” stammered out Cagliostro, who seemed unusually confused.

“ Even under that of the accursed coxcomb whom I was mad enough to have admitted into my château. To give the crowning stroke to

my discomfiture, it was necessary that a miracle should happen—that a stock, a stone, an insensible brute, should become a man. I waited,—and, morbleu ! the said miracle did happen. May the wrath of God confound the fellow——”

“ Amen !” said Cagliostro, in a deep voice.

“ Bravo !” exclaimed the Duke. “ That is the first word you have uttered that sounds like sympathy. You looked so gloomy during the story, that I really thought you were taking part with the girl, instead of myself.”

“ I do not think her exchequer,” said Cagliostro, “ will enable her bribes to vie with those of the Duke de Fronsac.”

“ Ah ! that is the true principle of action.— Now we understand each other. You have given me proofs of your power—it is marvellous and incomprehensible. I believe that you can achieve any thing within the bounds of human

possibility. Now, mark me. I choose to be foolish, mad, frantic, respecting this girl. Decoy her back to my hôtel—overcome her reluctance—make me her successful suitor,—and I will gorge you with money.”

Cagliostro remained silent for some time. At last he said : “ I wonder, Duke, that a man of your undaunted courage, and notorious skill at his weapon, did not personally chastise the presumptuous offender.”

“ Such was my first and natural emotion,” replied the Duke ; “ but, on reflection, though I am no coward, I began to doubt whether the plan would be successful. I have seen him fence, and his proficiency is great—certainly equal to my own. Then his advantage in point of youth would turn the odds fearfully against me. I am afraid I should be foiled, in every sense of the word.”

“ A nobleman of the land from whence you took this girl, would long ago have put such an impertinent rival under ground,” observed Cagliostro.

“ Perhaps so,” replied the Duke ; “ but there are limits to every one’s roguery. I dislike assassination. It is beyond the line which I will not pass. No—no. Ransack the resources of your fertile brain, my dear Cagliostro.—Give her some love philtre—some of your preparatory draughts. The power to accomplish the task is not wanting, if the inclination be present : of that I am convinced. There are plenty of ways and means. The mystery of her birth renders her open to deception on that point. Introduce yourself to her as the Conte di Volterra. Such I have told her is the name of her family. Pretend to be her father.

“ Excellent !” exclaimed Cagliostro, break-

ing into a fit of wild laughter. "Excellent! I will pretend to be her father. Admirable idea! Oh, I think I may pretend to be her father!"

"Not," continued the Duke, "that I would wish to limit your expansive genius to the execution of my own meagre inventions. I only threw out the idea as a suggestion."

"Duke, I thank you for the hint," resumed Cagliostro, with a sort of frantic gaiety. "Yes, I will pretend to be her father."

"Adieu, then, for the present," said the Duke; "when shall I receive news from you?"

"In four days, at the farthest," returned Cagliostro. "Again I thank you for your obliging hint. Yes—I will pretend to be her father."

CHAPTER XXI.

A RELATION DROPPED FROM THE CLOUDS.

ONE morning, when Cleveland was compelled by business from England to be absent, Antonia was informed by the old woman who lived with her, and superintended her domestic economy, that a strange gentleman earnestly desired to speak with her. Not liking the tone and mystery of the message, and apprehending some fresh machination of the Duke de Fronsac, Antonia intimated that the stranger must either

communicate his business by writing, or defer his visit till a more convenient period. Madame Thibaut, who seemed to have her own reasons for favouring the stranger's entrance, and had probably received in anticipation a *douceur* for that purpose, endeavoured to alter her mistress's determination ; but Antonia was firm. The duenna left the room grumbling, but to the surprise and indignation of Antonia, reappeared the moment afterwards, ushering in the identical stranger, whom she had been instructed to dismiss. She had however no time to scold ; for her visitor immediately addressed her. He was a handsome middle-aged man, whose dress indicated that he belonged to the higher orders of society.

"Your name," said he, "is I believe Antonia di Volterra?"

"It is, sir," replied Antonia, who had not

yet prepared a suitable remonstrance on the impropriety of his conduct.

“ You were brought up under the protection of the Duke de Fronsac ?” pursued he.

“ I was, sir, though I cannot understand by what right an entire stranger puts such questions.”

“ I come on the behalf of your maternal uncle, the Count Orroboni.”

“ I am not aware,” stammered Antonia, confused and agitated, and hardly knowing what to say, “ I am not aware of the existence of any such relative.”

“ Probably not,” returned the stranger calmly ; “ to announce the fact of my friend’s relationship, and to explain the reason why you never heard of his name before, formed the object of my visit.” So saying he seated himself without invitation opposite to Antonia, on whom he

gazed intently, and began to tell his story with the air of a man who is determined not to depart before he has fulfilled his mission.

“Your father, Mademoiselle, the Conte di Volterra, became obnoxious to the government under which he lived, and only saved his life by a timely flight from its territories. His property was confiscated; and he died a broken-hearted exile. His wife did not long survive him. Her brother, your maternal uncle, was at this time absent from the country. A distant relation, whose name I have not been able to discover, put you out to nurse in the country with certain obscure artizans. Some unknown circumstances suspended his remittances; and the people to whom you were entrusted treated you with cruelty. From this situation you were rescued by the Duke de Fronsac. Do not start—I am aware of the odious motives

by which his apparent generosity was actuated. You owe him no gratitude. About two years ago, your uncle returned to his native country, and learnt for the first time the sad fate of his sister's family. Since that period he has been indefatigable in his endeavours to obtain tidings of his lost niece. About a year ago, I had occasion to travel into France. There was a rumour current in the village where you had been brought up, that you had been carried into that country. When I took my leave of your uncle, he gave me a casket of valuable jewels. 'If' said he, 'you ever meet my niece, make known to her my existence and give her these jewels. They will serve to confirm your romantic story, and may very possibly be of service to her, should she be in want of pecuniary assistance.'" With these words, he put into Antonia's hand an open jewel-case,

the inside of which was blazing with a magnificent set of diamonds. Antonia was painfully perplexed. She had strong reasons for believing the stranger's narrative, wild and extraordinary as it sounded. It tallied with all she knew of her own history. Besides, how could any scheme of imposition be forwarded by transferring the property in such valuable jewels, from himself to her?

A few months ago, the discovery of so near a relation as an uncle, would have filled her with the liveliest joy. From how much misery—from how much error—such a protector would have saved her! Now matters were different. She had made a fatal and irreparable step. She had committed a fault, which the world never forgives in a woman. Of what use was it to recognize the relationship the stranger spoke of. When this Italian nobleman should

discover that she was living with one who was not her husband ; he would doubtless repudiate her with contempt and disgust. It was better not to commence a connexion which could not be lasting, and whose termination must be attended with pain. At length Antonia spoke : “ I throw no imputations, sir, on the truth of your story, although it is strange that none of these particulars should have ever reached me before. Had the existence of the gentleman whom you affirm to be my uncle, been made known to me some months earlier, I should have hailed with rapture the idea of finding a protector and a relation in the same person. But circumstances have happened, which when they come to the knowledge of the Count Orroboni, will take from him all desire to acknowledge me as his niece.”

“ The Count Orroboni,” replied the stranger,

“is of a mild and forbearing temper, and will know how to discriminate between those faults which are the offspring of a vicious disposition, and those which are the result of an unfortunate situation.”

“Enough, sir,” said Antonia, who seemed to be writhing beneath the pain which the stranger’s allusions inflicted. “Take back the jewels—give, if you will, my best thanks to the Count Orroboni, for that generosity which I am obliged to decline; but believe, me, you will best consult the happiness of both, by never informing him of my existence.”

“Permit me to remind you, Mademoiselle,” said the stranger, “of the advantages which you would have derived from the connexion.”

“I can easily imagine them,” hastily answered Antonia; “but my resolution is fixed.”

“Let your uncle at least have the consolation

of knowing that you are happy in the position to which you so obstinately adhere. Will you empower me to assure him that you are contented with your lot?"

"Oh yes—yes," said Antonia hurriedly and in a low tone, as if rather speaking to herself than answering the question. "Too much so—too much so. Yes, I am happy—unboundedly happy—happier than I ought to be—far happier than I deserve to be."

"Heaven be praised!" said the stranger, in a voice of deep sympathy. "May your feelings never change. But this is a world in which nothing is fixed or constant."

"Ah, the future!" cried Antonia. "I do not look at that—I am so happy, that I am absorbed by the present. But take back your jewels," added she, for the stranger rose as if with the intention of departing; "I cannot accept the gift."

“They are yours—absolutely yours,” returned he. “I have merely held them, until I could find the rightful owner. Fling them away, if you like; but I can neither commit the dishonesty of appropriating them to myself, nor can I insult the original donor by returning them to him.”

Antonia would have remonstrated farther, but before she could speak, the stranger had left the room.

A new subject of perplexity now occurred to Antonia; should she relate the stranger's visit and his strange communications to Cleveland? Many considerations induced her to keep them secret. He had of late expressed some uneasiness respecting her future prospects: she felt sure that he would disapprove of her hasty rejection of her uncle's overtures: she dreaded lest he should consult her interests at the expense

of her happiness, and persuade her to live with her uncle. This idea constituted the real motive of her peremptory refusal to negotiate her admission to his family. She shrunk, it is true, from the painful observations that would necessarily be passed on her conduct ; but she shrunk still more from the idea of a successful arrangement with her uncle, which would lead to her being received into his house. This plan involved separation from Cleveland ; and that—her heart grew sick at the mere possibility of such a misfortune—it was misery worse than death. Another point of doubt with Antonia, was the value of the jewels. She was anxious to ascertain the real worth of these ornaments ; because she felt that if these gems were genuine, their ready production and bestowal by the stranger would constitute a very strong argument in favour of the truth of his

narrative. It was exceedingly improbable that one, whose object was extortion or imposition, should consent in the very outset of his plan to the loss of such costly articles. In this difficulty she had recourse to Cleveland, to satisfy her doubts. This step, considering her resolution of secrecy with respect to the transaction with which they were connected, might seem strange and inconsistent to one who was not acquainted with the nature of the feelings which subsisted between Antonia and her lover.

There is a species of love, says Rousseau, so intense as to exclude all possibility of jealousy. Antonia well knew how deeply the confidence and affection of Cleveland were rooted, and felt assured that circumstances a thousand times more suspicious than the present could never shake their stability, or induce him to harbour a thought that was unfavourable to her. Nor

was she deceived ;—when she showed him the ornaments, Cleveland much admired their beauty, and assured Antonia, in answer to her questions respecting their value, that the stones were large, genuine, and of the first water. “ But,” added he, “ as the fairy times when people talked jewels have long gone by, and as even such gifted persons as yourself, dearest Antonia, must now be content to utter metaphorical gems ; permit me to enquire how you became possessed of such valuable ornaments ?”

“ That is a secret,” replied Antonia, smiling, “ you must not ask me—indeed you must not—I cannot tell you at present. Trust me !” continued she, emphatically.

“ I will,” he replied, with equal emphasis ; “ and I even thank you for the opportunity you have given me of showing my confidence. Believe me, love, I did not ask from doubt or

suspicion, but from simple curiosity. At your request I banish the feeling, and blow it away from me thus—" added he, playfully suiting the action to the word. "Now it is gone!"

CHAPTER XXII.

PHILOPROGENITIVENESS.

A few days after the scene related in the foregoing chapter, the Marchioness de Montolieu received the following letter. It bore neither date, signature, nor postmark. But, alas ! the person to whom it was addressed knew only too well the quarter from whence it came, and the subjects to which it alluded.

“ I pledged myself not to obtrude upon your attention any token either of my existence or

my attachment. I have kept my word ; but it was part of our compact—it was agreed upon between us, on that memorable evening when we last met, that you would endure the ignominy of my correspondence, should I succeed in discovering any traces of that unfortunate being, who was committed, as I have before told you, to the care of an Italian mechanic. Not only am I acquainted with her present situation and residence ; but I have been enabled to track all the circumstances of her life, up to the present hour. At the age of ten years she was adopted, or rather purchased from the sordid hind to whom she was entrusted, by a nobleman, who I dare say is well known to you—the Duke de Fronsac. Do not suppose that the act was dictated by benevolence. It was but the first step to a cold, calculated, deliberate scheme of seduction. But however

base and perfidious his motives, his conduct in the first instance conferred upon her that invaluable boon—a good education. True it is, that the rules he prescribed for her guidance were solely calculated to expand the intellect and taste, while they left moral feelings uncultivated. Yet when the reasoning of a young person is early developed, the means of forming a correct judgment upon moral points, is placed within her reach; and, in the absence of any corrupting bias, her natural election will generally be in favour of what is right. In this treacherous, but not unornamented retreat, Antonia (for that is her name) passed several years; during which time she had gradually exchanged the interesting graces of a pretty child for the more exciting charms of womanhood. The period had now arrived when the Duke thought that his past care, foresight, and

forbearance, would reap an ample reward of easy pleasure; but, like many other ingenious people, he overshot the mark at which he aimed. His plans failed from excess of refinement. In endowing his proposed victim with all those mental charms, which he fancied would enhance his anticipated enjoyment, he had rendered her superior to the sordid considerations which animate so many of her sex. She shrunk with natural horror from the idea of selling herself to a man of disproportionate age and uncongenial disposition. Her clear strong sense taught her that favours conferred with an evil intention, which were meant to work mischief rather than benefit to the receiver, could impose no rational ties upon her gratitude. By the assistance and interference of a priest, who frequented the Duke's chateau, she effected a flight to Paris; leaving to the

baffled sensualist the stinging reflection, that the paragon of physical and mental beauty which he had laboured to create, and hoped to appropriate to his own selfish gratification, could only be possessed and enjoyed by those whose intrinsic personal merits rendered them worthy of such a prize. In Paris she endeavoured to maintain herself by her own exertions, and for a time succeeded ; but her remorseless persecutor followed her to the capital, surrounded her with his machinations, and soon cut off the slender resources which her ingenuity had discovered. Overwhelmed with the unaccustomed evils of poverty—despairing of all help—she was tempted to apply to her misery that dark and dismal remedy, which constitutes the utmost limits of human punishment for the worst offences. From this melancholy resource, so much grudged by the happier

part of mankind to their unfortunate fellow-creatures, she was saved by the interposition of a young Englishman, named Cleveland. This person, it appears, had been already introduced to Antonia, by her perfidious protector, for the purpose of deciding some licentious bet. He availed himself of this slight acquaintance to offer her the amplest and most liberal relief—a relief which I am bound to say originated in pure and humane motives, and was unshackled by any degrading conditions. What was the unhappy girl to do? Was she to reject gifts proffered with so much delicacy, and persist in her frightful resolution? Alas! she accepted them. You will anticipate the fatal result. Yet I am firmly convinced it was not contemplated or intended by either at the commencement of their acquaintance. His youth, his fine form and handsome countenance, his agreeable man-

ners ; the recollection of his frank and disinterested generosity, which was advantageously contrasted with De Fronsac's insidious benefits ; the absence of any other object to distract her ideas—all conspired to render him a dangerous companion. The impossibility of finding a suitable match, in point of education and feelings, in the rank of life to which she had sunk, and the want of natural advisers and protectors, must also be considered in her defence. She yielded to the daily, ever renewing temptation, and became his mistress ; but it was no base compact ; it was no vile exchange of illicit pleasure for a dishonourable subsistence. The best feelings of her nature were unfortunately enlisted against her happiness. Her conscience sounded no alarm. Where was the harm of loving one so young, so amiable, so every way fitted to be an object of attachment ? Without

worldly experience, was her simple unassisted reason alone sufficient to resist the delusions of a heated and erring imagination—to unmask the sophistries of passion, or to control the intoxication of love felt for the first time in all its primal energy and strength? The world makes no distinction between the woman who falls the victim of feelings, which under happier circumstances might have proved a blessing and a glory to her, and she who deliberately sacrifices herself to gratify the base desires of avarice and luxury. But can you—can any of your sex at the bottom of their hearts really approve of this cruel injustice? Will you, for this single error, reject her—cast her off—abandon all farther interest in her fate?

“By a singular coincidence, the greater part of the foregoing tale was related to me by its principal and most guilty actor, the Duke de

Fronsac. I also collected much from an old woman who fills the double office of housekeeper and companion to Antonia. If you wish to see her you may gratify your curiosity by an easy method. I ascertained from her duenna that either tomorrow, or the day after, she will call at a mercer's shop to purchase some articles of dress. The time she chooses for such purposes is generally two. I send you a slight sketch of Antonia and of her attendant, in which the colour and fashion of their dress is exactly delineated. With this assistance, if you can manage to enter the shop at the same hour, I think you cannot fail to recognize her. In what manner you will avail yourself of the information which this letter contains — what course you will adopt towards this unfortunate yet interesting girl, I leave to your own feelings to decide. If your views and wishes be at all

within the compass of possibility, need I say what double delight I shall feel in carrying them into execution? I await an exposition of your feelings on the subject. Direct an answer, if you deign any, to Brisseau, Printer and Copper-plate Engraver, 15, Rue de Lesdiguères, Faubourg St. Antoine. Do not trust it to the post; for the police are in the habit of inspecting the letters, and of opening any that excite their suspicion. Go boldly in your carriage to the printing office, and direct your servant to leave the packet, to be altered according to the written instructions contained within."

THE ANSWER TO THE ABOVE.

"Thanks! a thousand thanks to you for your precious yet agitating intelligence. I received the information with fearful pleasure. My heart bounds with joy at the thoughts of seeing

this long lost but not forgotten being ; and yet a dim presentiment of evil tells me that I am embarking in a perilous course, of which the issue is dark and menacing, I must look again at your letter. Reject her ! cast her off ! abandon her ! Do you speak these words in mockery and irony ; or do you know so little of a mother's heart, as to think she could ever view her own—her only—child with the careless eye, the cold indifference of a stranger ? Do you imagine that the mere lapse of some seventeen summers and winters can eradicate the strongest affection of my nature ? No ; were I placed on a much loftier eminence than I now occupy ; and were I to see my daughter a beggar, covered with rags and infamy, shunned, despised, and deserted by all, I would descend from my height, embrace the poor persecuted outcast, take her to my home and bosom,—relieve her misfortunes, or

share her fate. Ay, this and much more would I do, in spite of the scoffs and sneers of the surrounding world. Alas ! you little know the desperate fidelity of maternal attachment. But do not be alarmed. I intend to take no step which will in the smallest degree compromise my rank or character ; for I can far more effectually serve my child while in the possession of wealth and station, than if I were in her own sad and precarious situation.

I cannot decide anything before I see her—the mere idea throws my spirits into such a flutter of expectation that I cannot seriously bend my thoughts to the consideration of the different schemes for her benefit which suggest themselves to my mind. I cannot rest— I cannot think, until I see her. * * *

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* * * “ I have seen her !
I have heard her speak ! Guided by the instructions contained in your letter, I repaired to the mercer’s shop which you said she frequented. I was fortunate enough to meet her accompanied by an old woman who seemed her attendant. How bright and beautiful she looked ! She gave some trifling order to the shopman—the tones of her voice thrilled through my heart. Oh ! that I could have strained her to my bosom and called her child—darling—my own Antonia ! I would have given worlds for a single embrace. I would have knelt to any one who would have supplied me with an excuse for speaking to her. I strove to address her but in vain, my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth—my voice died away in my throat—I was forced to suppress my feelings, and speak to the officious shopman, who had brought me

some silks to inspect. By way of gaining time, I told him, without looking at them, that those were not the articles I wanted. At the sound of my voice she turned round and looked at me. Yes, I felt her soft eloquent eyes turned on me—on me her mother, with the indifferent gaze of a stranger—I wonder I did not faint. After a momentary glance she walked out of the shop. Alas ! I could not detain her ; and the beautiful vision vanished from my eager eyes. So long as she was present, I was absorbed in the contemplation of her charms. I could think of nothing but her unrivalled loveliness ; but when she had departed, I recollected your fatal account of her present condition. Oh God ! This was what I foreboded ! My worst fears are realized ! As far as I am concerned, this bitter and terrible blow may be retribution. I could endure my own agony in silent submission.

But alas ! the worst part of this misery will fall on Antonia. She is doomed to expiate in her own person the crimes of her parents. The fault was not her's, poor child ! but upon her will fall the punishment of society—the pain, the sorrow and shame, which sooner or later must overtake every woman who violates its laws. But this must not be—we must prevent this terrible injustice—we must indeed, my dear friend—yes, I will call you friend—preserver—benefactor—anything—if you will but exert your powers to save my Antonia from her impending fate. She cannot be depraved ! It is impossible ! those beautiful eyes were full of goodness—there was an air of purity in her face that could not be mistaken—her whole deportment, too, was indicative of modesty and proper feelings. No ! no ! she is the victim of circumstances—you said so yourself. How

shall we break off this odious connexion? You tell me that she appears enthusiastically attached to this young Englishman. It is dreadful to think that her young affections should be thus wasted! Unhappy delusion! Miserable infatuation! What a mockery is it in a man to talk of love, while he is irreparably injuring a woman in the estimation of her fellow-creatures, and preparing for her future years of misery and disgrace. He has it in his power, by marriage, to make her happy and respected. He deliberately refuses to take that step, and yet has the shameless hypocrisy, the disgusting effrontery, to swear that he loves her. How loves?—why as the vermin loves the fruit it feeds on and destroys. Such a man may dote on her complexion—may adore the symmetry of her fair form—but he is surely not in love; or if he is, it is with his own passion, and not

with the pretended object of his affection. The Count D'Ostalis has promised to introduce him to me this evening. I am all anxiety to see and converse with this destroyer of my hopes, and to form some estimate of his character. I hear he has obtained the soubriquet of the English poco-curante, from his coldness and indifference; but Count D'Ostalis tells me that he has much changed of late.

“ You may perhaps smile at the ardour of my attachment for a being of whom I have seen and known so little. Not one man in a hundred can comprehend the feelings of woman on that subject. I have always passionately desired to have offspring. I never saw a beggar press her infant to her bosom, but I could have cried from very despair at my want of children. I felt as if I could willingly have exchanged my childless rank and splendour, for her rags and

poverty, accompanied by so sweet a consolation. Joyfully, indeed, would I have sacrificed the hollow and insipid pleasures of society, for the felicity of possessing a little cherub, attached to me by that nameless spell implied in the word 'my own.' Alas ! I am well assured, from the unsatisfied and craving longings of maternity which are alive within me, although not from experience, that there is no purer or more exquisite pleasure in life, than a mother's rapture as she bends over her sleeping infant. Long ago, I should have adopted a child, but the Marquis, indifferent as he is to my proceedings in other respects, absolutely opposed himself to this step. Conceive then my agitation, after long years of deferred hope, to find my own—my long-lost child, in the prime of her youth—lovely—amiable—accomplished—all that could have fitted her to be the dearest of friends, as

well as the most loved of children—to find her all this, and the prey of a libertine. Oh God ! my brain whirls round and verges on insanity, when I think on this, and reflect that I am the cause.

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“Yesterday I went to a *soirée* where Monsieur Cleveland was expected to be present. D’Ostalis had promised to introduce him to me, but he did not arrive for some time after the other, so I had ample leisure to contemplate this pernicious Englishman before I formed his acquaintance. His person is finely formed, and his countenance handsome and intelligent ; but it is pervaded by an air of dissatisfaction and melancholy, which rather impairs the effect that his very pleasing features would otherwise produce. However, when he smiles or grows animated in conversation, I must confess his

physiognomy becomes very agreeable. As soon as I had concluded these reflections, D'Ostalis made his appearance, and brought Monsieur Cleveland up to me. What a strange sensation I experienced when I first began to talk to him. In fact, mine was an extraordinary position. Here was I, with my aching heart and heavy spirits, smiling and bowing to the cause of my misery, and talking calmly, politely, and graciously, to the man who was the seducer of my daughter !

“ Our conversation was at first flat and uninteresting enough. We confined ourselves to the hackneyed insipid topics of the day on which strangers usually discourse. At last Count D'Ostalis addressed to me some *fade* flowery compliments on the irresistible influence of female charms.

“ I was thinking of Antonia at the moment,

and in the fulness and bitterness of my heart I answered, ‘ that it was indeed customary for men to address women, more especially when they were young and handsome, in a tone of affected deference and softness, which they do not use to their own sex; but that the use of this hypocritical style did not prevent women from being treated, on certain occasions, both by laws and individuals, with the utmost barbarity and cruelty; and that, in return for these idle, unmeaning, unfelt, demonstrations of respect, they deprived us of all power of independence and free action. ‘ I appeal to your decision, Monsieur Cleveland, to pronounce whose opinions on this subject are justest—mine or Count D’Ostalis’s?’

“ ‘ I think,’ replied he, ‘ that the complaint of Madame la Marquise is well founded. The common language of men to women is very

insincere and deceitful. Look at their acts; examine the laws of even civilized countries. It is easy to see who were the legislators, and for whose benefit they legislated. That which is considered as a jest—nay, as an amiable frailty, in a man's conduct, is visited on the woman in many places with death, in others with perpetual imprisonment, in others with infamy, and in all with ruin. In the regulation of her conduct, she is considered a free agent and punished accordingly; in the regulation of her property, she is deemed a child, or an idiot; and except in particular cases, the disposition and power over it is transferred to her husband.'

“ I have always felt strongly on these points; and I was both surprised and pleased, when I heard Monsieur Cleveland give utterance to such sentiments; but before I could reply, D'Ostalis, who had been listening to him with extreme impatience, broke in.

“ ‘ I admit,’ said he, ‘ that women are restricted to a small share of legal and recognized power, but look at the immense extent of their secret underhand influence throughout the whole of society. Nothing is more different than law and fact. By the French law of succession, women are excluded from the throne, and yet who during the last century have been the real sovereigns of France? Louis the Fourteenth, Louis the Fifteenth, Louis the Sixteenth? or Madame de Maintenon, Madame de Pompadour, and Marie Antoinette?’

“ I made no answer, for I wished to hear Cleveland speak. He quickly answered : ‘ The unavowed and illegitimate influence, attained by a few individuals, argues nothing in favour of female happiness, and does not improve the general condition of the sex. On the contrary, the facts you adduce, are only a melancholy example, that cut off from legitimate means of

obtaining power and wealth, they are apt to prostitute that beauty and those feelings, which were intended as the source of purest happiness to themselves and others, to the gratifications of ambition and avarice.'

"Count D'Ostalis took snuff, and either had no answer ready, or did not wish to continue the discussion. I intently regarded Cleveland. He was plunged in a reverie; his eyes were fixed on vacancy. What was the subject of his thoughts? Was conscience suggesting the discrepancy between his theoretical sentiments and his practical conduct? Could it be that this man, who saw with such clearness, and avowed with such frankness and candour, what so few of his sex have honesty enough to confess—could he be the seducer of my Antonia? Was this generous courage on the weaker side, this earnestness in favour of unpopular truth,

compatible with unworthy acts? I broke the silence by exclaiming, ‘ what a charming thing it would be, if all the professors and utterers of fine sentiments and noble principles, actually carried them into practice. France would then be Utopia— Paradise.’

“ ‘ Do you impute insincerity to my opinions ?’ asked Cleveland, with a smile.

“ ‘ No,’ said I, ‘ I believe you speak as you think ; but though you recognize the truth as a mere matter of speculation, there is a guilty expression in your face, which tells me that you have as little inclination as any other man to adopt it as your rule of action.’”

“ ‘ Ah, Madame !’ cried D’Ostalis, ‘ your last remark excites my liveliest admiration. The secrets of friendship ought to be inviolable, I will never betray them, or else I could bring such evidence against my excellent and amiable

friend, Monsieur Cleveland, as would amply bear out your opinion, that he is only rougher and ruder than other men, and not a bit more honest.'

“ ‘ If my love of truth,’ rejoined Cleveland, ‘ leads me now and then to whisper it in a friend’s ear, I have no desire to fall a martyr to abstract principles. Believe me, no man, whatever be his natural disposition, can ever be much in advance of his fellow-creatures in practical virtues. They will soon stop his progress. Conceive some enlightened reformer in Turkey giving liberty to his wives—throwing open their prison doors, and entertaining mixed parties in the harem. What would be the result—partial or general imitation? No! His friends and contemporaries would think, and call him a beast; his wives would soon abuse his indulgence, and then plead his insane and unseemly conduct as an excuse;

and finally a virtuous and indignant populace would tear him to pieces.'

"The true meaning of this speech I considered to be, that his own inclinations would prompt him to do justice to Antonia; but that his dread of the world's censure withheld him from executing his generous intentions. Such at least was the interpretation my maternal partiality drew from his words. I much wished to have continued the subject; nor do I think that Cleveland was averse to its discussion: but Count D'Ostalis taking advantage of the pause, burst into an elaborate description and criticism of a young debutante, who had made her first appearance, the preceding night, at the Théâtre Français. When he had finished, I found it impossible to renew our former subject; and the conversation permanently subsided into fashionable small talk.

— “The more I see of Cleveland, the better I like him; the easier I find excuses for Antonia. I cannot imagine how he acquired the nickname of ‘poco-curante.’ To me he appears to possess much greater depth and seriousness of feeling, than the majority of those who affect to fix upon him that appellation. But everybody agrees in saying that his character and manners have of late sustained great alteration. Can this change proceed from his acquaintance with Antonia? Oh! that I dared think so!

“I have been weighing and meditating, with all the force of thought that I am capable of exerting, whether it is probable that Cleveland will ever marry Antonia; and I have arrived at the bitter conclusion, that the hope of that event is extremely small. Supposing, then, my forebodings to be true, it is evident we cannot better serve Antonia, than by inducing her to

renounce her present rash and fatal connexion. No doubt the effort will at first cost her much pain; but this will pass away, and be succeeded by a peace of mind which she cannot know at present. A few hours of temporary grief, which time and occupation will soon alleviate, are well endured, if they purchase her exemption from future years of irreparable misery. For how can those be permanently happy who have forfeited, whether justly or unjustly, the respect of their fellow-creatures?

“ A plan has occurred to me, which, if you think it capable of being realized, would afford Antonia a safe and honourable asylum, while it allowed me to enjoy the constant pleasure of her company. Suppose I introduced her into my house as a relation—say a niece. I am certain my husband would make no objection to the proposition; for with him a handsome guest is

always acceptable, especially of the fair sex. If we did not betray ourselves, there are only two persons in the world who could detect the imposture, Cleveland and De Fronsac. The first is too generous to betray anybody, even if he had the opportunity; and the other exclusively divides his time between Paris and his own abominable country residence; while I should confine myself to our château at Veret, which he is as little likely to visit as Nôtre Dame when high mass is being performed. Even if he should accept one of my husband's invitations—a thing he has never done yet—I should have previous notice of his visit, and could send Antonia out of the way until he had left us.

No doubt you will be surprised to find me proposing a scheme of fraud and imposture, which involves the constant necessity of deception and dissimulation. I feel that my plan

deserves all these names ; yet thus much will I say in my apology,—it harms no single human being, either directly or indirectly ; while, on the other hand, it rescues a lovely and amiable girl from the dangers to which beauty and poverty are naturally exposed, and restores a beloved daughter to the aching bosom of her mother. All the effects are not only harmless, but highly beneficial ; still I am conscious that the general consequences of deception and trickery are bad ; and that a pure and upright mind revolts from all imposture, no matter what shape it takes, or by what excuses it is defended. How wretched is the necessity which drives me to an expedient so repugnant to my natural disposition. Yet the gratification of my maternal feelings has now become a necessity. Ever since I saw her, I have allowed myself to dwell upon her image—to clasp her in imaginary em-

braces—to picture to my mind the delight of daily seeing her, of living with her, hearing her, and interchanging my thoughts and feelings with her; until exasperated with the illusive excitement, my desire to regain my child has become so violent, as to deprive me of all repose, and incapacitate me for all occupation. It haunts and pervades me like a feverish thirst, which I cannot slake. If I may not have my daughter's society—if this first and most natural right and pleasure is denied, my existence is unendurable. I feel that death or gratification are my only alternatives !”

CHAPTER XXIII.

AMATORY REFRIGERATION.

THE saddest lesson which experience teaches man, is a knowledge of the true nature of love. It is in vain that the whole course of tale and history assures us of the evanescent, transitory character of this passion—it is in vain that our own observation confirms the truth, and shows us that the sensation is as brief as it is delightful. What man, in love for the first time, could ever be induced to believe, that the delicious sentiment, which absorbs or excludes

every other feeling of his bosom, must sooner or later die a natural death, and be extinguished in its own gratification? True, it may be succeeded by a tender and affectionate attachment, by firm and lasting friendship; but the glory—the enthusiasm—the celestial exaltation of true passion, when it first overcomes us, must pass away. How ridiculous, then, to abuse men for their want of constancy. Could we command our affections, who would cease to love? who would throw away the treasure which constitutes his happiness, and which he values more than all the riches of the world? It is in spite of ourselves—in spite of our utmost efforts to recall our first enthusiasm, that we gradually begin to view the once loved face with indifference, and to feel that her society has no longer a spell for our disenchanted minds. To love is to be blest, and who, that found himself in Eden,

would voluntarily leave it? It is customary to talk, as if the inconstant man made a selfish gain by his change of sentiment; but what can he profit by the decay of the sweetest sentiment of our nature? As well rail at the capitalist, because he gets rid of his depreciated securities. Alas! it is with a heavy heart that he parts with bonds, once the representatives of thousands, for a fraction of their original value. But it is with a far profounder sentiment of despair, that the man of reflection perceives his warmest and most cherished feelings will not abide the withering touch of time and custom; and that the love he fondly deemed eternal, has hardly the durability of an Autumn flower.

It is the law of our nature that all passive impressions shall become weaker by repetition, and in process of time be entirely effaced. The

effect which a beautiful woman produces on a man's mind, shares the general fate of all involuntary emotions ; and the latter can no more prevent the flight of his love, than he can the departure of his youth, health, strength, or any other blessing. Cleveland's passion had not yet reached that fated period ; still it cannot be denied that the intensity of his attachment had begun to diminish. His mind was no longer absorbed by the single idea of love. He could think and speak to Antonia of other things than his passion ; nay, he could even read a book in her presence without much distraction. It was with deep dismay that Antonia perceived these symptoms of subsiding passion. Her own feelings remained in all their original force ; and it seemed unnatural and cruel in him not to return them. She had no fears that he would desert her, in the vulgar sense of the term ; but

she dreaded the time might soon arrive when Cleveland would continue the connexion rather from a sense of honour and generosity than from love. In this frame of mind, she was disposed to consider the overtures and remonstrances with which her diamond-giving visitor still pursued her, with more attention than she had hitherto bestowed on them. He had not sought to renew his personal acquaintance with her; he had refrained from all attempts to gain a second interview. He seemed to content himself with forcing a copious correspondence on her attention. Some of the letters contained matter relative to herself of such an extraordinary nature, that natural curiosity compelled her to read the epistles. The main object of the writer appeared to be to induce her to leave Cleveland; and to live under the protection of a lady of high rank, whom he asserted to be

her mother. To the truth and justice of some of the arguments, by which he enforced his solicitations, Antonia could not refuse her assent. Her unknown correspondent confesses to her in these letters, that the story he had related to her on the occasion of their personal interview was a mere fabrication. He thus justifies the deceit :

“The real events of your history are so wild and extraordinary, that I knew you would at once reject them, as incredible. I was therefore obliged to prepare your mind by a fiction, before I could hazard the revelation of actual facts. I was forced to gain credit for improbable truths, by a prefatory string of plausible falsehoods. Yes, it is true that you are the daughter of a woman of rank, now moving in the highest society of Paris — celebrated in those brilliant circles for her wit and beauty, but not less distinguished for the amiable quali-

ties of her disposition. It is equally true, that this lady, who possesses no children by marriage, is aware of your existence. It is not less true that she takes the liveliest interest in your welfare, and that she is willing to run any risk, and encounter any danger, in order to enjoy the pleasure of unrestrained intercourse with you. The objection, therefore, which you urged against your return to your relations, loses its weight. The lady, who I hope will be your future protectress, will not be likely to blame you for the misfortunes which sprung from her own neglect. She proposes that you should live with her at her country château, in the character of niece. If you will consent to this, I will make such an arrangement as will preclude all danger of discovery. In fact, from whom have you to dread detection but the Duke de Fronsac? Now, as long as you remain unmar-

ried, it is not necessary that you should mingle in Parisian society, the only place where you are likely to meet with De Fronsac. I will give you proofs of the truth of my present story, that will banish every suspicion from your mind; I will reveal to you the name of this lady. She goes frequently to the Italian Opera. Get Cleveland to point her out to you; he knows her well. You shall have an interview with her. The only real obstacle which exists to this plan, is your infatuated attachment for that Englishman. Now, granting all that you can assert respecting the sincerity and strength of his passion, how long can you hope to retain his affection? He is the most fastidious discontented mortal that I ever encountered. He is already tired of every thing. He professes himself indifferent to those prizes which are objects of the fiercest dispute to common men.

He has grown weary of pleasure, riches, admiration, power, even of life itself. And yet you are weak enough to fancy that this strange freak of affection, which, for want of other idleness, he now indulges towards you, will be lasting, will be eternal. Can you for a moment allow yourself to believe, that this man, so easily affected with disgust and satiety, who before he is thirty has found time to grow sick of every thing in life, should change his nature when he approaches you, and prove a miracle of uniform constancy? When he ceases to love you—and it is wonderful, considering his character, that his passion has lasted so long—what will be your position? I do not allude to pecuniary distress. Cleveland is rich, generous; and I dare say would never allow one, who had been even the temporary object of his affections, to lack support. He will give you

money; I doubt it not: but will this be sufficient? Will he give you, as now, his time and society? To whom will you then turn for consolation and sympathy? In your present situation, you forfeit the deference and respect of our sex, and the good-will and kindness of your own. Society is at war with you; and will never grant you peace, or allow you to rest. No matter what may be the absolute guilt or innocence of your present connexion; it violates the world's law, and is therefore in the eyes of the world the greatest of crimes. If you would live happily with your fellow-creatures, you must conform to their rules and customs—or prejudices and absurdities, if you will. The boldest and cleverest of men never opposed society single-handed with success; for a woman to brave the conflict, is, indeed, madness.

“ I offer you a new career—oblivion for the past, and a prospect of passing your future life among that class of society, for which you are so well fitted both by nature and education. Can you reject this proposal ? In spite of the warmth and liveliness of your feelings, I know that you sometimes reflect ; that you sometimes calmly consider what is best for your own and others’ happiness. Think deliberately on what I have urged—on what I offer. You must ultimately accede to my overtures. It is not in human nature to refuse such manifest advantages.

“ But say that my opinions respecting the transitory nature of love are exaggerated—are absolutely false—or grant that your lover is an exception to the universal rule. Think, as a thousand infatuated girls before you have dared to think, that for you man’s nature is reversed.

Dream, if you will, that a heart, more uncertain than the winds, and more unstable than the waves, has for you become fixed and constant. Is love alone, and by itself, a sufficient compensation for the loss of every other comfort and pleasure in life? Have you no other sentiments, passions, wants and feelings, to be gratified, but this one? Alas! love is but one out of a host as numerous as that of Xerxes. Existence is composed of a thousand petty amusements—a thousand trivial occupations—a thousand small duties. At any one of these taken by itself you may individually smile; but on the aggregate depends your happiness. Love is the wine of life; we prize the racy intoxicating beverage far beyond the simple food which supports existence: but ask yourself in sober calmness, which is the most important?—with which can you easiest dispense? Reflect on

the position in which you are now placed — view it on every side—examine it in every light. Look beneath the surface—extend your glance beyond the present. Be not dazzled with the sunshine that now streams from your lover's eyes ; for the night cometh, and quickly—the long dark night of infamy and misery. You are wholly and solely dependent, as no human being should be, on the caprice of a single individual, and if he fails you—ay, the thought is fearful—you have but one plank between you and the abyss : that lost, you sink deeper than plummet ever sounded. You have but one star to guide you : that quenched, what shall direct your course ? You have but one source of joy, hope, pleasure, respectability, amusement, goodness : and that dried up, whence shall the daily current of your being flow ?” * * *

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Such were the forcible and energetic communications which were constantly forwarded to Antonia from her unknown correspondent. It is not to be supposed that they were perused without effect. The perpetual repetition of opinions, even when they are opposed to our own, at last makes a considerable impression on our mind; and sometimes we concede to reiteration and importunity, what we would not have yielded to reason. But the sentiments expressed in the preceding extracts corresponded only too well with the fears and doubts that were fermenting at the bottom of Antonia's heart. She viewed every art and gesture of Cleveland with microscopic eyes. There was in truth a slight alteration in his manner. The first effervescence of his passion had subsided; and his demeanour and his spirits had become more equable. This comparative composure of manner

was magnified by Antonia into downright indifference. Mere trifles—molehills invisible to the sight of common people, became mountains to the jealous glance of love. At these times, the letters of the unknown correspondent were sometimes resorted to as a sad consolation. They were perused and reperused with increasing attention. However bitter was the idea of separation from Cleveland, she was now fully convinced of the possibility of such an occurrence. The overtures contained in the letters at all events presented an alternative. By degrees she conceived the thought of answering these strange communications. The idea soon grew familiar to her mind; it no longer terrified her; and at last she put it into execution. She entreated to know the name of the lady who had been alluded to as her mother. After a time it was communicated, but accom-

panied with the most fearful and terrible injunctions of secrecy. She was farther informed that the Marchioness de Montolieu would be present in her customary box at the Italian Opera on a particular night.

Cleveland was intently examining a portfolio of fine engravings, to which he had been making some additions. Antonia was ostensibly engaged with the same amusement, but alas ! her eyes were oftener fastened on her lover's countenance than on the prints beneath. " Oh that I could look under that fair brow," thought she, " and see what is passing in the busy brain within."

" Have you no criticism to make, Antonia, on the new engravings which I have brought you?" said Cleveland, without looking up.

Antonia repressed the exclamation that rose to her lips. She forbore to tell him that she had been too much occupied with gazing on

him, to notice the additions to the portfolio. Her exquisite tact enabled her to see that the moment was unseasonable; and that a display of tenderness, which he might be unable to return, would only embarrass and distress her lover.

“ I am musically inclined to-night,” said Antonia ; “ let us go to the Italian Opera.”

“ Are you serious, dearest ?” said Cleveland.

“ Is there anything extraordinary in my wish ?” asked Antonia.

“ Oh ! nothing,” replied Cleveland ; “ only you yourself requested me to procure these engravings, and now I have brought them, you will not turn your eyes on them.”

“ Be it so,” said Antonia ; “ are men to monopolize the pleasures of fickleness ?”

“ By no means,” said Cleveland, smiling, “ you shall have your share of the pleasure, if

you call an infirmity by that name. You shall be as fickle as you like, and you shall go to the opera if you like."

In a short time they were seated in a box at the opera. Antonia's first care was to find out the Marchioness de Montolieu. She saw a lady, still in the prime of life and beauty, sitting in the box which had been designated to her beforehand, as the seat which the Marchioness would choose on the night in question. A thrill of agitation pervaded Antonia's frame. Could that fair being, so young—so bright, be her mother? The ideas of age and maternity were indissolubly connected in her mind; she knew not why. She wished to be sure that she was not mistaken, and turning to Cleveland, she asked him, if he knew the name of the lady sitting in the opposite box.

"The Marchioness de Montolieu," returned

Cleveland; "and now you put me in mind of an observation, which struck me the other day in her company, that you resembled her so strongly in voice, feature, and manner, that you must somehow or other be related."

Antonia's heart beat with a variety of emotions. "Are you intimately acquainted with her?" asked she.

"I have only lately been introduced to her, but I have every possible inclination to improve our friendship."

"Why?" asked Antonia faintly.

"Oh! I hardly know why—because she is very agreeable and very handsome—because she is so like you, dearest, both in body and mind."

Antonia's countenance brightened—so great a luxury is the simplest, idlest compliment from the lips we love. She would never leave him, no—not to be recognized as the daughter of

the first noble in the land. She could not however help gazing on the Marchioness. Her countenance seemed melancholy and absorbed. She paid but little attention to the conversation of the gentleman who was the fellow-occupant of the box, and still less to the performance on the stage. Her thoughts seemed far away. Could it be, that she was pining for the unnatural daughter, who had just resolved never to seek her protection, or meet her affection? And then she looked on Cleveland. Lover and mother ! why would not fate allow her to enjoy them both ? Must fortune never come with both hands full ?

CHAPTER XXIV.

A SEPARATION, WITH STRANGE REASONS FOR IT.

As long as we love, says Rochefoucault, we pardon. What a deep knowledge of human nature is evinced in this little aphorism ! We overlook all faults in those we love—we dote upon their very imperfections and frailties, and view them as the breaks and chasms in a landscape—defects perhaps in themselves, but increasing the beauty of the whole. No ill-usage disgusts us. We receive their bad treatment,

as a devotee resigns himself to the misfortunes which he believes to be the chastenings of his Deity. We make a merit in suffering for them. We experience an actual pleasure in our pain, when their hand inflicts the wound. In proportion as Antonia perceived Cleveland's love to decline, the stronger grew her own passion. And yet in spite of this infatuation, she had already determined to part from him for ever. Day after day, she watched his manners grow colder—his looks become less fond, and his voice less soft and mellifluous; yet to do him justice, she confessed that his behaviour never changed. He was as anxious as ever to supply her with pleasure and amusement. His liberality was as unbounded as at first. But what availed these acts of kindness? The symptoms of declining love were not to be mistaken by a person of Antonia's penetration. She saw too

clearly, that they foreboded the ultimate extinction of his attachment. The thought was agony, yet how could she arrest what appeared the natural progress of things? How could she prevent the fatal period, when he would cease to love her, from arriving. She had but one resource; there was but one means of avoiding this detested moment. It was to part from him now—at the present time, while the last remains of attachment were still alive in his bosom.

“You will have to dine by yourself, to-day, Antonia,” said Cleveland one morning, as he had just finished his preparations for going out. “I shall be particularly engaged till night. Adieu.”

“Adieu,” replied Antonia, but what a difference between the two ‘adieux.’ The first came trippingly off the speaker’s tongue, in the

careless placid tone, in which we bid a friend good-bye, whom we expect to meet again in a few days, or perhaps hours; and whose absence we could bear with equanimity for a much longer period. The second was uttered in a tone of deep emotion. There was a seriousness and solemnity in the sound, which did not belong to common parlance. There was also a slight tremulousness in the voice, as if the speaker could hardly pronounce the word, and with difficulty suppressed the agitated feelings that were struggling to escape from her full bosom. Cleveland was so struck with the expression which she gave to this ordinary and yet affecting form of speech, that he closed the half-opened door of the apartment, and turning round, looked at her in some surprise. Antonia returned the glance with a far more intense gaze. At length, apparently unable to stifle

her contending emotions, she darted forwards, and flinging her arms round his neck, burst into a passionate flood of tears.

Cleveland was embarrassed, not to say annoyed, by this strange display of tenderness and passion. He did not like to treat such warmth of feeling with cold indifference; yet he felt himself unable either to understand, or to reciprocate its fervour. He was moreover pained to observe such a strong proof of internal sorrow and secret uneasiness. He felt, in short, like the cool and placid Hume, when the frantic enthusiast Jean Jacques Rousseau, from some reaction of feeling towards the former gentleman, suddenly fell upon his neck and wept: 'Gently, gently, my dear sir,' said Hume, patting the other on the back. This was all that the astonished philosopher could do towards soothing the passionate old child of fifty years.

Equally ineffective consolation was administered to Antonia by Cleveland—he pressed her to his bosom—begged her to be calm—wondered what could have happened to distress her in this extraordinary manner—was sure she was ill—begged her to have advice, &c. &c.—Antonia wept on in an uncontrollable passion of grief. Cleveland grew tired and vexed at the continuance of the scene, and at last made a gesture of weariness—perhaps of impatience. Antonia instantly withdrew herself from his arms, but apparently more in sorrow than in anger.

“If you know how much pain,” said Cleveland, “this unevenness of temper causes me, I am certain you would not yield to your feelings in this manner.”

“Forgive me,” said Antonia.

“Forgive you! Nay I must be the person

who has offended—and yet I am not conscious of having disobliged you.”

“Alas ! you cannot offend me ; though you may occasion me much pain ; but say that you forgive me this weakness, and that we part friends,” said Antonia.

“Considering the shortness of the period during which we shall be separated,” replied Cleveland, smiling, “I should have thought it hardly necessary to take such a solemn and formal farewell ; but I am willing to humour your weakness, though perhaps it would be more friendly to deny you. I cannot forgive you, because I was never offended, but only grieved to see your spirits so uneven. We certainly however part friends, and something more than friends ; I trust and hope we shall meet again in a gayer and happier mood.”

Antonia was silent. The tears still stood in

her eyes. Cleveland approached her, and gently kissed them away. She remained mute and passive under his caresses—and so they parted.

On his return home Cleveland found that Antonia had gone out, and was not yet returned. As the hour was late he was a good deal surprised, and a little alarmed. On making enquiries, he was informed that she had left home about two hours after himself, and that she had spent the interval in writing.

“Did she not leave word when she would return?” demanded Cleveland of the old woman, whom we have before mentioned.

“No, sir, but she cried very much as she got into her fiacre. ‘Your trunks, miss,’ said I, ‘are quite safe——’”

“Trunks!” exclaimed Cleveland, stamping furiously. “Did she take anything away with her?”

“Oh Lord, sir!” cried the old woman, “I’m sure I thought she had got your leave, or I should not have permitted her.”

Cleveland struck his forehead in anguish and despair.

“The gentleman who was with her seemed very kind,” sagaciously observed the old woman, who in her frightened stupidity kept talking on, in hopes that she should at last say something to please.

“She must be deceived—trepanned,” cried Cleveland. “I will instantly go to the police. (The idea of infidelity never struck his mind.) But stop—you say she wrote something. Where is it?—in her room perhaps. I will go and see;” and he rushed with the energy of a madman into the apartment where Antonia had slept. The first object that met his eyes was a letter on the toilette table directed to himself,

and in her handwriting. He tore it open and read it through, without moving from the spot, or changing the position in which he stood. The following were the contents :—

“I dote on you—I adore you. Your beloved image seems to pervade my whole existence. I dream of you all night—I think of you all day. My heart—my soul—my brain—nay, every nerve and fibre of my frame is instinct with love for you. I could worship the very ground you tread upon. I could shed my heart’s blood—I could drain the pulses that throb so wildly for you, drop by drop, to give you an hour’s pleasure—to save you an hour’s pain. All other passions, thoughts, emotions and sentiments, are swallowed up in this one master-feeling. I love you beyond all measure or limit—I love you fondly—impiously—I love

you to distraction,—and therefore I leave you for ever.

Hear me, dearest Cleveland; I could bear to see you—Cleveland—my all of love, hope, and happiness—stretched in death at my feet. Yes, I could bear to see the face and form, now so pregnant with grace, strength, and beauty—reft of its divine spark, and lying an unconscious and pulseless corse before me. I could behold this sight and survive, because the recollection of your love would enable me to endure life. But to perceive that glorious and ineffable passion—which once shone around and about me, like the meridian sun, filling all life with such radiance, that my senses ached with excess of light—dwindle into a common vulgar sentiment—a mere household attachment—the result of habit and convenience; and perhaps to feel it shrink to something less than this ;—to view the last rays of waning passion

depart from me with the slow but sure motion of the dial's hour hand ; I, gazing on them the while, like a shipwrecked mariner watching the sun go down, which will cut off all chance of escape or succour—nerveless, hopeless, helpless, powerless. No, no, rather let me die a thousand deaths than undergo such intolerable and protracted tortures. Yet too surely I feel that this will be the result if we live together much longer. Day by day—hour by hour—minute by minute—your love is decaying. Its fashion and form are the same now as at first ; but soul, life and energy, are ebbing fast. You are unconscious perhaps of the change, or you perceive it, and battle against the natural progress of your feelings with your utmost efforts. In vain ; these painful struggles, these useless wrestlings with your own nature, will but accelerate the fatal period. Let us part then, my beloved—let us

part while we still love—ere life is infected by the poisonous truth, that our passion, like every other hope and pleasure, is vanity and delusion of spirit. Leave the feast while the immortal nectar of enjoyment, still glows upon our lips; do not wait to drain the dregs of satiety and indifference—rather dash the goblet, precious though it be, into a thousand pieces.

“Do not mourn for me; I am content with my fate. The Calendar says that we have passed but a few brief months together; but to me the time seems like a succession of happy ages, so lengthened out is the period by the countless sensations that are crowded into it. Yes, I have lived an eternity of bliss; and its memories, which are worth all other pleasures, will accompany me to the last moments of my existence. They are sufficient for felicity; I am content; I am happy. Entertain no anxiety

for my future fate. What the world would call my true interests, are advanced and strengthened by the step I have taken. I shall gain in respectability, and station in society, something of what I lose in peace and happiness. Should I be deceived in these expectations, I shall be but little affected. Henceforward good or bad fortune is the same to me. I can feel neither joy nor sorrow after losing you. Forgive me that I parted at once, without apprizing you of my intention. I examined my resolution and found it unequal to the task. The sudden and sharp separation, which cleaves the bosom like an axe, is woe enough to bear. To have my heartstrings slowly drawn asunder, by the protracted agonies of a formal parting, is more than I could endure.

“I have still a thousand feelings to explain—
a thousand wishes to unfold; and this letter

may perhaps be the last I shall ever write to you. But my brain is confused and weak. I am unable to avail myself of the opportunity. The multiplicity of my eager thoughts overwhelms my understanding. My eyes are misty—hardly can I trace the incoherent words I write. Farewell—I can say no more. Your own heart will tell you how much is felt, wished, and conveyed, in that simple word. Farewell, my beloved—my adored Cleveland. Farewell—farewell !

“ ANTONIA.”

For some minutes after he had perused the letter, Cleveland stood in a sort of stupified dismay. Was he dreaming?—did he read the letter aright?—Gone !—and for ever. This was a blow he had not anticipated. Perhaps she would return. With a beating heart he again

read her farewell epistle. No—no—there was no hope—she had left him in right good earnest, and for ever. Her resolution was the result of his own conduct: there was no one he could blame—no one on whom he could vent his fury—no one who could afford him the slightest assistance, sympathy, or consolation. He threw himself on a chair, and wept like a child in utter weakness. To know the worth of a thing, we must lose it.

“ For it so falls out,
That what we have, we prize not to the worth ;
But being lacked and lost, why then we rack
The value.”

It seemed to Cleveland as if he had for the first time become sensible of Antonia's charms and virtues—as if he had for the first time become aware of the desperate and absorbing nature of his passion for her. Compared with

the intensity of his present emotions, he certainly had never felt love before. Then came the overwhelming flood of regrets and self-reproaches, which we all feel too late, when we lose the friend whose kindness we have abused. Was it possible he had been living months in her society, and deemed the privilege of so little value? Madman!—idiot! Now he would sacrifice his whole fortune—his health—his life—to redeem five minutes of those wasted and ill-appreciated hours of bliss. In the stupid wantonness of security and content, he had trampled on the boon that made his happiness; and fate had deservedly wrenched away the blessing. Oh that he could see her once more—only once more—though it were to bid her an eternal adieu. It was denied him. His head grew dizzy. His senses for a moment deserted him—he became delirious with agony—he

shouted aloud Antonia's name, as if expecting her to answer. He called first with frantic eagerness—then in a soft imploring tone. The loved and familiar voice responded not to his cry—the well-known face of beauty came not forth to meet him. Cleveland gazed slowly and fearfully round the solitary room, and felt that he was alone—alone—alone.

CHAPTER XXV.

MUST TRUTH ALWAYS BE TOLD ?

WE must change our scene to the Château of Veret, the country residence of the Marquis de Montolieu.

“I hardly understand the story yet,” exclaimed the Marquis, yawning.

“I will explain it to you for the twentieth time,” said the Marchioness, with an air of gaiety, which an acute observer would perceived was forced. “My sister, who went young into

Germany, there married a certain Baron von Oberfeldt, the brother of the Baron Swarzenheim, who is coming to visit you. By this nobleman she had an only daughter. Both died young. Their daughter was consigned to the care of a cousin, he being the nearest relation, residing in Austria; for her paternal uncle, Baron Swarzenheim, was then abroad. When the latter returned, he demanded the guardianship of his niece. Under his care she continued for some years. At length, being appointed to a distant embassy, he is compelled to relinquish the charge. He has implored me to supply his place for a year or two, and to allow my niece to remain during that time in our château."

"How odd that your sister should have married a German."

"Not more singular than my marrying you, who are a Frenchman."

“What’s the reason,” inquired the Marquis, “that this branch of your family have never let us know of their existence until the present moment?”

“My sister’s marriage was against the consent of her family. Her husband, in pique, no doubt, forbid her to hold any correspondence with her relatives; and when he died, she did not long survive him.”

“Humph! I predict, Marchioness, that you will find this girl an intolerable bore.”

“Entertain no anxiety on that ground, my dear,” said the Marchioness.

“Well! but perhaps *I* shall; which would be a still more calamitous event.”

“I will engage that you shall never be troubled with her.”

“I suppose, by the Baron not asking you to introduce her at Paris, that your intended pro-

tégée is a juvenile gorgon. High cheek-bones ; red hair ; complexion speckled, like a guinea-fowl's egg ; and the ancle of a Flanders' mare. Too bad,—when you know how I detest looking at an ugly face.” And the Marquis gazed in an adjacent pier glass, and arranged the curls of his peruke.

At this moment a lacquey entered, and informed the Marquis and Marchioness, that the Baron Swarzenheim and his niece had arrived at the château, and were ready to wait on them.

“ Show them in immediately,” cried the Marchioness.

A tall, stately gentleman, attired in a fashionable travelling dress, accompanied by a young lady of exquisite beauty, who was leaning on his arm, were ushered into the room.

The Marquis glanced first at the male visitor, and then at his companion. At the sight of so

much loveliness his countenance cleared up. He rose, and advanced to meet the Baron, with all the politeness of a pleased Frenchman.

“ I have the honour, I believe,” said the Marquis, “ of addressing the Baron Swarzenheim.”

“ The same, at your service,” answered the Baron. “ I am afraid I am committing a breach of politeness, in thus introducing myself. No doubt the rules of society require that I should have waited until I could have found a mutual friend, but anxiety for my niece’s interests induced me to take a step, which I fear you may view as an intrusion.”

“ Do not mention such a thing,” cried the Marquis, looking at the niece. “ I am delighted to have the honour of your acquaintance.— Allow me to introduce you to the Marchioness.

But," added he, "if what some folks say about the force of nature be true, I need not present your companion to her."

"I will begin our acquaintance with this embrace," said the Marchioness, clasping her fair visitor in her arms with such energy, that the Marquis's attention was attracted; and he looked at the young lady with an admiring eye, as if he should have liked to have followed his wife's example.

"What an extraordinary resemblance your niece bears to you, Marchioness," cried the Marquis, still contemplating the young German; "and to you also, Monsieur le Baron. I can distinctly trace the lineaments of both countenances, softened and harmonized into beauty, in that lovely face. Parbleu! if I did not know her to be your niece, I should have taken her to be your daughter."

The Marchioness abruptly walked to a window.

“ When you consider, Monsieur le Marquis, that this young lady is the daughter of my brother, and the Marchioness’s sister, the family likeness is explained, and your surprise will vanish.”

“ Nay,” replied the Marquis, “ you need not discuss the matter. I certainly did not suspect Mademoiselle to be the daughter of two persons who have never seen each other before to-day.” And the Marquis laughed, and took snuff, at what he considered a good joke.

“ You, yourself, Monsieur,” observed the Baron, “ exhibit in your face and figure all the characteristics of the race of Montolieu. I have seen the portraits of some of your renowned and warlike progenitors in our old Hungarian castles.”

The Marchioness returned to the group.

“The ancestral hook in my nose, eh? Well, I have been told the same thing before. I really believe, myself, that I am like Raymond de Vaudricour, the fifth lord of Montolieu. My dear Baron, the Marchioness and myself will have the greatest possible pleasure in receiving your niece into our family during the whole period of your embassy.”

“Thanks, thanks; you have taken a load off my mind,” said the Baron.

“In fact,” continued the Marquis, “we were both anticipating the pleasure with which we should mutually act the part of parents to our charming niece, when your arrival was announced. Were we not, Marchioness?”

“I can safely answer, for myself, in the affirmative.”

“I had a prophetic conviction,” pursued the

Marquis, " that the Marchioness's niece would prove a beauty. Had I not, my dear?" added he, turning to the Marchioness, who reluctantly confirmed the falsehood.

" But what distresses me," continued the Marquis, " is, that your niece should ' waste her sweetness' in the rustic solitude of this our Château de Veret. Allow us to take her to Paris?"

" Excuse me, my dear Marquis ; but I could not perform my diplomatic mission in peace and tranquillity, four hundred leagues from this spot, if I thought my niece were exposed the while to the corruption and contamination of Paris," replied the Baron.

" You are bound to Constantinople, are you not?" inquired the Marchioness.

" My destination is changed. I am now despatched to St. Petersburg."

“Capital !” cried Montolieu. “My dear Baron, your court could not have chosen a more acceptable ambassador to the chaste Catherine. You cannot fail to be on good terms with the Czarina. You are six feet high—broad shouldered—strong limbed—and have a glance of fire.”

“I should think,” answered the Baron, “that every corner and nook of the Czarina’s heart was fully occupied.”

“Ay, but variety you know—besides, my dear Baron, if you will allow me to say so, you are very like the celebrated Count Cagliostro, who, as report says, was one of the Empress’s lovers under the rose. I once saw him at Paris.—But you are not offended at the comparison?” continued the Marquis, observing the Baron’s face to change colour. “The resemblance I alluded to, of course, only extends to the person.”

“Nay,” returned the Baron; “I care not how far you conceive the similitude to extend. Cagliostro is certainly as clever, and, in all probability, quite as respectable, as any of Catherine’s other lovers. That he is a charlatan, instead of a minister, is the caprice of fortune.”

“Ay—ay,” said the Marquis; “that is looking at the matter like a philosopher. After all, the two characters are not so different. If every charlatan is not a minister, most ministers are at least charlatans.”

“Ha ! ha !” laughed the Baron, in great good humour.

“By the by, did you ever hear the curious story they whisper of our present ambassador to Catherine ? I’ll tell it you when Madame my wife has left the room.”

“A thousand thanks for your forbearance,” said the Marchioness.

“Well,” continued the Marquis, “if Catherine makes love like a grenadier, at least she rewards like a sovereign.”

“As you seem bent on continuing this edifying conversation, you must allow me to remark, that little would be gained by protecting our niece from the corruption of the metropolis, if she is compelled to hear such discussions in the country. You must excuse me if I withdraw with her for the present.” With these words the Marchioness, taking her young guest’s arm, made a rapid retreat, and left the gentlemen to continue a conversation, which now became too broad for transcription into our chaste pages.

The Baron did not stay long at the Château de Veret. After a sojourn of two days, during which period he had entirely acquired the good graces of the Marquis, he took a tender adieu of his niece, and set off for Vienna, with the

intention of proceeding thence to St. Petersburg.

The Marquis's admiration for the new inmate of his château did not diminish on farther acquaintance. On the contrary, he was never tired of extolling her wit, sense, beauty, and accomplishments. He was in a good humour with everybody and everything, and seemed delighted with his wife for having such charming relatives. An unexpected incident, however, called him to Paris. He received intelligence that the Duke's mistress had eloped from him some months ago ; and that her lover, far from being able to decoy her back by presents or promises, had not even succeeded in discovering her retreat. Still he was reluctant to leave Veret. The beauty and wit of his new visitor detained him by a soft and imperceptible attraction ; but subsequent reflections determined

him to break the spell, by a vigorous effort, and to remove himself from the sphere of its influence. It is true, he was a good deal in love with his wife's niece; but the seduction of so intimate a connexion was a step beyond the limits he had prescribed to his license.

If, indeed, she were once married to some Parisian nobleman, and established according to her rank, there would be no objection to his forming a liason with her in the character of a married woman. Such were the morals of French society before the revolution.

“ I must wait till she is married,” thought he, with a sentiment of moral resignation. “ Till that event takes place, I must curb my desires: so I had better not expose myself to temptation by remaining here.” Besides this quasi-virtuous thought, there was his bet with De Fronsac to look after: a thousand louis was a serious

sum ; and then there was the pleasure and triumph of announcing his success in the affair to all his boon companions : and more than this, there was La Gabrielle waiting to receive him with the sincerest sympathy and exultation at the victorious result. All these considerations induced him, in spite of the charms which he felt in Antonia's company, to leave the Château about a week after the Baron, and to set off to Paris.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FATAL INVITATION.

“ So this wonderful beauty of yours, De Fronsac, has at last fairly given you the slip”—said Count D'Ostalis to the Duke. “ Upon my soul, it serves you right—eternally insulting your friends with descriptions of the celestial charms, which you would never permit their modest longing eyes to view. Her faithlessness is certainly a judgment on you, for the wanton insolence, with which you treated your less fortunate companions.”

“ How did you learn the news ?” said the Duke.

“ Oh ! the whole set of us are acquainted with the flight. The only wonder is, that we did not discover the secret before. Why she eloped six months ago ; De Montolieu will certainly come upon you for his thousand louis.”

“ Let him come when he will,” replied the Duke, “ he shall be paid—that is not the worst sting of the affair ; I could bear the loss of the bet, but that villain Cagliostro——”,

“ How is he mixed up with the matter ?” asked D'Ostalis—“ Oh I see—this flighty girl had already deserted you, when you applied to Cagliostro, and you sought to avail yourself of his omnipotence, and omniscience, and so forth, to decoy her back.”

“ Most sagacious D'Ostalis ! methinks you are going to turn conjurer like your respectable

friend Cagliostro; if so—you will excuse me buttoning up my pockets in your company.”

“No more my friend, than your own,” retorted the Count; “I am an hundred louis the worse for seeing his face—to say nothing of the head-ache which his mystifying jargon gave me; and the awful manner in which he has twice shaken my nerves. But what was the result of your private interview with the *à priori* philosopher?”

“Results! zounds! my complaint is, that there was no result at all. After making the fairest promises and insinuating himself into the heart of my mystery—he turns round upon me, and refuses me the smallest assistance. Nay more—he adds insult to injury, and thinks fit to send me a very didactic epistle, in which he coolly advises me, as I value my life and happiness, to abandon all thoughts of Antonia—that’s

the tiresome girl's name—and concludes by quoting the butt-end of some old sermon on the immorality of my past courses."

Count D'Ostalis laughed, and then mused. "I tell you what Duke," said he, "I would follow his advice, and relinquish the business."

"Your humble servant," replied the other, "and allow him to carry off the girl himself; which I verily believe he has already done, for I have ascertained that she has left her first lover. No: no: let me catch this insolent juggling charlatan within my clutches; and if I do not make him pay bitterly for the affront he has put upon me, say that De Fronsac has no stomach for revenge. In fact, I have only to hand him over to the police; and they will punish him sufficiently, on their own account, for both."

"Take my advice," said Count D'Ostalis

thoughtfully, "meddle not with that man, if indeed he is a man, and nothing more. But man or demon, be he which he may—leave him alone. I am not superstitious, but seeing is believing. Let him keep company with the devil as much as he pleases, but do not make a third to the party."

"Pshaw !" cried the Duke, with a contemptuous smile, "where are your wits ? and where, oh ! where is your courage ? Do you expect me—me, De Fronsac—to tremble at these childish terrors ? That this Cagliostro is a clever scoundrel, it is impossible to deny—that he possesses much practical scientific knowledge I do not doubt. But let us once catch the gentleman. Handcuffed with iron—within four stone walls, and deprived of his apparatus, he will possess no more power, under such circumstances, than you or I would have."

“ Well : well : ” replied the Count, “ have your own way ; I am neither Cassandra, nor Mentor, but Count D'Ostalis. Follow the desire of your own heart. Do that which seemeth best unto your Ducal wisdom. But here comes De Montolieu. Miserable De Fronsac, how will thy loyalty bear to part with a thousand beloved images of thy sovereign ? ”

The Count D'Ostalis and the Duke were walking on the Boulevards. The Marquis, as both expected, planted himself full in their way, and saluted them with an air of triumph.

“ I will save you the trouble, ” said the Duke, “ of making your demand. I confess myself to have lost the bet, and will pay you the amount directly, if you will accompany me to my hôtel. In consideration, therefore, of my prompt settlement, spare me your exultations on the subject. ”

.

“ You quite mistake my feelings,” said the Marquis, “ I approached you, not bursting, as you suppose, with sentiments of ungenerous triumph, but melted with pity, and filled with thoughts of compassion and sympathy. Nay, I would have refused the money, but, that I cannot consent to deprive you of the fine moral lesson, which is contained in the loss.”

“ Benevolent soul !” drily exclaimed the Duke, “ is this your first specimen of sympathy and consolation ?”

“ No :—hear me,” said the Marquis, “ I have just left at my Château at Veret, the most beautiful creature that Heaven ever suffered to adorn the earth ;—and only seventeen—”

“ Well ;—” said the Duke.

“ Well—if you will promise to be a good boy, and say nothing impudent and do nothing naughty, I will try if I cannot bless your eyes with a sight of her.”

"Thanks for your confidence and liberality," replied the Duke, with an equivocal smile, "Pray ; who is this successor to La Gabrielle?"

"Oh ! I am not so lucky as you think me ; she is no successor to La Gabrielle—I wish she were. She is my wife's niece, so that if I were to attack her, the attempt would create scandal."

"Has she made her debüt at Paris?" enquired the Count D'Ostalis.

"No !" replied the Marquis, "her aunt has got some confounded notions in her head, about the demoralizing effects of Parisian society, which induce her to bury this brightest of gems at Veret. So the favour I offer is as exclusive, as it is precious."

"I am infinitely beholden to you," said the Duke ; "I really think I will accept your offer."

"But recollect," said the Marquis, "she is the Marchioness's niece. Remember—the

strictest decorum is absolutely necessary. If you look and love, you must despair and die. The only road is through the Church; and even were you to deposit your dukedom and ring matrimonial at her feet, I would not promise you she would think them worthy picking up."

"And supposing," replied De Fronsac with a slight smile, "that out of complaisance to your obliging hint, I made this beauty, Duchess de Fronsac. Confess the truth—would you enjoy any rest of mind or body, until you had qualified me for Heaven?"

"Hem!" said the Marquis, "you have found me before now a successful antagonist—witness the bet—"

"My bad fortune, not your own merit."

"Well," replied the Marquis, "at least you ought to acknowledge my merit, in the matter

of the proposed excursion ; for your Avatar at Veret will occasion a terrible quarrel between the Marchioness and myself. You are a bitter pill to my better half ; she has the worst opinion of your morals."

"You had better sweeten the mixture," cried Count D'Ostalis, "by the addition of my agreeable company."

"I have no objection, most modest Count," answered the Marquis ; "my travelling carriage will hold three. But where are your thanks, Duke ? will you not admit this to be a consolation ?"

"I give you a thousand, and a thousand, and I wish to God I could pay my bet in the same coin."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MAN WITHOUT A HEART.

AFTER the departure of the Marquis, his wife was for a time completely happy. She could now indulge with impunity her transports of affection towards her long lost, and late recovered daughter. Without fear of surprise or discovery, she could now clasp Antonia to her bosom, and shed tears of joy over her head. A certain learned divine compared life to a board full of round and square holes, and men to

pegs respectively fitted to these apertures ; and added that all the round pegs, by some mischance or other, got into the square holes, and all the square pegs into the round holes. Madame de Montolieu was decidedly a round peg in a square hole. Nature had constituted her to attain felicity through the medium of gratified affections ; while destiny, denying her domestic pleasures, had thrown her into a vortex of fashionable gaiety and dissipation, where she was stunned by the noise and bustle, without being amused by the tinsel splendour of the scene. The truth was, the Marchioness was one of those rare women, in whose disposition vanity is a very subordinate passion. Unlike most of her sex, she would have preferred love to ambition, and the charms of individual attachment, to the intoxication of general admiration. The homage and flattery, which were yielded on

every aide to her wit and beauty, did not console her for the state of isolation, in which her strongest affections were placed. She had no children. Such of her relations, as were still living, resided in Italy. Her husband, after the first three months of his union, treated her with civility and neglect. They lived, in short, on those polite terms of estrangement, which were common enough before the revolution, between married people in Parisian society. Count D'Ostalis was a poor substitute for the lover, which her ardent imagination and vivid fancy, had sometimes sketched in beau ideal. Thus, the most energetic and active portions of her nature—her passions and her affections—were entirely unoccupied; and she consequently experienced that miserable ennui and weariness, common to all who are endowed with strong powers, which external circumstances prevent

them from exercising. The restoration of Antonia supplied her with an object for these feelings, whose forced inaction rendered her unhappy. Madame de Montolieu could not bear to be deprived of her company a single instant. She was never weary of conversing with her daughter. Every idea and opinion which the latter expressed, was, to her devoted mother, as a fresh page opened in a precious and mystic volume.

Madame de Montolieu possessed a very considerable knowledge of natural history, and was particularly well versed in botany. She proposed to Antonia to learn the science ; and the latter, who felt that mental occupation was the best consolation she could find for the secret grief which rankled in her bosom ; and who, moreover, from motives of gratitude and affection, wished to appear happier than she really

was, readily accepted the offer. For whole hours the mother and daughter would wander through the beautiful domains of the Château de Veret; sometimes indulging in that sweet interchange of feeling, so dear to intellectual minds and affectionate hearts; sometimes pursuing the science, the prosecution of which formed the ostensible object of their stroll. Secluded from the noise and din of what is called the fashionable world—removed from the vain and feverish struggle of society, Madame de Montolieu felt that the time spent in these simple and delightful occupations, were the happiest moments she had ever experienced. The being she loved best on earth was at her side. The sweet influences of nature diffused themselves over her frame, and communicated to her mind a tranquillity of soul—an unruffled calm of temper and serenity of spirit—which she had never

known before. Often the shades of evening would close over the wanderers, before they were aware how quickly the happy hours had passed. Nor did Antonia's spirit long continue mournful. If she did not attain the perfect ease and contentment of her mother; she felt as if after many storms and dangers she had at last gained a calm and secure haven. If she no longer possessed the vivid enjoyment of the past, neither was she harrassed by the precarious nature of her situation and the uncertainty of its duration.

At the close of one of these days, spent in the manner we have described, Madame de Montolieu and her daughter were sitting in the saloon of the château. Though the autumn was far advanced, the mildness of the season had tempted them to throw open the windows, that they might more fully enjoy the tranquil

beauty of the evening. The sky was pure and cloudless. The setting sun poured forth a flood of golden fire, which bathed every object with light and glory. Not the faintest breeze was stirring. Even the slender tree-tops ceased to tremble. No sounds were heard save the chirpings of a few retiring birds, who seemed summoning their partners to rest. The Marchioness sat side by side with her daughter, tenderly clasping one of Antonia's hands in both her own. They mutually gazed on the calm loveliness of the scene before them; and neither spoke. After some minutes' silence, Antonia chanced to look at the Marchioness, and saw with surprize that the eyes of the latter were filled with tears.

"Does this beautiful sunset give you pain, my mother?" asked Antonia.

"No : not pain precisely ; but it conjures up

melancholy ideas to my mind. I cannot help thinking that in a few minutes all this splendour and glory will be swallowed up in the gloomy shades of evening. And then a thrill of apprehension comes over me. And I tremble lest the happiness I have lately enjoyed, like the present scene, calm and beautiful, will be also, like it, brief and evanescent too. I dread that yonder sunset is the last I shall ever behold in peace and happiness: and that a long dark night of sorrow is coming."

"You should not allow these vague fancies and undefined terrors to dwell upon your mind."

"And on what subject were your thoughts running, Antonia?"

"Nay, I was gazing on the bright orb with simple animal enjoyment. I did not think—I only felt."

Before the Marchioness could reply, the

sound of wheels in the distance was heard. She turned to her daughter with a look of apprehension.

“Hark !”

“It is only the noise of some distant post-chaise,” answered Antonia. “Why should you be alarmed ?”

“I know not,” said the Marchioness ; “but in my present mood, every thing affrights me.”

Neither pursued the topic ; but as if to abstract their attention from the subject, again looked towards the landscape. The sun’s last rays were just disappearing over a line of distant hills. They slowly sunk. The jingle of the approaching vehicle now became distinctly audible. At length it was heard to rattle into the court-yard of the château. The Marchioness started up, and exclaimed, “I wonder who it can be—how my heart beats !”

"Dearest mother," said Antonia, flinging her arms round the Marchioness, "be calm—why should you apprehend danger?"

"Because, my darling—— but I hear footsteps in the passage ; they are coming into the saloon ; let us resume our seats."

As she spoke, the door opened ; and the Marquis de Montolieu entered, ushering in the Duke de Fronsac !

"Ladies, your most obedient ; you did not expect me to return so soon. Mademoiselle von Oberfeldt, allow me to introduce to you my particular friend the Duc de Fronsac."

Had a bomb on the point of explosion fallen into the centre of the apartment, the deadly missile would not have struck such terror to the hearts of the Marchioness and Antonia, as the sudden appearance of this dreaded nobleman. At first they gazed in speechless consternation.

But when Antonia heard him introduced to her by name, she could no longer controul her feelings. She uttered a loud shriek, and fainted. The Marchioness caught her in her arms. Overcome as the latter lady was by terror and anguish, she still retained sufficient presence of mind to make an apology for her niece's conduct. Mademoiselle von Oberfeldt had been very ill ever since the Marquis had left the château, and had fainted several times before that day.

“How unfortunate!” said the Marquis, contemplating the pale but still lovely features of Antonia, as she lay on the sofa, where the Marchioness had placed her; “these repeated faintings will ruin her beauty.”

“It is very strange, Madame la Marquise,” said the Duke, fixing a cold, malignant eye upon Madame de Montolieu; “but methought

when I first entered the room, the young lady possessed as perfect and lovely a bloom as ever tinged the cheek of health."

The Marchioness, the moment she had deposited Antonia on the sofa, had rung the bell for assistance. Her own soubrette now made her appearance ; and by their joint assistance, Antonia, who had already recovered her senses, was enabled to walk to her sleeping apartment. The Marchioness skilfully availed herself of the pretext afforded by Antonia's illness, to gain a short period of quiet and solitary reflection, and took the opportunity to retire with her pretended niece. When the Marchioness had left the room, she endeavoured to compose her thoughts, and calmly to reflect what course it was most advisable for her, under her present distressing circumstances, to adopt. Yet, anxious as she was to find a remedy for her embarrassment, she

could not help marvelling at the singular cruelty of the mischance which had befallen her. There was but one man in all France, whose presence she dreaded at the château; and guided by some fatal perversity, the Marquis had selected that particular individual as his companion. But she had no leisure to pursue this train of thought.—Something must be done; and that speedily.—If the Duke communicated the circumstances which had first connected him with Antonia, her fate was sealed. She would stand convicted in the eyes of her husband of a flagrant, though unintelligible and inexplicable imposture. If her real relationship to Antonia were eventually discovered, the case would be still worse. She knew that the Marquis, though indifferent to her conduct as a wife, would never forgive a transgression committed before marriage. Had she not acted foolishly in

leaving the Duke alone with her husband? De Fronsac might hesitate in communicating the secret in her presence, but he could hardly be expected to feel much reluctance in imparting the information during a familiar tête-à-tête. Had she not better return, and keep perpetually in their company? There was one chance of escape; if she could prevent the Duke from betraying the secret, until she could obtain a private interview, she might persuade him to bury the transaction in eternal silence. She would throw herself on his mercy, and appeal to his generosity. She would take him into her confidence. She would explain to him the near but unfortunate tie which existed between Mademoiselle von Oberfeldt and herself. She would endeavour to rouse the feelings of a father and a man, and would leave the point to be decided by his conscience, whether he would

sacrifice both mother and daughter to the indulgence of a selfish passion. She felt sure he could not be so dead to all sense of honour and generosity—so destitute of every better principle of our nature, as to refuse her request, or betray her. It is true she felt no great confidence in his character, from the traits of his conduct which had fallen under her observation, or had been related to her. Still he had a human form, and with all his vices, must have a human heart. Fraught with these resolutions, the Marchioness rejoined her husband and his visitor. She was much relieved to find from the former's manner, that nothing had as yet transpired. With a heavy and aching heart, she nevertheless joined in conversation, and even answered some questions relative to Antonia's indisposition, with tolerable composure.

The evening, though it appeared to the

anxious Marchioness a century, did not in reality last very long : for the Marquis was fatigued with his journey, and proposed retiring at an early hour. As the party were about to leave the saloon for their respective sleeping apartments, the Marchioness hastily scribbled a small note in pencil, and slipped it into the Duke's hand. The latter bowed significantly and passed on. The paper contained these words :—

“ Monsieur le Duc, favour me with an interview in my dressing-room before you retire to rest.”

It must be recollected that the Marquis and Marchioness de Montolieu occupied separate apartments.

The Marchioness traversed her room with disordered steps, anxiously revolving the possibility of securing the Duke's silence. A slight tap at the door announced his arrival. The Mar-

chioness advanced, and endeavoured to open it ; but her agitation was so excessive, that she was unable to accomplish even this simple task. The latter obeyed, and entered with a brisk triumphant air.

“ Monsieur le Duc,” said the Marchioness, hardly able to articulate, “ doubtless you will be surprised at the step I have taken, but the painful circumstances in which I am placed leave me no other resource.”

“ I agree with you, Madame la Marquise,” replied De Fronsac.

“ Monsieur le Duc, I am about to ask you a favour,—trifling indeed to you, but one on which my future happiness depends.”

“ I anticipated as much.”

“ Will you be merciful, and grant it to me ?”

“ I never sign promises in blank, and leave

them to be filled up. You must explain, madame."

"My niece, Mademoiselle Von Oberfeldt, has not always borne the name and character she now maintains."

"Assuredly she has not."

"The Marquis is not aware of this fact—but—but——"

"But his curiosity is roused," rejoined the Duke, malignantly, "and a single word would give him a clue to the whole mystery."

"God forbid ! All that I ask you, Duke, is to continue to preserve the kind silence which you have hitherto maintained."

"Before I answer your request, madam, you must permit me to inquire the meaning of your inexplicable conduct. What earthly object can you propose to gain by causing a young adventuress to enact the part of your niece?"

“Painful circumstances,” said the Marchioness, gasping out the words, “which I cannot explain, have impelled me to the strange course I have taken. But I ask you, in your turn, Monsieur le Duc, what object you can propose to gain by revealing a secret on which the happiness of two human beings depends?”

“I will tell you frankly, Madam,” replied the Duke. “Your present conduct is an obstacle to the completion of my desires. You stand between me and my pleasures. For years I have supported, educated, and protected the peevish girl whom you now patronize. In spite of my numerous favours she left me. But she has now lost the paramour she fled with; and want and penury would soon compel her to sue for readmittance to my roof, did not your capricious and unaccountable favour support her in her pride and ingratitude.”



“ Ah ! spare that unhappy child more misery,” said the Marchioness. “ She has suffered so much already. Born with a disposition that nature formed for love and pleasure, she has endured every variety of woe. Now that she has at last gained a quiet haven, do not drive her thence. There are a thousand women in France who would with eagerness dispute the honour of your attentions; in mercy do not force them on this poor girl. To gratify an hour’s whim, do not make her miserable for life. Speak : Duke, you are wild and gay ; but I know you are generous at heart—you will grant my request—you will allow her to remain unmolested in her retreat.”

“ Nothing for nothing,” replied the Duke. “ In this egotistical world everything has its price; and a cypher seldom fetches more than its own value. The only alliances that are

firm and lasting are those which benefit both parties. What profit do I draw from this treaty of silence? What recompense do you offer me for keeping your secrets?"

"Point me out any mode of evincing my gratitude," replied the Marchioness, eagerly. "Ah! how gladly would I obey the suggestion."

"At present," said the Duke, with a look which made the Marchioness shudder, "I will dispense with any personal proof of gratitude on your own part. It is by your influence over your protégée's mind that you can chiefly hope to render me service. You need not communicate to her the danger of her position. It is evident, by her agitation, that she is fully aware of it. But you must inculcate compliance to my desires as the only path of safety. You must stifle the last lingering throbs of hesitation or reluctance; you must teach her to affect, if she


cannot feel, regret for her past refusals, and make her sensible that nothing but an excess of complaisance will induce me to pardon her former obduracy. On these very mild conditions I engage on my part not to betray the imposition she is carrying on, nor in any way to disturb her present position."

The Marchioness during this speech seemed stupified with horror. On the cessation of his voice she appeared to perceive the necessity of rousing her energy, and making some answer to the odious propositions she had just heard.

"You do not know," said she, in an almost hysterical tone, "you do not understand our real position—our relation to each other—or else you could not propose such horrors. I will confide in you—I will explain everything. That young person, Antonia I mean, you will hear with surprise, is my daughter. Yes ; before

my marriage with the Marquis. Judge now if you will persist in these dreadful conditions. My guilt—my neglect—my criminal neglect—have already brought down a load of evil upon my unhappy child. Already she has been placed, by the desertion of her natural relations, in frightful positions, where resistance to surrounding circumstances was impossible. Would you now put the crowning stroke to her misery and my infamy, and make me become the procuress and seducer of my own daughter? No; no; you jest—you do but jest. It is as little in man to ask, as it is in woman to grant such a request. Were you ever a father, Duke? But no, you could never understand the strength and depth of my affection. True, she is illegitimate, but she is still my child—the only one I ever had. I lost her in early youth. Throughout my whole life I have thought of her—

dreamed of her, till I was almost mad ; I sought her as a miser would search for the one lost jewel which constituted his whole fortune. I found her and began to dream of happiness. I risked reputation and almost life to recover her—to place her in her present situation ; and will you crush our dawning hopes for ever ? Will you bid me—a mother—to become my own daughter's executioner ? No ; no. You did not know what you asked. In the name of common humanity," continued the frantic Marchioness, throwing herself at the Duke's feet, "I implore your mercy. You may one day need it yourself. I entreat your mercy. Allow us to exist in peace. When you have broken the heart of one who never injured you, and rendered infamous the dearest object of her love, will you be happier yourself ? Listen to the prayers of a mother—you had a mother once



yourself. Yield to your better feelings. Promise that you will not reveal the secret to my husband. Promise that you will not utter that one word !”

Here the Marchioness paused from utter exhaustion. The Duke, who had listened with the utmost curiosity and interest to the Marchioness’s narrative, or rather to her broken exclamations, contemplated her kneeling figure with great attention, and after a few moments’ silence, said :—

“ I believe you, madam,—you resemble Antonia in face, figure, and tournure. Yes: the tale is true—your very attitudes are the same—the same marvellous grace of form—the same elegance and freedom of motion. These prove your maternity, better than a hundred lying witnesses.”

“ You believe my story ?” resumed the Mar-

chioness eagerly, "you cannot then hesitate to grant my request, to promise secrecy without annexing those horrible conditions?"

"You must have formed a strange idea of my character, madame," said the Duke, with much composure, "to think that a long tragedy speech, even though well recited, and delivered with good emphasis, would induce me to swerve from my determination. The case stands simply thus. I find my runaway mistress maintaining a fictitious character in my friend's house. Well—I am not ill-natured. I offer not to disturb her game, if she will only consent to play mine for a short time. I am willing enough to sacrifice my friend to her—what can I do more? You cannot expect me to sacrifice myself—my own pleasures. Every body has his turn. A few months ago, circumstances gave her the power of eluding my grasp; she

used it without scruple. Now, circumstances enable me to extort from her whatever I choose to ask. Do you think I shall be such an idiot, as to forbear availing myself of the opportunity. I offer her the alternative of an assignation, or a revelation. Let her choose between the two ; I have taken my resolution : let her do the same. Madame la Marquise I have the honour to wish you good night."

Before the Marchioness could make any answer, or renew her supplications, he had left the apartment.

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OR,

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE DISCLOSURE.

WHEN the Duke reached his own apartment, he began to review the agitating scene which had just occurred. At one conclusion he speedily arrived; viz. that it was useless to wait for the Marchioness's answer. When he recalled her looks of bewildered horror at the first announce-

ment of the scheme—her obstinate incredulity in the seriousness of his proposal, and the latent conviction, which she seemed to feel, that he could not be so cruel as to execute his threats ; all hopes of inducing her to consent to his infamous terms vanished. Other objections to the eligibility of his plan also rose to his mind. He recollected that, though in most matters, De Montolieu was an easy tempered man, it was not safe to tamper with any point which, in that nobleman's opinion, implicated his family dignity ; and he clearly saw, that if his proposed intrigue with Antonia, and his concealment of her real parentage, should transpire, that he should certainly be called to a severe account by her supposed uncle-in-law. The knowledge of Antonia's relationship to the Marchioness, suggested to his mind a safer and a plainer course, than a reluctant agreement, which that

lady would do all in her power to counterwork. He would go to the Marquis the next morning, communicate to him the whole story without reserve, and boldly demand as his own the mistress whose elopement had already cost him so dear. If, too, the Marquis, as the Duke strongly suspected, entertained a lurking passion for Antonia, common decency would prevent him from intriguing with his own wife's daughter; and he could then do nothing else but surrender her up, to the friend who had unravelled for him such a daring and mysterious imposture.

Meditating on these execrable, cold-blooded schemes of villainy, the Duke fell asleep, and enjoyed a tranquil and refreshing slumber until the next morning.

It is a mistake to suppose, that a thorough and complete scoundrel suffers from uneasiness

of conscience. As long as he can stave off the disagreeable consequences which sometimes overtake misdeeds, but are not their infallible result, he often enjoys life exceedingly; far more, indeed, than his betters. He can breathe the congenial atmosphere of vice, without pain or difficulty. Crime is to him his natural element, and he exists in it, as comfortably, and as easily, as a fish in water. It is the partly bad—the man of mixed and contradictory character—not destitute of moral faculties, but not possessing them in a degree sufficient to controul his baser inclinations—who is first hurried into guilt by his impetuous passions, and then, when the pleasure is over, and the vanity of the temptation apparent, becomes a prey to the bitter upbraidings of conscience. This is the man who experiences that miserable reaction of his better feelings, called remorse, and realizes in

this world that hell, which religion declares to be his lot in the next.

It was the custom of the luxurious inmates of the château to take a cup of coffee, or some other slight refreshment, in their rooms, on first waking; and to descend about noon into the *salle-à-manger*, where they partook of a very substantial repast called breakfast. Before this hour, the company did not usually meet.

The next morning the Duke sought the dressing-room of his host. The latter had arisen, and was in the act of taking the slight repast to which we have alluded.

“By your leave, De Montolieu,” said the Duke, “I will take my coffee with you this morning. I have an important communication to make to you.”

“Good—I am delighted to hear so,” replied the Marquis, yawning. “I wanted something

to amuse me. Let me send for fresh coffee, or do you prefer chocolate ?”

“The chocolate, if you please,” said the Duke.

“Now for your communication, Duke,” cried De Montolieu, flinging himself back in his easy fauteuil.

“Since I saw you last night,” said the Duke, beginning to sip his chocolate, “I have made some very interesting genealogical discoveries in your family tree.”

The Marquis's brow darkened. Pride of ancestry was one of the strongest of his numerous stock of prejudices.

“The investigation of my genealogy,” answered the Marquis, with great stiffness of manner, and dryness of tone, “must have impressed your mind with the conviction that the Montolieus are an old and noble race, who have always been ready to defend the honour of their line.”

“It is not to that portion of your race who are quietly rotting in lead and velvet, that my communication refers. I allude to a certain fair shoot grafted on your matrimonial branch.”

“My dear Duke,” returned the Marquis, who did not understand raillery on the subject, “you are neither holding the language of heraldry nor that of the world. For God’s sake speak out, and tell me in plain French what you mean.”

“Well then,” said the Duke, “to drop all farther metaphor, do you remember a certain bet we made over our cups some six months ago?”

“I have not such bitter reasons,” said the Marquis, chuckling with triumph, “for recollecting the facts, as yourself; but my memory does not fail me on the subject.”

“You recollect also,” continued the Duke,

“that the fair damsel who was to have gained the prize of beauty on my behalf, eloped before she became the character which entitled her to compete with La Gabrielle.”

“My poor Duke,” cried the Marquis, “the loss of the thousand louis has certainly affected your wits. What has the dull recapitulation of stale facts got to do with my family tree?”

“Patience ! I am approaching the end of my story ; and the novelty of my catastrophe will atone for the dulness of the preceding narrative. In the most extraordinary manner, I have discovered the birth and genealogy of the young heroine that I intended to make my state mistress. And who, in the name of wonder, do you think she proves to be?”

“How can I tell?” replied the Marquis. “Somebody very grand, I suppose—a changing princess, or an archbishop’s bastard.”

“Your last guess is not so bad. She has a cardinal for a great uncle. Now mark me. Put the cup from which you are sipping your coffee down on the table.—It is a beautiful specimen of Sèvres china; and I should be sorry to see you break it.—Then screw up your nerves as forcibly as possible. Tightly grasp the arms of your easy chair with both hands, and listen to what I am about to say.”

“If my hands were at liberty,” said the Marquis, “I should use them to hold my sides; for great will be my laughter, when after this solemn preamble, I shall see you delivered, like the mountain in labour, of something much more ridiculous than a mouse.”

“The adventuress, then, to whom I allude,” continued the Duke, speaking slowly and emphatically, “who was born without a surname, and to whom I gave the appellation of Volterra,

turns out to be the daughter of your wife, Marquis, and identical with Mademoiselle von Oberfeldt, who is now an inmate of this magnificent château."

The Duke had correctly anticipated the fate of the coffee-cup. Throwing it from him with violence, the Marquis started from his recumbent position, as if stung by a serpent. "The Marchioness de Montolieu's daughter!" exclaimed he, with intense rage. "You rave;—you have been dreaming, and in your madness mistake your visions for reality."

"I might with greater reason," replied the Duke, "compare you to a somnambulist, who walks about with his eyes open, and cannot see what is passing under his nose. I can call my whole household at Chamilly to prove the identity of Antonia di Volterra, and the adventuress who now passes as your wife's niece."

“The very last woman on earth I should have suspected !” said the Marquis, as if rather communing with his own thoughts, than answering the Duke. “’Sdeath, I shall go mad !”

“Come,—come,” said the Duke, coolly ; “such things have happened before now, even in the noble house of Montolieu. Was there not a certain Vicomtesse de Montolieu much patronised by the ‘grand monarque?’ And did not the Vicomte receive a marquissate, with divers broad lands, as the reward of his loyal and discreet complaisance ?”

“Pooh ! that was nothing—the Vicomtesse was a married woman. Her liaison with Louis the Fourteenth was conducted according to the strictest rules of etiquette and fashionable usage, and occasioned no scandal. It brought wealth and honours to her husband, and conferred historical celebrity on her descendants. But an

intrigue before marriage ! an intrigue with some low, obscure, unknown fellow—a roturier perhaps.—Bah ! the disgrace is irreparable.”

“Well ! for my own part,” said the Duke, shrugging his shoulders, “I do not see why that which is a trifle in a married dame should be such an inexpiable enormity in a spinster. I admit, however, that the majority of the fashionable world are of your opinion. Be this as it may, the truth of my story is incontestable. Examine the Marchioness. Charge her directly with the imposture ; and she will not have the effrontery to affect farther concealment.”

“And Baron Swartzenheim !” continued the Marquis, “the German envoy to the Empress Catherine : I feel crazy at the recollection of the imposition. When I fancied that I was rallying him with such success, how the villain must have been laughing in his sleeve all the time.”

“In truth,” returned the Duke, “I think, that up to the present time the German has had the best of the jest.”

“What shall I do?” said the Marquis, pacing the apartment with disordered steps. “What course shall I take? I will not countenance her a moment longer. Had she contracted a *liaison* with the greatest *roué* in Paris, I should not have interfered with her pleasures; but an intrigue before she was a married woman! her conduct is scandalous—irremediable! I will separate forthwith.”

“Humph!” observed the Duke. “In that case you must restore the fortune she brought you. I would advise you to pause ere you take that step.”

“Well then,” exclaimed the Marquis, “I will obtain a *lettre de cachet*, and shut her up; her maintenance in the Bastille will not cost much.”

“An excellent plan !” calmly responded the Duke, “if feasible. But I doubt whether in these times you will persuade the ministry to grant you such a favour. Necker has already refused two or three persons of the highest quality. A terrible change for the worse has silently and imperceptibly taken place in the system of government. Those lettres de cachet were such convenient things. If any audacious member of the numerous class of nobodies offended or stood in the way of one of the select order of somebodies, the aggrieved lord could easily extinguish the obnoxious individual for ever, by plunging him into that living tomb, a state prison. Such a power was some compensation for the loss of our hereditary rights of justice; but I am afraid, my friend, we have fallen on evil days. You will not be able to extort the lettre de cachet.”

“At any rate I will make the attempt,” said the Marquis. “If ever family crimes required that interposition of royal power, surely mine is that case. Lend me your powerful aid at Court, and I doubt not but that I shall succeed. The queen will take my part, for she does not like the Marchioness.”

“But are you determined,” said the Duke, in a tone of affected moderation, “to take all these violent steps before you have spoken to the Marchioness on the subject—before you are satisfied of her guilt?”

“I am quite convinced,” eagerly answered the Marquis, “I want no farther evidence. Now my suspicions are aroused, I recollect a thousand little circumstances confirmatory of her guilt. An intrigue before marriage! Never till now has the house of Montolieu sustained such a disgrace.”

“ Well,” said the Duke, “ I will exert whatever influence I possess at Versailles to assist your cause ; but I doubt our success. But what are you going to do with the young lady—your newly discovered daughter-in-law ?”

“ Take her—seduce her—ruin—kill her,” exclaimed the Marquis, with rising fury. “ Do what you like with her.”

“ I am obliged to you, my dear Marquis, for your extreme liberality ; but a happy thought strikes me ; can we not get her included in the *lettre de cachet* ?”

“ Certainly,” answered the other, “ she is an accomplice throughout the whole imposture. But what are you to gain by putting her in prison ? You cannot visit her in the Bastille.”

“ No,” said the Duke, “ but four or five months’ imprisonment is an excellent and approved medicine for pride and insolence. At

the end of that time, my young lady will be glad to purchase her liberty on any terms."

There is nothing, not even religious bigotry, which so effectually hardens the heart as the perpetual pursuit of selfish pleasures. Where his gratification is concerned, a roué is the most remorseless and cruel of men. He would sacrifice the whole world rather than deprive himself of a single agreeable sensation.

When the whole party assembled at noon, there was nothing in the Marquis's manner, which could lead Madame de Montolieu to the conclusion, that the Duke had disclosed the secret to her husband. The conversation was languid, but no single remark or allusion was dropped which argued the faintest suspicion on the Marquis's side of the real state of circumstances. Bred up in courts, he was naturally a good dissembler. He spoke to Antonia with

his usual cordiality; and the Duke admirably supported the game, by asking the Marchioness, with an air of affectionate politeness, how she had passed the night. They announced, however, their intention to return to Paris, but this sudden distaste for the country did not astonish Madame de Montolieu, who was well aware of their partiality for the capital. Their excursion to Veret was in her judgment much more surprising and unaccountable than their returning to the metropolis.

The day after, they took their departure, leaving the Marchioness in the most miserable state of uncertainty as to the probable safety of her secret. The sword was suspended over her by a much frailer support than a single hair—it rested on the Duc de Fronsac's mercy.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE KING, AND THE COURTIER.

ARRIVED at Versailles, the Duke de Fronsac and the Marquis de Montolieu encountered no great difficulty in obtaining a private interview with the king. Louis the Sixteenth, to whom the exercise of any sort of power seems to have been an insupportable burthen, and who shrunk as much from regulating the ceremonies of a ball, as from promulgating an edict for the government of his kingdom, was too

happy to devolve the control of all matters, connected with presentations and interviews, to his Grand Chamberlain, the Duke de Dreux Brézé. Upon the mind of this nobleman, the ancient genealogy, high rank, and great wealth of the applicants, had their due effect. A day was instantly fixed for the interview.

Appointments between princes and subjects, are, at least, generally kept by the latter. The two noblemen took good care to be in the ante-room at the hour fixed on. After waiting some time, they were admitted into the royal closet.

The personal appearance of this unfortunate monarch is so well known, from the numerous portraits which are scattered over Europe, that it is quite unnecessary to describe his face and figure. Every one can recollect the fleshy and unintellectual contour of his countenance, redeemed, however, by a somewhat mild and bene-

volent expression. His simplicity of demeanour was great, but unsuited to a king. Nature had not gifted him with the imposing dignity, or the magnificent condescension, of his ancestor, Louis the Fourteenth ; and unfortunately, he had not sufficient ability to see the necessity of simulating these qualities, which so effectually awe and dazzle the vulgar herd of mankind.

He treated the two noblemen with a familiarity, that set them too soon and too much at ease in his company ; while, unfortunately, the pleasing effect of such extreme condescension, was considerably impaired by the roughness and homeliness of his manners. After the first formal salutations were over, Louis the Sixteenth demanded the nature of their business.

“ Every fresh visitor,” said he, with a strong expression of weariness and distress, “ that I

admit into my closet, is the herald of some new disaster, or embarrassment. Every body gives me advice, but nobody renders me assistance. One half of my counsellors are pushing me forwards. The other half are dragging me back. Half the crew are rowing to the north ; half to the south ; and both parties swear, that they are obeying my orders, and consulting my inclinations. What bad news do you bring, gentlemen ? some fresh revolt in the provinces ? some outrage at Paris ?”

“It is indeed a misfortune, Sire,” answered the Marquis, “that compels me to seek your presence, but the calamity is of a domestic nature, and affects none of your Majesty’s loyal subjects, but the individual who now craves your aid and protection.”

“God be praised !” cried Louis, much relieved to find that his suitors’ business was not

political. "Monsieur le Marquis, I am sincerely sorry for your family grief, whatever it may be, though I cannot help rejoicing to learn, that my anticipations of fresh disturbances are not realized, for I am quite worn out with state perplexities. But what are the circumstances under which you ask for my assistance?"

"I will explain," answered the Marquis. "I have now been married to the Marchioness de Montolieu upwards of ten years; and during that time, I trust I have been a faithful and indulgent husband."

Louis the Sixteenth, who, unlike his predecessor, knew nothing of the scandal of his capital, gave implicit credit to the statement of the Marquis.

"A short time ago," resumed De Montolieu, "the Marchioness induced me to receive into my family a young person, whom she repre-

sented as her niece. The imposture was conducted with so much skill, and the girl sustained her fictitious character with so much tact and ability, that I should never have suspected the deception. Luckily my friend De Fronsac chanced to pay me a visit at my château. And I will request him to state the scandalous discoveries that ensued."

Louis turned, with a stolid look of wonderment, from the Marquis to his companion.

"Some years ago, Sire," interposed the Duke, "I was induced, from motives of charity, to adopt a young orphan. She proved to be of a vicious disposition, and subsequently eloped from my roof, in company with a young Englishman. For some months I lost all trace of the girl, nor did I again see her until the Marquis took me to his château at Veret, and introduced me to his wife's niece. What was

my surprise to recognise, in the pretended niece of the Marquis, my former protégée. I suppressed my astonishment, until I found myself alone with the Marchioness. I accused her of palming an adventuress on her husband, as her relation. She confessed the imposition; but stated, that the girl was in truth a natural child, which she had borne before marriage; and that excess of maternal affection had prompted her to adopt this measure, as the only means by which she could enjoy the society of her daughter. She appealed to my pity, and solicited my secrecy; but my duty to my friend overpowered every other consideration."

"This is a distressing business," said the King; "a very painful affair—but what can I do for you, Monsieur?"

"Sire," resumed De Montolieu, "it is evident from the manner in which this imposition

has been carried on—from the marks of premeditation which it wears—from the number of accomplices who must have been engaged in it—that the criminal and unhappy woman whom I have the misfortune to call my wife, has contracted acquaintances no less dishonourable to herself, than dangerous to me. My family honour—my fortune—nay, even my life—are hardly safe, if I am not armed with the power to prevent such conspiracies.”

“And how am I to protect you, Monsieur?” said the King, with an exceedingly simple air.

“Give me authority to place this misguided woman, and the young adventuress whom she confesses to be her natural daughter, under restraint, until I can find means to detect their accomplices, and unravel their intrigues. Nothing but legal duress and confinement will be sufficient to coerce spirits capable of conceiving and executing such an audacious piece of imposture.”

“I see now,” said Louis, “at what you are aiming. You want me to grant you a *lettre de cachet*—but why not seek redress from the ordinary tribunals?”

“Consider, Sire,” answered the Marquis, “the misery of exposing these family misfortunes to the vulgar gaze. It is bad enough to be deceived by one’s wife, but ten times worse to know that every *roturier* in France is laughing at the deception, and thanking God that he is not the Marquis de Montolieu. Then look at the law’s indefinite delay—the idle quibbles which both judges and advocates fondly seize upon, as a pretext for refusing substantial justice. Who can predict the decision of a suit, any more than the result of a battle? Skill and dexterity win the victory in both. So perhaps after I have convinced all France of my injury and the Marchioness’s infamy, I may

hear judgment pronounced against me, because my lawyer or his clerk may have transposed or omitted a sentence in the pleadings. I am not even sure that this base conspiracy and imposition is a legal crime, and punishable by law."

"There is much truth in what you say, Monsieur," observed the King; "and I heartily condole with you on the misconduct of the Marchioness. As far as my own personal inclinations are concerned, I should not hesitate to comply with your application. But I assure you, such a step is entirely out of my power. Necker will not hear of *lettres de cachet*. He reads me a lecture every day, to prove how injuriously they operate on the happiness of my people. After all, he may be right. And one thing is quite certain, I ought to strive as much as possible to promote the welfare of Frenchmen."

“Such a wish is conformable to your Majesty’s well-known benevolence,” interrupted the Duke. “But if the descendant of a race who have fought and bled for France might presume to offer an honest opinion to the King whom he adores, I would counsel you, Sire, to attain the desirable end you spoke of, by following the dictates of your own excellent judgment. Distrust those advisers, who would persuade you to sacrifice power to popularity; and who would pluck from your crown its brightest jewels, under the pretence of rendering it a more pleasing object in your subjects’ eyes. Grasp with a firm hand the sceptre of your ancestors, and govern according to those ancient laws and customs which have raised the state to its present pitch of glory and greatness.”

“Ay,” said the King, with somewhat of doubt and irresolution in his manner, “the queen

and her friends are always holding the same language to me : and sometimes I feel determined to embrace the course they recommend, but then"——

"What is the obstacle, Sire ?" said the Duke.

"The deficit," returned Louis, with a sigh ;
"the increasing deficit in the revenues—the stubborn and disloyal refusal of the Parliament to register my edicts—the difficulty of collecting the taxes—the riots and disturbances, which can only be quelled by shedding blood. The thoughts of all these things rise to my mind ; and then I pause, and hesitate, and begin to think that Necker's mild and peaceful plan of appeasing discontents by reform, is preferable to the employment of military force."

"But no military force," interposed the Marquis, "is requisite in the present case. All that I ask is your signature to a mandate, which will be implicitly obeyed."

“ True—true,” answered the feeble-minded monarch ; “ I had forgotten that. Well, Monsieur, I will see what can be done. Have you mentioned the matter to any of my ministers ?”

“ To none,” replied the Marquis, “ except to Monsieur Du Crosne, the lieutenant of police.”

“ He is acquainted then with the facts of your case ?” said the King.

“ He is, Sire.”

“ Well—he will attend at the council to-morrow ; and if I can settle matters with Necker, I will issue the *lettre de cachet*.”

Satisfied with the impression which they had made upon their monarch, the two noblemen took their leave.

“ We have played our cards well,” said the Marquis to his companion.

“ Yes—pretty well as yet,” replied the Duke ; “ but the real battle—the odd trick, to continue your metaphor—must be won to-morrow ; and

Necker will not concede the point without a desperate struggle."

"True," said Montolieu, "I did not like to see the King yield his assent with so little difficulty. I fear the minister will be able to twist the royal weathercock back to its old place with the same facility."

"Never did you utter a truer prophecy," said the Duke. "With Louis the last word is always the truest, and the last plan always the wisest. The only way in which we can win the game is to secure the highest trump."

"To whom do you allude?"

"To the Queen, man—to Marie Antoinette—whom else should I mean?"

"Alas! it is too late now," said De Montolieu, "that matter should have been thought of, and cared for before."

"That matter was thought of, and was cared for before, by your provident and disinterested

ally. Know that in half an hour I shall be admitted to the honour of an interview with the Queen, and if I don't enlist her in your cause, I will give you leave to take out my brains and throw them to your dog for breakfast."

"Incomparable De Fronsac! I could fall down and worship you."

"Oh fie! Reserve your pious adorations for the proper quarter. If you defraud Satan of his due, he will not stand your friend on the present occasion."

"Thou art the prince of devils! A greater than Satan!"

"Oh, shocking! Prythee, cease this diabolic blasphemy. Flattery dulls the wit, and I have need of all mine in the coming interview."

"Adieu, then, my dear De Fronsac, till to-morrow at the breaking up of the council, when we shall learn the king's decision."

CHAPTER XXX.

FEMALE INFLUENCE.

THE council took place the next day as the King had intimated. It consisted only of the King ; Monsieur Necker, the prime minister ; and Monsieur Du Crosne, the lieutenant of police. When the business for which the council was convened was settled, Louis began, not without a certain trepidation and embarrassment in his manner, to introduce the subject of the lettre de cachet to his minister. He repeated the

statement made to him by the Marquis on the previous day, and insisted on the corroborative evidence of the Duke. He finished by asking the minister what he thought of the affair; and whether it did not justify the use of a *lettre de cachet*.

“Why cannot the Marquis resort to the usual tribunals?” said Necker, with a dissatisfied air.

“The very question I put myself,” said the King, “but it seems that the Marquis despairs of obtaining justice from the lawyers. And then he cannot bear to expose his domestic misery to the eyes of the public.”

“Would such arguments as these,” said Necker, “be for a moment listened to if urged on the behalf of the accused party? Why then should they be available to the prosecutor?”

“Recollect, Monsieur,” said the King, who seemed somewhat scandalized at the observation,

“that the Marquis is a person of ancient family, high rank, and large property !”

“The better reason,” answered Necker, with a severe air, “since society has conferred upon him such immense advantages, that he should abstain from grasping at unjust and exclusive privileges. Why should his *ex-parte* statements be received and acted upon like attested evidence? Why should he, more than any other man in France, be permitted to preclude his opponent from defence and reply ?”

“I think,” said the King, “you cannot doubt the lady’s misconduct, if you believe the Duke’s testimony, and I cannot conceive him capable of perjury. If then you consider the Marchioness guilty, where is the hardship or injustice in confining her for a moderate period? What harm can come of it? A mild imprisonment will compel her to discontinue her iniqui-

tous practices, and give her leisure to repent her past misdeeds. It is the first time, too, the Marquis ever asked a favour; and I feel sure I shall confer a vast obligation on him by granting his request."

"Is it the object of your Majesty's policy," continued Necker with an austere expression, "to conciliate the affections of a few coronetted favourites, or to promote the general happiness and prosperity of the millions over whom you reign?"

"I call God to witness!" exclaimed Louis with great emotion, "that it has ever been the chief and dearest wish of my heart to make my subjects happy. Never did fond father pray for the success of an only son, with more eagerness, than I have besought Heaven to pour its choicest blessings on my people."

"I believe you, Sire," said the minister,

touched at the manifest sincerity of his monarch. "In common with all France, I do ample justice to the excellence of your intentions, and the soundness of your judgement. Happy would it be for this country, if your Majesty could always be persuaded to follow such admirable guides, and to turn a deaf ear to the suggestions of perfidious advisers, whose rank, and not their merit, gives them access to your presence."

"In short, Monsieur," said the King twiddling about the button of his coat in a most painful state of irresolution, "you would advise me not to issue this *lettre de cachet*."

"Such undoubtedly is the advice," said Necker, "which I feel it my duty to tender to your Majesty. You asked just now, Sire, what harm could result to society from the imprisonment of a guilty woman. I ask you in return,

what loss does society sustain by the murder of an unworthy individual? No direct injury, I admit, accrues in either case, but the sense of insecurity, which, as a consequence of such acts, is engendered in the public mind, is the worst both of social and political evils. This time an irresponsible uncontrollable power has stricken down guilt; the next time it may prostrate innocence. Any violation of the established laws, on which depends the safety of men's lives and properties is bad; but their infraction by the executive power, is far more dangerous than their infringement by a criminal, and produces a train of ever extending evils, the remote consequences of which, it is almost beyond the human understanding either to estimate or trace."

The King paused awhile, and then said with firmness, "my conscience tells me that what

you say is right. Ah ! Monsieur, you ought never to leave my side, for the moment you are out of sight, I am overpersuaded by other people. However, I will profit by your advice on this occasion, and not allow the Marquis de Montolieu to shut up his wife."

At this moment, the door of the chamber opened, and Marie Antoinette, unaccompanied by a single attendant, made her appearance. She was attired in a costume, which, however well it might be calculated to set off her face and figure, was unsuited, from its extreme plainness to a Queen of France. She advanced with smiling confidence to her husband, and said, "Forgive me this intrusion, Sire, but you will recollect that we expect the pleasure of your company at our fête to day. I would have sent you a note, but De Dreux Brézé declared, that he should expect the roof of the palace to

fall in after such a breach of etiquette, as dispatching a message to you while engaged at council. So finding nobody to commit the atrocity of disturbing you with a note, I was forced to be my own messenger."

Louis, who was somewhat wearied and exhausted with the schooling which Necker had inflicted on him, looked refreshed at the sight of his wife, and bade her sit down.

"We have just been considering, madame," said he, "whether we ought to shut up a lady, who has been playing some very naughty pranks."

Monsieur Necker seemed dreadfully annoyed at the prospect of discussing the matter with this fresh counsellor.

"And what was the result of your decision?" asked the Queen.

"Why, Monsieur Necker," answered Louis,

"has read me a very long lecture on the mischief arising from the employment of lettres de cachet, to every word of which I heartily subscribe."

"May I venture to enquire the culprit's name?" said the Queen.

"The Marchioness de Montolieu, madame," replied Necker, in a voice by which he meant to deprecate all farther discussion."

"Indeed," cried the Queen, "I am acquainted with her case; and very ill I think she has behaved. Such conduct ought not to pass unpunished."

"You see the manner," said the King turning to Necker, "in which the Marchioness is judged by her own sex."

"I have endeavoured," said Necker, with a sigh of weariness, "to demonstrate that the Marchioness's guilt or innocence is not the real subject for your Majesty's consideration."

“I suppose,” observed the Queen, “I ought to be silent in so learned a presence: but it does appear to my simple apprehension, that the guilt or innocence of a culprit is a point that merits some attention from his judges.”

“Well, I begin to think so too,” said the simple-minded King.

Monsieur Du Crosne, the lieutenant of police, had not hitherto spoken. He had watched with anxious attention the struggle between the royal inclinations and the ministerial reasonings. For a moment the latter preponderated; and he determined to suppress the information which he was otherwise prepared to have brought forward. Now a fresh weight was thrown into the scale, and seeing that the abstract arguments of the minister began to kick the beam against the superficial petulance of the Queen, he hastened, like a true minister

of police, to support the cause of arbitrary power.

“The name of this Marchioness de Montolieu is inscribed on my list of suspicious persons ; I have evidence to prove that not many months ago she paid a visit, in company with a hair-brained Count, named D'Ostalis, to no less a personage than the notorious Count Cagliostro.”

“What !” said the Queen, turning pale with rage, “does that arch-traitor still pollute France with his presence? I thought that he was banished.”

“True, Madam,” replied Du Crosne, “but such is his audacity, that he has dared to return to the scene of his crimes. And such, unfortunately, is his pernicious dexterity, that he has contrived to elude the most vigilant researches of the police.”

It is well known that Marie Antoinette was

deeply wounded by the suspicions which had been thrown on her character by the famous affair of the necklace; and that her hatred and desire for vengeance on all connected with that conspiracy almost amounted to phrenzy.

“Do you mean to say,” said she, with the utmost excitement, “that this woman — the Marchioness, visited that execrable charlatan Cagliostro?”

“Even so,” answered Du Crosne. “And it would now appear by the statement made by her companion, and the excessive emotion which she manifested on that occasion, that some near and intimate connexion must exist between Madame de Montolieu and that too celebrated adventurer.”

“And now,” said Marie Antoinette, impetuously addressing herself to her husband, “can you hesitate to exercise your royal autho-

rity in bringing an odious criminal to condign punishment? This Marchioness—this disgrace to her high rank—is a friend and associate of Cagliostro, and very possibly of that female demon La Motte, and the other conspirators in the necklace affair.”

“This is mere conjecture and assumption,” calmly observed Necker to the King. “Holding communication with a suspected person is not a crime by law; and your Majesty is bound to administer strict legal justice to the meanest peasant that owns your sway.”

“That is very true,” said the King.

“Good,” interrupted the Queen. “I freely admit that justice is due to the meanest peasant; how much more then is it the right of the first subject of the realm? I—a Queen of France—the wife, daughter, and sister of kings—have been subjected to injuries and insults, that the

lowest of my sex could not have borne in patience. And what was the redress which the parliament of Paris afforded me? I appeal to you, Sire, who are acquainted with my sufferings on that occasion—who remember the days and nights that I passed in agonies, that a beggar might have pitied. Can you be surprised, that I should hold the authors of my misery in detestation?—that I should desire their punishment; and that when they or their acquaintance are proved guilty of other crimes, that I should deem them the last persons on earth towards whom your Majesty's prerogative of mercy can be with propriety exercised?"

"Be composed, Madam," said the King, who was obviously much affected by the pain, which the affair of the necklace had inflicted on his wife. "Be composed, I will issue this *lettre de cachet*, since you take it so much to heart."

But the minister was not formed of such flexible materials as his master. He remained firm and uncompromising, and seemed determined not to yield the question.

“Sire,” said he, addressing himself more particularly to Louis, “when you did me the honour to appoint me to the responsible situation which I now hold, I only accepted office on certain terms, without which, I felt that all my efforts for the benefit of my country, and for the advancement of your Majesty’s true honour and glory, would be baffled and attended with no results. One of the most important of these stipulations, was the virtual abolition of lettres de cachet during the period of my ministry. Your Majesty will pardon me, if I consider your disregard of this condition as an intimation that you have no farther occasion for my services.”

The King looked frightened and perplexed, but said nothing.

“You will still remain King of France, Sir,” said the Queen, with a disdainful smile, “even when Monsieur Necker shall have deprived us of his valuable assistance. You will have the right to govern France according to the ancient law and custom of the realm. Tell me not of discontent and rebellion. Let your enemies but dare to show themselves; and then do you Sir, show yourself at the head of your faithful guards. Believe me, your foes, if the pitiful wretches deserve that term, will disappear like dew before the morning sun.”

In the energy of her feelings, she waved her arm, and clenched her hand, as though she actually grasped the sword to which she recommended the appeal. The speech, however, did not produce its intended effect on the King's

mind. He was startled by the Queen's allusion to the necessity of quelling insubordination by military force ; and said with an air of disapprobation—

“Gently, Madam, gently—I will spill no blood myself, nor permit it to be shed by others in my name. It shall never be said that Louis the Sixteenth introduced the curse of civil war into this unhappy country, for whose punishment he was born a King.”

“Am I to understand,” coldly inquired Necker, “that your Majesty accepts my resignation?”

The expression of Louis indicated the most pitiful irresolution and perplexity. He paused for a moment or two.

“I wish, Monsieur Necker, that *I* had the power, like you, of resigning my office. God knows, how willingly I would transfer the scepter

tre into any hands, that were better fitted to wield it than my own."

"You may do worse than resign your sceptre," impetuously exclaimed the Queen, "you may surrender every iota of power, and still find, that you are unable to rid yourself of the danger and responsibility of the kingly office."

"Why was I born a king?" said the distressed monarch; "I strive to please all parties; and I succeed with none. Monsieur Necker, you see how the case stands. Let me for once be a King. I ask of you as a personal favour, to countersign this much disputed *lettre de cachet*. It is the first request of the sort I have ever made to you. It shall be the last."

Necker paused in deep thought for some moments. At last he replied, shaking his head with a melancholy air.

"Sire, we shall both fall victims to the same

weakness—the inability to say “no” in the right place : but it is impossible to refuse a request couched in such terms, as your Majesty has deigned to use.”

The Lieutenant of Police produced the *lettre de cachet*, and handed it to Necker, who though the expression of his countenance still indicated his extreme repugnance to the step, slowly and reluctantly countersigned the instrument. Such were the means by which the last *lettre de cachet* ever issued in France, was obtained ! But it is easier to abolish names than things. The old monarchical forms of tyranny were indeed swept away, but the power and practice of arbitrary imprisonment long continued to desecrate France.

The council broke up ; the Queen’s face was brightened with triumph. The Lieutenant looked as proud and as pleased, as a cat who

has just caught a mouse. But the King and his minister left the closet with vexed and dissatisfied countenances.

When we consider the superfluous sensibility which the educated European exhibits to the most trivial and insignificant affronts—the tenacity with which he recollects, and the excessive zeal and fury with which he seeks revenge ; it must seem strange, that so many millions of such individuals, should tamely endure the sway of a monarch who possesses the fearful prerogative of arbitrary imprisonment. The chivalrous, high-spirited noblesse of France, who for a look—a word—a gesture—were willing to take another's life, or to peril their own in mortal combat, walked to a prison, at the sight of a *lettre de cachet*, as silently and as submissively, as a well beaten hound slinks to its kennel. None ever thought of resistance,

and yet the process was about as odious and illegal, as could well be conceived. Persons totally unconscious of any legal offence, and apprehending no accusation, were suddenly shown the despotic mandate, and forthwith conducted to a state prison. Here they remained for an indefinite period of time, varying from a few months to many years, secluded from communication with their friends, and deprived of all control over their property. Many times they were not informed of their real or imaginary offence, or even the name of their accuser, and could only hazard remote conjectures as to the cause of their detention. No wonder, then, that a man like Necker, naturally inclined to liberal politics, and anxious to acquire popularity with the public, should be strongly opposed to a practice, so utterly subversive of all personal liberty and security. In fact, the

prime minister himself was not exempt from the operation of these fatal mandates, and might one day find himself transformed from the agent of oppression into its victim.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE BASTILLE.

FOR two or three days after the departure of the Marquis and his friend, the Marchioness and her daughter were filled with the greatest anxiety. Every moment they expected that the dire effects of the Duke's anger and disappointment would burst upon them from some unforeseen quarter ; and they awaited in nervous trepidation the coming blow. A week elapsed, and nothing happened. The courage of the Marchioness began to revive ; and she

thought that the storm had passed over. "Perhaps, after all," observed she, "the Duke had more of human feeling than I gave him credit for; perhaps he affected obduracy, in hope to bend me to his will, and had no serious intention of executing his threats."

Antonia did not participate in her mother's confidence. Her knowledge of De Fronsac's character forbade her to hope that he would forbear his vengeance.

"The hour of danger," said she, mournfully, "is come, but not gone. I know our enemy well. He is a complete egotist, utterly inaccessible to any sense of pity or compunction, brooking no disappointment, and pursuing his selfish schemes of pleasure with reckless and remorseless tenacity. I dread that he is now laying the mine which he will soon spring to our destruction."

“ Another week elapsed without any realization of their fears ; but, alas ! on the morning of the fifteenth day after the departure of the Marquis, an exempt of the police, accompanied by a small party of armed men, arrived at the château. With the hard indifference characteristic of all the lower functionaries of government, they briefly showed the unhappy Marchioness and her daughter the *lettre de cachet*, and peremptorily ordered them to be ready within one hour to commence a journey to Paris. Such necessities only as they could collect and pack up within that short period were they allowed to take with them. They asked to what prison they were about to be consigned, but received the callous reply, that they would find that out, when they arrived at their journey's end.

The Marchioness was utterly stunned by the

calamity ; it exceeded her worst anticipations. She had prepared herself for the bitterest reproaches on the part of her husband, in the event of the Duke's revealing the secret. Nor had she expected that he would content himself with angry words. She had even prepared herself for separation and social disgrace. She had even dared to picture herself an exile from Paris and the fashionable world, living in some obscure corner in the country, deprived of all resources and amusements except the company of Antonia ; and the scene, melancholy as it might seem to her gay contemporaries, was not without its peculiar charm for her. But to be hurried away to prison by brute force, without an interview with those who decided on her fate ; without an opportunity of explaining or palliating her conduct, was more than she could endure. The actual severity of the blow had

outrun her wildest fears. The idea, too, that Antonia, her daughter, to enjoy whose society, to promote whose happiness, had been the sole object of her rash plans and intrigues, had fallen a victim to her policy, and was to be consigned to the same living tomb as herself, gave the finishing blow to her misery. Her fortitude sunk under this last consummation of distress, and she wept during the first part of her journey in unrestrained weakness. Antonia bore the misfortune with more firmness. This was not the first time she had tasted suffering. She was accustomed to reverses. Besides, she had by no means recovered her separation from Cleveland. Her heart had been utterly dried up and seared by this great grief; and it sustained all subsequent blows with diminished sensibility, if not with increased courage. Entirely forgetting her own share of the calamity, she endeavoured,

by the tenderest exhortations, to moderate the Marchioness's excess of grief.

"Compose yourself—recollect yourself, dearest mother," said Antonia, embracing the weeping lady with the warmest affection, "and do not give way in this terrible manner to sorrow,—pray be composed."

"Avoid me—hate me—curse me," shrieked the Marchioness, with frantic vehemence; "I am your worst enemy—your bitterest foe—the cause of all your misfortunes. I disgraced you even at your birth, and ever since that moment have persisted in the same course of injury and ruin."

"Forbear these dreadful expressions, for my sake—for your own," said Antonia, "they fill me with horror. Misfortune may defeat the the kindest intentions, but cannot in a generous mind impair the sensations of gratitude which

they excited. Had all your plans for my benefit been realized, I could not have loved you, when surrounded with fashion and splendour, with half the truth and fondness that I do now."

"Alas !" exclaimed the Marchioness, in a tone of despair, "I have left you nothing else to love but myself."

"Oh do not talk in this strain ! if you love me, be calmer."

It was not until after much effort, and many severe struggles, that Madame de Montolieu could assume even a tolerable degree of composure. And still her eyes were involuntarily filled with tears ; and still, from time to time, the rising throbs shook her breast with convulsive violence.

But both had one consolation under their afflictions—the lively and tender affection which subsisted between them. Each, imbued with

this delicious sentiment, felt more concerned for her companion's suffering than her own ; and each, engaged in the generous task of consolation, lost to a great extent the sense of personal sorrow. If the sympathy of friendship be essential to the enjoyment of prosperity,—if pleasure itself grow wearisome, unless it be shared with others—how infinitely precious does the sentiment of attachment become in the dark hour of adversity ; when all have left us—when the good-natured world are unanimously satisfied that we have deserved our misfortunes, and mildly acquiesce in the propriety of our ruin—how sweet to find one to whom our calamities only render us an object of greater tenderness—one, who scorning to judge us by the vulgar test of success, gives us credit for all we had intended, but were prevented by adverse circumstances from executing. But this is not all.

Look on the other side of the picture. The operation of affection is like that of mercy, twice blessed. The man who is consoled and relieved by the assistance of a friend, does not experience half the pleasure in receiving the latter's benefits, however weighty they may be, which his generous ally feels in conferring them. What luxury can compare with the exquisite sense of satisfaction and exultation, which pervades the whole mind, after we have achieved a sacrifice for a friend? What spectacle so touches and excites the feelings as the sight of a desponding friend reviving under our cheering and encouragement? In fact there is scarcely a feeling incident to human nature which returns a greater harvest of pleasure, than a strong sense of attachment to a worthy object. And yet this sentiment—so pure—so beautiful—so pleasurable—so accessible to all—so admirable

a corrective to the natural egotism of even the best characters,—gently rousing and enlisting in its behalf all the kindlier feelings of humanity, this sentiment, which diminishes every woe by sharing it, and doubles every joy by sympathy, how little is it cultivated by mankind! “Uncommon,” says Rochefoucault, “as true love is, it is not so uncommon as friendship.” Even when inspired by all the passion and poetry of youth, the sentiment of attachment appears rare, and limited in its duration; and between individuals of an advanced age, or of the same sex, seems scarcely to have any existence at all.

Towards evening they arrived at Paris, and when the vehicle entered the Rue de St. Antoine, the Marchioness conjectured that the place of their destination was the Bastille. Nor was she deceived. The carriage halted at the avenue; the exempt spoke to the sentinel. The

first drawbridge was lowered; the carriage passed over, and proceeded to the Governor's house, which was situated outside the ditch that surrounded the fortress itself. The Major of the Bastille and the King's Lieutenant stood at the door, received the prisoners when they alighted from their carriage, and escorted them up stairs, accompanied by the exempt. Agitated and trembling, they entered a room, where M. De Launey, the Governor, was sitting at a table with divers huge registers before him. He had a disagreeable expression of severity, which was not redeemed or softened by the silly air of self-importance which sat upon his face. His physiognomy tallied with the general opinion which prevailed in society respecting his character. It is true his situation was not likely to prepossess the public in his favour; but De Launey was unpopular, even for a

Governor of the Bastille. Vague rumours were afloat, for nothing certain or precise was known of this mysterious prison,—of the cruelty and rigour with which he treated his prisoners. His overweening pride and folly were proved by better evidence—his own behaviour in society, where he gave general offence by his absurd pretensions to political importance and influence.

The Governor looked up with an awful frown from his registers as the party entered the room.

“Oho!” said he to the exempt, “whom have you brought us here, Monsieur Delavigne?—women, eh?”

“Two ladies, Monseigneur,” replied the exempt.

“Humph!” we shall ascertain that fact officially,” said the Governor; “give us the lettre de cachet.”

The exempt handed the fatal instrument to De Launey.

“ Oho !” said the latter, “ these letters shall authorize you—um—um—Erminia Laura, Marchioness de Montolieu, née D’Albemonte, and Antonia Von Oberfeldt, otherwise Antonia di Volterra, falsely calling herself the niece of the said Marchioness—oh ! oh !—You want your receipt, I suppose, Monsieur Delavigne ?—good——.”

The Governor then indorsed the *lettre de cachet*, with an acknowledgment that the within-named persons had been delivered into his custody, and returned it to the exempt, to whom it served as a proof that he had discharged his duty. Having received this testimonial, he immediately took his leave.

“ So, so,” resumed the Governor, looking over the register, “ I see that this young lady is

described as falsely calling herself your niece, Madame la Marquise. You would do well to inform me who she really is, and what is the nature of your connexion with her."

The superintendents of the Bastille were very inquisitive about their prisoners' secrets. Even the turnkeys had strict orders to report to the Governor or Major any information which they might pick up from the captives they attended.

The Marchioness, whose nerves were much shattered by grief and fatigue, burst into tears at this painful question. Antonia, to whom resentment at her mother's treatment gave courage, prevented Madame de Montolieu from answering, and said to De Launey: "Monsieur le Gouverneur, it may be your agreeable duty to keep us locked up in this delightful residence, but not to ask us questions that may tend to criminate ourselves."

“ No, Mademoiselle,” replied the Governor, reddening with confusion, “ but when a commission is appointed to examine you, which will doubtless be in a few weeks, I shall be present, and shall have power of suggesting any questions I choose to the commissioners ; so that you will lose nothing by answering my present queries.”

“ I do not see,” observed Antonia, with some petulance, “ the advantage of anticipating a penance. By your leave, Monsieur le Gouverneur, we will defer the evil day until its legal and official season.”

The Governor had been so upset by the sudden and unexpected resistance of Antonia, that he had returned an argumentative and even apologetic answer. A moment's reflexion convinced him of the feebleness of his young opponent ; and enraged at his own weakness, he

determined to frighten her by a display of his strength and importance.

“ Let me recommend you, young lady, or rather young woman, for I have no proofs of your nobility, but rather the contrary, to drop this insolent and flippant tone. I am the Governor of the Bastille !—think of that—the Governor of the Bastille !—and now you know who I am, I beg you will treat me with fitting respect.”

“ You say,” rejoined the reckless Antonia, “ that you are the governor of a prison, which means in homely language a jailor ; I do treat you with fitting respect.”

“ This jesting is intolerable,” exclaimed the Governor, in a pompous guttural tone, like an enraged turkey-cock ; “ I tell you, young woman, that I am the King’s representative in this place—you smile, but I repeat it, I am the King’s representative. What have you to say to that ?”

“Nothing,” replied Antonia, “only the circumstance shows that the King is not exempt from the common lot of mortality, but like his subjects liable to gross misrepresentations.”

“This is all very fine,” said the Governor, “very fine indeed. Madame de Montolieu, your chamber, while you and your companion are inmates of the Bastille, will be Number 3, in the Bazinière tower. Perhaps, if that young lady had been more prudent in her language, a pleasanter apartment might have been named.”

The Governor made a sign to his lacquey; the latter slipped out, and returned with two ruffianly looking turnkeys. The Major of the Bastille then intimated to the prisoners, but in a much more civil manner than his superior, that they must follow him to their destined chamber. The Major led the way, and the two turnkeys followed the prisoners. They crossed the court in front of the Governor’s

house, and came to the second drawbridge. The word was given, and the bridge lowered. A circumstance here occurred which impressed upon the prisoners the frightful secrecy characteristic of the usages of the Bastille. The sentinels, as the party passed by them, covered their faces with their hats, so that they might not be acquainted with the personal appearance of any of the prisoners confined in the fort.

After traversing many dark and winding passages, they came to a circular flight of stairs. Proceeding upwards, they reached the allotted apartment. One of the turnkeys opened the door. The Governor had threatened them with a bad apartment, and a miserable hole it was, for the habitation of two persons accustomed to all the comforts and luxuries of civilized life. The whole furniture of the room consisted of two wretched pallets, two chairs, and a coarse

table. The walls, which were whitewashed, were dirty, and scribbled over by former tenants. The light of the small window was obscured by the thick and close iron bars on its external orifice. Having cast a hawk's glance round the room, the Major and his satellites left the prisoners to the enjoyment of this delectable retreat.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE TEMPTER AND THE VICTIM.

AT the expiration of the first month of confinement, the door of the prisoners' chamber opened at an unusual hour ; and Antonia was informed by the turnkey that her presence was required in the council chamber. The Marchioness solicited permission to accompany her ; but the turnkey, who seemed quite appalled at the audacity of the demand, declared her request to be utterly inadmissible. Antonia inquired the

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object of the summons. The turnkey replied that it was probably to answer the interrogatories of the King's commissioner. Antonia had no alternative but to obey. She quietly followed the conductor into a room, situated in the centre of the fort. On entering, she recognized, to her inexpressible dismay, M. De Launey, and the Duke de Fronsac. They seemed to be disputing with each other.

"If Monsieur le Duc," said De Launey, in an offended tone, "absolutely insists upon my departure, it is my duty to obey. But I may say, without vanity, that my experience in these matters is great. Some of the most distinguished men in France have thought themselves fortunate in being able to avail themselves of my skill and astuteness in examining the prisoners."

"Monsieur le Marquis," returned the Duke,

in a tone of cool and civil contempt, "I return you many thanks for your kind offers of assistance, which I do not need; and I am certain that so obliging a personage as yourself—one so anxious even to give what is not wanted—will never refuse what is particularly requested—namely, your absence from the ensuing examination."

"Oh! very well, Monsieur le Duc; do not think I wish to press my services on anybody; I shall reserve them for those who have sense enough to appreciate their value."

With these words, he flung himself angrily out of the room, leaving the fair prisoner alone with the Duke.

Antonia remained transfixed with surprise, terror, and disgust. The man whom of all others she had most reason to detest stood before her, eyeing her with a licentious yet scornful

smile, and affecting to be amused with her consternation.

“Good morning,” said De Fronsac to the trembling girl; “I took the liberty of calling on you, as I was assured that you are now always to be found at home. You can guess the purport of my visit !”

“I can, Monsieur le Duc,” replied Antonia, to whom indignation supplied courage. “It was to enjoy the spectacle of the sufferings which you have caused by your malignant, and unprovoked attack.”

“You wrong me,” observed the Duke; “it forms no part of my character to commit gratuitous mischief. In fact, I would not take the trouble. It was necessary for my good pleasure, that you should yield yourself to my wishes; and it was to overcome the resistance which you opposed, that I inflicted the injuries that you call unprovoked.”

“ Yes ! unprovoked ! ” returned Antonia, “ had I not as good a right to escape from one I hated, as you had to pursue what you liked ? ”

“ As good a right certainly,” said De Fronsac. “ But know, my fair metaphysician, that rights in this world are mere empty words unless enforced by power. I was born a wolf, you are the lamb. It is my nature to prey upon you. No doubt you have the right to escape my fangs, but I have the power to catch you. Are you so impious as to murmur against the established order of nature ? Cease your resistance, and I will cease my persecutions.”

“ This cold-blooded avowal of a determination to perpetrate crime, whenever you can commit it with impunity, only confirms my resolve never to yield. Persecute as you will ; to the last moment of my existence—with the last energies of expiring strength, I will continue to resist.”

"Listen to me," said the Duke, with that cold calm fixedness of purpose, which constituted the basis of his character, "nay—never turn away your eyes in disgust, for I am going to speak the language of reason, not of passion. Look around you. Survey these massive walls—these triple barred outlets, which serve for windows. Beyond them are high walls and chevaux-de-frise—the guards—the sentinels—and the deep fosses!—You will admit that escape is impossible."

"I know not," replied Antonia, affecting hope where she certainly felt none. "Stronger forts than the Bastille have ere now been levelled with the dust, and captives have gained the outside of even securer dungeons than this."

"You wander, Antonia!" impatiently interrupted the Duke, "already confinement begins to impair your natural understanding. The

Bastille has stood for centuries, why should it not continue to stand for centuries more?— True, prisoners have escaped, but compare their number with those, that have been compelled to abide their misery. What does your chance of escape amount to?

“ Little, perhaps,” replied Antonia; “ but proceed, to what do your remarks tend ?”

“ Consider,” pursued De Fronsac impressively, “ the dull monotonous torture of protracted imprisonment. Consider, what it is to gaze in horrid uniformity of agony, for thirty years, upon the same walls—the same stones—the same barred windows—the same boards—the same strip of sky. To see no human face but the harsh forbidding one of your jailor, repeated day after day. To hear no human voice, but his coarse unfeeling tones. Reflect what it is to possess no occupation—no subject of con-

temptation, but your own pain ; and to be forced—to be driven to muse on this hateful all-absorbing idea, until your faculties are either deranged by madness, or extinguished in idiocy. Calculate and weigh the number and extent of your painful sensations, during this long period of slowly drawn out torment ; and then confess that the Bastille is a horrible abode.”

“It is,” replied Antonia firmly, “but your château is a worse.”

“Be it so,” said the Duke, “but I do not ask you to stay there for thirty years. Live at my château for six months. At the end of that period, you shall depart as rich as a prima-donna, and as free as the wind, at liberty to bestow your love and your gold upon whom you like. Admit that you pass the whole time in sighs and tears—I shall enjoy your grief, by the bye, for you never look so handsome as when

in tears,—the period of probation, however painful, will soon have passed—but your present sufferings will cease only with your life, unless I procure your release, which I swear only to grant on the terms I have intimated.”

“Never !” answered Antonia, turning away—
“Never can I overcome the just abhorrence I feel for your conduct and character.”

“I do not ask for love,” said the Duke mildly, “at least not such love as I dare say you wasted on the young Englishman I was blockhead enough to introduce to you. A little civility and complaisance is all that is required.”

Antonia indignantly shook her head.

“Pause ere you reject my offer. It may not be repeated, and deliverance dawns upon you from no other quarter. Bethink you, were my château a hell, and I blacker than Satan, free-

dom for the rest of your life is cheaply bought by six months' companionship with me."

"I can conceive no fiend worse," answered Antonia, "than a bad man, who declares his determination to indulge in every crime which he has inclination and power to perpetrate."

"Be wise, and yield, ere it is too late," said the Duke menacingly.

"Should I by such means obtain also Madame de Montolieu's deliverance?" asked Antonia thoughtfully.

"I have nothing to do with that business," coldly replied the Duke; "you had better appeal to her husband; perhaps he will release her on the same terms. By the time you have left me, this second labour will prove a mere bagatelle. You remember the proverb, 'Tis only the first step, which costs much trouble.'"

"This passes endurance," exclaimed Anto-

nia ; “ spare yourself the trouble, sir, of making any farther offers, which are as useless for your purposes as they are insulting to my feelings. Know that I would rather die, rot, go mad, or starve piecemeal within these walls, than breathe the air of the same place an hour together with you.”

“ Is that your final answer ?” said the Duke.

“ It is,” replied Antonia.

De Fronsac gazed on her with a malignant scowl for some moments, and then said, “ when we next meet your tone will be humbled.”

With these words he slowly withdrew.

When the Duke re-issued from the Bastille, he was plunged in a profound reverie. He threw himself into his carriage without speaking to his attendants, who were waiting for his orders. So deep was his abstraction, that the lacquy asked him two or three times where he

should direct the coachman to drive to, without receiving any answer. At length he roused himself from his reflexions, and ordered the carriage to proceed to the hôtel of the Lieutenant-General of the Police.

De Fronsac was lucky enough to find that much employed personage disengaged; he immediately mounted to the minister's bureau.

"How have you sped in your mission?" enquired Monsieur Du Crosne of the Duke.

"But badly, or rather not at all," returned the Duke; "not a tittle of information respecting her accomplices could I extract from the obstinate girl. I questioned and cross-examined her to no purpose. In vain I availed myself of my previous knowledge of her habits and disposition, and brought forward arguments and topics which were peculiarly suited to touch her feelings. She was inflexible."

“ Did you tempt her with the hope of immediate release?”

“ I did,” replied De Fronsac, “ but without effect.”

“ That is strange,” said the Lieutenant-General of Police ; “ after a month’s imprisonment in the Bastille, the most stubborn spirits are generally unnerved and thrown off their guard by the prospect of liberty.”

“ She is an extraordinary girl,” answered the Duke musingly ; “ I confess myself baffled.”

“ I am afraid you are a bad commissioner inquisitor,” said Monsieur du Crosne, laughing. “ In truth, the trade requires some practice. We shall not find you again volunteering to examine another state prisoner. Come, Monsieur le Duc, do not look so grave ; the greatest wit could not expect to succeed in his first essay.”

"My failure is not the cause of my thoughtfulness," answered De Fronsac; "I was hesitating, whether I should communicate to you certain incidents, which have occurred to me; but the circumstances are so trivial, that it is, perhaps, scarcely worth while to occupy your time by the recital."

"I think no time lost," rejoined Du Crosne, "which is spent in listening to information. No doubt it may sometimes mislead us—no doubt we may sometimes go wrong in spite of its assistance—but without it we cannot advance a step. By all means tell me the facts—tell me them all, if you please—even those that appear most trifling. Straws thrown up in the air will serve to show the wind's course."

"I have been subject for some time past," said the Duke, "to a species of annoyance, petty and unimportant in itself, but occasioning

me anxiety by the remarkable mystery in which the authors are enveloped..’

“ Of what nature is this annoyance ?” asked du Crosne.

“ Every day,” continued de Fronsac, “ I am harassed by written menaces.”

“ Do you mean,” demanded Du Crosne, “ that you are molested by anonymous letters ?”

“ Occasionally,” said the Duke, “ they have been sent by the medium of the post ; but they assume a hundred different shapes and modes of appearance. Sometimes my eye is attracted by a scrap of paper, which, I know not how, comes under my hand. I take it up, and on looking at it, find it inscribed with the usual threat. Sometimes I see a dirty note, directed to me, lying on my toilette table. I call my valet, and ask him if he put it there. He denies all knowledge of it. My curiosity is excited. I

open it, and read the old threat. One day I resolutely abstained from looking at any paper which I saw lying about. I went into my library, and determined to fortify my mind against any superstitious fancies by the perusal of a philosophical work. I took down a volume of Helvetius, and lo ! the irritating warning was written on the margin of the first page I glanced at. Nay, if I keep a letter in my pocket for a day or two, it will sometimes become marked in the most mysterious manner with the same writing."

"Do you suspect any of your domestics?" asked Du Crosne.

"I dismissed several," replied the Duke, "to see whether their absence would put an end to or at least lessen the frequency of these missives; but, finding the practice continued, I received them back."

“What is the purport of these threatening notes?” asked Du Crosne.

“They all contain this single sentence,” replied the Duke: ‘Remember the prophecy of Cagliostro.’ ”

Monsieur Du Crosne exhibited an expression of surprise, which did not escape the observation of the Duke, who quickly added, without giving the other time to make any comment, “you must know, my dear Du Crosne, that some four or five years back, when that rascal Cagliostro was in vogue, I was foolish enough to allow the knave to practise some of his magnetic mummery upon me. During the sleep into which he contrives to throw his dupes, he persuaded a silly bystander—an intimate friend of mine—that I had predicted the mode of my death. It must be to this incident, that the present system of annoyance refers.”

“This is a most extraordinary story,” observed Monsieur du Crosne. “The most plausible solution of the riddle that I can suggest is, that some scoundrel—either Cagliostro or somebody to whom he has communicated the incident—has corrupted one of your domestics. The difficulty is to supply an adequate motive for the commission of such an unmeaning act of malice. I cannot divine what object the perpetrators could have proposed to themselves.”

“Is Cagliostro now in France?” inquired the Duke, with an air of the most unconscious innocence. “I thought he was banished.”

“Ay,” said Du Crosne; “but banished people sometimes return, like banished thoughts, when they are neither expected nor desired.”

“True,” said the Duke, thoughtfully, “most true—too true! You know then this adventurer to be in France? why not apprehend him?”

“ Believe me,” replied Du Crosne, “ I have every possible inclination to take that step, whenever an opportunity occurs ; but I am not assured of his presence in France ; I have only reason to suspect that he is now resident in Paris under an assumed name, and new character. He has enlisted into the service of one, whose ample resources and criminal intentions will find him but too convenient a tool.”

“ Unfortunately,” said the Duke, with a grimace, “ his employers seem to leave him a great deal of leisure time, the benefit of which I am now tasting. But, perhaps, you think I attach too much importance to the circumstances I have detailed to you ; and that I need not apprehend any serious attack, or substantial danger ?”

“ I hope not,” replied Monsieur Du Crosne ; “ but I certainly am of opinion that the facts

you mention ought not to be passed over without notice. With your permission, Monsieur le Duc, I will place your hotel under the especial surveillance of the police, and direct its agents to watch the habits and connexions of your domestics. For I still cling to the idea, that these tricks you speak of, could only be executed by an inmate of your family."

"You may be sure," said the Duke, "that I shall afford your agents every facility for carrying on their investigation. The annoyance itself is trifling; but I do not relish the idea of Cagliostro's emissaries penetrating to my toilette table. Adieu, Monsieur Du Crosne; accept my warmest thanks for the patience with which you have heard my story, and for the prompt measures with which you propose to abate the nuisance."

"No thanks, Monsieur le Duc; it is my duty,

no less than my inclination, to protect the lives and happiness of all his majesty's subjects, especially those so eminent for their birth and rank as yourself."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SHOULD THE FUTURE BE KNOWN ?

ON leaving the Lieutenant-general, the Duke hastened to Count D'Ostalis. The latter, to his visitor's extreme surprise, was sitting alone in his library, reading.

"Welcome, my dear Duke," cried D'Ostalis. "Did you ever think to behold me enacting the part of a solitary student? I have been reading for a good hour by the clock; and what is more, I have been reading a metaphysical, ethical, and moral discourse.

"I am afraid I interrupt your learned labours," said the Duke, smiling, "I will call some other time."

"Oh, no," returned the Count, in a flourishing tone; "I am always ready to sacrifice my own pursuits to the convenience of my friends. In other words," added he, laughing, "the book was just dropping out of my hands when you came in."

"Just the result I should have apprehended," said the Duke, with mocking gravity, "from such a lengthened effort of intellectual labour. Indeed, my dear D'Ostalis, you must beware of these learned excesses. You will wear out your faculties if you keep them on the stretch for such protracted periods of time. And what are the fruits of your profound investigation? What have you learned?"

"The author," replied the Count, "has very

solemnly and formally, and with great force of reasoning, invited me to pursue a plan, which I find on reflection I have been unconsciously practising all my life."

"What is that?" inquired the Duke.

"To refrain from seeking to know the future," replied D'Ostalis. "The chapter I read, was on the ridiculous and pernicious desire, which men have always manifested to pry into futurity. It shows, and shows very well too—only at fearful length—that if at twenty we were cursed with a knowledge of all the misfortunes we were destined to endure, in after life, we should hang ourselves in despair."

"This is odd enough!" said the Duke; your studies are singularly apropos to the subject on which I came to talk with you."

"How so?" enquired the Count. "Explain yourself."

"You remember," replied the Duke, "the

mystical jugglery which you witnessed Cagliostro perform over my body, when I was asleep on his cursed wire sofa. He made me pronounce, or rather appear to pronounce, some prophecy or other. You remember, my nerves were so shaken by the abominable drugs he had given me, that I consented to remain in ignorance of what had passed during my slumber. Well : I have come to-day for the purpose of making you reveal the whole scene to me ; and, I own, I was struck by the extraordinary coincidence between the subject of your reading, and the object of my visit."

" Extraordinary indeed !" exclaimed the Count, who, as we have seen, was, amongst other weaknesses, a little prone to superstition. " De Fronsac, this is something more than a coincidence. Accept the incident as a warning, and obey it as such. Beware of asking me a

single question, respecting what you uttered, while plunged in that magic sleep on Cagliostro's couch."

"For shame! D'Ostalis," rejoined the Duke, smiling with ironical scorn. "What is the use of your sublime metaphysical and ethical investigations? What profit do you draw from profound and abstruse studies, continued, too, with unintermitting severity for such a frightful space of time, if, after all, you are to remain as superstitious as a sailor, or an old woman?"

"Ridicule proves nothing, De Fronsac," answered the Count, with a look of obstinate terror.

"Listen, then, to reason," pursued the Duke. "On a thousand previous occasions, when I have called upon you before, our thoughts were running on dissimilar topics. On this, my thousandth and first visit, you chance to be

reading about what I happen to be thinking of; and you are overwhelmed with astonishment. It is not so wonderful as throwing double-sixes twice running with the dice. A man dreams every night, and his visions never come true; once in ten years his dream bears some resemblance to events which subsequently happen. And lo! that which is nothing more than an imperfect action of the brain during sleep, arising from a want of sufficient exercise and fatigue during the day, is straightway considered as a supernatural communication from higher powers. The true wonder is, that as we dream of the past, and as the future is only a repetition of the past, we do not oftener prefigure forthcoming events in our slumbers."

"All this is unanswerable, I admit," said Count D'Ostalis in a dogged tone; "but though silenced, I am not a whit convinced. I own I

have a strong repugnance to acquaint you with the details of the scene you refer to. What possible good can accrue to you from the knowledge?"

"First tell me," replied the Duke, "what possible harm can arise from gratifying my wishes."

"Hear me," said Count D'Ostalis. "Your words and gestures, on that occasion, were horrible. Often have they recurred to my mind, and never without producing a disagreeable effect. If I, an uninterested spectator, or, at the best, a mere fashionable friend, cannot recollect your broken expressions without horror, what emotions will *you* not experience, whose fate was declared to be prefigured forth in them?"

"Nothing at all," answered the Duke with a hardy laugh; "for this plain reason, that I do not believe a syllable of my sleeping murmurs."

“ Ay, ay,” said the Count, sagaciously nodding his head ; “ ’tis all very easy to feel courage when a bright afternoon sun is streaming through the windows, and the carriages are rattling in the streets ; and the hum of distant voices is sounding on your ears ; wait till the hour of solitude, and stillness, and darkness comes—wait till the pale moonlight, creeping over the walls of your bedroom, endues every object with ghastly animation—then the superstitious weakness, which you crush so easily now, will become a giant and tyrant fear, which you can neither endure nor drive away.”

“ A child of eight years old,” replied the Duke, “ would appreciate the force of your argument ; but I am not afraid to be left alone in the dark. However, since you make so many objections to the disclosure of this unimportant secret, I will tell my real reason for wishing to be acquainted with it. I have lately received

threatening notices, reminding me in an ominous manner of the prophecy of Cagliostro. Now, as I believe, that out of ten accomplished prophecies, nine are fulfilled by the prophet, I should like to be aware of the nature of this famous prediction, in order that I might guard against its completion."

"This alters the case," said the Count; "but for my own part, I think that precautions for personal safety inspire so much anxiety, as to be a worse evil, than the danger they are intended to counteract. Better to die at once, than always to live in the fear of death. Against all ordinary attempts, you are as safe as another man; and a hundred thousand guards could not secure you from the desperation of an individual. Again I say, therefore, enjoy the present; and let the future take care of itself."

"My dear D'Ostalis," replied the Duke,

rather drily, "I will admit that you have displayed, during this discussion, a great range of intellectual power. At first you were philosophical—then poetical and descriptive—and now you are philosophical again. But I will not admit that you have a right to withhold from me a secret which concerns my personal safety ; and which, it was agreed, you should reveal whenever I should request you."

"Since you ask me so pointedly," replied D'Ostalis, "I shall of course make no farther opposition. Without, then, troubling you with a minute description of your various motions, gestures, exclamations, and broken words, you appeared to me to be struggling with an angry and ferocious mob, who had stopped the progress of your carriage. You called to your servants to drive on ; they seemed unable to obey. You were apparently engaged in personal

conflict with the crowd, and were finally overpowered, and cruelly torn to pieces."

"Excellent!" cried the Duke; "I see the whole plot. The Parisian populace have lately shown many symptoms of insubordination, and committed several outrages. This miscreant Cagliostro no doubt intends to seize the first opportunity of setting them on me. Everybody will be shocked at the catastrophe. Bye and bye the story will creep out, that Cagliostro has for many months prophecied the exact manner of the Duke de Fronsac's death, and the rascal will gain a reputation unequalled since the time of Albertus Magnus."

Count D'Ostalis pondered for a moment, and then said, "Ay, but how did he cause you, when lying asleep on the sofa, to indicate this particular mode of destruction by your cries and gestures? Another coincidence, eh, De Fronsac?"

“ Not at all,” replied the Duke with readiness. “ I do not believe, that he had the power of inspiring me with any particular train of thought, when asleep. On the contrary, I believe that the nature of my cries, when in that state, which was purely accidental, has subsequently, in connexion with late events, suggested to him the sort of outrage with which he now daily threatens me. Had I gurgled in my sleep, like a drowning man, and talked about water, he would then have conceived the idea of pitching me over a bridge into the Seine.”

“ But how did he make you sleep, or dream at all ?” asked D'Ostalis.”

“ I admit that fact,” said the Duke, “ to be extraordinary, but not supernatural. Probably the drugs, that he administered, possessed this peculiar property.”

“ And now,” resumed Count D'Ostalis, “ that

you fancy you know the quarter from which the danger is to be expected, what course will you take?"

"Prepare to meet it, or rather, to guard against it," replied De Fronsac.

"By what means?" asked the Count.

"Henceforth," said the Duke, "I shall avoid the more plebeian quarters of the city. I shall make it a rule never to traverse the Faubourg St. Antoine, or St. Marceau. Above all, I shall carry weapons myself, and arm my lacqueys and coachman from head to foot."

"Vain precautions all!" exclaimed the Count, "if you are destined to the fate; and if you are not, how should a hunted outlaw like Cagliostro, unable to show his true features in the street, and living under a fictitious name, have sufficient influence over the people to incite them to murder?"

“ I think it far more reasonable,” replied the Duke, “ to ascribe to this man the greatest natural means and resources, than to allow him the smallest supernatural power. I have got what I wanted, and I am obliged to you for your information. Now let us change the subject. Shall you be at the Opera this evening ?”

“ I think so.”

“ I shall meet you there. *Au revoir* till then !” and the Duke somewhat abruptly took his leave.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF HANGING OVER A BRIDGE.

How often, in matters of feeling, the simple instincts of the heart, guide us with a wisdom, which the most refined deductions of reason and experience cannot surpass. If Antonia had summoned to her assistance the world's most hoary and subtle veterans, and demanded of them a remedy for waning love, could they have suggested a more politic and efficacious course, than separation. Complaints and remonstrances irritate, and only accelerate, the catastrophe

which they deprecate. Increased attentions weary, or are felt as disguised reproaches. The only true cure for declining passion, is absence. It is a specific. No other medicine in the world has the least effect; and if it fails, torture yourself no more with remedies; it is clear that the neck of your passion is hopelessly broken. No expedient could have been better. From the peculiar nature of Cleveland's character, whilst she lived with him, he compared her with the unattainable standard of his own imagination. When she was gone, he judged her more fairly, by others who still remained, and began to appreciate her immense superiority to the rest of her sex. "Out of sight, out of mind," is an aphorism, which may be true, when applied to the vulgar herd: but the imaginative man never knows the full extent of his love, until he is separated from his mistress. It is

then that his natural susceptibility to the beautiful, exhausted and sated by too frequent and too familiar contemplation of the object of admiration, begins to revive. It is then that she rises on his memory, in all her original loveliness, decked in every charm both of mind and body, while the few slight blemishes, incident to the most perfect of the human race, which would sometimes intrude themselves on his notice, when they were daily exhibited to his view, become invisible in the distance. It would be attributing too much to the pleasures of imagination, which are rather intended to throw a grace and lustre over life, than to constitute its substantial happiness, if we asserted that Cleveland did not suffer by Antonia's absence. On the contrary, he felt it deeply, and would have purchased her reappearance at any price. But he had a consolation—the indulgence of his memory.

His grief at her loss was not all bitterness, but mingled with sweet, and, perhaps, exaggerated reminiscences of the delicious moments he had spent in her society. At all events, he no longer experienced the miserable vacuity of heart and soul, under which he laboured before his acquaintance with Antonia. He had now both a wish and a hope : The wish to see once more that loved and fairy form—once more to hear that thrilling voice—once more to exchange words with her, and read his answer in the beautiful and eloquent play of her expressive features : The hope—that could he once achieve an interview with her, he should soon be able to induce a resumption of their former ties. A flattering conviction lurked at the bottom of his heart, that he should not be allowed to sue in vain.

Like all deserted lovers, Cleveland became

much addicted to solitary walks. He was wont to ramble through the streets with a slow step and occupied air, absorbed in his own thoughts, and utterly unconscious of the busy crowds who passed by. Looking up from one of these fits of abstraction, he started. Chance had led his unguided footsteps to the Pont Neuf, the memorable bridge where he had first met Antonia. With what undefinable and tumultuous feelings did he gaze upon its stony structure ! He twice paced its pavement from one end to the other. He placed himself on the very spot, where he had caught Antonia, as she was about to take the fatal leap. He leaned over the balustrade, and contemplated the dark and rapid current beneath. Suddenly he was aroused from his reverie, by what seemed the voice of a young female, speaking in low and whispering tones. The sound seemed to come

from under the bridge yet he was aware, that as few boats were used on the Seine, they could not proceed from thence. He turned sharply round, expecting to find the person who had uttered them at his side. But no human being was near, with the exception of a shabby, haggard artizan, who, at some yards distance, seemed engaged like himself in hanging over the bridge, and counting the ripples on the river.

Cleveland attributed the sound to fancy, and relapsed into his former contemplative mood. Again the voice reached his ear. This time he could not be mistaken. The accents were clearer. He could even distinguish the words. He listened with intense attention.

“You regret Antonia”—said the voice, “It would be wiser to regain her. You pass your days in cherishing her image, and putting up

vows for her happiness. It would be better to spend your time, and exercise your imagination, in devising means to rescue her from the Bastille."

Here his astonishment and curiosity had mounted to such a pitch, that he could not help turning round to look at his neighbour, to ascertain, if he either heard the voice, or was concerned in producing it. The man was still gazing on the river in idle contemplation. His lips did not move, yet Cleveland still heard the mysterious voice whispering as before, though he could not distinguish the words, except when his face was turned towards the river.

Cleveland was puzzled and annoyed. Was he dreaming in broad daylight? Were his senses wandering? He grasped the parapet of the bridge, as if to assure himself of its reality. A superstitious feeling began to creep over his

mind. He thought of the mysterious and warning voices recorded in ancient annals—"The airy tongues that syllable men's names." Were such as these now buzzing in his ear, or was he the dupe of human imposture? Above all, come the voice whence it would, was its information correct?

He resumed his listening attitude. Again the soft tones of the unknown speaker fell upon his ear.

"You are free," it said, "to gaze upon the sky, and fancy every fleecy cloud an island of the blest, floating on its blue ethereal ocean—a fit residence for yourself and Antonia. But the object of all these unavailing, though romantic ideas, languishes in prison, and sees only the same narrow strip, which pours its melancholy light through the grating of her cell."

“ Who are you ? Where are you ? ” said Cleveland, with more agitation in his manner, than he would have liked a witness to have beheld.

“ I am one, who knows both you and Antonia, better than you know either me or yourselves. As to my situation, I am at your side.”

Cleveland started, and looked towards his elbow. Nobody was there.

The voice seemed to laugh at his credulity.

“ Why do you thus mock me ? ” asked Cleveland, angrily.

“ Partly for your own benefit—partly for my own amusement. A forsaken lover is such a fine subject for ventriloquism, that it is impossible to resist the temptation.”

The secret of the whole trick immediately flashed upon Cleveland. His shabby-looking neighbour, was a ventriloquist. His first sensation was a sentiment of anger, that a stranger

whose rank in society was so inferior to his own, should venture to play with his most delicate feelings; but his anxiety and curiosity respecting Antonia's fate, speedily suppressed his resentment. He well knew that no correct information is ever gained by rage; and he determined to examine the ventriloquist by every possible means, until he could ascertain, whether the assertions which the latter made respecting Antonia's present situation, were founded on truth, or were mere random conjectures which he had thrown out at a venture. He approached the individual—pulled out his purse, and said—

“My good friend, I am sorry to see an artist of such distinguished power in your present garb. Your talent for ventriloquism will be better appreciated, when you are gayer clad. Take these pieces of gold,” added Cleveland, putting into the stranger's hand five louis-d'or,

“ Provide yourself with a regular place of exhibition. As much more will be at your service, when you shall have answered two or three little questions, which I will take the liberty to put to you.”

“ I observe,” replied the other smiling, and balancing the coin in his palm, “ that whenever milord Cleveland makes the smallest request, he always scatters about his money with a very reprehensible prodigality. Such profusion indicates on his own part a very unphilosophical contempt for the precious article, and shows, besides, that he has the worst possible opinion of his fellow-creatures.”

“ Nay,” replied Cleveland, “ if your feelings are so outraged, I will take back the money, and you can give your information gratis.”

“ No,” said the ventriloquist, coolly depositing the money in his pouch ; “ my formal rejection

of such a trifling sum might be misconstrued into a vulgar and ostentatious display of disinterestedness. Besides, the best correction of the practice I complain of, is for the insulted party to observe an uniform rule of taking whatever is offered."

"I believe so, too," replied Cleveland; "and now, my friend, after thanking you for the moral lesson I have just received, allow me to ask my conscientious monitor, where he first formed my acquaintance, and who apprized him, that I took such a deep interest in the lady whose Christian name he has just mentioned?"

"This is not the first time I have spoken to you in the tone of an equal," boldly answered the ventriloquist. "Did you never sup with me?"

"Never, I am certain," rejoined Cleveland, smiling; "I admit I may have kept company with rogues, but they were always well-dressed

villains. Besides, King George has not a better memory for faces than I have, and I cannot recollect your features."

"Never mind," said the ventriloquist, "oblivion is the deserved fate of a badly-dressed villain. But mark my words, a day is fast coming, when the gayest attired nobleman in Paris will envy the security conferred upon me by this ragged and dirty blouse."

"Very likely," replied Cleveland drily ; "in the mean time, while your prophecy is fulfilling, will you condescend to answer the question I have put to you?"

"A bridge on the Seine," said the ventriloquist, "when the wind is blowing from the north-east, is a bad locality for long explanations."

"It is my own fault," returned Cleveland, "I chose the place."

“ There spoke the true aristocrat,” cried the other, with a bitter laugh. “ The rich milord Cleveland chooses to endure the cold,—therefore the journeyman mechanic must not pretend to any feelings ;—velvet and satin, for want of other idleness, voluntarily expose themselves to the inclemency of the elements, therefore frieze jacket must not presume to exercise his common sense.”

“ You are severe,” said Cleveland, who was determined not to be offended ; “ but I assumed, contrary to what appears to be the case, that the inconvenience, which seemed trifling even to me, would be entirely disregarded by you. But was not the inference at least probable, from the superior tenderness of my education and nurture ?”

“ Humph !” rejoined the ventriloquist, “ your superior education is hardly a sufficient reason

for following your footsteps. You might choose to jump from this bridge, instead of merely standing on it, on a gusty day ; and for no better reason than because fortune had so loaded you with her favours, that you had nothing left to wish for ; but I am not bound to imitate you."

Convinced by this allusion to an occurrence, the knowledge of which was confined to himself and Antonia, that this singular individual must be in some manner intimately acquainted with his lost mistress, Cleveland felt a redoubled desire to question him at farther length.

" Let us then take shelter in the streets, since the present place does not suit you."

" Horror of horrors !" exclaimed the other, who appeared to enjoy the turn the conversation took. " Oh, violation of all social decorum ! What ! exhibit wealth seeking the company of poverty !—One of the privileged class walking

arm in arm with one of the people !—monstrous ! The phenomenon is more extraordinary than the lion lying down with the kid, or the wolf with the lamb. The spectacle will turn the heads of the good Parisians. They will think it prognosticates the advent of a new Messiah.”

“ Mocking quibbles !” said Cleveland. “ You sought this interview. You must have some motive for desiring an explanation ; and yet when I offer an opportunity, you put me off with banter. Call upon me at my lodgings.”

“ No,” replied the other, “ you shall visit mine ; that is to say, if you dare. Here is my card.”

Cleveland read on the dirty scrap of paste-board which the other handed to him, “ Jean Brisseau, Printer, Rue de Lesdiguères, Faubourg St. Antoine.” “ I will not fail you,” said he.

“ Will you really come ?” rejoined the other ;
“ that is bold. All-powerful love, to what will
you not compel us !”

“ At what hour shall I come ?”

“ Dusk,” replied the other.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE CONDITION.

CLEVELAND returned home, musing on the character of his new acquaintance. It was evident, from his allusions, that he was intimately acquainted with Antonia, and must have possessed great influence over her to have obtained from her, an account of the incident which first brought her in contact with himself. That she was imprisoned in the Bastille, he did not for a moment believe. What minister would take the trouble to send a poor obscure and uncon-

nected girl to a state prison ? He looked upon the assertion as made at random, with a view to startle his nerves and to rouse his attention. Some misgivings crossed his mind as to the prudence of putting himself within the power of such a questionable personage as his morning's acquaintance, by entering his haunts. But he was constitutionally brave, and his acquired indifference to life had exaggerated this feeling into a careless rashness and unreasonable indifference to danger. Besides, he argued to himself with some plausibility, that if this ventriloquist had wished to entrap him, he would have adopted a quieter and milder demeanour, calculated to inspire confidence ; whereas his object had evidently been to dazzle and astonish—to excite curiosity and wonder, even at the risk of rousing suspicion.

As the evening approached, he took a fiacre

and drove to the Faubourg St. Antoine. Dismissing his vehicle, he easily found the house designated on the card. It was a printing office. He rung the bell, and the door opened. He walked boldly in, and found himself in a bare dirty room, surrounded by types, compositors' desks, and the other apparatus of the typographical art.

"Is Jean Brisseau at home?" said he, in a loud firm voice.

"Behold him," said the ventriloquist, stepping forward from a door on the opposite side of the apartment; "Good, you are punctual to my vague appointment; but we are exposed to interruption in this place. Let us adjourn to a safer apartment."

He raised a trapdoor, so artificially constructed in the floor, that it would probably have escaped any casual observer's notice. A

rough flight of stairs was visible. Brisseau motioned to Cleveland to descend them. A slight feeling of hesitation came over him, but a moment's reflexion convinced him that his true policy was either to trust Brisseau altogether or not at all. He decided on the former course, and stepped boldly down the stairs. Brisseau followed him, closing the trapdoor behind him.

At the bottom of the flight, Cleveland found himself in a large subterranean apartment or cellar, well lighted by a strong lamp, which hung from the centre of the roof. There was a printing press in the middle of the room, with some numbers of a periodical publication scattered about the machine. It would have been imprudent in Cleveland to have exhibited too much curiosity, but he could not help casting a few glances on the sheets. He immediately recognized them to be numbers of an illicit and

exceedingly seditious newspaper, which had lately, to the great chagrin of the government, been much circulated among the lower orders of the French metropolis.

“ Well, sir,” cried Brisseau, seating himself, and motioning to Cleveland to do the same, “ what is the object of your visit here ?”

“ I have come,” said Cleveland, “ to hear you explain at greater length than you were inclined to do this morning, the origin and extent of the acquaintance which you pretend to have formed with me.”

“ I repeat that I have often enjoyed the pleasure of your society,” replied Brisseau, “ before this morning. I was present at the Duke de Fronsac’s supper, when those two precious representatives of modern chivalry betted, instead of fighting, about the beauty of their respective mistresses. Even before your connexion with

Mademoiselle di Volterra, your character had interested me. I studied it with attention, and found abundant matter both for admiration and pity."

"Indeed," said Cleveland, smiling, "I was not at all aware of the honour I enjoyed."

"Are you offended, my proud reserved islander, that the mechanic, Jean Brisseau, admired and pitied you?"

"Not at all," replied Cleveland. "If you have studied my character to any purpose, you must know, that though bitter experience deters me from seeking the sympathy of those about me, I value—deeply value the good opinion of the lowest and humblest human being, when it is genuine and disinterested. Nay, the attachment of a dog is not to me an object of indifference."

"Spoken like yourself!" exclaimed the prin-

ter, approvingly. "You are not the aristocrat I began to think you."

"But it was surely not in your character of Jean Brisseau," said Cleveland, "that you gained access to the Duc de Fronsac's parties. What part did you enact on those occasions?"

"That is a secret," replied the other. "I dare not tell you; because I may need the disguise again."

"You were pleased to say," replied Cleveland, "that you were attracted and interested by my peculiarities of disposition, even before my connexion with Mademoiselle di Volterra. How could such a circumstance affect your feelings towards me?"

"That, also," replied Brisseau, smiling, "must remain a mystery to you."

"Enough of myself," said Cleveland. "Tell

me something of Mademoiselle di Volterra." And he suppressed a sigh as he asked the question. "Under whose protection is she now residing?"

"The King's."

"The King's!" repeated Cleveland, incredulously.

"Yes," answered Brisseau; "she is now living under the protection of the King, as represented by the very unheroic Marquis de Launey, Governor of the Bastille."

"Oh God! is she really immured in that horrible prison?—do not trifle with me on the subject."

"I speak, alas! in serious sadness," replied Brisseau, "when I say she has been an inmate of the Bastille for the last four months."

"Four months!" repeated Cleveland, in a tone of horror; "and I all this time——" he

struck his forehead violently with his clenched hand.

“ —Have spent the day in hanging over bridges, and gazing upon the moon;” said Brisseau, finishing the broken exclamation. “ Well ! it is all the better that you passed the interval, unconscious of her fate. You could not have rendered her the smallest aid.”

“ Yes, yes ; I could,” returned Cleveland, impetuously. “ I could have flown to Versailles, gained an audience of the King—pleaded the cause of truth, justice, and innocence, and have procured her release.”

“ Go to Versailles !” exclaimed Brisseau. “ What boyish folly ! Hear me. Without disparagement to your abilities, abler men have ere now pleaded the cause of truth, justice, and innocence at Versailles, and have had judgment given against them. But had you such superior

eloquence, as to succeed where everybody had failed, what in truth would your story in substance amount to? That the young lady in question had lived with you for some months in a very equivocal capacity, which you most probably would not think it worth while minutely to analyze; that during that period you had every reason to be satisfied with the young lady's conduct; that certain, morbid, over-refined, and complicated emotions, which no length of explanation would enable so pudding-headed a personage as his most Christian Majesty Louis the Sixteenth to understand, had induced a separation. That during her absence your passion had renewed with ten-fold vigour, and, consequently, that it was very improper to shut up the object of so much love and tenderness in the Bastille."

Despite his agitation and pain at the con-

firmation of Antonia's imprisonment, Cleveland could hardly help smiling at Brisseau's description of his applications.

"Any story, however affecting, may be caricatured," said Cleveland; "Louis the Sixteenth has ere now granted more unreasonable requests than mine."

"No doubt," returned Brisseau; "but consider the political state of the court at the present moment. Tomorrow is the all-important day, on which the States-General meet for the first time. Every brain in France, not belonging to a lover or an idiot, is throbbing, whirling, splitting with excitement at the anticipated result of this grand political experiment. Some hearts beat high with hope; others sink with gloomy apprehension; but the attention of all is fixed, concentrated, absorbed, by this all-engrossing subject. Nothing else is talked of

during the day, nothing else is dreamed of by night; no other topic of conversation is permitted in any class of society. You smile—but you are a lover, and have no time to waste on such tedious trifles as the fate of empires, or the destinies of millions. Well ! the centre of all this agitation is the King ; of all the over-excited minds and wearied brains in France, the fat and feeble cerebrum of Louis Capet suffers the most. Not only is he torn to pieces by his own natural doubts and fears ; but he is surrounded by a crowd of courtiers, ministers, priests, nobles, and princes of the blood, who all pull and tug him different ways, just as the mob of porters and waiters treat an English traveller, when he first lands on the Calais pier. The King resigns himself in passive despair to the strongest puller——”

“ What does all this tend to ? ” interrupted

Cleveland, impatiently. "If true, how does it affect Antonia or myself?"

"Thus much," replied Brisseau; "at such a moment, in such a state, can you expect the harassed preoccupied monarch to examine the case of an obscure prisoner in the Bastille, and to adjudicate thereon?"

"Why not?" said Cleveland, with enthusiasm. "However numerous or important his occupations, he should always find time to do justice; and if he cannot, he ought to abdicate, and descend from a throne, the duties of which he cannot discharge."

"Hear me," answered Brisseau, shrugging his shoulders; "if you are determined to rescue the lady of your love by your own personal exertions, take your pocket pistols and batter the massy walls of the Bastille until you have effected a practicable breach; then rush forward with

your court sword, and storm the fortress single-handed, like one of Ariosto's heroes. Such an attempt would be moderate, feasible, and rational, compared with your present notion."

"Why so?" persisted Cleveland, although beginning himself to doubt the efficacy of his interference at Versailles. "The influence of the English Ambassador will procure me a personal interview whenever I wish."

"Good," retorted Brisseau. "Grant that, after a world of solicitations, you are allowed to enter the King's closet for a few minutes, how will you advance your object? What will you gain by it? Louis will assume perhaps a painful air of attention—will gaze on you with lacklustre eyes, and suppose from your earnestness and eagerness, that you are stating some matter connected with the States General. You finish

—present your petition or memorial, and are ushered out. The King hands over the document to his private secretary, with faint orders to examine it and make his report thereon. The Secretary at such a moment, would as soon think of going through a complete course of theological reading; and it will lie in his desk until it has accumulated a certain amount of dust and dirt, and it will then be transferred to his cook."

"Is there then no resource, no remedy?" said Cleveland despondingly. "Must I quietly acquiesce in the undeserved misery of the being I love best on earth?"

"Any efforts that you make to rescue her," replied Brisseau, "will prove abortive, and in all probability aggravate the condition of her whom they are intended to benefit."

"Is there no hope then?"

" I did not say that," returned Brisseau.

" If I must despair," said Cleveland, " who shall dare to undertake the enterprise."

" No individual," replied Brisseau, " can succeed."

" Who then shall free her?" enquired Cleveland.

" A power, mightier than individuals," answered Brisseau, in a more impressive manner than he had yet used, " mightier even than a crowned King, is at work, which while it sweeps away the rich and powerful by myriads, may prove the harbinger of deliverance to one, who now seems cut off from all hope of escape; even as the hurricane, which engulfs a fleet, may float to shore a fragile casket."

" To what power do you allude," said Cleveland, who like most of the English then in Paris apprehended no convulsion or disturbance,

from the establishment of a form of government similar to their own.

“ The resistless march of events,”—replied Brisseau, “ the force of inevitable circumstances—which rolls on its predetermined course, shattering old tyrannies, and creating new tyrants; obliterating ancient prejudices and substituting modern follies; overturning, changing, destroying, and reproducing laws, governments, customs, manners, and feelings; while the human pigmies who figure as chiefs—who, raised to-day, are crushed to-morrow, yet dare to deem themselves the causers and movers of the scene, are but in truth so many passive links in the long mysterious chain, which binds the whole universe in a scheme of fated necessity.”

“ So I am to wait with folded arms, according to your counsel,” said Cleveland “ until events set her at liberty: like Horace’s rustic, waiting

on the bank, until the river should run dry. I confess I see no symptoms of the social convulsion which you forebode."

"Let that pass," replied the other impatiently, "and answer truly the question I shall put to you. Were Antonia di Volterra, whose image now seems so exclusively to occupy your heart and head, as to deprive you of all power of observing what is passing around you,—were this cherished object of your thoughts and wishes restored to you at the present moment,—examine well your intentions and feelings towards her, and say, would your future conduct be really calculated to promote her happiness?"

"If a lover," said Cleveland, "who deems the mere presence of his mistress a luxury, greater than the whole world besides could afford him, is likely to make her happy, I answer your question in the affirmative."

"If such a man's deeds," gravely replied Brisseau, "were consistent with his sentiments, he would guard his mistress's honour as jealously as his own—would scorn to expose her to the world's reproach, by maintaining a connexion with her, which society condemns. Do your past acts correspond with these principles; and what are your intentions for the future?"

Cleveland bit his lips, and remained silent for some moments. At length he answered in a constrained voice, "I came hither, Monsieur Brisseau, upon the understanding that I should receive some interesting intelligence, not to be catechised by an utter stranger as to my most secret thoughts, views, and intentions."

"You think to take refuge from my question in the petty formalities of society," replied Brisseau; "I admit the enquiry to offend against all rules of polite intercourse, and I still press

the question, which you must answer either by your words, or your silence ; but, in the latter event, despair of ever again beholding Antonia di Volterra."

He spoke with that calm, collected, impressive energy, which inspires an irresistible conviction, that the speaker has the power to execute what he threatens. Cleveland gazed on him with involuntary astonishment ; but a moment's reflexion speedily convinced him that an obscure mechanic, destitute of powerful connexions or extensive resources, could not possess the extraordinary influence he affected.

" If words," replied Cleveland drily, " were evidence of strength, you, my friend, would be little less than omnipotent. You talk like a god, but you look like a journeyman printer. The ardour of your genius makes you overlook the glaring inference which arises from the fact,

that the man, who cannot raise himself in life above the condition of a mechanic, is not likely to be able to control the fate of others who are better off than himself."

"Bad reasoning!" said Brisseau coolly; "because a courier's drunkenness has ere now changed the fate of empires: but when I spoke of an eternal separation, I only threatened what I, already in part, have executed. I was the cause that she originally left you."

"Indeed!" replied Cleveland, who began to breathe hard; "you have a singular mode of recommending yourself to those persons whom you honour with your attention. Pray," added he, in the thick voice of rising passion, "were you also the cause of her imprisonment in the Bastille?"

"Alas! indirectly I was," answered Brisseau; "but be calm, I will redeem my error before

long. I placed her in a station where I deemed she would have been high and happy ; but the scheme exploded, and the miserable sequel was what I tell you."

" For God's sake, good Monsieur Brisseau," cried Cleveland, " refrain from all future interference in other folk's affairs. Your intentions may be good, but your means are most unlucky ; you were pleased to intimate your good-will to me, and seemed to feel a still stronger interest in the fate of the young lady we have been speaking of. What is the result of your well-meant exertions in behalf of the parties towards whom you are thus favourably disposed ? One loses the society which constituted the chief charm of his existence ; the other is deprived of her liberty : and both of happiness."

" Part of these effects I designed," answered Brisseau ; " a part has happened in spite of my

utmost exertions. But we are wandering from the question I was so rude as to put. Do you refuse to answer it?"

Cleveland hesitated; his reason, his experience, his natural distrust of the marvellous, the suspicious tendency engendered in his own mind by repeated deception, inclined him to treat Brisseau's pretensions to power with contempt, and to regard his story as a mere fabrication, devised for the purposes of imposition. On the other hand, Brisseau's demeanour and language were so striking and impressive, so far exceeding in power and ability the airs and pretensions of a vulgar impostor, that in spite of himself a secret persuasion stole over his mind that the man's vaunts would be redeemed by his deeds. Divided by these opinions, he took a middle course. "You will at least admit," said he, "that the consideration of so important

a question may justify a few hours' deliberation ; give me till to-morrow to decide?"

"Take four and twenty hours," replied Brisseau with a triumphant smile, "and communicate your ultimatum to-morrow evening."

At this moment a peculiar tap was heard, not at the trapdoor by which they entered, but at some other door or entrance which led into the cellar. Brisseau started; and his countenance betrayed marks of embarrassment.

"A friend of mine," said he to Cleveland, "is coming to visit me. He must not see you—never could I lull his suspicions; I must hide you——"

He cast his eyes rapidly round the cellar. A clumsy wooden screen afforded the best place of concealment that the emergency allowed him to select. Without asking Cleveland's leave, he hurried him behind this piece of apparatus, and

conjured him not to betray his presence. Cleveland made no great opposition to the manœuvre, though he was puzzled to know why the printer should be alarmed at being seen in company with a gentleman. To speak truly, he wished to know something more of Brisseau, than he could discover by the conversational skirmishes which had hitherto taken place between them; and it occurred to him, that the visitor, unaware of the presence of a third party, might very possibly drop some allusion, or ask some question, which might throw a light on the previous pursuits and character of his new acquaintance. Like most persons ensconced behind a screen, he speedily found a friendly chink sufficient to gratify his curiosity. The moment Brisseau had disposed of the Englishman, he opened the door.

A fashionably dressed and handsome man,

between forty and fifty years of age, walked in. Cleveland at once recognized him to be the celebrated La Clos, the private secretary of the Duke of Orleans, renowned even in that licentious age for the surpassing profligacy of his literary conceptions. His novel of the *Liaisons Dangereuses* produces on the mind of the reader, by the intense immorality of its characters, the same effect which other authors strive to attain by the description of physical horrors. The portraiture of the Comtesse de Merteuil would appal the most vicious person that ever lived.

“What news from Versailles?” said Brisseau.

“Plenty,” replied the new comer, “so good as to be almost bad.”

“Ah! the danger I always foreboded,” exclaimed Brisseau; “we have invoked a storm to show the incapacity of the present pilot, and to form a pretext for substituting another; and

I am afraid the tempest will blow the whole ship to pieces."

"You have exactly touched the very centre of my apprehensions," said La Clos.

"But why give way to fear?" replied Brisseau; "let the tempest rage as it will, two clever fellows, like ourselves, may manage to build a raft out of the ship, that furious winds, instead of sinking, may waft to fortune."

La Clos shook his head. "Who," said he "can foretell his fate in a revolution?"

"What is the general temper and spirit of the deputies of the Tiers Etat?" enquired Brisseau.

"All are filled," replied La Clos, "with boundless hopes and impossible aspirations; they have unanimously agreed to absorb the other two states, by compelling them to vote by numbers instead of by orders. This will be their first step. I have spoken to many others,

who avow, that nothing less will content them, than the abolition of titles and privileges, the confiscation of Church property, and the reduction of the royal authority to a point which will leave Louis the Sixteenth the crowned president of a republic, rather than King of France. The first point of the problem being established, viz. that the States-General will attempt to overthrow monarchy; the next point essential to ascertain is, what course the monarch will take?"

"Say, rather," replied Brisseau, "what course will the court take? for the court ultimately governs the monarch."

"The King's personal inclinations," said La Clos, "would lead him to yield; but his wife and courtiers will sooner or later urge him into resistance."

"Then comes the tug of war," cried Brisseau, in a low yet exulting voice; "then comes

the crisis—then comes the immortal moment in which we shall strike the grand blow.”

“That blow, Brisseau, we shall never strike.”

“Why not?” asked Brisseau, impetuously.

“I have sounded our chief,” said La Clos, with an air of melancholy composure, “and find him wanting. Mark me, Brisseau, Philip of Orleans will never be king. He has not stuff enough in him to form an usurper. His levity and weakness are inconceivable. He has no moral courage. When the prospect of the crown was so distant as to be unattainable, he coveted the prize with a child’s eagerness. Now that circumstances and our own exertions have brought it within his reach, with a child’s caprice or timidity he relaxes his pursuit.”

“But we will strike the blow for him,” said Brisseau.

“He will not let us,” answered La Clos. “At

threatening notices, reminding me in an ominous manner of the prophecy of Cagliostro. Now, as I believe, that out of ten accomplished prophecies, nine are fulfilled by the prophet, I should like to be aware of the nature of this famous prediction, in order that I might guard against its completion."

"This alters the case," said the Count; "but for my own part, I think that precautions for personal safety inspire so much anxiety, as to be a worse evil, than the danger they are intended to counteract. Better to die at once, than always to live in the fear of death. Against all ordinary attempts, you are as safe as another man; and a hundred thousand guards could not secure you from the desperation of an individual. Again I say, therefore, enjoy the present; and let the future take care of itself."

"My dear D'Ostalis," replied the Duke,

rather drily, "I will admit that you have displayed, during this discussion, a great range of intellectual power. At first you were philosophical—then poetical and descriptive—and now you are philosophical again. But I will not admit that you have a right to withhold from me a secret which concerns my personal sin and which, it was agreed, you should reveal whenever I should request you."

"Since you ask me so pointedly," replied D'Ostalis, "I shall of course make no further opposition. Without their troubling me with a minute description of your various attitudes, gestures, exclamations, and drops of sweat, it appeared to me to be struggling with me, and ferocious war with me, the progress of your carriage. I saw your servants to drive on. They obeyed. You were apparently very angry."

the last moment he will hesitate, and refuse us his authority. When the scheme was in embryo, it amused his imagination; now it draws near, he trembles at its magnitude and importance."

"Well, then," cried Brisseau, "we will on in our career, and strike for ourselves. The last three weeks, I have been disseminating papers among the French guards, that would have made the wig of the "Grand Monarque" uncurl itself with horror. Then, thanks to my exertions; all the grisettes in Paris are glowing with enthusiasm for the States General. Treason and pleasure are mingled in their kisses, and while their military heroes fancy themselves teaching the art of love, they are in truth learning the catechism of revolution. Above all, the privates and subalterns are hugely tickled with the clause in the cahiers, in which the constituents instruct their representatives to demand an increase of pay for the

army. What unknown friend to our plots first started the idea? It was indeed a vast stroke of policy to outweigh the influence of present payment by a prospective bribe."

"The neutrality of the military," replied La Clos, "were the utmost we could expect; they will not assist in the work of rebellion."

"Some will," said Brisseau.

"Still, the main business of insurrection," said La Clos, "must be effected by popular force. What success have you had in organizing the chaotic elements of revolt?"

"I have enlisted in my service," said Brisseau, "eleven invaluable emissaries."

"At a great expense?" asked La Clos, "that, however," added he, "is a secondary consideration."

"Six," answered Brisseau, "are mercenary desperadoes, whom I pay with hard cash. Two

enthusiasts, whom I pay with words; that is, I occasionally harangue them. The other three have joined me from mere love of fighting and mischief. They are incessantly spreading sedition in their respective quarters; and the first time that any public event rouses the Parisian populace into insurrection, they will head them, and direct the energies of the crowd to some definite practicable design."

"Remember," said La Clos, "the Bastille must be the first object of attack."

"Fear not," replied Brisseau; "I have good reasons for not forgetting your plans."

"I shall now proceed to the Palais Royale," said La Clos, "and report progress. My news will be coldly received, because I bring him nearer and nearer to the Rubicon, which he has neither courage enough to cross, nor prudence enough to fly."

"Never mind," said Brisseau; "On, on, for our own sakes, if not for his."

"Amen," said La Clos, turning towards the door. "In a week's time I shall see you again; by that time matters will have thickened."

As soon as La Clos had taken his leave, Cleveland advanced from his hiding-place.

"What think you of the conversation you have just heard?"

"Shall I tell you what I think of yourself?" asked Cleveland.

"Do so."

"That you are the rashest and most incontinent conspirator that ever perished on a scaffold."

"I had only the choice of evils," answered Brisseau. "La Clos is the most suspicious of men. His distrust once excited is never laid. My schemes ran less risk of derangement from the introduction of a new confidant, than from

the alienation of the prominent actors. Suffering in your tenderest ties from the power of arbitrary imprisonment, I knew that you could not be otherwise than hostile to the government ; besides, I wished you to see that I was something more than a journeyman printer ; more than all this, I do not fear the police, for they can neither secure my person, nor interrupt my plans."

Cleveland felt no wish to refute these arguments. To convince a desperate and daring character, that the safety of his person and the success of his schemes depended upon his own discretion, would be an act of glaring and obvious impolicy. He assented, therefore, to the justice of Brisseau's remarks, and after announcing that he should call the next day, at the same hour, he took leave of his strange acquaintance.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A STRANGE CHARACTER DEVELOPED.

ON finding himself in the open street, Cleveland's first impulse was to seek the purlieus of the Bastille. He walked rapidly along, until the gloomy towers of that too celebrated prison, darkly defined against the moonlight, rose upon his sight. He advanced to the fosse, and gazed upon the massive walls and frowning battlements, which contained the object of his deepest attachment, with a strange and mingled emotion of

fury, bitterness, and delight. Within a stone's throw from where he stood, Antonia breathed, lived, and had her being. Yet he could not see her—speak to her—hear her voice—gaze upon her form—or convey to her the smallest intimation of his vicinity. By human intervention, that small space of ground, was converted into an impassable barrier between him and all that he held dear on earth. A single stone wall alone interposed, and yet more effectually separated him from his mistress, than if whole seas and continents had been placed between them.

Why had he come there? What pleasure did he receive? what profit did he gain by straining his eyes on the black towers of the Bastille? As far as the enjoyment of Antonia's presence and company was concerned, he might as well have been at the other end of France—at the other end of the world. What was the

subtle influence, that like a magnet drew him to the spot? What was the inexplicable attraction, that detained him for hours before the walls that encompassed his mistress? but it is useless to attempt an analysis of the sentiment. None but lovers—none but those who have deeply and truly loved—a class of mortals much fewer in number than the world supposes,—can understand why Cleveland remained in the vicinity of the fortress till the dawn. It is true, the incidents of the day afforded him ample food for reflection. Antonia's fate, the strange manner in which it was communicated, the extraordinary and mysterious character of Brisseau, the alarming confidence which had been thrust upon him without his own sanction or consent—all constituted matters of excitement and consideration; but passing over the latter topics, his thoughts recurred to Antonia—to the

possibility of recovering her. The event to the view of reason appeared remote and improbable, yet when Brisseau spoke of coming events which would effect her release, such was his extraordinary faculty of inspiring belief and confidence, that hope sprung up in Cleveland's mind in spite of himself. Certainly if a revolution were impending, which should seat the younger branch of the Bourbons on the throne, her deliverance was not far off; for Brisseau evidently took a strong interest in her welfare, and was too important a partizan to be refused such a trifling favour as her freedom. But was such a change of dynasty probable? The Duke of Orleans was a favourite with the people at present, because he opposed himself to the Court in politics; but Cleveland felt that he had neither energies to command respect, nor virtues to inspire sympathy, and that he

was as ill-calculated, as Louis himself, to long maintain the part of a popular leader. La Clos, with whose great talents he was well acquainted, had seemed to take the same view of his chief's character, and to deem him incapable of accomplishing the design he had so recklessly commenced. It was on Brisseau's own exertions that he chiefly relied, and so strong an opinion had he conceived of the inexhaustible resources and the consummate audacity of that extraordinary personage;—so highly did he estimate the versatility and extent of his talents, that he thought him capable of bringing to pass apparent impossibilities.

Supposing then that Antonia should be again restored to him, upon what terms did he propose to live with her—upon what principles to regulate their future intercourse? Cleveland was neither fickle nor inconstant: no man was

better aware, that mutual fidelity is the essential condition to mutual affection, and that he who desires to be sincerely and truly loved, must direct his exclusive devotion to a single object. He was entirely free from the vulgar passion for variety which seems to haunt so many men. He looked upon this restless craving after new objects of desire, as evidence of an incapacity for enjoyment. He well knew, that such men leave all in turn, because they are unable to find with any the happiness they seek, and that their incessant love of change, is only a fruitless effort to escape from their own miserable satiety; just as invalids cause themselves to be transported from town to town, and from country to country, in the vain hope of discovering a climate, that will give to disease and irritation, the calm and placid vigour, that belongs to health alone. His hesitation, then, to unite

himself to Antonia, did not arise from any apprehension, that he should at a future period repent the union. Never since he had known her had his heart wandered a moment, though but in imagination. A cloud it is true had for a short time overshadowed his affection, but in the first hour of absence, it had burst forth again with its original warmth. He intensely felt all her beauty and excellence, and never attempted to supply the vacancy she had left in his bosom. Not marriage itself could surround him with stricter ties, than were already imposed upon him by his own inclinations. Why, then, did he hesitate to convert a covert and clandestine connexion into a permanent and legitimate union? What were the obstacles between him and happiness? The dread of the world's sneer. Antonia's birth was obscure and mysterious; the Duke de

Fronsac still lived to brand her as his runaway mistress ; and, lastly, her intercourse with himself. Of this last article of accusation he soon disposed ; it was cruel, it was ungenerous, to charge her with a fault which was partly owing to circumstances, and partly to his own conduct, which was committed in his own favour, and for his own sake. The other two unfortunate circumstances of her lot, might certainly expose her, and consequently himself, to much contumely and vexation. While he was totally ignorant of her parentage, he could never be secure but that the lowest and most degraded of mankind might start up, and claim her as his child ; then her involuntary residence under the Duke's protection would be exposed to much misconstruction, and would render her an easy prey to calumny and misrepresentation. But these objections lost much of their weight, when

he recollected, that he was not a native of France; and that a repetition of his visit to that country was by no means essential either to his worldly prosperity, or his mental happiness. In England there would be few to question, and none to contradict, whatever account he might choose to give of his foreign wife; while the refined beauty of her person, and the natural elegance of her manners, would tend to lull any suspicions respecting her family. There, too, she would find a proper sphere of display for her many charms and virtues; and he confidently anticipated, that if she could be guarded against unfair prepossessions in the outset of her career, her intrinsic loveliness, both in mind and body, would soon be appreciated by society, and attract an universal tribute of admiration. We shall not farther pursue a description of his mental conflict. Suffice it to say, that the

struggles ended, as such always do, by the strongest impulse winning the victory over the other contending emotions, and then forcing poor reason to find arguments to justify the decision.

Another subject which engaged much of Cleveland's attention, was the conversation between Brisseau and La Clos, which he had involuntarily overheard on the previous evening. Parts of it were unintelligible to him; but he understood quite enough to make him aware that the parties had embarked on some dark and desperate scheme of rebellion, and might deservedly expect to be apprehended at any moment by the emissaries of government. He could have no guarantee, that such an arrest would not take place, whilst he was holding communication with Brisseau. Such an accident might implicate him in the guilt and danger of

the plot, and expose him to considerable embarrassment, before he could prove his innocence. With this conviction, it would have been insanity to have repeated his visit the next morning to Jean Brisseau. He contented himself with sending an unsigned, and undated note, in a feigned hand, to this effect: "That he was determined to take the first opportunity of uniting himself to the lady, in whom Monsieur Brisseau was so strongly interested."

If Cleveland had been asked, whether Brisseau's sanguine predictions had inspired him with the expectation of recovering Antonia, he would have denied the fact; yet it is certain that a vague, indefinite, yet powerful sentiment of hope, lurked in his breast, perhaps unknown to himself. It was strange, because we have seen that Cleveland was of a melancholy temperament, and he had many a time despaired,

under circumstances, which had held out probabilities of success much better founded, than the present. The secret of his faith lay in the character of Brisseau. This singular personage possessed, in an eminent degree, the peculiar talent of imperceptibly impressing all who approached him with a profound conviction of his extraordinary talents and resources. In every look and gesture there was a calm imposing assumption of power, which sooner or later prevailed over the strongest scepticism.

This unconscious reliance on Brisseau was naturally much increased, when intelligence of the first proceedings of the States General arrived in Paris. It was well known that this celebrated assembly consisted of deputies elected by the three orders in the state: the clergy, nobility, and bourgeoisie, or commonalty. The third estate sent twice as many representatives, as either of

the other two classes. In summoning the States General, the King and his advisers intended that they should vote according to orders ; that is to say, that the representatives of each class should severally ascertain the opinions of their members, and then, that the majority of orders should decide the adoption or rejection of the measures under discussion. In this manner, the court, anticipating that the representatives of the privileged orders would generally adhere to the side of the government, expected to obtain a majority of orders, if not of the representatives ; and trusted with confidence, that on most occasions of importance, the clergy and nobility would unite in resisting the innovations, and revolutionary tendencies of the third state. The popular leaders saw the importance of the point, and strenuously insisted, that the three orders should vote together ; and that the gross

majority should constitute the decision of the assembly. It is not necessary to relate the details of this famous struggle, and the mode in which it ultimately terminated in favour of the popular party. When the result of the contest became known in Paris, Cleveland was struck by the remarkable coincidence between the predictions uttered by Brisseau, and La Clos, in their confidential conference, and the actual course of events ; and he hardly knew which to admire most, the correctness of their political judgment, or the amazing extent of their private information. At this period, the future appeared bright and full of hope to Cleveland ; not only did he rejoice, in common with all the generous and liberal spirits of the age, to see a great nation shaking off an odious system of despotism and vassalage, to which they had been for centuries subjected, but he had a deeper and

more personal interest in the struggle which was going on ; he felt that great changes in the political system of the country were inevitable ; and he foresaw, that amongst the first and most necessary of these alterations, would be a law securing the personal liberty of the subject against the tyranny of the executive, and effecting the discharge of all the state prisoners, who were at present confined under various frivolous pretexts in different parts of France. It now occurred to him, that it might be in anticipation of some such measure, that Brisseau had predicted the speedy release of Antonia ; but suddenly the flattering prospect began to darken. The King, who had at present yielded to the wishes of the popular party, and used his personal influence with the representatives of the clergy and nobility, for the purpose of inducing them to accede to the system of voting proposed by the

third estate, now changed his course. In the royal sitting held on the twentieth of June, he openly avowed his intentions to retain the odious prerogatives of his ancestors, and forbid the representatives to exercise the functions of a legislative assembly. The absence, too, of the popular minister, Necker, on this occasion, was remarked, as an ominous circumstance. The exclusion of the deputies from their accustomed place of deliberation ; their substitution of a neighbouring tennis court ; the courageous and sublime oath which they swore, never to separate, until they had succeeded in obtaining a constitution for France, followed in rapid succession. These indications, on the part of the court, of a determination to get rid of the States General ; and the firmness and energy, on the other hand, with which that body resisted the attacks made upon them, blighted the hopes, which Cleveland

had begun to entertain. The prospect of the peaceable enactment of such a law, as he had anticipated, was now far removed; and Antonia's deliverance must be expected from other means. In this state of anxiety and agitation, the only resource which suggested itself to his imagination, was a renewal of his acquaintance with Brisseau; and so eager did he become to acquire some well-founded information respecting the probable course of future events, that his former apprehensions of being implicated in that person's intrigues, were now quite overlooked.

A little after dusk, he repaired to the Rue Lesdiguières, and gave three distinct knocks at the door of the printing office; it was opened, as before, by a wire, which passed into another room. Cleveland walked in, and waited the requisite time; at last Brisseau made his appearance.

“ Ha ! Monsieur Cleveland,” said he, with a polite bow, “ I am delighted to see you ; but what has induced you to venture once more into this den of rebellion, this cave of treason, this sink of sedition, from which you have of late so prudently kept away ? Do not suppose you are not welcome, because I ask the question ; I will confess that I am surprised at the visit ; I did not expect to see you again.”

“ Your political prophecies, Monsieur Brisseau, have been accomplished with such singular correctness, that I could not resist my desire to hear you pronounce some fresh oracles on the same subject.”

“ Your new-born enthusiasm for politics,” returned Brisseau, with an arch smile, “ is very amusing ; in other words, Sir Lover, you would know of me, if a certain bird will be able to burst her cage. I answer that she will ; and

repeat what I formerly said, that coming events will release her. Are you satisfied?"

"I imagined," said Cleveland, "when you spoke of Mademoiselle di Volterra's speedy deliverance, you speculated on the probability, that the States General would abolish the use of lettres de cachet, and pass some law equivalent to the Habeas Corpus of the English, which would prevent in future the practice of arbitrary imprisonment, and bring about the release of those already imprisoned."

"You are the last man in the world, from whom I should have expected such Utopian ideas. Do you fancy, when a people are oppressed, they have nothing to do, but to point out to their governors the consequences of their despotic measures, and beg of them to desist? When a robber claps a pistol to your breast, and demands your money, or your life, do you

believe, he errs from a theoretical ignorance of the rights of property ; and that a moral lecture will save your purse ? Know, that history contains many prodigies, but no exception to this grand universal truth, that from the creation up to the present hour, governments have never conceded the smallest portion of reform to aught, save the actual, or threatened operation of physical force."

" And will the demonstration of the French be actual, or merely threatened ?"

" Blood will flow in torrents ; of that be certain : revolutions are not made of rose-water."

" But if your grand rule," said Cleveland, " be so universal, how was it that the King ever summoned the States General ?"

" Because he and his advisers fancied in their folly, that the States General would prove a more pliable and efficacious instrument of taxa-

tion, than the Parliaments. He has now discovered his mistake ; and has lost no time in attempting to get rid of them."

" Will he succeed, most illustrious prophet?"

" No !" answered Brisseau, " property, intelligence, and numbers, are on the popular side. If the King knew how far and wide the wish for change has spread—if he knew how deeply it is rooted in the hearts of his subjects, he would yield to what is inevitable. But who shall whisper truth into a monarch's ear?—who shall penetrate that mysterious and fatal circle of minions and intriguers who ever surround a king ; governing him who appears to govern all ; making him blind to the warning of impending fate ; seizing for their own share the power, the profit, and the pleasure of tyranny, while they leave to the nominal tyrant its odium and responsibility."

“ Then my law,” said Cleveland, “ is not likely to be passed, until the monarchy is destroyed.”

“ When the monarchy is ground to dust,” said Brisseau, “ do not be too sure of your law. There are other despots in the world besides those who wear a crown. A century may elapse, before France may be able to boast of such a bulwark of liberty as you allude to.”

“ Your vaticinations, except upon one point, are not encouraging.”

“ That is the only matter,” returned Brisseau, “ in which you are much interested at present.”

“ And you refuse to apprise me of the specific manner, in which the result, which is so devoutly wished for, is to be accomplished.”

“ You must not drive oracles to particulars— if every prophet were forced to specify the colour of his Messiah’s hair, he could not long

retain his infallibility. I say, trust in me. Opportunities shall not escape you for want of notice; when the pear is ripe, I shall put you in the way to pluck it."

"We shall meet again then?"

"We shall," replied Brisseau. "But as we may perhaps meet under different auspices, and in a scene less suited to calm explanation, than the present, if you have any questions to put—difficulties to solve—or request to make, you had better seize the passing moment."

"No:" said Cleveland thoughtfully, "I have nothing farther to ask. Yet stay—gratify a curiosity, which, if impertinent, is at least natural. I see before me a man, dressed in the humble garb of a mechanic, possessed of marvellous, and apparently incompatible accomplishments: one day I am startled by his ventriloquism; the next, I am alarmed by his

treason. Compelled by fear of the police to live in a hole under ground, he continues to be informed of the most important state secrets : his conversation is one everlasting sneer at mankind, yet he chooses to take an incomprehensible, and causeless interest in an utter stranger. Living riddle, that you are, furnish me with your own solution—explain to me the mystery of yourself.”

“ Did you ever hear of Cagliostro ?” asked Brisseau.

“ Yes, often,” replied Cleveland, “ you allude to the famous charlatan and impostor.”

“ Why charlatan ? why impostor ?” scornfully exclaimed Brisseau ; “ because he duped a few individuals, whilst others cheated whole nations ? Suppose that he sometimes tempted a miser to barter some of his loved metal for the hopes of alchemical gold ;—grant he, now

and then, predicted to a roué, or gambler, the result which his own conduct made inevitable ; what are these trifling cases of deception, compared with the wholesale impositions of those great men, whom the world delights to honour ? Examine the lives of heroes, conquerors, prophets, statesmen, legislators, teachers, preachers, advocates, orators, and writers. Scan the voluminous records of all they have imagined, spoken, written, and acted — scrutinize the principles they brought into action, the false faiths and erroneous delusions which they engendered ; the struggles of mind and matter which they headed and exasperated ; the wars, massacres, persecutions, and controversies, which they stirred up—consider the whole amount of all this thought and action ; and accurately calculate, how much was meant to serve the cause of truth and mankind, and how much to forward

selfish ends, and individual interests. Distinguish between what was intended to benefit and enlighten, and what was meant to dazzle and mystify.—Charlatan! Impostor! I throw back the epithets with scorn, and fix them on the brightest names consecrated to immortality.”

“ You admit then your identity with Cagliostro.”

“ That is one of the many parts,” replied Brisseau, “ which I have played in my time ; it is now filled by another actor who is in Italy. I have abandoned the character for ever.”

“ But why not have adopted, in the outset of your career, one of these legal and social charlatanries, which you denounce ? A fiftieth part of your wasted talents and activity, exerted in a legitimate direction, would have made you rich and famous ; whereas——” Cleveland stopped, lest he should irritate the vanity of

the singular personage, whose character he was endeavouring to elucidate.

“Whereas I am now poor and infamous,” rejoined Brisseau; “was not that what you were about to say? but I am wealthier than you imagine; and as for fame it was never my aim or object.”

“May I ask what that is?” asked Cleveland.

“Pleasure—excitement—the gratification of a wild and ardent imagination, which dominates over my other faculties, and calls incessantly for strange events, variety of external impressions, and active operations on a fitting sphere; and which, when condemned by circumstances to an unnatural inaction, preys upon itself, and becomes my torture, instead of my delight.”

“And to satisfy this vain, nameless, and indefinable desire,” said Cleveland, “you committed all the pranks attributed to Count Cagliostro?”

“ ‘The end was quite worth the means ; I grudged neither the trouble nor the risk. I have seen every hue and shade of many-coloured life. I have flitted through all the different grades of society, as caprice or interest prompted me. When tired of the refined but languid wit of the palace, I have sought relief in the coarse but hearty humour of the cabaret. Sometimes a noble, sometimes a trader ; sometimes living in the crowd, and busying myself in the endless varieties of human character ; sometimes burying myself in my laboratory, and tracing the mysteries of nature. By turns an artist, a mechanic, a juggler at a fair, a conjuror in a village, a quack-philosopher in the capital, I have inspired the beings, with whom I came in contact, with new motives of action, conducted their intrigues, held the thread of the plot in my hand, and profited by the denouement.

The ordinary events of my career have been romances ; my every day existence a melodrama ; and what between the excitement of extricating myself from peril, and the enjoyment of achieving success, I have escaped that mortal ennui—that weariness of existence—which has clung to you through life like a poison, and infected every source of pleasure.”

“But why violate the established laws of society,” observed Cleveland, “and wage war with your species?”

“Had I been born on the vantage grounds of hereditary rank and fortune ; had my birth and connexion entitled me to struggle for the great prizes and high places of life, be assured I would never have descended from my natural eminence, to act the part of Count Cagliostro. But I was born the slave of labour ; sentenced, by the sordid necessity of earning my daily

bread, to the doom of perpetual and unremitting toil. In my youth, an old gentleman, a customer to the artist to whom I was apprenticed, who was fond of promoting education, and diffusing what he called useful knowledge, took notice of my talents, and recommended me to perseverance and industry, as the surest way to greatness. In proof of this advice, he lent me a biographical account of all the celebrated men who had risen from obscurity and poverty to eminence. I drew from it an inference he little expected ; I computed the space of time, over which the lives of these prosperous individuals extended ; and I calculated the number of beings who had lived and died, where fortune originally placed them : and I found the chances to be ten millions to one against the rise of any particular individual. I rejected what you would term legitimate means with scorn and despair ; and

since I could not untie the tight though invisible meshes of poverty, I boldly cut them."

"Are you fully aware of the chances of the perilous game you are playing? Society against a single individual—a myriad to a unit?"

"I have estimated them again, and again, with the most rigid arithmetic," said Brisseau gravely, "and taking my own peculiar personal qualities into the calculation, and making the necessary allowance, I find the hazard is not so great as you imagine."

Cleveland shook his head.

"Well, be the danger what it will," continued Brisseau, "I am prepared to meet it. When I can no longer live after my own will and fashion, I am content to die, but not to trail out a dull, laborious, mechanical existence, distinguished only from the machine, at, or with

which I work, by susceptibility to pain and envy."

A long pause ensued on both sides. Each seemed occupied by his own thoughts, and neither attempted to continue the conversation. At length Brisseau abruptly bade Cleveland adieu. The latter understood the hint, and immediately took his departure.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE BIRTH-DAY OF THE GREATEST EVENT IN
MODERN HISTORY.

ON the thirteenth of July, Paris was thunder-struck with the intelligence of Necker's dismissal on the preceding day. The elements of explosion had long been gathering in the metropolis; and this impolitic step on the part of the court, acted as a spark to kindle them. The populace broke into open insurrection.

Cleveland went out to collect news, of what was passing in the streets; and learnt, that the Hospital of the Invalids had been attacked, and

taken by a mob, who had plundered its vaults of 80,000 muskets, and a proportionable quantity of ammunition: Cleveland saw the serious consequences of this exploit, which not only inspired the insurgents with courage, and confidence in their own strength; but put into their hands the means of executing still more important enterprizes. On his return to his lodgings, he found the following note. "To-morrow will be enacted a grand popular melo-drama, in the Rue de St. Antoine, Place de la Bastille. If Monsieur Cleveland does not object to the smell of gunpowder, he is particularly requested, by his printing-house friend, to assist in the representation: Monsieur Brisseau is of opinion, that the denouement of the piece will be intensely interesting to Monsieur Cleveland." "The event," thought Cleveland, "which this extraordinary man predicted, and which I

thought so impossible, is actually on the eve of completion."

The next morning, Cleveland repaired to the Rue de St. Antoine, where the Bastille was situated; but, long before he arrived in sight of that fortress, his progress was obstructed by groups of people, who stood engaged in loud and fierce discussion, on each side of the street: most of them were armed with some formidable weapon,—a great number had muskets, of the same description as were used in the army; these were evidently the fruits of yesterday's attack upon the Invalids: some brandished, with furious gestures, a heterogeneous collection of such tools, and utensils, as might, upon occasion, serve as instruments of offence. Even the garde meuble, and the museums, had been plundered; and the antique weapons of other ages, after centuries of rusty inaction, were again applied to the

purposes, for which they were constructed. Here you might see a fellow, whose greasy locks, and blue jacket, betokened him to be a butcher, flourishing a gold-hilted ivory-handled Damascus sabre, the spoil of some crusader.—In another direction was a modern-looking printer, stalking along with the long lance used in the tournaments of the middle ages. Cleveland could not help stopping to look at one man, who had armed, or rather encumbered himself, with the immense two-handled sword, which was in vogue with some of the heroes of chivalry; so large that it required the force of both arms to wield it, and so long that it could only be worn from the shoulder. “Morbleu!” said the fellow, who was endeavouring to brandish his enormous sword with one hand; “I think there must have been giants in the old time, or else we have sadly fallen away in strength; this sword would tire

my arm in a quarter of an hour ; I think I had better get an axe, like old Tournay. '

Meantime, Cleveland observed that the people, though violently excited, seemed to have no definite object, or common plan : the chief topic of their discourse was the infamous conduct of the Queen, and courtiers, in persuading the King to dismiss Necker ; and the great object of their anxiety and dread, was the army encamped near Paris, under the command of Marshal Broglio. Some said, that the General was marching on Paris, with the intention of taking the City by storm, and allowing the soldiers two days' sack ;—others avowed, that he would content himself with drawing lines of circumvallation round the metropolis, and starving it into submission ;—others again, whose imaginations were more terrific, looked up every moment at the sky, in expectation of showers of

shells, and added, " they knew, from good authority, that Marshal Broglio had received secret orders to bombard Paris, in case he met with resistance." Two or three individuals, who seemed particularly busy, ran about shouting, " Attack the Bastille !" How such a step afforded any protection against the dangers threatened by Marshal Broglio, they did not condescend to explain.

Still pushing his way through the crowd, Cleveland at last arrived in sight of the Bastille, and seeing a large mass of people collected round the outer draw-bridge of the fort, made his way up to them : he descried Brisseau in the centre, apparently engaged in a warm altercation with some well-dressed individuals, who were endeavouring to dissuade the surrounding mob from adopting violent measures.

Cleveland had not been in his present posi-

tion long, before Brisseau's quick eye, darting round the multitude, fell upon him: the latter could not leave his place; but he indicated his consciousness of Cleveland's presence, by a slight nod of recognition.

“Listen to a little reason, my countrymen;” said De la Rosière, a member of the old parliament of Paris, which had acquired a great, and deserved popularity, from the prominent part he had taken, in the grand struggle with the royal authority, which preceded, and, indeed produced, the convocation of the States General. “Listen to reason. I asked, why you congregated together with shouts and weapons? you tell me, because you are alarmed at the supposed designs of Marshal Broglie. I ask you, whom, and what, you are going to attack with these weapons? you answer, the Bastille; but, if you level the Bastille with the dust; how will the

destruction of that building enable you to resist Broglio's forces?"

"If we destroy the enemies of liberty, within the City," replied Brisseau, "we shall be the better able to cope with those without."

"Down with the Bastille!" cried a voice in the crowd; "it is the stronghold of tyranny and oppression!"—"It is the citadel of despotism!" shouted another.

"Yes! yes!" responded the circle round Brisseau and De la Rosière; "nobody can deny that—"

"It is a prison," exclaimed a pale young man, with long dishevelled hair, "where the friends of liberty are starved to death, while their oppressors wallow in luxury at Versailles."

This last observation seemed a home-thrust to the surrounding crowd: it roused their fury to the utmost; and a thousand voices, hoarse

with passion, began to repeat, "Down with the prison of liberty,—tear down the detested jail."

At length, an interval of silence occurred in the human storm. La Rosière made an unlucky use of the opportunity thus afforded him to speak: "Surely my friends," cried he, with a cool sarcastic smile, "you do not intend, because you are the friends of liberty, to pull down all the prisons in Paris? the freest countries in the world must have strong places, in which the wrong doers, and violators of the law, may be confined."

"La Rosière!" shouted the pale young man with streaming locks, "you are a traitor!"

"He has sold himself to the Court!" exclaimed one of the crowd.

An outrageous calumny is sure not to be allowed to drop for want of evidence.

"I can bear witness," cried a shoeblack,

coming forwards, "that his wife, Madame de la Rosière, received on the fifteenth of last month a hundred thousand livres from the Queen."

"Tear the traitor in pieces!" hallooed the crowd.

"Hang him with the lamp cords," cried some pestilent fellow, suggesting for the first time a cry which afterwards became so fatally common.

Already one ruffian had collared Monsieur de la Rosière, when Brisseau was heard loud above the tumult.

"Do not let us quarrel among ourselves," said he; "we have enemies enough to employ all our attention and force. Monsieur de la Rosière is not a traitor; he is honest but mistaken; I will convince him of his error. Monsieur de la Rosière," cried he, turning to that

gentleman, who by vigorous efforts had disengaged himself from his assailant, “ you call the Bastille a prison ; and you say that prisons are necessary even in lands which enjoy the greatest freedom.—Granted. But lay your hand upon your heart, and answer me truly and candidly this question. Is the Bastille a prison erected merely for the detention of prisoners, or a fortress built in the heart of Paris for the purpose of overawing the city ? If it be simply a jail, why do yonder battlements bristle with loaded cannon pointed against the street ? Why were immense quantities of powder secretly introduced last night into the fort ? In your heart do you believe all these preparations are directed against a score of miserable fettered captives, or against the good citizens of Paris ? ”

La Rosière’s answer was lost in the tremendous yell by which the surrounding auditors

signified their conviction of the orator's inference. When he could obtain a hearing, he was understood to admit, that the spectacle of the loaded cannon might justly cause apprehensions in the minds of the citizens, considering the uneasy nature of the times.

“ I still,” continued he, “ disclaim my belief in the supposed hostile intentions of the governor of the Bastille. But to prevent any farther jealousies or terrors, and to convince you that I am unchanged in my good wishes for popular liberty, I will head a deputation to Monsieur De Launey, and demand of him that the cannon be removed from the platform.”

The populace, who are always delighted with a new idea, shouted applause. Two respectably dressed individuals (for the mob, before, at least, they have arrived at the last stage of revolutionary madness, always like to be represented

by folks better attired than themselves) were selected at random from the crowd, and requested to accompany La Rosière in his mission. One of the two persons chosen stood aghast and silent at the honour thus conferred upon him ; as if he did not dare to disappoint the wishes of the crowd by a refusal, and yet felt himself wanting in courage to execute the task which had devolved on him.

“ What ails you, Monsieur Dupré ?” said one of the crowd ; “ you don’t seem to half like your present office.”

“ Why if anybody here—any adventurous young man,” tremulously replied Monsieur Dupré, “ who might wish to see the inside of the Bastille—I’ve no curiosity myself—would like to take my place, he is welcome to do so—that’s all. I’m afraid I’m not exactly the proper person for this sort of business.”

“ Business !” returned the other ; “ you have nothing to do, but to walk over the drawbridge, and go into the Governor’s house ; that is a very easy matter, is it not ?” When you are there, La Rosière will speak for the party.”

“ Doubtless,” returned Monsieur Dupré, with a rueful smile ; “ it is a very easy matter to go into the Governor’s house. My only fear is, that there may be some difficulty in getting out again.”

The crowd laughed at Monsieur Dupré’s shrewd conjecture ; but La Rosière, who had heard this dialogue, came forward, and said, “ I confess I entertain no fears on my own account. Monsieur De Launey, the Governor of the Bastille, is still a Frenchman ; and I would trust myself to his honour ; but since my worthy colleague surmises that we may be detained contrary to good faith, let us stipulate,

that four officers of the garrison should come out of the Bastille as we go in, and remain as hostages to this assembly until the return of their representatives."

Again the crowd applauded. Monsieur de La Rosière's proposals were communicated to one of the sentinels at the drawbridge, who forthwith reported them to the Governor. He soon returned to his post, bearing Monsieur De Launay's consent, and accompanied by four subaltern officers. The drawbridge was lowered. The four officers crossed it, and shook hands with the populace, as they came among them. La Rosière and his two colleagues entered the fortress, and the drawbridge was again drawn up.

The people waited a quarter of an hour with exemplary patience; at the expiration of this enormous period of time, they began to suspect

that their deputies had fallen victims to De Launey's treachery, and to moot the propriety of putting the hostages to death. In five minutes more they proceeded to blows and insults; and it would have gone hard with these unfortunate men, if La Rosière had not thrust his head from a window in one of the towers, and assured them of his safety. In another quarter of an hour, La Rosière and his companions made their appearance, and the four subalterns returned to the Bastille, nothing loth to escape from the wild hands in whose custody they had been placed.

The Governor's answer to the deputation was, that the cannon complained of had always been placed in their present position; that he was not authorized to remove them altogether without an order from the King; but as the spectacle alarmed the Parisians assembled out

side, he would remove the obnoxious pieces out of sight.

In fact, shortly after La Rosière's return, the cannon were pulled a little back, so as to conceal them from the view of the spectators beneath. The populace, who imagined their point gained, hurrahed with exultation, and La Rosière, elate with his pacific triumph, made the best of his way home.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE ATTACK.

THE deputation had not produced the result which Brisseau had confidently expected, viz. that a flat refusal would have been returned, which would have roused the people to the highest pitch of fury. Though somewhat disconcerted at the tranquillizing effect of the Governor's message, he determined to make an effort to revive the popular indignation against the Bastille.

“My friends,” said he, in a voice the loud.

ness and power of which seemed almost supernatural, "you must be very good-natured to take the Governor's answer in satisfaction of your just and reasonable demands. You insisted upon the removal of the cannon; and lo! he has dragged them back six inches: but when Broglio sends him orders to fire on his countrymen, pray, how many seconds will it take to push the murderous tubes forwards to their old places? He treats you, as a nurse does a child, who cries at the sight of the rod: she puts it behind her back, and the infant is pacified; although the rod remains as ready for use when wanted, as the cannon, that lurk in ambush behind yonder treacherous ramparts: but you adult Frenchmen—grown up Parisians—are you childish enough to be the dupes of such an old woman's trick?"

These few words acted like a firebrand on

the inflammable tempers of the mob. First arose an ominous buzz of discussion, a low deep sound, something between a hiss and a groan, which deepened and then slackened like the first fitful murmurs of an approaching storm. Gradually gaining strength, it became universal throughout the whole extent of the crowd, and at last burst upon the ear like the awful roar of a full formed hurricane. The multitude was agitated like a sea—the dark surface of human heads heaved, and worked to and fro, until its vast undulations imitated the huge swell of the ocean. Arms began to flash among the crowd—swords were brandished ; the glittering tubes of muskets were protruded from the moving mass. Suddenly some desperate spirit levelled his musket at the battlements of the Bastille, and fired—a shout, that seemed to shake both heaven and earth, proclaimed the exultation of

the multitude at this first act of overt hostility. A thousand muskets were pointed in the same direction, and a tremendous volley was discharged at the ramparts. The leaden shower rattled against the massive walls of the old fortress, as vainly as hailstones. Its only effect was to drive from the ramparts, such of the garrison as were gazing on the multitude below. They quickly withdrew themselves from the range of their assailants' guns; and the lately crowded walls and towers presented not a trace of human life; save that now and then, a head slowly and cautiously raised itself above the battlements. In a moment the adventurous poll became a target for a thousand muskets, and it was withdrawn with much greater speed than it was put forward.

A short description of the Bastille is necessary, to enable the reader to comprehend the

nature of the attack which followed. This celebrated fort, or prison, was nearly of an oblong shape. Each corner terminated in a tower, and each side was also inlet, as it were, with two towers, placed at equal distances from each other. This part of the Bastille, which might be considered as the citadel, was surrounded by a deep ditch or fosse, on the outside of which, and joined by a causeway and drawbridge, stood, in a large open court, the governor's house, the guard-house of the garrison, and other offices connected with the Bastille. These external buildings adjoined the street, but the avenue of the entrance which led to them, was defended by a drawbridge and a branch ditch. The garrison of this important place consisted of two troops of Swiss and a small force of Invalids !

While the mob were maintaining a harmless fire against the walls of the Bastille, which

did not provoke even a single shot from its defenders, a much more effectual attack was made upon the outer drawbridge by two daring individuals; one a discharged soldier, named Louis Tournay; the other was never known, and most probably perished in the subsequent conflict. These courageous men entered a perfumer's shop, which adjoined the guard-house, and from thence climbed over the roof of the latter building, and got behind the drawbridge. Meeting with no interruption from the garrison, who had all retired into the interior of the Bastille, they began to hack and cut away with their hatchets the fastenings of the iron chains, which held up the great drawbridge. At first, from the noise, confusion, and smoke, which prevailed, they were not perceived by the garrison in the citadel. When they espied their operations, and saw their intentions, they hallooed out to those daring

assailants to desist, on pain of being instantly fired on. These threats only redoubled the exertions of Tourney and his companion. The fear of death lent supernatural vigour to their brawny arms. Again the Swiss, with dreadful threats and levelled muskets, denounced instant destruction to them, if they persisted—quicker and louder fell their desperate strokes. Compelled by the obstinacy of Tourney and his companion, the garrison at length overcame their reluctance to fire. Two or three shots were discharged from the tower, but without effect,—the assailants' efforts amounted to agony.

The bridge begins to tremble and shake—another shot—another blow—the last hasp is cut away—down falls the bridge! With a scream of exultation and surprise, the crowd swept across it, like a pent-up torrent when it bursts its bounds,—filled the guard-house—filled the

government mansion—filled the court in front of it. In a moment a furious attack was made on the second drawbridge. The garrison, now seriously alarmed, and irritated at the result of their former forbearance, began to pour a deadly and destructive fire of musquetry from the battlements, and more especially from the loopholes in the walls. Every shot told on the densely crowded mass. Each bullet, like a stone thrown into a china shop, did its work of destruction. Aghast to find themselves falling on every side, and mowed down in files, like the thick grass under the scythe of the mower, the terrified people made a simultaneous push backwards, and in half a minute the court was completely cleared of all but the wounded and slaughtered wretches who were prostrated by the discharge. Many of the mob rushed panic-struck across the drawbridge, and could

hardly deem themselves safe at the distance of a couple of streets. Others there were of bolder temperament, who retreated indeed from the open court, but took up their position behind the angle of some sheltering wall, or within the governor's house, and from thence maintained an irregular and dropping fire against the defenders of the fort. Encouraged by their example, most of the fugitives regained their courage, and crept into the governor's mansion and the guard-house, which they immediately began to pillage. Cleveland was not far distant from the drawbridge when it first fell, and was carried away by the pressure of the mob. Finding resistance impossible, he yielded to the human current, and passed the bridge into the court; here he was fortunate enough to escape the effects of the volley which was discharged from the Bastille. Like every other occupant,

Cleveland felt the imperative necessity of flight ; but retaining more presence of mind than the majority, he deemed it sufficient to retreat beneath the angle of a wall, which afforded him refuge from the shot. Here the celerity with which he took up his position, brought him in rather rough contact with an individual who had already betaken himself to the same shelter. As the smoke cleared away, he recognized Brisseau.

“ Ha ! ” said the latter ; “ this is brave sport—merry sport is it not ? It makes one’s blood circulate—— ”

“ Humph ! ” answered Cleveland ; “ you had better ask the wounded wretches who are writhing in that court ; their gore, at least, is flowing at a handsome rate.”

“ Poor devils ! ” said the other, coolly. “ But, after all, what better use can they put their

lives to? It's their own cause, and that of liberty; can the soldier say as much? Die they must at some time; and the sick-bed has its pangs as well as yonder court. In five minutes, few of them will be able to feel the difference between that pavement, and a couch of down."

"A truce, for God's sake," exclaimed Cleveland, "to this unseasonable moralizing. How many have fallen, think you?"

"Some twenty or thirty," said Brisseau. "I thought the sluggish dogs of the garrison were not going to fire at all, and would let us climb over the walls without interruption: but, *pardieu!* when they once began, they made up for lost time, and peppered us to some purpose."

"You will never take the Bastille," observed Cleveland, despondingly. "To keep firing at walls, ten feet thick, with musquet balls, is mere waste of powder and lead."

“As the generality of my friends,” replied Brisseau, “had the economy to steal both their weapons and ammunition, they can afford to be liberal in their use.”

“Is, then, your enterprize,” said Cleveland, “from which you led me to expect so much, to terminate in pillaging the outer works of the Bastille, and discharging a few harmless shot against its walls?”

“Not so,” returned Brisseau; “the Bastille has a weak side, which you do not dream of.”

“My eyes are certainly not adequate to the discovery. Pray point it out. Where is it?”

“In the cowardice and incapacity of its Governor,” answered Brisseau; “which exposes it to greater danger, than a six-yard breach in its thickest bulwark. The noise of our muskets will sooner or later frighten him into surrendering.”

“ And supposing,” pursued Cleveland, “ that you are deceived in this notable expectation, have you other means of storming the fort ?”

“ Yes,” replied Brisseau. “ A large portion of the French guards have promised to join us, if they can escape from their barracks. They will bring some artillery with them ; my grand object is to keep my amateurs here, until my professional gentlemen arrive.”

At this moment a fresh crowd of people, preceded by a large flag, advanced, evidently for the purpose of holding a parley with the fort. When Brisseau observed them, he said to Cleveland, “ I must disconcert their negotiations, for a compromise will suit neither of us. We must have possession of the fort, and nothing less.”

The body of people, alluded to, advanced into the court ; and the garrison, conjecturing their intentions, grounded their arms, and made

signs that they would not fire. The deputation halted. At this critical period, Brisseau, who had, while talking to Cleveland, reloaded his piece, crept round the corner, and discharged it over the heads of the deputation, in the direction of the drawbridge. The garrison, who thought that the shot proceeded from the body of people who carried the flag of truce, were enraged at the bad faith of the pretended peacemakers, and fired upon them. Alarmed to find themselves between two fires, the unlucky deputation, instead of holding a parley, discharged their musquets at the fort, and then took to their heels.

The conflict proceeded, but with diminished vigour on the part of the populace. The garrison now fired without mercy on all within the range of their guns ; while the people could but ineffectually return the attack on men who only

showed their heads and shoulders for a moment above the wall. To shelter themselves from the shot of their adversaries, the mob bethought themselves of a very silly expedient. Three waggons, loaded with straw, were drawn into the court, and set on fire. The thick white smoke entirely hid both the Bastille and its assailants and suspended for some time the firing.

“Morbleu ! Elie,” said Brisseau, to an individual attired in old regimentals; “whose work is this?”

“Not mine, certainly,” replied the other, shrugging his shoulders; “what we can gain by smoke-drying ourselves like salted fish, God only knows.”

“Hark, my friend,” said Brisseau, to a man who was active in bringing the waggons, “what’s the object of this bonfire?”

“To hide us,” said the man.

“ Ah ! but, it hides the Bastille also, my friend.”

“ The smoke will annoy the garrison.”

“ Not so much, as it will us.”

The conflagration had become so fierce, that it was impossible to remove the flaming vehicles, which were therefore allowed to burn themselves out.

While the whole scene was thus enveloped in a dense covering of smoke, the besieged took the opportunity to discharge a cannon loaded with grape-shot, which produced sad havoc amongst the crowd. It is remarkable, that this was the only occasion, during the whole attack, in which the garrison resorted to the use of their artillery. The cause of this circumstance has never been fully explained: it seems, however, that the garrison could not work the cannon on the battlements, without exposing themselves to the incessant

shower of bullets from their assailants, and that on this account, they confined their defence to musketry. Stretching themselves at full length on the platform, they could gently raise their small arms over the battlements, in the direction of the crowd, and fire with perfect impunity, while the latter could not retaliate with the smallest chance of success. It must be recollected, that though the walls of the Bastille were lofty, when measured from their foundation, yet, that the great depth of the ditch in which the fort was built, did not permit the ramparts to rise any considerable height above the level of the surrounding streets.

At length, a shout of exultation from the mob, proclaimed the arrival of new and powerful assistance. A troop of French Guards had burst from their barracks, and hastened to co-operate with their unmilitary countrymen, in the glori-

ous task of storming the Bastille. They brought with them two pieces of ordinary artillery; an antique cannon, beautifully embossed with silver, which they had taken from the Garde-meuble, and a mortar. With this meagre battering train, they fell to work with considerable skill, and bravery. The pieces were pointed against the posts, and chains, of the second drawbridge, in the hopes of bringing it down, like the first, and were served with rapidity and precision.

The scene was more animated and terrific, than it yet had been.—The flashes of the artillery showed dull and red in the radiance of the afternoon sun: but the deep booming of the cannon—the sharp irregular reports of the musquetry—the groans of the wounded—the hurry—the agony—the confusion—the oaths—imprecations, entreaties,—above all, the wild rushing, and universal shout of exultation, which rose, from every

member of the infuriated multitude, and in which the roaring of the artillery was almost lost, formed a combination of sounds and noises, well calculated to deprive the mind of all tranquil thought, and to plunge it into a state of temporary delirium. Even Cleveland, preoccupied as he was, by other absorbing feelings, could not withstand the infectious excitement of the spectacle. He forgot the object which brought him there.—He forgot Antonia for the moment; so engrossed was he, by the fearful sights and sounds which pressed upon his senses; when the heavy tap of Brisseau's hand upon his shoulder, arrested his attention; and he heard that individual inquire, in a calm, cold, unaltered voice; “What he now thought of the people's chance of success?” It struck him, even at the moment, as something frightful, and unnatural that any human being should be able to preserve his

habitual calm, and composure, amid such an overpowering scene.

By a strong mental effort Cleveland sufficiently recalled his mental powers, to enable him to reply, and he said, "I think you may now destroy both drawbridges, and gate, and then cross the ditch on planks; bnt, doubtless they have planted cannon behind, which sweep the entrance, so you will not take the fort, without the most tremendous loss."

"True," answered Brisseau, "if the garrison were determined to defend themselves to the last gasp; but I have reason to know, they are lukewarm in the cause. De Launey neither commands their respect, nor their love. I marvel, they have not compelled him to surrender before this."

"And what," inquired Cleveland anxiously, "will become of the prisoners? will the mob liberate them at once, and dismiss them?"

"God only knows," replied Briseau, in the same composed tone, which he had used throughout the colloquy, "God only knows what these multitudinous kings of an hour may take into their victorious noddles. Perhaps, they will deliver the captives up to the civil power, to show their magnanimous respect for law and order : but do not be uneasy," added he, producing a key, "here are royal letters of dismissal ; I have cared for that. Keep close to me—Antonia's cell is second in the tower. I will take the liberty to open it, whether their Majesties, the populace, like it, or not."

"Thank God !" exclaimed Cleveland, "but tell me——"

"What noise is that?" cried Briseau, with a slight appearance of excitement. "Do you not hear a drum beating a retreat ; and see——look, an Invalid is displaying a white flag. By heavens ! we have won the game. Leave off

firing, my friends," shouted he, with a voice like a trumpet, " the garrison has surrendered !"

This appeal was heard, and obeyed in his immediate vicinity ; but the firing still continued in front of the crowd. At length, however, the foremost assailants distinguished a voice speaking from behind the drawbridge. Their fire slackened, a partial silence was obtained, and a pause, which strangely contrasted with the din of the past moment, ensued ; and the voice was heard : " We will surrender on condition that we are allowed to march out with the honours of war."

An indignant and contemptuous negative simultaneously burst from the crowd. The firing, and the confused din of the assault immediately recommenced. At this moment, a letter was protruded on the point of a bayonet through a loop-hole in the shut-up bridge.

“ Read it ! read it ! ” shouted the assailants. The firing again dropped ; a plank was procured, and stretched across the ditch. An adventurous individual advanced, and walked boldly along the perilous bridge, but his success was not equal to his courage. He tottered, and fell into the ditch, where he remained senseless. A dozen of the assailants on the causeway struggled for the dangerous honour of fetching the capitulation. One wore regimentals.

“ Let Elie go ! he has a uniform ! ” cried the spectators. The individual alluded to was a half-pay ensign in the Queen’s regiment, who had been one of the most active leaders of the populace. He stepped with a collected and undaunted air on the plank, and though the frail support bent and quivered under him, like a reed, his firm nerves sustained the trial. He took the paper off the bayonet, recrossed the

plank, and read the note. It was a capitulation, in which the garrison proposed to surrender on condition that their lives should be spared ; it concluded by saying : “ If you do not accept our capitulation, we have twenty thousand barrels of gunpowder in the towers, and we will blow ourselves, the fort, and the neighbourhood, into the air.”

“ I accept the capitulation,” shouted Elie, waving the paper, “ in the name of the French people.”

The drawbridge was lowered—the crowd rushed over it in shoals. Brisseau, who had seen, though not heard, the whole transaction from the back of the court, observed to Cleveland, “ Elie’s old uniform has won us this surrender. They think, they can trust the mob if led by a French officer ; but some of them, I suspect, will learn to their cost, that the leader

of a mob is not its commander. Now let us push on, and if possible keep together."

Having elbowed their way over the bridge, they at last gained the interior of the fort, where a dreadful scene of confusion presented itself. A large portion of the mob were anxious to massacre the garrison, on the plea that no faith should be kept with the enemies of liberty; but their military allies stontly opposed themselves to this proposition. Their professional feelings on the subject of quarter, and observing terms, overcame even the excitement of the hour, and the fury of their new-born political zeal. A victorious mob are always cruel, because they never intend to fight again; but the old soldier, whose business is war, knows, that the fugitive of to-day may be the conqueror of to-morrow, and shows mercy to others, in order that they may one day show it to him. But no inter-

ference could protect the Governor, and the superior officers. In vain Huin,* one of the bravest leaders of the multitude, endeavoured to cover him with his own body; the ferocious mob would not relinquish their prey, and literally tore him to pieces.

It is singular, that when the popular liberators found themselves in possession of the keys of the Bastille, they were so elated and engrossed with their triumph, that they instantly set off to deposit their prize at the Hôtel-de-Ville, quite forgetting, in the meantime, to unlock the prison doors of the captives they came to disenthral. So easily do the mass, when engaged in a conflict, lose all care or memory of what they are fighting about.

* Afterwards a general under Napoleon. In the affair of Mallet, he was the first person who stopped the progress of that extraordinary plot.

The lower part of the rabble had already betaken themselves to plunder. Forcing themselves with difficulty through the crowd, Brisseau and Cleveland hastened to the Bazinière tower. Unhappily their eager looks had attracted the attention of one of the plundering party, who judging that they were in pursuit of some extraordinarily precious booty, determined to follow them. A bottle of the Governor's wine which he had imbibed, had whetted his bloody-thirsty and avaricious propensities, without depriving him of the power to do mischief. With rapid steps, Brisseau and his companion mounted the tower, unconscious of their follower, who kept close behind. They reached the third story, Brisseau tore the key from his pocket, and dashed it into the lock—turned it—threw open the door. Two female figures were in the room ; one of them threw herself before the other.

“Death to De Launey’s daughter,” cried a voice behind.

Cleveland, and Brisseau, who was armed with a cutlass, rapidly turned round—the half drunken ruffian had dropped upon his knee, and his musket was levelled.

Up rose Brisseau’s weapon on high, and descended with the velocity of a flash of lightning—it was too late to prevent the discharge of the musket; but it totally clove the head of the wretch, who fired it, in twain—the ruffian died without a groan. Flinging down his sword, Brisseau darted through the smoke, and kneeling down, raised the unfortunate victim of this wanton murder from the ground, where she had sunk. It was no other than the Marchioness de Montolieu, who had received in her own breast, the ball most probably destined for her daughter.

Cleveland rushed forward, and clasped the other female, who was Antonia, in a long embrace.

“Oh Cleveland! dearest Cleveland!” shrieked Antonia, “aid my mother.”

He turned to her wounded companion, and beheld, with astonishment, Brisseau straining the bleeding lady to his breast, with looks of unutterable tenderness and grief. While he gently supported her with one arm, with the other he tore off his neckcloth, and fragments of his linen, to staunch the crimson stream, which flowed in fatal profusion over her beautiful bosom.

“Marchioness—Erminia—” gasped the mob leader with frantic emotion. “Look up—revive—this is the hour of liberation—victory—and triumph—You are free—”

Roused by this appeal, the dying Mar-

chioness opened her eyes, "free?" repeated she feebly, "who says that I am free? Ah Cagliostro — thanks dearest friend — a thousand thanks for your kindness and services—I die—but not unconscious of them—save Antonia—save my daughter—Antonia—"

"I am here my mother," answered the weeping Antonia.

"I hear your voice, but I cannot see you, this cell is so dark. Forgive me dearest child"

Here, Antonia, whose health and strength had been much affected by the late confinement of her life, sunk under the agony of the spectacle, and fell senseless into Cleveland's arms.

Life fled fast from the wounded Marchioness; already her soft lustrous eyes were glazed by the films of death, and her fair head drooped in utter lifelessness over Brisseau's arm. Yet still the last remains of vitality which

lingered in her brain, continued to repeat the idea which had predominated there during life, and she murmured in low faltering tones, "Antonia—save her—save her, Cagliostro, my beloved Cagliostro, for my sake."

Cagliostro drew his hand from the wound. The red stream of life no longer issued forth; he placed his hand upon her heart—it had ceased to beat.

"Shall I go, and procure medical assistance?" asked Cleveland, hardly knowing what he said.

Brisseau heard him not—his whole soul was absorbed in the unconscious form, which he vainly pressed against his own.

Cleveland repeated his question.

"For what purpose?" answered Brisseau, in the dry husky tones of despair; "no—no—all the quacks and drugs in Christendom will never make her smile again—she is dead, as certainly

as I am alive—alive for vengeance. Leave us, or rather me; for she is nothing now. Leave me, sir, I entreat you—look to your living charge, happy man,—and leave me with the dead! Go, go—I insist, I entreat you.”

Cleveland saw his presence only exasperated his comrade's agony. He felt that his own lovely burthen required attention and assistance. Stripping off the cloak and red cap of the slaughtered ruffian, who was still lying on the floor, he placed them on Antonia, and, leaving the sad scene within the cell, slowly and cautiously descended the tower stairs. The interior of the Bastille he found in the same state of uproar and agitation in which he had left it. The crowd offered him no opposition but what was naturally caused by their numbers and confusion. Nobody seemed inclined to dispute the task of assisting a wounded fellow-creature:

purely charitable offices have seldom many competitors. Hugging his precious burthen to his heart, Cleveland crossed the bridge in triumph. The way was now comparatively clear, although still densely crowded.

A fiacre presented itself, which he instantly engaged. In the vehicle Antonia recovered her consciousness. There is reason to think that she had recovered it before, but did not care to manifest the fact. Perhaps, after long absence, she felt it sweet to be borne along on the bosom she loved, and did not wish to disturb a situation which was not without its charms.

Cleveland gazed on the lovely being with looks of unutterable content, and straining her yielding, unresisting, form to his heart, he murmured in a broken voice: "Once more mine: Antonia, we will never part; let us swear it. Dearest, dearest, is this reality? Clasp my

hand to convince me that I am not dreaming—my happiness feels almost too great to be *true*.”

Antonia did not speak; she tenderly encircled her lover's hand in her soft and fairy fingers, whose eloquent and thrilling pressure assured him of all that words could never yet express. Her cheek reclined on his bosom; it was a moment of boundless rapture—one of those redeeming minutes which console us for the long heavy hours of our common ordinary existence. Oh! those faint delicious throbs, which excite the heart, until life seems as if it would sink under excess of enjoyment, and we can hardly distinguish the agony of pleasure from pain. Brief but intense instants! which we can hardly support in the passage, yet when once passed, we would give worlds to recall.

Oh fortune! give me back the happy time

M 2

when I was a lover, and I will pay for the few short hours with years of gratified ambition !

“ Can you guess whither I am taking you ? ” asked Cleveland.

“ I know not—I care not,” replied Antonia, “ I am with you, and that is sufficient—I am content—I have no fears for myself—it is for my mother, that I am anxious. It is hard to say in the first joy of our meeting—leave me ; but pray tell me where my mother is.”

“ Alas ! my beloved,” returned Cleveland, “ the unhappy lady whom you call mother, is beyond the reach of human assistance.”

Antonia's eyes began to fill afresh at the announcement of this calamity, but Cleveland kissed away her tears, and sympathized in her sorrow with such deep tenderness, that Antonia could not refuse to be comforted. And the blow, which falling on her at another time,

would have prostrated her in the dust, was now borne with temperate sorrow.

The next day found Cleveland and Antonia engaged in the delightful task of mutual explanation. They had a thousand hopes to communicate—a thousand feelings to unfold—a thousand misapprehensions to clear up. Hour after hour flew unconsciously away, while each sat listening to the other, indulging in that charming egotism, so delightful to wooers, and so tiresome to everybody else; when their conversation was interrupted by the sound of a violent affray in the street. Cleveland went to the window, and beheld a spectacle which rivetted him to the spot. A coronetted carriage, which he immediately recognized to be the Duke de Fronsac's, was surrounded by a huge collection of the lowest rabble, who seemed bent on obstructing the progress of the vehicle, and insisted

that its owner should descend and submit to be searched. The haughty noble inside, who was no other than the Duke de Fronsac, without deigning to answer the popular suspicions, or to soothe the irritation of the mob, shouted, in a tone of the loftiest contempt, reiterated orders to the coachman to proceed.

The coachman, who saw the impossibility of making any farther progress, without driving over the already exasperated mob, turned round to his master, and suggested in a low tone the prudence of yielding to the requisitions of the people. This appeal only inflamed the Duke's indignation. "Drive on, François," exclaimed he, "I command you, drive on, coward—at your peril dare to hesitate."

The coachman gave his horses a furious lash. The high-spirited animals reared, sprang forward, and trampled in the dust two or three

individuals, who were attempting to hold their heads. At this moment, a savage wretch plunged the blade of a cane sword in the side of the near horse. The poor animal sunk on the pavement. The mob seemed excited, like tigers, at the sight of blood; and the most horrid cries and imprecations burst from them. "Open the door—tear him out; he is carrying intelligence to Broglie. It is easier to bring him to justice now, than when he is at the head of his regiment. To the lamp with him. Let us see the colour of the aristocrat's heart! Trample him to pieces!"

Unfortunately for himself, the Duc de Fronsac entertained a very ridiculous opinion respecting the cowardice of the common people. Accustomed to see his inferiors and dependents tremble in his presence, he forgot that the timidity of such men proceeded from moral

baseness rather than from animal fear ; and that this moral baseness was nothing more than a repetition, on a lower and coarser scale, of the servility which he himself displayed at court. He fancied that an enraged mob would take to their heels at the sight of a pistol.

“ Pierre—François !” cried the Duke, almost hoarse with fury ; “ use your weapons—stand by me. Give back, scoundrel !” said the Duke, to a ruffian who opened the carriage and pulled down the steps. “ The first who mounts that step is a dead man.”

Two sturdy ruffians instantly answered the menace by springing into the carriage. The Duke was as good as his word—he fired. An assailant fell back mortally wounded. His comrade threw him under the wheels, and repeated his attempt. The second assailant succeeded in grappling with the Duke, and prevented him

from drawing forth his other pistol. The wretched nobleman was dragged from his carriage, and exposed to the full fury of a merciless mob. They flew upon him, like a pack of wild wolves upon a single dog; they dragged him through the kennel, then raised him in their arms. They tore him to fragments with their fingers,—limb was twisted from limb; and though a hundred deadly weapons were directed against him, such was the blind ferocity of the murderers, that not a single blow took full effect.

The whole scene passed in a much shorter time than is requisite for its description. Cleveland, who had at first regarded the affair as a mere ebullition of public disgust against an unpopular individual, which would end in a few handfuls of mud being thrown upon the carriage, was inexpressibly horrified, when he beheld the

fearful extremities to which the mob were evidently proceeding.

His first impulse was to fly to the Duke's assistance ; but the crowd was so dense that he could not hope to reach the Duke's carriage ; and supposing that he overcame the intervening obstacles, what would avail his single strength against that of an infuriated multitude. Nor was, indeed, the Duke's conduct towards those who were most dear to Cleveland, calculated to induce the latter to risk his own life, under circumstances where all attempt at interference seemed so hopeless.

Hardly knowing what to do, he remained chained to the spot. But his blood froze within him, when he saw the Duke fall into the hands of his assailants. He dashed open the window, and shouted an indignant remonstrance to the assassins below. They heeded him as little as

so many wild beasts, devouring their prey, would have regarded the singing of a bird on a branch above. He could not turn away from the scene. Its very excess of horror seemed to fascinate his senses. Yet amid the sickening disgust, which the spectacle of a cowardly and deliberate murder inspired him with, he was struck by the undaunted courage of the victim. Not a single cry for mercy escaped him. Though completely in the power of his tormentors, and mangled and mutilated in the most shocking manner, defiance and scorn of his foes seemed to animate his breast. Still he struggled against their cruelties with desperate but ineffectual efforts; until Cleveland observed one of his assailants clasp him round the neck, and whisper something in his ear. The man then dashed him on the ground, and strode away. By chance he turned his face towards the window where

Cleveland was standing, and the latter recognized Brisseau.

A striking change had taken place in the dying Duke's demeanour. He no longer offered the slightest resistance : he seemed insensible to the savage blows and stabs which were showered on him from every side. A fearful expression of inward terror occupied his fixed and glassy eyes ; and in this state he remained, until he expired under the barbarous treatment which was inflicted on him.

The horrid spectacle he had just witnessed, and the conviction that the present disturbance was only the forerunner of still more fearful convulsions, concurred with many other reasons to hasten Cleveland's departure from France. As soon as tranquillity was restored in Paris, he obtained passports for Monsieur and Madame Cleveland, and set off for his native country

accompanied by Antonia. He experienced no obstacle in reaching England ; where he was soon after his arrival united to Antonia, according to the ceremonies both of the Romish and Protestant churches.

Of the other characters of our story, we have but little to say. Of Cagliostro, or rather Jean Brisseau, nothing more was ever heard or known ; and whether he rose to eminence in the revolution under some fresh appellation, or whether he lived a quiet retired life on the results of his *à priori* system of philosophy, cannot be ascertained. In the year 1794, an adventurer of the name of Cagliostro was apprehended at Rome, and sentenced to perpetual imprisonment. But this personage is certainly not identical with the hero of our story, who had long ceased to bear the title. It was more

probably some disciple, who thus paid the penalty of his presumption, in assuming the name without the abilities or resources of his master.

Count D'Ostalis fell a victim to the extreme beauty of his silk stockings. In the early part of the revolution, he happened to be passing one day down the Rue St. Honoré. The delicate flesh-coloured lustre of these elegant appendages to the lower man, roused the republican bile of a band of poissardes, who were parading the street. An enthusiastic citizeness belonging to this body, unable to endure the exasperating and anti-revolutionary spectacle of a pair of perfectly clean silk integuments, crept behind the unfortunate Count, and thrust him through the back with a pike; for the express purpose, as she afterwards informed the

world, of soiling the aristocrat's new stockings. The Marquis de Montolieu formed a part of the daily batches, which Robespierre sent to the guillotine.

FINIS.

NOTES.

NOTES.

The Affair of the Necklace.

FROM the many voluminous memoirs which have been written on this subject, the following brief sketch has been compiled, which it is hoped will enable the reader to understand the extracts subsequently quoted.

Soon after Louis' accession to the throne, Boemer, the Court jeweller, offered to his sovereign for sale a diamond necklace, valued at seventy thousand pounds sterling. The King conferred with his wife; and the royal pair declined the purchase, saying, that they had more need of ships than diamonds. Notwithstanding this refusal, Boemer kept the necklace

by for some years, displaying all the time an almost frantic anxiety to find a buyer. The knowledge of these circumstances suggested to the mind of an unprincipled adventuress, named Lamotte, the scheme of an imposture, which, for consummate audacity and reckless villainy, has never been surpassed in the annals of crime. She was a descendant of the House of Valois, though her immediate ancestors had fallen into the lowest depths of poverty. The Court, in compassion to her royal descent, allowed her a small pension. She became acquainted with the Cardinal de Rohan, who, struck by her air and address, and the circumstances of her birth, took much notice of her. The Cardinal, who had given offence some time previously to the Queen, was at this period excluded from all Court favour, and often lamented the fact in conversation. Madame Lamotte had the address to make him believe that she was an intimate friend of the Queen, and often enjoyed the honour of private interviews with her. The Cardinal entreated her to mention him favourably to her royal mistress. Lamotte, finding him such an easy dupe,

began to attempt a still grosser imposition. She assured him that Marie Antoinette secretly wished to buy the necklace, and had only forborne to do so out of deference to her husband's economical inclinations. She then proposed to the Cardinal, as a means of gaining the Queen's favour, that he should negotiate the purchase of the necklace with Boemer on her account. The Cardinal expressed his delight at the scheme, provided he was assured of the Queen's acquiescence in the affair. The infamous Lamotte produced forged notes and letters in abundance, together with a specific order, purporting to be signed by the Queen, empowering him to purchase the necklace on her account. Armed with these documents, he repaired to Boemer. The jeweller proved a greater gull than the Cardinal. The ardent hopes and wishes of these men, the one to regain the Queen's favour, the other to dispose of his jewels, seem to have deprived them of all ordinary prudence, and to have inspired them with the most boundless credulity. Boemer transferred the necklace to the Cardinal, who delivered it, as he ima-

gined, into the Queen's own hands. Madame Lamotte had observed in the Palais Royal a young female, who strikingly resembled the Queen in external appearance. For a small reward, she was easily induced to personate the character of Marie Antoinette. She does not appear to have been admitted into the secret of the plot, but to have believed that she was acting a part, at the Queen's desire, in a hoax played on the Cardinal. The locality chosen for this scene was a retired summer-house in the park at Versailles. The time dusk. Trembling with hope and eagerness, the Cardinal sunk at the feet of the fictitious Marie Antoinette, and presented her with the necklace. The Queen, in a low and stifled voice, muttered her gratitude, and hoped that circumstances would soon allow her to publicly show him that favour which his obliging behaviour had already excited in her breast. Steps were heard approaching. The false Queen started; and exclaiming that her brother-in-law, the Comte d'Artois, was coming to see her, ran off with the

casket containing the necklace, leaving the Cardinal overwhelmed with joy at his gracious reception.

Boemer, receiving no money, grew uneasy, and applied in an indirect manner to the Queen. She, not understanding his hints, demanded explanation. An *éclaircissement* ensued. Boemer declared that the Cardinal de Rohan had purchased his necklace on behalf of the Queen. The Cardinal, when summoned to explain, gave up Madame Lamotte as his authority. The latter pretended to brazen the matter out, and averred that she had given the necklace to a valet of the Queen; but the man, when examined, flatly denied the fact. All the parties concerned were sent to the Bastille, and ultimately tried before the Parliament of Paris; who, to the indignation of the Court, acquitted the Cardinal, Cagliostro, and Mademoiselle D'Oliva (the girl who personated the Queen); and sentenced Madame Lamotte to be whipped, branded, and imprisoned.

The part which Cagliostro took in the affair, consisted in abusing the influence he possessed over the

Cardinal's mind, and in predicting to the credulous prelate that he would reap immortal honour and glory by undertaking the negotiation proposed by Madame Lamotte.

*Extracts respecting the affair of the necklace,
containing historical illustrations of the
character of Count Cagliostro.*

On the Saturday, the Cardinal returned from Versailles without having seen the Queen; having been told that she was taken suddenly ill with a violent headache, and obliged to go to bed: but at the same time a paper was given to him from her, "which (said he) seals the confidence her Majesty has in me."

A third appointment failed, in like manner, under the pretence of the Queen's being with the Dauphin, who was indisposed; but on putting him off for another week, he was told that her Majesty had the greatest plans in view for him, and was thinking of

nothing less than having him made Prime Minister. So far was he from not believing it, that he was alarmed by anticipation at the burden and difficulties of so important an office. I, too, from this moment, became uneasy, but from very different motives: I was afraid that this affair, still enveloped in so much mystery, might prove to be some court intrigue,—some abominable snare laid for the Cardinal. I told him my fears, which he turned into ridicule. “What! (said he) do you take me for a child, or an idiot?”—“No, certainly; but without being either the one or the other, you may be too sanguine—too easily imposed upon.” “Well! well! come, in spite of all your incredulity, I will convince you; but give me your word not to speak to any soul alive of what I am going to tell you.”—“You may depend upon me.”—“Let us go into my closet. You know that the Queen is very fond of fine diamonds. Some time ago a magnificent necklace was shown to her, which she immediately longed to have; but the King thought it too dear, and would not buy it. Still she longed to have it.

As she could not pay for it but by instalments, and with frequent delays, of which the jewellers would not run the risk, it was necessary to find some person very secure in every respect, who would secretly make the purchase for her Majesty, and who was in a situation to answer to the tradesmen for the payments. The friend, of whom I have spoken to you, pointed me out, and undertook to make the proposal to me. I embraced it, without hesitation, as you will readily imagine; and this is the state of things. Well! Mr. Incredulous! what say you now?"—"I say that I cannot comprehend it at all. How can the Queen, who has all the diamonds in the crown at her command, have so great a desire for this necklace?"—"How? because, perhaps, in all the diamonds of the crown so perfect an assortment could not be made: I tell you there cannot be finer seen."—"Be it so; but what can she do with the necklace? for, as the King thought it too dear, she certainly will not think of wearing it in his presence; and in his presence she is, or may be, every moment."—"I cannot tell you whether she will or will not wear it; perhaps she may wish to

make a present of it, or to keep it locked up until she has a favourable moment of gaining the King's approbation of the purchase. I cannot say, and it does not become me to question her on those topics."

—"Certainly not; but I hope, at least, that you will not conclude this affair without having seen the Queen."—"Doubtless not: see her, I must, to deliver the necklace to her."—"Is everything already settled with the jewellers?"—"Oh, yes! I will show you the agreement, signed by her Majesty, and all the articles approved in the margin by her, for I see you do not believe a word of what I am telling you."

—"Pardon me, but in affairs so nice as this I am fond of having things upon paper."—"Do you know the Queen's writing?" said he to me, as he showed me a slight paper book, which he took out of his desk.—"I do not," I replied: but your Eminence ought to know it well."—"Oh, perfectly. Read! read!" I ran my eyes hastily over the conditions of this agreement, which was signed "Marie Antoinette de France;" and I certainly saw in the margin, opposite each article, the word *approved*, written in a

small regular hand, like the signature. "Well!" said he, with a satisfied air, "do you begin to see clear?"—"I see," said I, "If this be the Queen's writing, that she writes a pretty little hand; but I think you have undertaken a very ticklish commission."—"You will change your opinion when you see the sequel; have patience till this day eight days, for I am positively to see the Queen next week."

This certainly had no other foundation than the same promises with which the Cardinal had been kept in suspense for six weeks before. He went to Versailles, and returned without seeing her Majesty; the reason given was, that the King had passed the whole evening with her; and the Cardinal admitted this account with an ease and confidence that astonished me. I expressed great uneasiness to him at his situation. "And has not the Queen even written to you?" said I. "Have you not a single letter from her on this business?"—"No; but she has made her friend write to me, and that's the same thing. I will show you a letter that will satisfy you."

He opened a small press, in an angle between the fireplace and the window, and, taking out a handful of letters, read me one of them, about a page and a half long. It was an inexplicable piece of ambiguity, which I had no sooner read, than I said to the Cardinal, with warmth, "If it be not, my Lord, the most respectable woman in the kingdom who has written this letter, you are most shamefully played upon. What does all this signify? There are expressions in it which may apply to some circumstances relative to the necklace when we know them; but they may as well, and better, be applied to a hundred other stories: in short, this letter is so inapplicable, that, happen what will, you can make no use of it; and I am convinced that the person who wrote it had this in view."—"Sir! do not talk in that manner. You would speak very differently if you knew how much that person is in every respect above all suspicion; besides, have not you seen the agreement, signed and approved by the Queen?"—"Yes; but as I am unacquainted with her Majesty's

writing, which may very well have been forged, and also with the lady so estimable, who may be much less so than you imagine,—I am more apprehensive than ever that this affair may turn out very troublesome to you. There is but one thing that can remove my fears; and that is, as you have not yet delivered the necklace, that you promise me, and I conjure you, not to part with it but to the Queen herself.”—“I do promise you, and so you may be easy: indeed, you would be perfectly so, if you knew the name of the person; all I can tell you is, that there is not a more distinguished one in the kingdom.”

Two days after this I went into Brittany, where I had not been more than six weeks, before I learned, by the public papers, that the Cardinal was arrested, without any particulars of the cause of so extraordinary an event; but it was not difficult for me to guess it.—*Memoirs of Bertrand de Moleville.*

From the Memoirs of the Abbé Georgel (Secretary to the Cardinal Rohan.)

IN the mean time, an unfortunate circumstance contributed to hurry the Cardinal still more unfortunately into extraordinary adventures. I do not know what monster, envious of the tranquillity of honest men, had vomitted forth upon our country an enthusiastic empiric — a new apostle of the religion of nature, who created converts in the most despotic manner, and subjected them entirely to his influence.

Some speedy cures effected in cases that were pronounced incurable, and fatal in Switzerland and Strasburgh, spread the name of Cagliostro far and wide, and raised his renown to that of a truly miraculous physician. His attention towards the poor and his contempt for the rich, gave his character an air of superiority and interest which excited the greatest enthusiasm. Those whom he chose to honour with his familiarity, left his society in

ecstasy at his transcendant qualities. The Cardinal de Rohan was at his residence at Saverne, when the Count de Cagliostro astonished Strasburgh and all Switzerland with his conduct, and the extraordinary cures he performed. Curious to see so remarkable a personage, the Cardinal went to Strasburgh. It was found necessary to use interest to be admitted to the Count. "If M. le Cardinal is sick," said he, "let him come to me and I will cure him: if he be well, he has no business with me, nor have I with him." This reply, far from giving offence to the vanity of the Cardinal, only increased the desire he had to be acquainted with him. At length, having gained admission to the sanctuary of this new Esculapius, he saw, as he has since declared, on the countenance of this uncommunicative man, a dignity so imposing, that he felt himself penetrated by religious awe, and that his first words were inspired by reverence. This interview, which was very short, excited more strongly than ever the desire of a more intimate acquaintance. At length it was obtained, and the crafty empiric timed his conduct and his advances

so well, that at length, without seeming to desire it, he gained the entire confidence of the Cardinal, and possessed the greatest ascendancy over him. "Your soul," said he one day to the Cardinal, "is worthy of mine, and you deserve to be the confidant of all my secrets." This declaration captivated all the intellectual faculties and feelings of a man, who at all times, had run after the secrets of chemistry and botany.

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After detailing the intrigues of Madame Lamotte, the Abbé Georgel reverts to the influence which Cagliostro exercised over the Cardinal.

Cagliostro, at that time recently arrived at Paris, was consulted. This Python mounted his tripod. The Egyptian invocations were made at night, illuminated by an immense number of wax tapers, in the Cardinal's own room. The oracle, under the inspiration of its familiar demon, pronounced that the negotiation was worthy of the prince, that it would be crowned with success, that it would raise the goodness of the Queen to its height, and bring

to light that happy day which would unfold the rare talents of the Cardinal for the benefit of France and the human race. I am writing facts, though it may be imagined that I am only relating fictions. I should think so myself, were I not certain of the statements that I make. Be it as it may, the advice of Cagliostro dissipated all the Cardinal's apprehensions, and it was decided that he should acquit himself as soon as possible of a commission, which was regarded as equally honourable and flattering.

From the Memoirs of Madame Cumpen.

MADAME DE LAMOTTE, wishing to gratify at once her hatred and revenge, declared, on her first examination, that the Count di Cagliostro was the contriver of the fraud of the necklace; that he had persuaded the Cardinal to purchase it. She insinuated that it was taken to pieces by this Italian or Sicilian Count and his wife; and that they alone reaped the profits of it. This declaration, supported by a thousand

other falsehoods, which unfortunately, however absurd, wore but too great an appearance of probability, caused the singular personage implicated in it to be sent to the Bastille, along with the woman who resided with him. The latter remained there nearly eight months; and the pretended Count did not come out until after the suit was decided.

It is certain that the Cardinal de Rohan was credulous enough to place the greatest confidence in this empirical alchemist, who had assured him, that it was possible to make gold, and to transmute small diamonds into large precious stones; but he only cheated the Cardinal out of large sums, under pretence of developing to him the rarest secrets of the Rosicrusians and other madmen, who have implicitly believed, or pretended to believe, the absurd folly of the philosopher's stone, the elixir of life, &c. Thus the Cardinal saw part of his money evaporate in the smoke of crucibles, and part found its way into the pockets of the sharper, who passed himself off as a great alchemist.

When this person was examined by the Court

touching the affair of the necklace, he made his appearance before the magistrates, dressed in green, embroidered with gold; his locks were curled from the top of his head, and fell in little curls down his shoulders, which gave him a most singular appearance, and completed his resemblance to a mountebank. "Who are you?—whence came you?" he was asked. "I am a noble traveller," was his reply. At these words every countenance relaxed; and seeing this appearance of good humour, the accused entered boldly on his defence. He interlarded his jargon with Greek, Arabic, Latin, and Italian; his looks, his gestures, his vivacity, were as amusing as his speech. He withdrew, very well pleased with having made his judges laugh.

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