

THE BEST
TERRIBLE TALES
FROM THE GERMAN

THE BEST TERRIBLE TALES.

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LONDON :

WM. REEVES, 83 CHARING CROSS ROAD, W.C.

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GERMAN

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WILLIAM REEVES, 83 CHARING CROSS ROAD, W.C.

PREFACE

IN this collection of Terrible Tales I have gathered together the best with which I am acquainted in the various languages. Very many of them, so far as I know, have never before appeared in English. The Tales are told by masters of the craft of story-telling, and are such as, it seems to me, must prove interesting to all. For ordinary humanity the terrible will always possess a fascination, and we find the best literary men of all countries and all times availing themselves of it in order to amuse their readers. French, German, Italian, and Spanish authors have exerted themselves in the composition of such pieces, with what success I leave the reader of *Terrible Tales* to judge.

C. J. T.

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TERRIBLE TALES

(GERMAN)

THE CRYSTAL DAGGER

I AM a Protestant clergyman, and have for the last twenty years of my life lived among the good people of F——. It has been my practice during that time to keep a diary of events as they have occurred. Some chapters of this diary should be known. I have therefore taken the trouble to transcribe about fifty pages of it. After I had settled as the clergyman of this parish, I often felt a melancholy pleasure in recalling my youthful impressions. I thought especially of the happy years I had spent in D——, where I had indeed lived on a very slender income, yet had the good fortune to secure many kind and sympathising friends. On this account I used to take great interest in all news concerning that place. One day I was horrified by the following passage in a letter handed to me by a friend, who, knowing of my former residence there, thought the news would interest me :—

G

B

‘Our whole community has been thrown into the utmost consternation by an event, such as, in our peaceful district, had been till now unknown. One of our most respected and prosperous townsmen, the well-known and worthy state counsellor, von S——, was last night murdered at his own house. This dreadful crime has been attended by circumstances which are almost incredible, and which will not admit even of conjectural explanation. Our lamented friend, who was so much esteemed as a faithful public officer, a hospitable landlord, and kind husband, after he had yesterday evening seen his lady into the carriage, which was to convey her on a visit to the capital, shut himself, about ten o’clock, in a study adjoining his bedroom, intending to write for some time undisturbed. This morning when his old valet went at an appointed hour to the room, he found to his astonishment that the bed had not been lain in, and his master was not to be seen either there or in the study. His hat and stick were in the usual place. The house door and garden door were fast bolted from within. Fearing some disaster had occurred, the man got several of his fellow-servants about him, and with them went through the apartments. Their horror exceeded all power of description when, on opening that of the lady, who had taken her departure on the preceding night, they found the floor covered with blood, and their master’s body, fully dressed, lying across the bed. It was observed that the lock of the secretaire in this room had been forced open. On the floor, not far from the body, lay a broken dagger with an ivory handle of curious workmanship, and near the secretaire was the counsellor’s gold watch, which had been trodden on. The hand stood at one o’clock.

There was a single wound on the body, and the dagger must have struck at once to the heart. No trace whatever has yet been found of the perpetrators of the horrible deed, but some of the law-officers maintain that the dagger belongs to a cabinet of curiosities in the Prince's summer palace, and that it must have been taken from there. No doubt the lady's absence might sanction the conjecture that some villains had availed themselves of an opportunity to commit depredations in the unoccupied apartments, but it is remarkable that no property seems to have been stolen. It remains also a mystery how the victim was put to death in that room, for there are no signs of any of the doors in the house having been broken open.

'Meanwhile a courier has been despatched for the unhappy widow, and we look anxiously for her return in hopes that some information may be obtained to guide our officers to the apprehension of the criminal.'

The paper dropped from my hand. In former years I had been intimately acquainted with the counsellor. His first wife had been my niece, and though I had only seen the present lady but once or twice, and she knew little of me, yet from early custom in the house I was always there called 'old Uncle Michael.'

I immediately determined to write to the president of the criminal court at D——. He also was an acquaintance of mine, a strictly honest but severe man, totally destitute, however, of those higher gifts of sensibility and benevolence without which the mere exercise of the law, according to the letter, becomes often very inconsistent with equity and abstract justice. I knew I could depend on him for

a faithful narration of every circumstance. In a few days I received a concise statement in his clerk's handwriting, with a few lines added by the president himself. He said that there was an impression that the counsellor might have committed suicide, and that the widow seemed to be of the same opinion, for no robbery appeared to have been effected. As to the dagger, it was proved that it must have been stolen from the Prince's museum, but when or in what manner no one could tell. The keeper could only say that some months ago there were some carpenters at work in an ante-room adjoining the museum, and that they had been in the museum itself at hours when it was open to strangers.

In the secretaire nothing was found of any consequence but only papers.

'There is one occurrence,' added the judge, 'which I cannot help noticing, as, though trifling in itself, it may lead to important consequences.

'During the examination of the premises we discovered a small private door, coloured to look like stone, in a back wall of the house. It was partly covered by fruit trees, the wall joining the garden. The widow was surprised no one had observed this door before, and pointed out to me, in the cabinet adjoining her bedroom, a tapestry door, which leads into a long narrow passage ending in a flight of steps down into the garden. The old servant assured me that this private entrance had for a long time past never been used, and had indeed been almost forgotten. The widow called my attention to the fact that the bolt of the garden door was still fastened on the inside, but, on examination, I found that it was very easily moved backwards and forwards, which did not correspond well with the

servant's assertion of the door being never used. I observed, too, a small, perhaps accidental, rent in the wood, by which it might be very possible to draw the bolt from the outside, but I made no remark to any one respecting this.

‘One consequence of this discovery has been to strengthen me in my opinion that the deceased did not commit suicide. It is hard to imagine that he who enjoyed so much the luxuries of this world, and who had it in his power to gratify every wish, should think of committing self-murder.’

I was precisely of the judge's opinion, though on very different grounds.

In a few days a second letter arrived from the same hand. This despatch informed me that, among the papers of the deceased, there had been found a will made several years ago wherein he had named me as executor. To this will there was a codicil, added after his second marriage, making provision for his wife. The president begged me, if possible, to obtain some weeks' leave of absence, as my presence at D—— was in many respects very important. He added that the widow had fallen into a state of mind by which all her friends were much perplexed and alarmed. Her grief had been increased by scandalous reports as to the terms on which she lived with her late husband. People now insisted that the deceased, after his second marriage, had been subject to violent fits of jealousy, which seemed not without reason, having regard to the frequent visits of the Prince Gustave Benno at his house, and that consequently he had had many violent altercations with his wife, which had produced bitterness and rancour on both sides. The Prince was by no means young and amiable. In his person he was somewhat

deformed, so that I could not suppose him truly to gain the affections of a young and handsome woman who, in her own domestic sphere, had so much reason to be contented.

‘Thus much,’ continued the judge, ‘is quite certain, that the Prince was very often at their house, and it is insisted on that his last visit there was the cause of the lady’s being sent, all of a sudden, to the capital. Her excessive depression of spirits, though her temper seemed formerly to be very cheerful, seems to have some further cause than her husband’s death. It has been remarked that the Prince’s attentions have now ceased altogether, so that he was not even once driven up to the door to pay his respects or express his condolence.

‘From all these circumstances people are again inclined to conclude that the counsellor committed suicide, and in the widow’s extreme grief they see only the effects of a guilty conscience which accuses her of having led him on to the terrible deed.’

Here the letter broke off abruptly, but, with the date of the next day, the following paragraphs were subjoined :—

‘Yesterday, when I was about to close my letter, a circumstance occurred which seems to afford us some glimmer of light. My wife came into my room to remind me of a birthday present which I was to make, and in order to provide this I went at once to a jeweller. While I was there, looking over various articles, there came an old poorly-dressed woman into the shop, and offered to the proprietor a small piece of silver for sale. He took it into his hands for examination, and I chanced to glance at it. It was a roughly made silver sleeve-button, and it occurred

to me that I had somewhere or other seen a pair of the same description. I then remembered that I had observed one of the same kind in a corner of the secretaire at the widow's house, where it had lain amid some papers, and attracted my attention only on account of the rough workmanship, which contrasted strangely with the almost finical elegance for which the counsellor had been distinguished.

'I made a sign to the jeweller that he should be on his guard, and under the pretext that he had not time to examine it properly then, he desired the woman to return in the evening, when he would be ready to pay her the value of the silver. When she was gone I made him give me the button, and hastened with it to the house of the widow, who accompanied me to the fatal chamber, which I had sealed up after my first search. The button lay in the secretaire as I left it, and corresponded so exactly with the other which I had brought that it was impossible to doubt their having belonged to the same owner. The widow affirmed she had never seen either of them before.

'I then hastened back to the jeweller's. The old woman soon made her appearance, and on my questioning her how the button had come into her possession, she looked at me suspiciously and answered that she had found it. "But when and where?" said I. She began to weep, and protested her innocence of any theft, but would give no clear and decided answer. I gave orders that she should be arrested, and kept in confinement till she spoke unreservedly; and on further inquiry I discovered that she was a washerwoman, and had also been employed at a paper manufactory. In a few hours I am to examine her again, and I beg of you to come here to assist me.'

I obtained leave of absence from my duties, and in a short time beheld once more the church towers of D——.

Though I was quite aware the widow had provided apartments for me in her own house, I thought it best to take up my quarters at an inn. As I walked through the town to the judge's residence, in passing through the square of the town-house I found a great mob of persons assembled at the door of that building, and on my inquiring what was the matter, one of them answered—

'They are looking at the dungeon that has been prepared for the murderer of the late counsellor.'

'So then,' said I, 'the villain has been discovered?'

'It is said so,' replied the man.

In a few moments I saw the prisoner brought past. One glance and how was I distressed to find that it was Herman Rose, my own favourite pupil, to whom I had given instruction both in religion and the elementary branches of science, and who had been confirmed by me about seven years before. I stood confounded at the sight. Recovering myself I hastened to the judge's house.

'We have caught the murderer,' cried he.

'Herman Rose? It seems to me incredible!'

'You knew then already?'

'Have you complete proof of his guilt?'

'It is not complete, but it will be so soon.'

The judge had some other business to attend to, and he now referred me to his secretary, who read aloud to me the accounts of the different examinations.

The old woman had confessed that she had obtained the silver button from a cabinetmaker's apprentice, named Herman Rose, several months ago. She had not offered it for sale then, partly

because her money was not quite exhausted, and partly because she hoped to find the companion button, which Herman said he must have lost in her apartments. Being asked why she had not explained this at first, the woman, after much hesitation, replied that she had been afraid to mention the circumstance, for Herman Rose had made her a present of the button in return for her having read to him his own and his wife's fortune, though such divination was by the law strictly forbidden. The woman was led back to prison, and Rose was arrested. Every possible inquiry was made as to his former conduct and character.

The only fault any one could tell of him was that he was sometimes rather discontented with his lot. He complained of poverty, but nevertheless married, but had not lived on such good terms with his young and handsome wife as might have been expected, for he was frequently absent from his own house, and thus excited her jealousy. He had been employed at the Prince's summer palace, and also at the counsellor's house.

At his examination he recognised the shirt-button as his, adding that he supposed he had lost the other button in the old woman's house, but now he perceived he must have lost it when he was employed in the bedroom at the counsellor's, when he had made some alterations in the secretaire. He was unable to comprehend how the button could be found in the writing-desk. At the same time if any one in the counsellor's house found a bit of silver they might place it in the desk and lock it up, not knowing whence it had come.

The judge abruptly showed him the dagger which had been found by the body, and asked Rose if he

knew anything of it. He seemed disconcerted, but answered in the negative.

‘Yet you change colour,’ said the judge.

‘It may be so. I knew the counsellor, and it is natural that I should shudder at the sight of the weapon that caused his death.’

‘No doubt,’ said the judge, ‘especially when one marks with attention this motto.’

He then read aloud the words inscribed in black letter on the ivory hilt of the dagger.

‘Two inches and a half complete—

The stricken heart will cease to beat.’

No sooner had the judge pronounced these words than the eyes of every one were turned to Rose’s wife, who, with a cry of horror, fell fainting on the floor.

The prisoner was for a while removed, and as soon as his wife recovered, both she and the fortune-teller, on whom also the words had evidently produced a deep impression, were strictly examined. Their statement was as follows :—

Several months ago, before Herman’s marriage, his bride persuaded him to accompany her to the house of the old woman, who, as she believed, could predict exactly whatever changes of fortune awaited them in the world, promising that if he would humour her inclination for this once, and the predictions should not be unfavourable, she would no longer object to an immediate marriage, nor to go with him, as he now proposed, to reside in a distant town beyond the frontiers. He agreed to her request, and the wise woman, perceiving that he was inclined to hold her pretended art in great contempt, tried every stratagem to raise her character in his estimation. After he had listened with incredulous, almost

with scornful looks to her prophecies, she proposed to him that he should scratch his wrist with a bodkin, and let some drops of blood fall on a hot iron shovel, asserting that his future fortune would be clearly revealed by what appeared on the metal. His bride was terrified, and would not listen to this suggestion. Herman, however, did not wait for her consent, but immediately stripped up his sleeve, laughing aloud at such absurdity, and cut himself slightly with a knife.

‘Here is blood enough,’ said he. ‘How much would you have?’

‘Only two drops and a half,’ answered the woman.

These words seemed to disconcert him, and with a solemn emphasis, as he let the blood drop according to her directions, he said—

‘Two inches and a half complete—

The stricken heart will cease to beat.’

‘Just as I was on the point of securing my worldly happiness,’ said he with a sigh, ‘these accursed verses fell in my way, and all my hopes were blighted.’

The old woman told him his fortune, that unlooked-for luck and great danger awaited him. Immediately after, Herman missed the button, and in spite of most diligent search it could not be found.

The wife added—

‘Shortly afterwards it seemed, in truth, as if fortune were inclined to favour my husband. He obtained large sums of money, so much, indeed, that he was able to set up in business on his own account. Where he got the money I am unable to explain. Sometimes he spoke of having had it left him by a friend.’

She was quite certain Herman had not come by it dishonestly.

The women were removed, and Herman was once more brought in. When he was questioned he gave an account of his visit to the fortune-teller's house almost identical with that given by the women.

'It is proved,' said the judge, 'that you know the dagger.'

'I have said I know nothing about it!'

'By what means, then, could you repeat the inscription on the handle?'

'I might as well ask,' answered Rose, 'how it comes to bear such an inscription, for I have known the rhyme from my youth.'

He was then interrogated as to where he had acquired the money to establish himself in business and to fit up his house.

'Am I then accused of theft?' asked he indignantly.

'I shall detain you,' said the judge, 'until we ascertain how, in the first place, the silver button came into the secretaire; secondly, how you became acquainted with the inscription on the dagger which was taken from the Prince's palace where you have been employed as a workman, and which dagger was afterwards the instrument used for a horrid murder; and, above all, until we discover to whom you are indebted for the means of your sudden rise in the world.'

'In God's name,' answered the prisoner resolutely, 'I have only declared the truth, and I cannot speak otherwise. Nor am I bound to render further explanations.'

He was then removed to the guard-house. At every succeeding examination he remained steadfast to the same deposition, and people despaired of being able to lead him any further.

So the matter rested till it was most unexpectedly

announced one morning that, during the night, Herman Rose had effected his escape. The authorities bestirred themselves, and he was soon captured. He was dressed differently, and much better than he had formerly been, and there was found in his pocket an embroidered purse containing fifty louis d'or. His flight and the money thus found upon him not only corroborated the suspicions already entertained of his guilt, but seemed to establish beyond doubt that he had powerful and ingenious accomplices.

When he was again examined he refused to give any account of the money that had been found on him.

'Is there any one in this town,' exclaimed he, 'who has lost such a sum and suspects me of having stolen it?'

One day the judge and I were talking over the matter, when he said to me—

'By-the-bye, you have the means of assisting me. We have spoken very little of the unhappy widow. She suffers dreadfully during these examinations. Every new discovery affects her, for she cannot bear the idea of even the greatest criminal perishing on the scaffold. I have explained to her in vain the absolute necessity of our proceedings, and I perceive plainly that my visits are by no means welcome at her house. Now our secretary, who has minutely observed the louis d'or which were found on the culprit, believes that he has seen one of them before, and that he paid it to the lady at a card-table a short time previous to the murder being committed. It is identified by this circumstance, that the coin, though newly stamped, has a curious mark on the king's face, which, as one of the company remarked at the time, rather improved than injured the likeness.

Ask the widow, then, whether she can recollect this circumstance. Here the coin is.'

I lost no time in fulfilling this commission. The lady, who was visibly declining in health and deeply afflicted, received me with unaffected kindness, and begged that I would come and take up my residence in the house. I did not hesitate to accept her proposal. Her distress was evidently not assumed to attract notice, and I could not forget that it was my duty to offer support and admonition to the mourner. I delivered the judge's message and showed her the louis d'or, which she looked at attentively.

'I do not understand,' said she, 'how this can help us. For, supposing it is the same piece of money, which can hardly be proved, yet it is a long while since I paid away what was then won at cards, and who can tell through how many different hands it may have passed since?'

After a long interval Rose was brought up again for-examination. He made his appearance much paler than before, and seemingly feeble in health.

'We are in hopes,' said the judge, 'that we shall now hear a plainer statement than you gave last at the bar.'

'By all means,' said the prisoner. 'I see plainly enough that I am aimed at and marked out as a victim. That the matter may come now and at once—I did take the money, and I did observe the dagger. Both lay together in the secretaire.'

'Why did you not confess this before?'

'You would not have believed me had I spoken the truth.'

'Let us hear further.'

'Several months ago when I was a journeyman, I was ordered to look over the furniture in the late

counsellor's house, and to make some repairs. One day (it was the same on the evening of which I went with my bride to the fortune-teller's) I was employed to polish the secretaire. During this work I felt melancholy and discontented. Alas! thought I to myself, if but a very small part of the wealth which has been, and perhaps now lies, in this, were in my possession, how happy should I be! I could at once begin business, marry the girl I love, and all distress would come to an end. While I reflected in this manner, and rubbed very hard on the wood to make it bright, the lock had been so much shaken by my efforts that it started open. This appeared to me like a supernatural event. Many drawers full of jewels and money shone most invitingly before me. As for the lock, I perceived that it was uninjured, and that I could close it again as well as ever. Through my whole life I have never felt so much terror as at that moment. My looks by chance fell on the crystal dagger with the ivory hilt. I took it in my hand from mere curiosity, and read the frightful inscription. It seemed as if a drawn sword—the weapon of an avenger—came betwixt me and the crime I was about to commit. I trembled violently, laid back the dagger, and closed the lock. Fate would have it that my sleeve-button should fall into the secretaire, in order that all this evil should come upon me. Afterwards I had resolution to finish my task without further temptation.'

'Thou liest,' said the judge.

'Have I not already said that you would not believe me? And yet it is in my power, if I were inclined, to bring one witness who could prove I have spoken the truth.'

'A witness? Give his name directly.'

'God is my witness,' replied Rose, after some hesitation.

'But the money—the fifty louis d'or? How did you come by it?'

'I took the fifty pieces at the first moment, almost unconscious of what I did.'

'Where was this money while you were in prison?'

'I had buried it in a corner of my garden,' was his reply.

He had formerly denied being at home even for a moment on the night of his escape, nor would his wife admit that she had seen him.

The result of this hearing was made known to me, and I had a long consultation with the president.

'Rose's statement,' said he, 'is a mere tissue of lies from beginning to end. I am sorry that by this deposition your friend, the widow, must be directly involved in our proceedings, in order that we may prove the falsehood of this fellow's assertions, for she denies all knowledge of the dagger. We must summon her to court, and you had better make her acquainted beforehand with this necessity.'

Accordingly I described to her all that had taken place, to which she listened with silent attention.

'How,' said she suddenly, when I mentioned the dagger, 'does he say it was in my secretaire? Is the man mad?'

When I had ended—

'Notwithstanding the falsehood about the dagger,' she said, 'for I deny ever having had it in my possession, yet I cannot think Rose is guilty.'

For some time she was silent. Then suddenly, much agitated, she took my hand in hers, and said falteringly—

'May I not, dear friend, rely on you absolutely and without reserve? I implore your assistance, your support, and protection for a most wretched woman, who in her misery knows not whither to betake herself. Rescue, I beseech you, an unfortunate man who has been falsely accused.'

'How can we tell that?' said I.

'How? Listen only to me. I know my husband's murderer. It was—it was—himself.'

'Himself!' said I sorrowfully.

'Yes, yes. Rose spoke only the truth when he said he had seen the dagger in the secretaire. I denied all knowledge of it, for had I owned to it I should have betrayed that my husband was a suicide. It was my duty to do so. Do I not know that it is to me must be ascribed the levity which drove him to the deed? I have indeed done more than that. It was from me Rose received the fifty louis d'or, which I sent to him, a few days before his escape, by his wife. His undeserved sufferings were agony to me, and I was in hopes he would escape across the frontier. Now you know all the truth.'

'I shall go to the president immediately,' said I, 'and consult with him.'

'Beware,' she said, 'you do not say to him one word more than is necessary. Only endeavour to assist this unfortunate man, and, for God's sake, do not mention that I have had any interference with his wife. On her I have imposed solemn silence, and even exacted from her an oath that she would observe it.'

I said what I thought would calm her agitation, but resolved, in my own mind, that as I had perfect confidence in the judge's honour and integrity, I

would freely repeat to him the story as it had now been disclosed to me.

‘So then,’ he exclaimed disappointedly, ‘it is even as was at first suspected?’

He fell into a mood of silent reflection, and at length requested me to call on him on the day following. I did so, and he received me with unexpected cheerfulness.

‘Your communication of yesterday,’ said he, ‘has caused me a restless night, but the struggle of conflicting evidence is now past, and I believe that the lady has deceived herself, and that, by trusting to her account, we should also be grievously misled. The consciousness of guilt, if that guilt has only consisted in youthful levity, always excites a generous mind to torment itself. Observe that the secretaire was *broken* open. Now is it likely that her husband, in order to commit suicide, would have done this? For the sake of a dagger, too, which was not his own, but belonged to the Prince’s museum?’

‘Suppose that the louis d’or found on the prisoner were given to him by the lady, yet how could he have obtained, long before that, the means of setting up for himself in the world when every one knows he was in his own circumstances poor and unprovided for? It appears to me more than ever probable that he himself must have taken the dagger and other articles of value which have not yet come to light. I have learned for the first time in my life to what extravagant lengths a false and misplaced compassion can mislead the female mind, by which mere conjecture is taken for certain proof; and I hold her deposition to be nothing more or less than an attempt to save, at all hazards, one whom she *believes* to be innocent, for *she has never given the*

prisoner one fraction of money. However, I am indebted to this story of hers for some fresh evidence.

‘Early this morning I went to the prisoner’s wife. I told her I was already aware that the money found on the prisoner came through her hands, and that she had received it from a lady of rank. She stared at me, and declared that she did not know what I meant. Before this I was convinced that the story of the fifty louis d’or had been a device of our friend the widow, to whom, in truth, Rose’s wife is not known even by sight. The woman, when I began to threaten her, confessed that her husband, on the night when he made his escape, came to the house, where he hastily put on a cloak and desired her to light him to an apartment on the ground floor, where, to her astonishment, he opened a small concealed repository behind the wainscot, from which he took a rouleau of gold coins, which he put in his pocket. He then embraced her and departed. I cannot doubt the truth of this statement. The woman led me to see the concealed place in the wall, and I found it exactly corresponding to her description. In it I found a single louis d’or, which, I conjecture, Rose in his haste dropped from the rouleau. When I spoke about the lady of rank, I could perceive the woman’s cheeks burn. I thought of the jealousy by which Herman’s domestic comfort is said to have been disturbed; and by some further questions I brought her to such confusion that she burst into tears, and confessed that her husband had been in the habit of staying out very late from the house, and that on the fatal night of the murder he had been absent for several hours, she knew not where. Now what is your opinion of all this?’

I was forced to admit that the judge’s conclusions

with regard to the widow's conduct were probably well founded—at least with regard to the louis d'or; but that she had pretended that the dagger was locked up in her secretaire I could by no means conceive. I agreed with him also that we must be somewhat more guarded in our communications with her; and he urged that I should bring her, as cautiously as possible, to the question—how the dagger had come there.

At a short examination the same morning the prisoner confessed that his wife's deposition regarding the money was altogether correct.

I fulfilled my new commission as carefully as I could, representing to the widow that on such an occasion it was the most imperious and indispensable duty to speak the truth. I told her that, unless she could give us some more satisfactory explanation regarding the dagger, the story she had told us would do more harm than good to the prisoner.

'I knew,' she answered, 'the process would take this turn. I cannot then say how the dagger came here. Might not the Prince himself have brought it? He was here on that unhappy night, and since then has never crossed our threshold. It would not become me to appear before him, but you might go to the palace, and perhaps you would deliver a letter for me to him. Besides giving him the letter, you might add a description of what you have seen. Tell him of my tears—my grief—my distraction.'

Accordingly the next morning I was provided with a letter, and with this I made my appearance at the hour of audience in the Prince's palace. He seemed surprised when I told him by whom I had been sent, broke the seal hastily, and read the letter.

Then he took several turns to and fro, stood suddenly still and bowed, as a signal that I should retire, without allowing me to speak another word, promising, however, that he would on that day see the president.

In the evening I went to the judge.

‘Have you spoken with the Prince?’ I asked.

‘Yes, I had the honour of being summoned to the palace,’ he replied.

‘Well, then?’

‘Well, he only begged of me to make an end as soon as possible of the matter, which, he said, had become a scandal and vexation to the court and the people.’

‘Was this all?’

‘His highness thought proper to rebuke me, or rather proposed a question involving a sharp rebuke, which vexes me the more as it must be known to you I have exerted myself to the utmost in the matter. “As there is so much talk about a robbery,” said he, “you should not have neglected to inquire whether there are any keys in the possession of the prisoner which fit the locks in the counsellor’s house.” It certainly had not occurred to me that such an investigation could be of any use, but by the imputation of neglect I felt deeply injured.’

‘Did the Prince not speak of the dagger?’

‘The dagger? Why should he have mentioned it?’

I informed him of the widow’s suggestion, and of my mission to the Prince.

‘I can scarcely bear to hear anything further of the widow,’ said he. ‘If the Prince knew of any circumstance that could tend to exculpate the prisoner we are bound to believe that he would not conceal

it, and her insinuation to the contrary might be looked on as a great insult. His highness did not say one word respecting the dagger.'

To the last degree mortified and dispirited, I went home. It seemed to me as if my incautious good nature, and perhaps undeserved sympathy, had involved me in difficulties where I was only groping in the dark, and that I could not even be sure of the rectitude of my own proceedings.

The widow hastened to meet me in the corridor. She read disappointment in my features, and was pale, terrified, and anxious. I told her what had passed.

The next morning I rose early, and in order to get the better of disagreeable thoughts, laboured so assiduously to finish some business letters that my servant had knocked several times at my door before I heard him. He came to tell me that the president had just driven up in his carriage to the door. I dressed myself as hurriedly as possible, and went to the apartments of my hostess, but the judge had gone, and her female servant informed me that the widow had suddenly been taken so ill that she was unable to see any one.

I had no alternative, therefore, but to betake myself to the president. He was in the court-room, having for this day ordered another examination. The servants begged that I would wait for him. How long the time appeared to me! Something decisive must have happened, and I nearly lost all patience; but at last he came in with an air of great triumph and cheerfulness.

'Wish me joy,' said he. 'The whole case is now quite clear, and Herman Rose is, after all, the murderer.'

‘Has he confessed then?’

‘Not in direct terms ; but he is as good as convicted. I was indebted to the Prince’s question, and to the letter written by the lady to save the prisoner, for the full discovery that has been made against him. I durst not pass over the Prince’s suggestion, though I never expected any advantage from it. I extorted all the prisoner’s keys from his wife. One of them, which belongs to the best apartment in the house, attracted my attention, because there is a bit of the iron filed off from one of the wards. His wife told me her husband had done this because the key did not properly fit the lock for which it was intended. With the key in my pocket I hastened to the widow’s house. The key fitted exactly the lock of the garden door—I mean the iron wicket, and also that of the door leading from the garden into the house. I hastened then into court and ordered the prisoner to be brought before me. At sight of the key he was evidently much disconcerted. At the same time he confessed that he knew it very well, and that he had filed away some of the wards. Then when I asked him how it came to fit so exactly the lock of the garden door at the house of the murdered counsellor, he became pale as a ghost and only answered, “I beseech you that I may be again dismissed and led back to prison. Do with me as you will ; I see that my doom is fixed.” From that moment onwards he no longer persisted in his denial of the murder, though he never distinctly confessed it. His answer to all questions was : “Since I well know I cannot convince you of my innocence, I am determined you shall not have a word more from me.” The matter therefore rests thus, and the evidence is certainly strong enough to convict him.

It seems probable that after breaking open the secretaire Rose was surprised by the entrance of the counsellor, and then, in his anxiety to escape, killed him with the dagger.'

No further evidence could be obtained. Time passed on. Rose was found guilty and condemned to die. This sentence was, however, by the Prince's clemency changed to imprisonment for life. Thus my worst fears were confirmed, for, according to my judgment, such a fate was even worse than death. I lost no time in taking my departure from a town which could now only afford me the most painful associations, and it was fortunate that, on my return home, I had many duties to fulfil, by strict attention to which I contrived to forget disagreeable recollections.

Fourteen years had passed when a letter was brought me along with a newspaper. I was about to open the former when a paragraph in the paper caught my eye. It was as follows :—

'A dreadful accident has just happened by which the inhabitants of this town (D——) are plunged into the deepest melancholy. Yesterday afternoon, about one o'clock, a violent hurricane arose, accompanied by thunder and a fall of large hailstones. Our beloved sovereign, the Prince Gustave Benno, who, though advanced in years, continued to enjoy his usual exercise, and who was then riding on his way from the summer palace to town with a small retinue, was overtaken by this tempest. He spurred his horse in order to reach quickly the place of his destination, but as he was galloping through a narrow street, past the residence of the late Counsellor von S——, still occupied by his widow, and had come close to her house, one of the window-shutters from

the second floor was blown down, and fell at the horse's feet. The animal was startled and reared, and while the Prince, who was a good horseman, endeavoured to force it on, its feet slipped on a smooth flat stone on the threshold of a private gate into the garden. The Prince was thrown over its neck with great violence, fell on the iron bars of the gate, and was so dreadfully injured that he died on the spot.'

Having read this I rightly conjectured that the letter which had arrived at the same time would renew all the painful remembrances which I had long ago banished from my mind. It was from the counsellor's widow, who implored me that I would visit her without delay, for she had communications to make of the utmost importance. I thought myself under the necessity of attending to her request, and found myself once more under her roof, seated by her sick bed, to which she was now always confined.

'You must,' said she, in a feeble voice, 'exert yourself to the utmost to save that unfortunate youth, whose innocence was always known to me, though I durst not speak openly. Now, I feel, the seal of mystery may be broken, and I have at command the most convincing proofs. Herman Rose did not commit the murder. Ere I die I must set at liberty that blameless victim. Know then that the murderer of my husband was the Prince Gustave Benno.'

'Good Heaven!' cried I, 'and you mention this now for the first time, after an interval of years, and when the Prince is dead!'

'Yes,' she said. 'But before you pass judgment listen to my wretched story. I have sinned, I have

fallen like many others, but my sufferings and my punishment have been such as have been rarely equalled.

‘The first years of my married life were not, indeed, unhappy. At length Prince Gustave Benno came to be in the habit of visiting at our house. In a short time he began to torment me with expressions of his admiration and of his attachment, to which I could make him no return, and my husband also distressed me by his boundless jealousy.

‘The Prince’s visits became every day more wearisome, and my husband’s jealousy more troublesome and restless. This persecution made me feel a kind of loneliness which I had never experienced before, and my discontent was aggravated by numberless petty irritations, so that I could not help entertaining a wish to be revenged on my tormentors. Such was my state of mind when one day the Prince brought me that crystal dagger, which he had brought from the museum only to show me, because in a conversation on old German weapons and armour, which we had had a short time before, it had been described, and had excited my curiosity. This was but one of his usual stratagems to obtain an interview, and the dagger was soon forgotten; but after the Prince had taken leave I recollected that if it were found in our house it would afford my husband a new opportunity for his tormenting complaints. I therefore locked it up in my secretaire, where there were also many of the Prince’s letters, which he continually forced on me, and which I could not refuse to take without the risk of provoking him beyond measure, as I had, when his visits commenced, entered into a regular correspondence,

wherein I supposed that he was only actuated by a spirit of badinage.

‘The young man, Herman Rose, had often been employed in our house, and had been remarked by almost every one on account of the correctness of his conduct, his graceful person, and his education, which was evidently beyond what could have been expected from one in his humble position. I had scarcely noticed him, however, till one afternoon, when I had just escaped from a tiresome interview with the detestable Prince, and before which my husband had just displayed the most violent suspicious rage. I came in great agitation to my own apartment, and on opening the door, saw, in a mirror which hung opposite, the figure of the handsome youth, who was at work polishing the secretaire. I could not at that moment explain to myself the feelings this apparition excited. I was conscious of my own innocence, of the gross injustice of the accusations and suspicions that were fostered against me, and felt, more than ever, disdain and indignation at the conduct of my persecutors. I knew not my own danger, and could not help remaining at the door in silent admiration of the youth’s handsome, placid, and yet somewhat melancholy features. The next minute the lock of the secretaire flew open. Good heavens! I was the witness of whom he spoke, but whom he did not venture to summon. All that he confessed at the last hearing is literally true, only with one exception—I mean the circumstance of his having stolen the louis d’or. He gazed for some moments anxiously at the tempting treasures, clasped his hands, evidently under a severe inward conflict, and closed the secretaire without touching its contents. I then went up to him

praising his forbearance and self-command, admonishing him, too, that he should beware of such temptations for the future. He was at first quite confounded, but afterwards replied with a degree of feeling and propriety which seemed incredible in one of his rank. I cannot speak further on the subject; suffice it to say that, tormented by my husband's violent temper, and dispirited by the profligate addresses of the Prince, I found in that youth the only being whom I could really love. We met very seldom, however. I gave him money, and it was by this means that he was enabled to provide for his wife, and begin trade on his own account. We had no confidant, and he was therefore under the necessity of making that fatal key of the garden door, so that he could enter the house unobserved, for I never ventured to take the right key from its place in the corridor for fear my husband should miss it.

'All of a sudden the Prince concluded that his attentions were interfered with by a favoured rival. One evening he came to me unannounced when I was sitting in the room adjoining my bedroom. He reproached me with great bitterness, and seemed, I know not how, to be too well informed of the real truth. Though he did not mention Herman's name he spoke of nightly assignations with a too fortunate lover. I took courage, and answered him with scorn and indignation; and then he behaved like a madman, and pretended to be in despair because I rejected his addresses. At that moment the dagger occurred to my remembrance. I took it out of the secretaire and gave it back to him, telling him that if he were determined to die he might avail himself of that weapon as soon as he pleased. He took it, and

concealed it in his bosom. Then he took the pass-key from the wall, swearing that if, on that night, the door of my apartment were closed against him, that of my husband should, on the following morning, be open. He left me to myself to brood in solitude over this dark and half-expressed threat. I was in the most frightful state of suspense and agitation, not knowing whether he wished to inspire me with terror or had actual proofs in his possession of my acquaintance with Rose.

‘While I was thinking over what had occurred, my husband, pale with rage, burst into the room. To my great satisfaction, as if he had been aware of the Prince’s designs, he took such measures as must render them nugatory, for he ordered a carriage to be got ready as soon as possible, in which I was to set out for the capital, provided only with such garments as could be packed instantly, and were requisite for my personal comfort. The rest of my effects he promised should be sent after me. When I wished to open the secretaire, under the pretext that it contained my jewels and money, he would not suffer me to go near it, and in reality what I wished was merely to secure the Prince’s letters. At last, however, he yielded to my request, but although the money was at my command, he would not permit me to touch the smallest scrap of paper. Angrily, and in a tone of defiance, I called for wax and a taper and put my seal on the lock. He laughed scornfully and asked whether that seal were a talisman that no human force could burst asunder. Then he accompanied me to the carriage.

‘We parted then for ever. On the evening of the following day I was called back by the news of the murder. On my entrance into the fatal room

the sight of the dagger made me immediately suspect that the Prince was the real assassin, and this idea became certainty when I found that the secretaire had been broken open—doubtless by my husband, who had left all my property in its usual state, but the Prince's letters were missing. Though I did not doubt by whom the murder had been committed, I had no proof, till very lately, of the minute circumstances attending the crime. I know not even now whether the Prince had conceived a great hatred of my husband, and they fought together, which considering the violent temper of both is not improbable, or if the former, in order to get back his letters and save his own reputation, had no alternative, but must on this account become an assassin. The latter supposition seems the more probable.

'Herman came no more to the house, but it was not the threatening ghost of a murdered man that drove him away, but only his abhorrence of the wicked intercourse into which he had been led, and his resolution to lead a better life. However, I spoke to him afterwards more than once.

'As to the silver button that was found in the secretaire, I never thought that it could be his, and vainly tried to account for its being there, till the president repeated to me the deposition of the old woman, and mentioned the name of Herman Rose. Then I was alarmed, and on the same evening I disguised myself as well as I could, and went out intending to warn him of the necessity for immediate flight, for only by that means could I be protected from disgrace. I met him accidentally at the door of his own house. On recognising me he turned pale, and recoiled a few paces. It was evident he had

wished never to see me again. After I had led him into conversation he explained that on the night of the murder he had been, at the usual hour, in the garden. He knew nothing of my sudden departure, but as he did not see our appointed signal at the window, and as there was no light in my chamber, he retreated and hid himself among some bushes. Suddenly the iron wicket was opened, a little man wrapped in a gray mantle hastened past him, unlocked the private door into the house, and entered. Almost at the same moment he had seen a light behind the window-curtains of my apartment, whereupon, concluding that it would not be safe to venture into the house, he quitted his station in the shrubbery and hastened away.

‘There remains but little for me to tell. I supplied Herman with the louis d’or that were found upon him.

‘What efforts it has cost both him and me to preserve silence! My health and the very springs of life are worn out.

‘On the morning after the Prince’s death his old confidential valet brought in a packet which his master had entrusted to him several years before, with an order that it should be given to me if I survived him. I opened it with fear and trembling, and found in it all the letters that had been taken out of the secretaire. On the inside cover were written these words—

“Rescued at the price of my own soul!”

‘Among the rest I found, half-torn, the billet which you once delivered into his hands, and in which I conjured him, by his own hopes of salvation and mine, that he would save the unfortunate man under trial by informing the president that my hus-

band had received the dagger from him. He had written on a blank-leaf of my letter—

“I had sworn a solemn oath that, with the dagger here mentioned, I would put to death that worthless profligate. My silence at this time redeems my word.”

‘Now leave me to my grief, which never can have an end in this world. Hasten to the capital, and set at liberty the miserable and guiltless victim of oppression and deceit.’

For my own part I was perfectly convinced that she had now spoken the truth, but by what means was it possible to effect Herman’s liberation? I decided in the first place to appeal to the governor at the fortress. I left the widow, assured that death would soon afford the only balm that could now be expected for her, for the physician was of opinion that, without some extraordinary change, she must in a few weeks sink under that resistless disease, a broken heart. Conscious that we should not meet again, I gave her my last benediction, and departed with anxiety to fulfil that wish which, if gratified, was of all the most likely to afford her consolation.

The character which had been drawn of the governor of the fortress in which the unfortunate man was confined, sanctioned my hopes, yet the longer I reflected the more uneasy I became. The prerogatives of high rank, the relationship of the different classes in society, the abuses of the law, filled my mind with disgust and indignation. At length I drew near the wished-for ramparts. I crossed the rattling drawbridge, and proceeded through the long archway into the town, which appeared to me like one vast prison. The governor received me very kindly. I

told him that my business was respecting a young man named Herman Rose, who had been convicted of robbery and murder.

‘Herman Rose,’ said he, and seemed to recollect himself slowly. ‘Herman Rose! It is needless to inquire for him. He has been dead and buried these three years.’

A STRANGE BRIDE

THROUGH the whole summer the weather had been delightful, and the baths of W—— had been more frequented than on any former occasion.

One evening a party of friends had supped together. The fatigues of the dancing assembly, which had lasted very late the preceding night, still weighed on their nerves, and though the moon shone invitingly, no one showed any inclination to walk. They seemed even too tired for conversation.

‘Where is the Marquis, I wonder?’ said one.

The Marquis was an individual who had a short time before arrived at W—— a stranger to every one there. He was a remarkable person. His name was a string of consonants which defied the power of any one to pronounce, and which gave no clue to his nationality. His manner and appearance were strange and mysterious. His pale visage, tall meagre frame, and stern black eyes were so little adapted to inspire confidence, that he would certainly have been shunned by all the world had he not possessed a fund of entertaining talk which charmed all who heard him.

‘Where in the world can he have stayed so long?’ said the Countess impatiently.

‘Doubtless at the faro table, where he drives the bankers to despair,’ said one. ‘On his account two

of them have fled, and they will not, I expect, return in a hurry.'

'The Marquis should avoid such conduct,' said another. 'These gamblers are revengeful, and it is whispered that the Marquis is involved in dangerous political schemes.'

'After all,' interposed the Countess, 'what injury did he do the bankers?'

'Nothing but always staking on cards that never fail to win. It is strange he never seems to take advantage to benefit his own fortune, for he always confines himself to the lowest possible stake. Other players, however, follow his lead, stake high, win invariably, and the bank is ruined even at a single game.'

The Countess was about to answer when the Marquis entered the room.

'So you are come at last!' said one.

'We have longed exceedingly for you,' said the Countess, 'and this evening, more than ever, you have chosen to absent yourself. It really seemed as if you had forgotten us entirely.'

'I had, indeed, some particular business to transact, and I have been most successful,' replied the Marquis. 'To-morrow, probably, not a single faro bank will exist in W——. I have gone from house to house, and the result is that we have not post-horses enough to carry away the enraged bankers.'

'Can you not teach us this wonderful art of yours?' asked the Countess.

'Not easily, madam,' replied he. 'A lucky hand. I can give no other explanation.'

'In truth,' said the gentleman who had spoken before, 'your hand is so lucky that in all my life I never knew anything like it.'

'At your time of life,' said the Marquis, 'that is

not saying very much, you have yet much to learn in the world.'

'And now, my dear Marquis,' said the Countess, 'since you will not divulge the secret of your good fortune, let us have some interesting story to rouse us from the lethargy in which we have been lost for some hours.'

'I shall not refuse,' replied the Marquis, and seating himself in an arm-chair by the Countess's side, he at once commenced as follows:—

I had made very many appointments to visit my friend the Count Globoda in his castle in the country. We had met in our travels; we had been cordial friends; and now, when years began to steal over us, we both wished to meet once more to talk over past adventures. I was, too, a great admirer of scenery, and my friend described his estate to me as one of the most romantic in the world. The castle was wonderfully ancient, but had been so well built and preserved that it was still habitable, and was kept up in much magnificence. The Count used to live there with his family almost the whole year, spending only a short winter in the capital. I knew this; and being certain of finding him at home, I visited him unexpectedly one night, just about this season, and was delighted to behold, by moonlight, the fine varied country and flourishing woods by which the castle was environed.

The kindness with which I was received did not prevent me from remarking an expression of grief and anxiety on the countenances of the Count and his lady. In a lesser degree the same expression was also discoverable in the features of Laura, their beautiful daughter. After some time I discovered

that they had never been able to forget the twin sister of this young lady, whose remains had been deposited about a year preceding in the castle chapel. Laura and Hildegard had been so like one another that they were not to be distinguished except by a small red mark on the neck of the latter. Laura and she had had only one heart and one mind, and the parents could not persuade themselves that they would be long separated, and were harassed by apprehensions that their beloved and beautiful Laura would also be taken from them.

I did what I was able to divert their thoughts, nor was I disappointed in my endeavours.

One evening, while the Count was talking to me of his plans for the future, among other things of his wish to see Laura well married—for although she was only now in her eighteenth year she had attracted many suitors and had rejected all,—the gardener rushed into the room with the intelligence that a spirit had been seen below, which must certainly be that of the old castle chaplain, who, according to tradition, had appeared for the first time as a *revenant* about a hundred years before. Several other servants followed this man, and with pale ghastly visages confirmed what he had said.

‘You will be terrified ere long at your own shadows,’ said the Count, and sent them from the room with the order that they should spare him the trouble of having to listen to such absurdity for the future. ‘It is awful,’ said he to me, ‘to what absurd lengths the superstition of these poor people leads them, and how impossible it is to eradicate this folly. For about a century the story has been current here of an old priest who is said to walk and even to read prayers in the castle.’ At this moment a

servant entered to announce a new visitor, the Italian Duke de Marino.

'The Duke de Marino,' said the Count; 'I have never heard the name before.'

'I have been a good deal acquainted with the family,' said I, 'and a short time ago was present at the betrothal of the younger duke in Venice.'

The entrance of our visitor would have been very agreeable to me if I had not perceived that our recognition was, on his part, attended with embarrassment and agitation.

'Well,' said he, recovering his composure, 'now that I find you here, my lord Marquis, I need not be surprised at what occurred to me a little while ago. I supposed that my name was perfectly unknown in this country, and yet when I drew near the castle a voice called out three times: "Welcome, welcome, Duke de Marino." It was a strange voice, certainly, and yet, Marquis, to you I am indebted for that reception.'

I assured him that till his name was announced I was perfectly unaware of his coming, nor could any of my servants have addressed him. 'Besides,' added I, 'it would have been exceedingly difficult to have recognised any equipage, however well known, in the gloom of such a night as this.'

'Very true,' said the Duke; 'and in that case I am perfectly at a loss to imagine who it could be.'

In a private interview Marino had with me afterwards he informed me that he had come thither on account of Laura, and that, if he were so fortunate as to obtain her affections, he would at once request her hand in marriage from the Count.

'Good Heaven!' said I, 'have you then had the

misfortune to lose your bride whom I saw at Venice—the Countess Apollonia?’

‘Of that I will speak at another time,’ said the Duke, and from the deep sigh which accompanied the words I concluded that the Countess had by infidelity or some other offence been separated from him.

The Duke seemed to succeed in his purposes with wonderful rapidity. He made himself so agreeable to the Count that he was invited to make a prolonged stay, and his conversation was very welcome to the old Countess. Marino did not fail to make use of his opportunities, and one afternoon I was surprised to hear that Laura and he were to be immediately betrothed. After dinner the conversation naturally revived what I had mentioned before of my having been present at the betrothing of a certain Duke de Marino in Italy, and the old Countess inquired whether the hero of that day were not a near relation of their friend.

‘Yes, a pretty near relation,’ said I, not forgetting my promise to the Duke not to discover that it was he himself. ‘But now, dear Marino,’ I continued, anxious to change the subject, ‘tell us how were you first induced to come to this remote castle? Did some friend inform you of the Countess Laura’s extraordinary beauty, or had you seen her portrait? Did you not tell me you came from Paris directly here?’

‘From Paris, yes,’ answered the Duke. ‘I had gone one day to look at the picture gallery in the Louvre, but no sooner had I entered the room than all my attention was attracted by a young lady of the greatest beauty. With trembling timidity I ventured to approach her, and remained always near at hand, yet without venturing to address to her even a single word. When she left the gallery I

followed, and took her servant aside to inquire her name. This he gave me, and when I expressed an earnest wish to pay my respects to her father, he told me that a meeting could hardly take place in Paris as the family were just preparing to take their departure from France. "At another time I may be more fortunate," thought I, and looked round, but the lady was out of sight. In trying to find her I lost the servant, and thus ended my first adventure.'

'And who was the lady?' inquired Laura.

'Who? Can you ask?' said the Duke. 'I told you the story in jest, indeed, as if it were quite new, but is it possible you did not observe me that day in the Louvre?'

'I!' exclaimed the girl.

'My daughter!' said the Countess. 'It could not be.'

'Nay, indeed,' resumed the Duke. 'The same servant whom, to my great satisfaction, you left behind you in Paris, and whom I hailed one night as if he had been a guardian spirit, told me all that I wished to know, so that, after a short visit to my native country, I came hither.'

'What strange story is this?' said the Count. 'Laura has never yet been to Paris, nor have I for the last sixteen years.'

The Duke looked as perplexed as they did. The conversation flagged, and when we rose from table the Count drew Marino into a window-recess; and, though I was at a considerable distance from them, and *seemed* inattentive, I heard all they said.

'My lord Duke,' said Globoda, 'what in all the world could lead you to that invention of the scene in the picture gallery? If you wished only to conceal the cause of your visit here, you might say so at

once, and there is an end; or, if you disliked that method, you might have evaded the question in a hundred ways, and it was quite needless to outrage probability with so much violence.'

'My lord Count,' answered the Duke, much offended, 'I was silent at table because I believed you had private reasons for concealing the circumstance of your daughter's residence in Paris, and must still assert before every one that in Paris I had the happiness of seeing your daughter for the first time.'

'But,' said the Count, 'what if I bring before you all my people to say she was never there?'

'In despite of all,' replied the Duke, 'I should still believe rather the evidence of my own senses.'

'What you say is very mysterious,' said the Count, in a calmer voice. 'Your manner convinces me that you must be under some extraordinary delusion. You must have taken some one else for my daughter. Forgive me for the temper into which I was betrayed.'

'Some other person!' cried the Duke. 'It would then follow that I have not only mistaken another for your daughter, but that her servant was also different from what I supposed him to be, yet he described to me all that I find in this castle and its environs, precisely as they are.'

'My dear Marino,' said the Count, 'it only follows that the servant was an impostor, who was well acquainted with our neighbourhood. The lady whom you saw could not have been my daughter.'

'I am afraid to contradict you in express terms,' said Marino, 'but, absolutely, the features I beheld were those of Laura, nor since that meeting have they ever been absent from my remembrance.'

Globoda shook his head.

‘Still another proof,’ resumed the Duke. ‘When I stood behind the lady at the Louvre, it happened that her handkerchief was drawn a little aside, and on her neck, otherwise white as alabaster, I observed a strange red mark.’

‘In God’s name, what is this?’ cried the Count. ‘You seem determined that I should be forced to believe things utterly incomprehensible.’

‘Can this mark be found on Laura’s neck?’

‘No,’ replied the Count.

‘Is it possible?’ cried Marino.

‘I have told you the truth. It is no less certain that Laura’s twin sister, Hildegarde, who resembled her in every feature, had the mark you describe, and carried it with her to the grave more than a year ago.’

‘Yet it is only a few months,’ answered Marino, ‘since I saw that lady in Paris.’

At this moment the old Countess and Laura drew near, anxious to know what could be the purport of this long conversation. The Count’s manner was so stern that they dared not ask any questions. He retreated with Marino farther into the recess, and I could not hear another word of their conversation.

No one knew what to conclude from the extraordinary orders given by Globoda at a late hour of that evening. He directed the sacristan to attend him in order that the coffin of the Countess Hildegarde should be opened in his presence, and he invited me to go with him on the occasion. He told me all that had passed between the Duke and himself. On our way to the chapel the Count said to me—

‘It is scarcely possible that any deception should

have been practised on me respecting my daughter's death, yet my own eyes shall convince me whether this coffin holds her remains. I will have *proof*,' he added, in a tone so loud and agitated that the sacristan looked round in affright.

I know not if any one of this party has ever stood at midnight before the grated door of a burial vault, beholding the piles of leaden shrines, in which are deposited the mouldering remains of a distinguished train of ancestors. It is certain at such a moment even the rattling of the keys in their locks makes a deep and mysterious impression; that when the door is forced open, one feels at the grating of the rusty hinges as if he were committing a fearful crime, and is glad to linger on the threshold before he enters into the dark abode of the dead. The Count experienced all these emotions as much as any one could. This I perceived by the deep sigh, almost a groan, which he heaved as we stood there. He controlled his agitation, however, by a great effort; did not allow himself to look at the other coffins, but went directly to that of his daughter, of which he lifted up the cover with his own hands. The body had so precisely the features of Laura that I was obliged to withhold my friend from imprinting the kiss of an affectionate parent on her forehead.

'Nay, touch her not, disturb not the repose of the dead,' cried I, and withdrew him as quickly as I could from the frightful vault into the free air of the living world.

For the rest of the night I reflected upon that inexplicable apparition which Marino had doubtless encountered in Paris. In a few days I had other reasons for being anxious and perplexed. The Duke constantly avoided speaking to me of the lady to

whom he had been betrothed. From this, and from the embarrassment he betrayed when I spoke of her, I concluded that, in consequence of his new love, he had basely deserted the Countess Apollonia, without any fault on her part to warrant such conduct. With such impressions on my mind I could not expect happiness for Laura in her marriage with him; and I resolved to take the first opportunity of tearing off his mask, so that he might repent of his cruelty, and return ere it was too late to the forsaken bride.

Sooner than I could have anticipated I was enabled to fulfil this plan.

One evening, after supper, the conversation happened to turn on the question whether injustice and wickedness are always punished in this world. I remarked that I had known within my own experience very striking proofs of it, and the old Countess and Laura begged that I would make them acquainted with one at least of the instances to which I alluded.

‘If I am to do so,’ said I, ‘you must at least allow me to choose a story in which the characters and incidents, as I think, concern you very nearly.’

‘Concern us? How is that possible?’ said the Countess, while I cast a significant glance at the Duke, who now looked on me with the pale ghastly visage of one whose conscience reproaches him.

‘Such at least is my opinion,’ said I; ‘but I must request the Count’s indulgence if the supernatural should play a part in my narrative.’

‘Have no hesitation on that score,’ said he; ‘and as to my wonder as to how you have chanced to encounter spectral and supernatural adventures, while not one ever fell in my way, I shall for the present say nothing.’

'It is perhaps not every one who has eyes to see what passes about him,' said I. 'The scene of the adventure I propose to describe was Venice.'

'Then,' interposed the Duke, 'I probably shall know something of the matter?'

'Perhaps; but the circumstances were for obvious reasons kept as private as possible. Now for my story:—

'The son of a rich nobleman, whom I shall call Felippo, during his residence at Leghorn, which town he visited on account of some inheritance that devolved on him, paid his addresses to a beautiful girl, obtained her parents' consent to their marriage, and then being under the necessity of revisiting Venice, he promised he would in a very short time come again to Leghorn in order to marry his beloved Clara. Their attachment was mutual, and their parting was even frightfully solemn. After they had exhausted the power of words in reciprocal protestations and vows, Felippo invoked the avenging powers to bring destruction on his own head if he should be unfaithful, and wished that his intended bride should not even find rest in her grave if he deserted her, but follow him still to claim his love. When these words were uttered, the lovers and Clara's parents sat at table, and to such an extent did the young couple carry their enthusiasm that they both wound themselves in the left arm and mingled their blood in a glass of white champagne.

"Inseparable as these red drops have now become shall our souls and our fates be for ever," cried Felippo. He drank half the wine, and gave the rest to Clara, who pledged him without hesitation.'

When I had arrived at this part of my story the Duke became restless, and darted at me some most

threatening looks, so that I could not help concluding he had been in his own life the hero of a scene resembling that I had described. However, it is most certain, I had merely repeated the circumstance from a letter that I had read from the girl's mother at Leghorn, of which I shall say more afterwards.

'Who would then have thought it possible that Felippo would conduct himself in the manner that he did soon afterwards? On his return to Venice, a young beauty, who had just made her appearance there, of wealth and high birth, was introduced to him by his parents. In a short time the recollection of his engagement at Leghorn was almost banished from his mind. His letters to Clara became more cold and laboured, till at length he ceased to write at all. The trembling handwriting and traces of many tears which appeared in Clara's letters had no effect upon his volatile heart. He now forgot everything but Camilla.

'This young lady's father, with whom I was so well acquainted that I lived as familiarly in his house as in my own, invited me to the wedding. The bride's parents had always lived together very happily, and were anxious that the same priest by whom they had been united should also pronounce the benediction over their daughter. The priest, who, though far advanced in years, had never shown hitherto any decline of his faculties or strength, was now seized with a lingering fever, which did not allow him to leave his bed. At length, however, he got better, and a day was appointed for the betrothing. As if some supernatural influence were exerted to prevent this, the priest, on the morning agreed on, was again attacked with such weakness that it was impossible for him to leave the house, and he

sent a message to say that they must choose another to perform the ceremony. The parents, however, obstinately insisted in their decision to have no other clergyman. The banquet and other festivities had meanwhile been so far arranged that they could not be postponed, and so it was agreed that they should be regarded as a confirmation of the lovers being solemnly betrothed. The banquet was protracted till late in the evening, and rings were, as usual, interchanged between the lovers. No sooner had that ceremony taken place than a most piercing shriek was heard by the whole party. Every one started up and ran to the windows, for the voice seemed to come from without; but though the twilight still rendered objects visible, it was impossible to discover any cause for this extraordinary alarm.'

'Halt there!' cried the Duke, with a wild laugh. 'The wild cry at the window is known to me as well as to you. It is borrowed from the *Memoirs of Clairon*, the French actress, who was in this manner persecuted by one of her deceased lovers. After the cry recollect there was always a clapping of hands. You must not forget that in your ingenious romance.'

'And for what reason,' said I, 'should you conclude that this incident could not happen in the life of any one else but Clairon? Your disbelief of my story seems the more strange as you allude to a well-authenticated fact in her life, which should rather support than invalidate the tenor of my narrative.'

He said no more; and I proceeded.

'Soon after this remarkable occurrence I happened to request of the bride, who sat opposite to me, that I might be allowed to look at her ring,

which was of very beautiful workmanship. She nodded assent, but to her great consternation it was no longer on her finger. Search was made everywhere for it. It was never found.

'The ball which followed was one of the most brilliant I have ever witnessed. The dresses were magnificent, but the bride excelled all in her dress and her display of diamonds, all but *one*, for the father of the bride and every one else was struck with the utmost astonishment on discovering that jewels of the very same fashion and lustre were worn by another lady, a masked stranger. He confessed to me that he was weak enough to feel his pride hurt at this, but he consoled himself by reflecting that, however rich the stranger's jewels might be, they would be surpassed out of all measure by a wreath of diamonds and rubies which was to be worn by Camilla at the supper table.

'When the party was assembled and the old gentleman looked around him, to his utter consternation the strange lady made her appearance with a wreath precisely like that of his daughter's.

"Fair lady," said he, "might I venture so great a liberty as to ask your name."

'The incognita shook her head with a mournful air, and did not answer him a word.

'Universal admiration was excited by the extraordinary luxury displayed at this final banquet. In the variety and excellence of his wines our host surpassed all that had hitherto been known in Venice, and yet he was not satisfied. He lamented especially that a misfortune had happened to his red champagne, so that he could not produce a single glass of that liquor. At this time the party seemed well disposed to make up for that want of joviality and

high spirits which they had betrayed throughout the evening. Only near me at the table it was very different. I was placed near the lady who wore the jewels, and I observed that she never tasted food or wine, nor did she ever take her eyes off Felippo and his bride.

‘At length, when white champagne was handed round, the bridegroom drew near to us, and took the seat next but one to the silent lady. Now, indeed, she seemed more animated, and she turned round towards her new neighbour when he addressed her, which she had never done to any one else, and even offered her glass as if she wished him to drink out of it. It was evident, however, that her attention much agitated Felippo. He held up the glass in his left hand, trembling like an aspen leaf, pointed to it, and said—

“How comes it that the wine is red? I thought we had no red champagne?”

“Red?” said the bride’s father. “What can you mean?”

“Look only at the lady’s glass,” answered Felippo.

“Well, it is filled with white wine like the rest,” said the old gentleman, and all the bystanders with one voice pronounced the wine white. Felippo, however, would not drink of it.

‘The mysterious whispering which had for some time supplied the place of all lively conversation now became more remarkable when the lady suddenly rose from her place, waved her hand, bowed to the bridegroom, and retreated to the door. The bridegroom’s father, anxious if he could discover anything which would tell him who the mysterious stranger was, followed her. When he got outside she had vanished.

‘A few days after this event Felippo received a letter from Clara’s mother informing him that her unhappy daughter had, in her grief and disappointment, died for the sake of her faithless lover, moreover that she had declared in her last moments that she would not rest in her grave till she had punished him for his infidelity. This letter made a great impression on him. Henceforward he always carried the letter about with him, and sometimes drew it unconsciously from his pocket and stared at its agonising pages. Even Camilla’s presence could not always prevent this, and as she, of course, ascribed his agitation to the paper, she availed herself of an opportunity when he had let it drop on the floor and seemed quite lost in thought, to examine, without ceremony, what had caused him so much distress. Felippo did not awake from his reverie till she had perused the letter, and was folding it up with her countenance deadly pale. He threw himself at her feet in a mood of the sincerest anguish and repentance, conjuring her to tell him what he ought now to do.

“Only let your affection for me be more constant than it was for this poor unfortunate,” said Camilla, and he vowed this from his inmost heart.

‘At last the day for the marriage arrived. When, according to the old fashion of the Venetians, Felippo went in the twilight to the residence of his bride, he could not help believing, all the way, that Clara’s ghost was walking by his side. Indeed, no loving couple were ever accompanied to the altar by such fearful omens as those which now took place. At the request of Camilla’s parents I was there in attendance as a witness, and I have never since forgotten the horrors of that morning.

'We were advancing in profound silence towards the Church Della Salute, but already, in the streets, Felippo whispered to me several times that I should keep away that strange woman, as he feared she had some design against his bride.

"What strange woman?" said I.

"Not so loud; for God's sake, be cautious. You see, do you not, how she endeavours to force herself between me and Camilla?"

"Fancy, my good friend. There is no one here but our own party."

"God grant that my eyes have deceived me. Only don't let her go in with us into the church."

"Certainly not," said I, and to the astonishment of the bride's parents I made gestures as if ordering some one away. In the church we found Felippo's father, on whom his son looked as if he were taking leave of him for ever. Camilla sobbed aloud, and when the bridegroom called out, "So, then, this strange woman has come in with us after all," it was thought doubtful whether, under such circumstances, the marriage could be performed. Camilla, however, said in her changeless affection—

"Nay, since he is in this unhappy state, he has the more need of my care and constant presence."

'Now they drew near the altar, when a gust of wind suddenly blew out the candles. The priest was angry, and blamed the sacristan for not having closed the windows.

"Windows!" said Felippo. "Do you not see who stands there and extinguishes the candles; and do you not see," continued he, breaking away from his bride, "do you not see who it is that is forcing me away from Camilla?"

'At these words the bride sank fainting in her

mother's arms, and all were convinced that Felippo had gone suddenly mad. But it was not many moments before they changed their opinion. The blood forsook his countenance, he was ashen pale—his lips moved as if with words upon them that he could not utter—his eyes dilated—his form swayed as if he had not strength to stand—then he fell forward—dead.

'It was thought he had been poisoned, but upon an examination of the body the physicians could find no confirmation of such suspicions. The relations resolved to keep the whole matter as secret as possible. What was very strange is that the ring which had been so often sought for in vain was now found among Camilla's ornaments.'

'So my long narrative ends.'

'That is a marvellous legend in good earnest,' said the Count.

'To say the truth, I should rather not have listened to it,' said Laura; 'I felt many times a cold shudder in every limb.'

When we retired to rest the Duke whispered to me—

'I have a few words to say to you in private.'

I brought him into my chamber.

'I perceive your kind intentions,' said he. 'This lying story you have made up—'

'Stop!' cried I. 'You have heard that I myself was a witness. How dare you accuse a man of honour of falsehood?'

'Of that afterwards, but for the present let me observe that wheresoever you got the anecdote of the wine mixed with blood, I know from whose real life that story was first derived.'

'It was taken from the life of Felippo. Of that

you may be assured, but that a similar circumstance may have occurred elsewhere I shall not dispute. It is very possible. Love adventures resemble one another more or less.'

'Be that as it may,' said Marino; 'I now demand of you that, from this day forward, you shall make no further allusions to my past life. Upon this condition alone shall I forgive you for your former injurious devices.'

'Forgiveness!' cried I. 'Conditions! And from you! On the contrary, I take the liberty of informing you that the Count shall to-morrow morning be made fully acquainted with your former betrothal, and of your expressions to me this night.'

'My lord Marquis, if you ventured this——'

'Ha, ha! I shall venture it. It is a duty I owe to an old friend. The liar who has accused me of a falsehood shall no longer be permitted to wear the mask in his house.'

Contrary to my own wishes, anger had carried me so far that it was impossible for me to avoid a challenge. The Duke determined instantly on this course of concluding the matter, and we agreed to meet in the morning with pistols in a neighbouring wood.

At daybreak, accordingly, we met, each attended by a servant. As Marino observed that I had not prepared my attendant with directions as to what should be done in case of my death, he undertook this duty himself, and gave orders to his servant for the disposal of my body, as if the worst had already happened. At the same time he had the insolence to remind me that in former encounters he had never failed to hit his mark. On such occasions he had not wished to inflict a mortal wound, now the case

was very different. It was necessary that I should not interfere with his proceedings. If, however, I would give my word of honour not to mention his former life at Venice, he would look upon the dispute as ended, and we might return to the castle as friends. I, of course, rejected his proposal.

‘Then,’ said he, ‘make your peace with heaven.’

We prepared to fire.

‘You shall have the first chance,’ said he. ‘It is your right, as I am challenger.’

I waived my right, but he insisted. I fired and shot the pistol out of his hand. This seemed to enrage him. He examined the lock, took steady aim, but his rage became ungovernable when, having fired, he found I was uninjured. He insisted that he should have shot me through the heart, yet was obliged to admit that there had not been the slightest movement on my part to which he could ascribe his failure. At his desire the contest was renewed, with precisely the same results, only that, as I took aim again at his pistol, which he held in his left hand, the ball grazed his fingers. After he had missed for the second time I declared I would proceed no further—that is to say, I would not fire at him, but as he had perhaps failed from agitation, he might, for the third time, aim at me if he were so disposed. Before he could answer this question, however, the Count and his attendants appeared upon the scene. He had had some suspicion respecting our absence, and had traced us by the sound of the shots we had fired. He complained very much of our conduct, and as he insisted on an explanation in Marino’s presence, I disclosed all. The Count was much perplexed, but as he was undecided as to what course to pursue, we returned to

the castle in silence. After some hours he sought me, and said—

‘You are in the right. If I were to play the part of a strict judge I should order the Duke to leave my house, but in that case how should we console Laura, who passionately loves him? He is the first for whom she has evinced any prepossession. Let us therefore leave them to their own choice. For my part, I must confess I cannot help liking this Duke, and if he has been inconstant to his first love, how many instances of inconstancy happen which might be forgiven if we heard the particular circumstances by which they were caused?’

It was therefore decided that the marriage should go on, and Marino and I were, by the Count’s intercession, made friends again.

At the betrothing festival there was no want of luxury and magnificence. At the ball Marino danced incessantly, and seemed extravagant in his mirth.

‘No ghost,’ said he, as he passed me in a quadrille, ‘has come to interrupt our festival as in your Venetian story.’

‘Don’t rejoice too soon, my lord Duke,’ said I. ‘Misfortune comes on with cautious noiseless steps. We often know nothing of danger when it is already close upon us.’

Contrary to my expectations he did not answer me a word; and it seemed to me a proof that my suggestions had made a deep impression when he began to dance more furiously than before. The old Countess begged him not to exhaust himself, and Laura at length prevailed on him to sit down, when he was quite breathless and exhausted.

‘Not long afterwards I saw the bride glide gently

out of the room, and, as I thought, tears glistened in her eyes. It was certainly Laura. I could not be mistaken, for I stood as near her when she passed as I now am to you, my lady Countess. It struck me, therefore, as remarkable that she should return in a few moments with an expression of the utmost cheerfulness on her features. I followed her, and with great surprise noticed that on coming up to the bridegroom she immediately led him out among the dancers, and, instead of dissuading him as before, seemed to enter into their amusements with as much animation as he did. I observed, too, that after one waltz the Duke went to bid his father-in-law and the Countess good-night. They shook hands, and he retired with Laura by a private door to their room.

By degrees the party began to break up, till at last no one remained in the room but myself, with our host and hostess. What was our astonishment, therefore, when we suddenly saw Laura, in her ball costume, enter, not from the door leading to the room to which she and the Duke had retired, but through the principal door, and look around her astonished to find the place so deserted.

‘What can be the meaning of this?’ said her mother, while the Count was so astonished that he could not utter a word.

‘Where is Marino?’ asked the bride.

‘Do you ask us, dear child?’ said the Countess. ‘Did we not see you retire with him nearly an hour ago?’

‘Impossible,’ cried she. ‘You are altogether mistaken.’

‘Nay, dearest Laura,’ answered her mother; ‘just after that waltz, when you danced with so much

spirit, you certainly went with him to your apartment.'

'I have not danced this evening more than once,' said Laura.

'Child, child!' said her father, 'to what purpose is this pretended forgetfulness?'

'I have not forgotten,' said Laura. 'I can tell you all that has passed this night.'

'Where then have you stayed away for this last hour?'

'In the rooms of my dear sister Hildegarde,' she answered.

'Dearest child,' said the Countess, 'on a day like this, how could such melancholy thoughts come into your mind?'

'I cannot say,' answered she; 'I only know that my heart became very much oppressed, and it seemed to me, all of a sudden, that I had never till then felt so heavily the loss of Hildegarde. A strange idea came into my mind, and I could not help believing that if I went to her room I should find her sitting, as in old times, with her guitar. I said nothing to any one, but slipped away, and went upstairs. Once in her apartments I could somehow not force myself to leave them. I was wearied, sat down on a chair by the window, and knew not how the time passed, till at last, as if I had awoke from sleep, I started up and came here.'

'How long then is it since you left the ball-room?' inquired her mother.

'At a quarter to twelve. The clock struck as I entered my sister's room.'

'Good Heaven!' cried her mother, 'what can this mean? It was the last quarter to twelve that I spoke to her and advised her not to dance so much.'

‘And where, think you, is Marino?’ said her father.

‘How can I tell? I expected to find him here.’

The Count snatched up a light and beckoned me to follow him. He led the way to the apartment that had been assigned to the married couple. We found the Duke alone—dead. He was lying on the floor, and on his face was a look of horror such as I had only once before seen on the countenance of man.

You may imagine into what distress this occurrence threw the whole family. My presence could be of no service. It was impossible to console them, and I was not sorry when letters came informing me that my presence was immediately required at my own residence.

The only explanation I could ever arrive at of those remarkable occurrences, was of a strange character; and, depending on mere oral tradition, is not very full nor satisfactory.

It is said that there was once, in the fifteenth century, a young lady of rank, a native of the district in which stands the castle of my friend Count Globoda. It is alleged that she was guilty of such cruel infidelity to a young man with whom she was once in love that he died of grief. Afterwards, on her marriage night, his spirit appeared, claimed the lady, and her immediate death ensued. The story runs, not very consistently, that she has since never rested in her grave, but has wandered through the world, assuming many different forms and aspects in order to seduce lovers into a breach of their vows. As it is impossible for her to wear the features of any living being, she invests herself in the form of the dead. She can never be released from her task,

which forms the punishment of her crimes, till she has found some youth whose fidelity resists all her endeavours.

As to the servant who attended her in Paris, that, I admit, seems inexplicable, nor can I understand the incident of the Duke's name being called out as he approached the castle.

This legend is the only explanation I can give of the circumstances attending the deaths of Felippo and Marino. If such an explanation will not suffice, I am unable to offer a better.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, I have finished.

The Marquis rose, begged that the company would excuse his retiring, on the ground that the recalling of such painful memories of past days had fatigued him, and left the room.

THE HOST OF 'THE SUN'

THERE is no chapter in the history of human nature more instructive both for the heart and understanding than that which records our errors. Whenever a great crime has been committed, a power proportionally great has been in operation, and although the secret play of the passions may not be discoverable by the paler light of ordinary feelings, still in the case of more powerful excitement it becomes loud, prominent, and colossal; and the nice observer of human nature, who knows how far we may reckon on the ordinary operation of free-will, and to what extent we may go in reasoning by analogy, will extract many a lesson in morality from this province of the science of mind.

The human heart is so uniform and yet so complex that one and the same propensity or desire may operate in a thousand different forms and directions, produce a thousand contrary effects, appear variously compounded in a thousand different shades, and a thousand dissimilar characters and actions may proceed from it, even when the person in question suspects nothing less than the existence of such a connection. Should there ever rise up for the science of man, as for the other departments of natural knowledge, a Linnæus, to class mankind according to

their inclinations and propensities, what astonishment would be felt at finding many a one whose vices are now stifled in the contracted sphere of private life, and within the narrow pale of the laws, placed in the same order with the infamous Borgia!

With these considerations in view, many an objection may be made to the usual mode of treating history, and here, I suspect, lies the cause which has hitherto rendered the study of history productive of so little effect on private life. Betwixt the excited feelings of a man who performs an action, and the tranquil state of the reader before whom that action is depicted, there intervenes so wide a distance that it is difficult, nay, often impossible, for the latter to even guess at the connection betwixt the action and the state of mind which produced it. There remains a distance between the subject of a history and the reader which cuts off all possibility of comparison or profit, and produces, not that wholesome fear which warns against the security of health, but only a stare of wonder. We look upon the unfortunate person, who, in the hour in which he did the deed, as well as in that in which he atoned for it, was a human being like ourselves—we look upon him as a creature of another kind, whose blood circulates differently from our own, whose will obeys different laws. We sympathise but little in his fate, for sympathy is always founded on a shadowy consciousness of similarity of danger, and we are far from even dreaming of such a similarity. The instruction and the connection are lost together, and history, instead of being a school of education, must rest satisfied with a paltry power of exciting our curiosity. If it would do something more, and attain its grand object, then it must choose between these two

methods—either the reader must be raised to the height of sensibility of the hero, or the hero must be represented as impassive as is the reader.

I know that many of the best historians of modern as well as of ancient times have adopted the first mode, and have assailed the hearts of their readers with moving representations. But this manner is a usurpation by the writer, and offends against the free spirit of the republic of letters, to the members of which it alone belongs to sit in judgment. It is at the same time an infringing of the established law of boundaries, for this method belongs exclusively and peculiarly to the novelist and the poet. Only the latter mode then belongs to the historian.

The hero must be represented so impassive as to be intelligible to the reader, or, which is the same thing, we must be made acquainted with him before he acts. We must see him not only perform the action, but likewise will it. In his thoughts there lies infinitely more for our observation than in his actions, and still more in the sources of his thoughts than in the consequences of those actions. The soil of Vesuvius has been examined to discover the cause of its burning. Why should we bestow less attention on a moral than on a physical phenomenon? Why do we not attach an equal degree of importance to the nature of the circumstances in which a particular individual has been placed until the collected fuel has burst into a flame within? The enthusiast who loved the wonderful would be charmed by the novelty and the romance of such an inquiry, and the friend of truth seeks the cause of these narrated facts. He seeks it in the unchangeable structure of the human soul, and in the varying circumstances

which modified its action from without, and in these he finds it with certainty. It surprises him no longer, in the same bed of earth, where formerly none but wholesome herbs flourished, to see the poisonous hemlock thrive, and it excites no astonishment to find wisdom and folly, virtue and vice, in the same cradle.

Although I did not put forward any of the advantages which the science of mind derives from this mode of treating history, it would deserve the preference for this single reason, that it roots out the cruel scorn and proud security with which untried and upright virtue usually looks down upon the fallen; that it encourages that mild spirit of toleration, without which no fugitive retraces his steps, no reconciliation between the law and the offender can take place, no tainted member of society can be saved from total destruction.

Whether the criminal of whom I am now about to speak may have had a right to appeal to that spirit of toleration, or whether he was truly lost past redemption to the body of the state, I will not anticipate, but leave to the decision of the reader. To him our indulgence can no longer be of any avail, for he died by the hand of the executioner; but the detail of his vices may perhaps instruct some, and, it is possible, even serve to enlighten the administrators of justice themselves.

Christian Wolf was the son of an inn-keeper in the village of T——, and, his father being dead, assisted his mother, till his twentieth year, in the cares of the establishment. The inn became unfrequented, and Wolf had many idle hours. Even while at school he had been known as a waggish boy. Girls brought home complaints of his impertinences, and the youth

of the village did homage to his roguish genius. Nature had done little for his person. A small, unseemly figure, curly hair of a disagreeably dark colour, a broad flat nose, and a swollen upper lip, which had besides been set awry by the kick of a horse, gave a repulsive character to his appearance, which made every woman avoid him, and afforded rich opportunities for the wit of his companions.

He was resolved to obtain what was denied him. Because he was disliked he was determined to please. He became thoughtful, and persuaded himself he was in love. The girl he made choice of treated him ill. He had reason to fear that his rivals were more fortunate than himself, but the girl was poor. A heart that remained shut to his pleadings might, he thought, perhaps open to his presents; but he himself was not rich, and the vain attempt to make his gifts valuable swallowed up even the little he had acquired in his unprofitable employment. Too idle and too thoughtless to support his falling fortune by business, too proud and also too weak to exchange the gentleman for the peasant, and to renounce that freedom which he adored for slavery which he hated, he saw only one course open to him—a course which thousands before and after him have adopted with better success—purchasing respect by theft. His native village bordered upon a royal forest. He became a poacher, and the produce of his robbery went faithfully into the hands of his mistress.

Among the lovers of Annette was Robert, an assistant huntsman to the forester. He early remarked the advantage which the liberality of his rival had gained over him, and with envious eye he sought the cause of this change. He appeared more frequently in 'The Sun'—such was the sign of the inn

—and soon his watchful eye, sharpened by envy and jealousy, discovered the source whence all the money flowed. Not long before this time a severe edict against poaching had been renewed which condemned the transgressor to the house of correction. Robert was unwearied in his attempts to steal upon the secret paths of his enemy, and at length he succeeded in catching the unthinking poacher in the very act. Wolf was arrested, and the sacrifice of the whole of his little property was barely sufficient to raise money to pay the fine to enable him to escape the appointed punishment.

Robert triumphed. His rival was beaten off the field, and the beggar lost the good graces of Annette. Wolf knew his enemy, and this enemy was the fortunate possessor of his beloved. The oppressive feeling of want joined itself to offended pride. Necessity and jealousy united rushed in upon him. Hunger impelled him to go forth into the wide world. Revenge and passion held him fast. He became for the second time a poacher, but Robert's redoubled watchfulness overreached him again. He now experienced the whole rigour of the law, for, as he had no more property that he could sell in order to pay a fine, he was sent to the house of correction in the capital.

His year of punishment was over. His passion, by absence, had increased, and his daring spirit had risen under the weight of misfortune. Scarcely had he received his freedom before he hurried to his native place, to show himself to his Annette. He appeared, and every one shunned him. Threatening necessity at length brought down his pride and overcame his delicacy. He presented himself to the rich of the place, and would willingly serve them for day's wages. The peasants shrugged their shoulders at

the debilitated youth. The brawny forms of his competitors supplanted him in the favour of those who might have been his patrons. He hazarded a last attempt. A situation was vacant, the last forlorn post of respectability. He offered himself as the herdsman of the village common, but the peasants would not trust their swine to such a good-for-nothing wretch. Disappointed in all his projects, rejected on all sides, he became poacher for the third time, and the third time he had the misfortune to fall into the hands of his watchful enemy.

Repetition had aggravated his guilt. The judges looked into the code of laws, but not one of them into the mind or habits of the accused. The mandate against poaching required solemn and exemplary punishment, and Wolf was doomed to have his back branded with the figure of the gallows, and to work three years in the fortress.

This period also expired, and he left his prison, but, alas, how different from what he was when he went thither! Here a new epoch began in his life. Let us listen to his own words, to what he afterwards confessed to his spiritual counsellor and before the judges.

‘I entered the fortress,’ said he, ‘a wanderer from the path of virtue and left it a villain. When I came to it I still possessed something in the world that was dear to me, and my pride shrank under my shame. When I was brought to the fortress I was shut up with twenty-three prisoners, among whom were two murderers, and the rest were all notorious thieves and vagabonds. I was derided when I spoke of God, and urged to repeat the most shameful blasphemies against the Saviour. They sang to me songs which even I, a dissolute boy, listened to with disgust

and horror. Not a day passed wherein the particulars of some infamous transaction were not narrated, wherein some worse project was not devised. At the first I fled this society, and stood aloof from their conversation as much as it was in my power, but I required some creature to keep me company, and the barbarity of my keepers had even refused me the companionship of my dog. The labour was hard and tryannical. My frame was weakly. I required assistance—nay, I will openly avow it, I required pity, and this I was obliged to purchase with the last remains of my conscience. I became at length familiar with the lowest of my associates, and when the last quarter of a year arrived I had surpassed my teachers.

‘From that time I panted for the day of my freedom. I thirsted for revenge. All men had injured me, for all men were better and happier than I was. I regarded myself as the martyr of natural rights, and the victim of the law. With gnashing teeth I dragged my chains when the sun rose behind the mountain on which my prison stood, for a distant prospect is a double hell to a prisoner. The unbound breeze which whistled through the air-holes of my turret, and the swallow that perched itself upon the iron stanchel of my grated window, appeared to be mocking me with their freedom, and made my confinement the more dreadful. I then vowed implacable hatred of all that assimilated itself to humanity, and what I vowed I have honestly kept.

‘My first thought, so soon as I saw myself at liberty, was my native village. Although there was little to be expected there for my future support, still my thirst for revenge promised itself much. My heart beat wilder when the church-tower rose in the

distance from the surrounding wood. It was no longer that hearty joy which I had experienced on my first return. The remembrance of all the hardships, of all the persecutions which I had formerly suffered there, poured on me at once. All my wounds bled anew, every scar was opened up afresh. I redoubled my pace. It refreshed me to anticipate the pleasure of terrifying my enemies by my sudden reappearance, and I thirsted now even as much after new humiliation as formerly I had trembled at it.

‘The bells were ringing for vespers when I reached the centre of the market-place. The people were flocking to church. I was quickly recognised. Every one who met me started back with horror. I had had from my earliest years a peculiar fondness for children, and something now involuntarily impelled me to offer a groschen to a boy that was playing near me. The boy stared at me for a moment, and then threw the piece of money in my face. Had my blood been only somewhat calmer I might have recollected that the beard I had brought with me from the fortress disfigured the features of my face even to hideousness, but my wicked heart had poisoned my reason, and tears such as I had never before shed ran down my cheeks.

“The boy knows not who I am nor whence I come,” said I to myself, “and yet he avoids me like a beast of prey. Am I then marked upon the brow, or have I ceased to bear the semblance of a man since I feel I can no longer bestow on any one my affection?” The contempt of this boy caused me more bitter pain than I had even experienced in my three years’ slavery, for I had done him a favour, and could imagine no reason why he should be moved to regard me with personal hatred.

'I sat down in a woodyard opposite the church. I knew not precisely what I wanted, but I still know I rose up much exasperated. Of all my acquaintances who had passed me, not one had deigned to salute me—not one. Indignantly I left my station to seek out for a lodging, when on turning the corner of a street I came in contact with Annette.

"'Host of 'The Sun,'" cried she, making a motion as if to embrace me. "Thou back again, dear host of 'The Sun'? God be praised that thou art returned."

'Her dress bespoke want and misery. Her countenance had a shameful sickliness in it, and her look announced the abandoned creature she was become. I instantly guessed what had happened. Some of the Prince's dragoons, whom I had just encountered, suggested the idea of a garrison in the village.

"'A soldier's wench,'" cried I, and laughing, turned my back on her. I felt happy that yet one creature was below me in the rank of the living. I had never loved her!

'My mother was dead. My creditors had been paid by the sale of my little house. I had neither friend nor property remaining. All the world shunned me as something poisonous, but I had at last forgotten to be ashamed. Formerly I had avoided the look of men, because contempt was to me intolerable. Now I pressed forward, and was delighted when I could terrify any. I was pleased I had nothing more to lose and nothing more to care for. I required no good quality any longer, because no good was any longer expected from me.

'The whole world lay open before me. I might probably have passed in some strange province for an honest man, but I had not the heart even to pre-

tend to be such. Despair and shame had at last forced this feeling on me. My last resource was to learn to do without honour, because I dare no longer lay claim to any. Had my vanity and my pride survived my humiliation, I must have ended my existence with my own hand.

‘What I should do henceforth was, as yet, unknown to myself. I wished to do evil—of so much I have still the obscure recollection. I wished to deserve my fate.

“The laws,” thought I, “are beneficial to the world, therefore I am determined to violate them.” I had formerly transgressed from thoughtlessness and necessity. I now did so of free choice, for my own pleasure.

‘My first plan was to prosecute my poaching. Hunting in general had, by degrees, become a passion in me, and, besides, I must live. But this was not all. It pleased me much to hold in derision the Prince’s edict, and to injure my sovereign in spite of all his laws. I no longer feared being seized, for I had now a gun ready for my detector, and I knew, too, that my shot could not miss its aim. I killed all the game I saw. I sold but little of it on the frontiers. The greater part was left to rot where it fell. I lived parsimoniously that I might bear the expense of powder and shot. The destruction of the larger game became notorious, but upon me suspicion no longer fell. My look forbade it. My name was forgotten.

‘I followed this sort of life for several months. One morning, according to my usual practice, I had roamed through the wood following the track of a stag. For two hours I had wearied myself in vain, and I had begun to look upon my prize as lost,

when, all at once, I discovered it within shot directly before me.

"I will kill it and carry it away," thought I. The sight of a hat, which lay upon the ground a few paces before me, suddenly terrified me. I looked more narrowly; and recognised the huntsman Robert, who, behind the thick trunk of an oak, was now aiming at the stag for which my shot had been destined. A deadly chill ran through my frame at the sight. He was just the man among all living beings whom I hated most, and this man was placed in the power of my rifle. At the moment it seemed to me as if the whole world relied upon my shot, and as if the hatred of my whole life had concentrated itself upon the trigger with whose movement I could accomplish the murderous deed. An invisible frightful hand pressed upon me. The finger of my destiny irrevocably pointed to this dark moment. My arm trembled while I permitted my gun to make its terrible choice. My teeth gnashed together as if in the chill of an ague, and my breath remained motionless in my lungs. The level of my rifle remained a minute wavering—a minute—then another—then another. Conscience and revenge struggled hard and doubtfully, but revenge proved victorious, and the huntsman lay dead upon the ground.

"My gun fell with the shot.

"Murderer," muttered I, slowly. The forest was as silent as a churchyard. I heard distinctly that I had articulated "murder." As I stepped nearer, the man expired. I stood a long time speechless by the corpse, but at length a loud laugh burst from me.

"Wilt thou now cease to tell tales, worthy friend?" said I, stepping boldly up, while I at the same time

turned round the face of the huntsman. His eyes stood wide open. Instantly I became grave and silent. I felt as I had never felt before.

‘Until this moment I had transgressed as a compensation for my shame, now there was something done for which I had not yet atoned. An hour before, I thought no one could have persuaded me that there was anything worse than myself in existence. Now, I began to suspect that my situation an hour ago was an enviable one.

‘The judgments of God occurred not to my mind, or, if they did, but one flitted before me, and what it was I know not. My brain was perplexed with the thought of rope and hatchet, and the execution of a woman for child-murder which I had witnessed when a schoolboy. Something particularly terrifying, I thought, must happen to myself, for from that moment my life was forfeited. I thought on nothing else. I wished only that the huntsman still lived. I did all that was in my power to recall the evil deeds he had done me when alive, but in vain. My memory was extinct. I could not recollect even one of the various things that had roused me, but a quarter of an hour ago, to madness. I could not conceive how I had brought myself to commit this murderous deed.

‘I was still standing beside the corpse—I might have stood for ever—when the crack of a whip and the creaking of a waggon which was going through the forest brought me to myself. It was scarcely a quarter of a mile from the highroad where the deed was perpetrated. I thought of safety.

‘Involuntarily I plunged deeper into the forest. Upon the way it struck me that the dead man had once possessed a watch. I required money to reach

the frontiers, and yet my courage failed me to return to the place where the corpse lay. Here a thought on the devil and the omnipresence of God terrified me. I gathered up all my boldness and determined to brave the combat even with the powers of hell. I went back to the spot. I found what I expected, and, in a green purse, something more than a dollar in money. In the very act of putting both of these things into my pocket I stopped suddenly and considered. It was no fit of shame, or of fear to aggravate my crime by plunder. It was spite, I believe, which made me throw the watch away from me, and made me keep only the half of the money. I wished to be considered the personal enemy of the slain, not his robber.

'I now flew through the forest. I knew that the wood stretched northwards for four German miles, and there skirted the frontiers of the principality. Until noon I ran on breathlessly. The rapidity of my flight relieved my mental anxiety, but it returned more terribly as my strength became exhausted. A thousand frightful images rose before me, and struck like piercing daggers through my heart. Eetwixt a life full of the fear of death, and a violent death itself, it was now left me to make the dreadful choice, and that choice must instantly be made. I had not the heart to leave the world by suicide, and yet shrank back at the prospect of remaining in it. Held fast between the known miseries of life and the unknown terrors of eternity, alike unfitted to live or to die, I completed the sixth hour of my flight, an hour replete with miseries no living being could describe.

'Wrapt up in myself and weary, with my hat unconsciously drawn down over my face as if this could shroud me from the eye of inanimate nature,

I had insensibly followed a small footpath which led me through the gloomiest part of the forest. All of a sudden a rough commanding voice called to me—"Halt!" The voice was quite near. My distraction and my slouched hat had prevented me from looking round. I raised my eyes, and saw a savage-looking man, with a large knotty stick, approaching me. His figure seemed gigantic—at least my first surprise made me think it so, and his skin was of a yellow mulatto hue, from which the white of a squinting eye obtruded even to frightfulness. Instead of a girdle he had a thick rope bound twice round a green woollen coat, wherein was stuck a broad butcher's knife and a pistol. The cry was repeated, and a powerful arm held me fast. The voice of a man had filled me with terror, but the sight of a villain gave me courage. In the situation wherein I was I had reason to tremble before every honest man, but none before a robber.

"Who art thou?" asked the man.

"Thy equal," was my answer, "if thou really art what thou seem'st to be."

"There is no road this way. What wouldst thou seek here?"

"What right hast thou to ask?" replied I contemptuously.

The man looked at me twice from head to foot. It seemed as if he were comparing my figure with his own, and my answer with his figure.

"Thou speakest like a beggar."

"That may be. I was one yesterday."

The man laughed.

"Any one would swear," cried he, "that even now thou wouldst not pass for much better."

"For something worse,—but I must on."

"Hold, friend. What makes you journey so fast? Is your time so precious?"

"I bethought myself for a moment. I know not how the words came out upon my tongue.

"Life is short," said I slowly, "and hell endures for ever."

He stared at me.

"I will wager now," said he at length, "that thou hast rubbed shoulders with the gallows."

"That may probably happen yet. Farewell till we meet again, comrade."

"Stop, comrade," cried he, while he drew out a tin flask from his hunting-pocket, took a deep draught, and then reached it to me. Flight and anxiety had consumed my strength, and during that whole frightful day nothing had as yet crossed my lips. I was afraid of fainting in the forest. I could not hope to get the least refreshment for three miles around me. It may be guessed how gladly I shared this offered health. My limbs gained new strength from the refreshment, my heart new courage, and there came new hopes and love of life. I began to think that I might not yet be altogether so miserable, so much had this welcome beverage accomplished. Yes, I confess it, I felt that I was still again a man, for at length, after a thousand disappointed hopes, I had found a being who was like myself. In the state to which I was sunk I would have drunk fellowship with the spirits of hell to have gained a confidant.

"The man had stretched himself out upon the grass; I did the same.

"Thy drink has done me good," said I. "We must become better acquainted."

He struck fire to light his pipe.

“Hast thou followed this business long?”

‘He looked sternly at me.

“What dost thou mean by asking?”

“Has *that* been already bloody?” drawing the knife from his girdle.

“Who art thou?” said he fiercely, and laying his pipe aside.

“A murderer like yourself, but only a beginner.”

‘The man looked at me sternly, and took up his pipe again.

“Thou art not of this neighbourhood,” said he, after a pause.

“I am from about three miles distant. The host of ‘The Sun’ in T——, if thou hast ever heard of me.”

‘The man leapt up like one possessed.

“The poacher, Wolf?” he cried hastily.

“The same.”

“Welcome, comrade, welcome!” cried he, and shook me forcibly by the hand. “That is excellent. I have thee at last, mine host of ‘The Sun.’ For days and years I have thought upon how I could catch thee. I know thee right well. I know all. I have long reckoned upon thee.”

“Reckoned upon me. How so?”

“The whole country is full of thee. Thou hast had enemies — a bailiff has oppressed thee, Wolf. Thou hast been crushed to the ground, yet thy wrongs cry up to heaven for vengeance.”

‘The man became warm.

“Because thou hast shot a few wild boars which the Prince fed upon our fields and acorns, they have dragged thee to prison, and then to the fortress. They have stolen from thee house and business. They have made thee a beggar. Is it come to this,

brother, that a man should be no better than a hare ?
Are we no better than the cattle upon the fields ?
And can a fellow like thou endure it ?”

“Can I alter it ?”

“That shall be seen immediately. But tell me whence comest thou now, and what object hast thou in view ?”

‘I told him my whole story. The man, without waiting till I had finished, sprang up with joyful impatience, and drew me up along with him.

“Come, brother host of ‘The Sun,’” said he. “Now thou art ripe. Now I have thee as I wanted thee. Follow me.”

“Whither wouldst thou lead me ?”

“Thou wilt not need to ask long. Follow.”

‘He dragged me forcibly away.

‘We had gone a short quarter of a mile, and the forest became steeper, wilder, and more impassable. Neither spoke a word until at length the whistle of my conductor roused me from my reverie. I raised my eyes ; we stood upon the rugged brink of a precipice, which bent itself below into a deep cavern. A double whistle answered from the innermost centre of the rock, and a ladder rose, as if of itself, slowly from the abyss. My conductor clambered down, and called to me to wait till he should return.

“I must first chain up the dog,” said he. “Thou art a stranger, and the animal would tear thee.”

‘With this he disappeared.

‘Now I stood alone before the abyss, and I knew well, too, that I was alone. The inconsiderateness of my conductor did not escape my notice. It would only have cost me a little determined resolution to have drawn up the ladder, and I was free, and my flight was secured. I confess that I thought of it.

I looked down into the deep cavern, which was now about to receive me. Its gloom reminded me of the abyss of hell, from which there is no escape. I began to shudder at the career I was now about to enter upon. Instant flight only could save me. I determined upon such flight, and had already stretched out my arm for the ladder when, all at once, there thundered in my ear something which sounded to me like the scornful laugh of hell.

“What has a murderer to risk?” and my arm fell powerless by my side. My reckoning was complete. The time of repentance was over; my deed lay behind me like a huge rock, and barred my return for ever. My conductor at the same time reappeared, and told me to come. There was now no longer any choice, and I clambered down.

‘We were scarcely a few steps below the precipice before the ground widened, and several huts became visible. In the middle of these was a round grass plot, upon which were lying, around a blazing coal fire, from eighteen to twenty people.

“Here, comrades,” said my conductor, and placed me in the midst of the circle; “here is our host of ‘The Sun.’ Bid him welcome.”

“Welcome, host of ‘The Sun’!” cried they all at once, while they rose up and pressed around me—men and women. Shall I confess it? Their joy seemed undissembled and hearty. Confidence, and even respect appeared on every countenance. One pressed my hand, another took hold of my coat—their whole behaviour was like a meeting with an old acquaintance that was dear to them. My arrival had broken in upon their meal, which they had just begun. It was immediately resumed, and I was required to drink the welcome.

'The supper consisted of all kinds of game, and the wine-flask wandered continually from neighbour to neighbour. Happiness and harmony seemed to animate the whole band, and each vied with the other to show his joy at my arrival.

'I was placed between two women, in what seemed to be the seat of honour at the table. I expected to see there the very outcasts of their sex, but how great was my astonishment when I discovered, under the meanest apparel, the loveliest females that had ever met my eye. Margaret, the older and prettier of the two, could scarcely be five-and-twenty; she spoke very freely. Maria, the younger, had been married, but had run away from her husband, because he had used her ill. She was of a fine figure, but looked pale and slender, and was less handsome than her companion. The grace of her manner, however, secured her my heart for ever.

"You see, brother host of 'The Sun,'" said the man who had brought me there, "you see how we live with one another, and with us all days are alike. Are they not, comrades?"

"Every day like the present," was repeated by the whole band.

"If, therefore, you can determine to be pleased with our mode of life, then consent to be our leader. Till now I have been such, but I will yield to you. Are you satisfied, comrades?"

'A joyful "Yes" responded from every throat. My head burned, my brain was stunned, my blood boiled with wine and passion. The world had discarded me as it might one afflicted with the plague. Here I found a brotherly reception, comfort, and honour. Whatever choice I made, death awaited me; but I could here at least sell my life at a higher

price. Sensuality was my ruling propensity ; my decision cost me little thought.

“I remain with you, comrades,” said I, with a loud and determined voice, and stepped into the middle of the band. “I remain with you,” cried I again ; and so I became the captain of a band of robbers.’

The following part of the story I pass over altogether. What is merely terrible has nothing instructive in it for the reader. A wretch who had sunk to such a depth would commit much that humanity revolts at ; but he committed no second murder, at least so he himself declared upon the scaffold.

His fame extended itself in a short time throughout the whole province. The roads became insecure. Nocturnal robberies disturbed all the folk ; and the name of the host of ‘The Sun’ became the terror of the country people. Justice sought him out, and a price was set upon his head. He was fortunate in eluding every snare that was laid for him, and was cunning enough to take advantage of the superstition of the credulous peasants to secure his freedom. His associates were directed to spread the report that he had made a compact with the devil, and could make use of witchcraft. The district in which he played his part was then, as it is now, one of the least enlightened in Germany. Full belief was given to this report, and his person was secure. No man showed an inclination for a contest with the dangerous being whom the devil had chosen for his service.

He had followed this dreadful occupation for a twelvemonth when it began to become insupportable to him. The band at whose head he had placed himself fulfilled not his glowing expectations ; a seductive exterior, while he was giddy with wine, had

formerly blinded him. He now perceived with terror how horribly he had been mistaken. Hunger and want appeared in place of the abundance with a show of which he had been gained over. Very often must he risk his life for a single meal barely sufficient to keep him from starvation. The show of brotherly concord disappeared. Envy, suspicion, and jealousy reigned in the hearts of this abandoned society. Justice had offered a reward to any one who would offer him up alive, and if an accomplice did so a complete pardon was offered to him—a mighty temptation for the outcasts of the earth. The unfortunate man knew his danger. The honesty of those who despised God and man was a poor pledge for his life. His sleep henceforward departed. An everlasting death-like anxiety gnawed at his peace. Wherever he went the frightful phantom of suspicion rattled behind him, pained him when he was awake, lay by his side when he went to sleep, and tormented him with horrible dreams. Stifled conscience regained at the same time its voice, and the adder of remorse awoke with this storm in his breast. His whole hatred was now averted from man, and was turned with all its poignancy upon his own head. He forgave all else, and found none to curse save himself.

Vice had completed its instruction to the unhappy man. His naturally good understanding triumphed at length over the melancholy delusion. He felt now how he had fallen, and calm sadness took the place of gnashing despair. With tears he wished the past could return; now, he knew well, he would pass it quite differently. He began to hope he might yet be honest, for he felt in himself he could be so. In the lowest depths of his depravity

he was nearer honesty than probably he ever had been since his first error.

About this time the Seven Years' War broke out, and the levies for soldiers were unusually severe. The miserable man entertained hopes from this circumstance, and wrote a letter to his sovereign, an extract from which I here insert :—

‘If your princely favour does not feel too much disgust to look down upon me, if a criminal of my character does not lie completely beyond the pale of your pity, then grant me, most illustrious Prince, your attention. I am a murderer and a robber. The law condemns me to death. Justice seeks me out, and I offer most willingly to give myself up, but I bring at the same time a strange request before your throne. I abhor my life and fear not death, but it is a terrible thing for me to die without having lived. I would live to make reparation for a portion of the past. I would live to atone to the state which I have injured. My execution would be an example to the world, but no compensation for my deeds. I hate vice, and thirst ardently for honesty and virtue. I have shown ability in being terrible to my native country; I hope I have even yet some ability whereby I might be useful to it.

‘I know I sue for an unheard-of thing. My life is forfeited, and it is not my intention to make a bargain with justice. I appear not in chains and bonds before you. I am still free, and alarm for myself has not the slightest connection with my petition.

‘It is favour I implore. A claim upon justice, even though I had one, I would not attempt to avail myself of. Yet of something I might remind my judges. The catalogue of my crimes began with the

sentence that deprived me for ever of my honour. Had justice been formerly less severe towards me, I should not now require mercy.

'Let your clemency, my Prince, stand in the place of right. If it is in your sovereign power to save me from the law, then grant me my life. It shall be henceforward dedicated to your service. If you can do it, inform me of your gracious determination in the public newspapers, and I shall, upon your princely word, appear in the capital. If you have decided otherwise with me, then let justice act her own part, I must act mine.'

This petition remained unanswered, as well as a second and a third, wherein the supplicant begged to be admitted into the cavalry of the Prince. His hopes of a pardon vanished altogether, and he therefore resolved to fly the country, enter the service of the King of Prussia, and die like a brave soldier.

He dispersed his band and entered upon his journey. The road conducted him through a small town where he wished to pass the night. Strict proclamations had just been issued through the country for a severe examination of all travellers, as the sovereign, a prince of the empire, had taken a part in the war. Such a command the gate-clerk of this town, amongst others, had received. He sat upon a bench before the gate as the host of 'The Sun' rode forward. The appearance of Wolf had something comical in it, and at the same time something terrifying and savage. The meagre horse which he rode, and the grotesque choice of his attire, wherein he had given less proof of his taste than a chronicle of his thefts, contrasted strangely enough with a countenance upon which as many raging passions had stamped their impress as might be seen on the faces of the

corpses scattered on a field of battle. The gate-clerk started at the sight of this strange wanderer. He had grown gray in the service, and forty years' experience had produced in him a physiognomical acquaintance with all travellers.

The hawk-eye of this bloodhound did not miss his man here. He instantly shut the town gate and demanded of the horseman his passport, while he made sure of his horse's reins. Wolf had provided for an accident of this kind, and carried a passport along with him which he had a short time before taken from a merchant whom he had plundered. This solitary token was not sufficient to defeat the observation of the clerk, and to bring the oracle of the town-bar to a recantation of his suspicions. The clerk believed his own eyes rather than the paper, and Wolf was required to follow him to the office of the bailiff.

This official examined the passport and declared it to be right. He was an inveterate lover of news, and liked particularly to talk of the times over a bottle. The passport told him its possessor had come direct from the very theatre of the war. He wished to fish out private intelligence from the stranger, and therefore sent a clerk back with the passport and with an invitation to the traveller to share a bottle of port wine with him.

In the meantime the host of 'The Sun' remained on horseback in front of the office, where his grotesque appearance had collected around him all the scum of the town. They whispered to each other, pointing alternately to the horse and to the rider. The wantonness of the people arose at length to a complete tumult. Unfortunately the horse, to which every one pointed, was a stolen one, and the rider

imagined that it might have been described in the public placards and been recognised. The unexpected invitation of the bailiff confirmed his suspicion. He now considered it as certain that his false passport had betrayed him, and that this invitation was only a snare to seize him alive and without opposition. A bad conscience made him stupid. He put spurs to his horse, and galloped forward without giving any answer to the clerk.

This sudden flight was a proclamation to the rabble. 'A villain!' cried they all, and rushed after him. With the rider it seemed life or death. He had already got in advance. His pursuers followed breathless behind him. He was escaping, but a strong hand pressed invisibly against him. The hour of his destiny was run, the inexorable Nemesis was overtaking him. The street he trusted himself to end in a *cul-de-sac*, and he was obliged to turn round in the face of his pursuers.

The alarm of this event had in the meantime put the whole town into uproar. Crowd joined crowd. Every street was stopped. A host of enemies were in full march upon him. He drew a pistol, and the people fell back. He endeavoured to force his way through the crowd.

'This shot,' cried he, 'is for the daring fool that will try to stop me.'

Fear produced a universal pause ; but a courageous locksmith at length caught his arm from behind, seized the finger with which the furious man would discharge his pistol, and forced it out of joint. The pistol fell. The defenceless man was torn from his horse, and dragged in triumph to the bailiff's house.

'Who art thou?' demanded the official, with something of a brutal tone.

‘A man who is resolved to answer no question till he is treated more politely.’

‘Who are you?’

‘What I gave myself out to be. I have travelled throughout all Germany, and have been insulted nowhere but here.’

‘Your sudden flight makes you an object of suspicion. Why did you fly?’

‘Because I was weary of being the sport of your rabble.’

‘You threatened to fire?’

‘My pistol was not loaded.’

The weapon was examined. There was no shot in it.

‘Why do you carry such weapons about with you?’

‘Because I bear with me things of value, and because, too, I have been warned about a certain host of “The Sun,” that rambles about this neighbourhood.’

‘Your answers prove much for your assurance, but nothing for your honesty. I shall give you till to-morrow to see whether you will discover the truth.’

‘I shall adhere to my present declaration.’

‘Let him be conducted to prison.’

‘To prison? Mr. Officer, I hope there is still justice in this country. I shall demand satisfaction.’

‘I shall give it to you as soon as you are cleared from suspicion.’

In the morning the officer considered that the stranger might yet possibly be innocent, that imperious words would have no power over his stubbornness, and that therefore it might be better to meet him with calmness and moderation. He

assembled the council of the place, and ordered the stranger to be brought up.

'Pardon me, sir,' said he, 'if in the heat of the moment I yesterday treated you somewhat hastily.'

'Most willingly, since you address me thus.'

'Our laws are severe, and your adventure caused alarm. I cannot grant you your freedom without violating the laws. Appearances are against you. I wish you would tell me something whereby the suspicion might be removed.'

'And if I should know nothing?'

'Then I must inform the government of your detention, and you must remain a while in confinement.'

'And then?'

'Then you run the danger, if you are found not to be what you represent, of being either whipped across the frontiers as a vagabond, or, if you are mercifully dealt with, put under the drill-sergeant.'

Wolf was silent for a few moments, and appeared to suffer a severe mental conflict. Then he turned suddenly round to the officer, saying—

'May I be alone with you for a quarter of an hour?'

The members of the council looked at one another, not knowing what to do, but upon a significant nod from their President they retired.

'Well, what do you desire?'

'Your yesterday's behaviour, Mr. Officer, would never have brought me to a confession, for I despise force. The modest discretion, however, with which you have to-day treated me has inspired me with respect and confidence. I believe you are an honourable man.'

'What have you to say to me?'

‘I see you are an honourable man. I have long wished to meet with such a one. Permit me to take your right hand.’

‘What means all this?’

‘That head is gray and venerable. You have been long in the world. You have probably suffered much, have you not? and have become more humane in consequence.’

‘Well, sir, and whither does all this lead?’

‘You stand but a step from eternity. Soon, soon, you will require pity from your God. Will you refuse such pity to a man? Do you suspect nothing? With whom do you think you speak?’

‘What is all this? You surprise me.’

‘Have you no suspicion yet? Write to your Prince, tell him how you found me, and how I was, from choice, my own betrayer. May God be one day as merciful to him as he will now be to me! Pray for me, old man, and let a tear fall as you write your communication. I am the host of “The Sun.”’

THE CRAZY HALF-HELLER

IN the year 17— a young German merchant named Richard chanced to visit Venice, the widely celebrated seat of traffic and commerce. In consequence of its being then the period of the Thirty Years' War, all Germany was at that time a scene of dissension. No wonder, therefore, if the young merchant, who was a gallant more inclined to banqueting and luxurious indulgence than to feats of arms, was not greatly displeased at his affairs calling him for some time to Italy, where things wore a less hostile appearance, and where, too, he had heard there was no lack of the richest wines, the most delicious fruits, or beautiful women. He soon plunged into all manner of excesses, and continued daily to indulge in revels and in the society of mirthful faces. In all the company of brave gallants with whom he at length constantly associated there was but one countenance overcast with gloom. It was that of a Spanish captain, who, though he never failed to be present at these scenes of riot, rarely bestowed a word upon the company, while his dark features were rendered still more gloomy by the visible uneasiness which sat upon them. Still his presence was endured, for he was a man of rank and wealth, and one, too, who regarded but lightly the expense of treating his friends evening after evening.

Richard, in the meantime, although less liberal of his purse than he had been at first, found his finances rapidly decreasing, and he reflected with no small sorrow that this joyous kind of life must quickly terminate. His associates were not slow in observing his melancholy, or in divining the cause of it—his being by no means the first instance of the kind that had occurred within their society—nor did they spare their taunts, so that our gallant was fain to venture among them the last precious relics of his purse. While things were in this condition, the Spaniard one evening drew him aside, and, with unexpected courtesy, requesting that he would accompany him abroad, led him to a lone and retired spot. The youth was, at first, rather alarmed, but quieted his apprehensions by reflecting that his companion well knew that he had little else with him than his skin, and in that Richard was determined a hole should not be picked without his returning the compliment.

The Spaniard, having first seated himself on the ruins of an old building, compelled his companion to do the same, and addressing him, said—

‘I cannot help thinking, my young friend, that you stand greatly in need of that which has long become a burden to myself, namely, the power of procuring whatever sum of money you choose, and whenever you please. This power, such as it is, I am willing to dispose of to you for a trifling amount, besides some other advantages into the bargain.’

‘What occasion,’ inquired Richard, ‘can you possibly have for money, if you wish to part with the power of obtaining it yourself?’

‘The case stands thus,’ returned the captain. ‘I know not whether you are acquainted with certain little spirits that are called bottle-imps. They are

small black devils enclosed in a little phial. Whoever possesses one of these can command whatever worldly possession he desires most, especially abundance of gold. In return for these services, the soul of the person who possesses the imp becomes forfeit, in case he die without having previously disposed of him, and this can be done only by his receiving a less sum than that which he first paid for the spirit. Mine cost me ten ducats—for nine it is yours.'

While the youth was reflecting on this extraordinary offer, the Spaniard continued—

'I could, if I pleased, easily get rid of the thing by palming it upon some one as a mere curiosity, in which manner a knavish fellow inveighed me to purchase it, but I do not wish to have the weight of such an ill deed upon my conscience, and therefore honestly and fairly acquaint you with the bargain. You are still young and high-spirited, and will not fail to meet with opportunities enough of disposing of your purchase whenever you may become as weary of it as I am even now.'

'Sir,' said Richard, 'if you would not take it ill of me, I could tell you how often I have been imposed upon already in this good city of Venice.'

'Why, thou foolish fellow,' exclaimed the Spaniard, 'thou needest but call to mind the brave entertainment I gave last evening to judge whether I would cheat thee of a paltry nine ducats.'

'Who spends much, wants much,' observed the young merchant, 'and the longest purse we know has a bottom, and that not a golden one.'

'If I do not chastise thee for this insolence it is because I still hope that thou wilt help to rid me of my bottle-imp, and, indeed, I would not willingly harm thee.'

‘Might I not be favoured with some specimen of the thing’s abilities?’ inquired the wary merchant.

‘How may that be?’ answered the other. ‘It will neither remain with any one, nor aid any one, save him who has fairly purchased and paid for it.’

The youth could not help feeling some alarm at the idea of possessing such a spirit, but, in spite of his fears, his imagination dwelt upon the enjoyment that would be in his power, were he the owner of the imp. He determined to try to obtain it, if possible, at a cheaper rate.

‘Witless fellow that thou art,’ exclaimed the Spaniard, with a laugh. ‘It is for thy sake and for the sake of those who shall come after thee that I demand the highest sum I can, that I may delay, as long as possible, the time when it shall be purchased for the smallest possible coin, and the soul of the purchaser thereby become inevitably forfeit because he cannot sell the imp again at a lower price.’

‘Well,’ said Richard, ‘let me have it. I warrant me I shall not be very eager to get quit of my purchase in a hurry. If, therefore, I could have it for five ducats——’

‘It is all one to me,’ returned the Spaniard, ‘but remember you are hastening on the minute when the evil spirit shall claim the last unhappy possessor as his own.’

With these words, he delivered up to his companion, in return for his gold, a small glass phial, wherein Richard could just discern, by the light of the stars, something dark, that kept leaping up and down.

By way of making an experiment he demanded, though but mentally, to have double the amount of

the sum he had just expended in his right hand. He instantly felt the ducats thrust into his palm. He returned in glee to the tavern, and the company, who were still carousing there, were not a little astonished at perceiving what cheerful countenances were now worn by those who were lately in so melancholy a mood. The Spaniard quickly retired without awaiting the banquet, which, late as it was, Richard ordered to be prepared.

One of the first things that the young merchant sought when he found himself in the possession of such wealth was the company of one of the beautiful women whose charms had first impressed him when he arrived in Venice. It chanced that, one day as he was sitting with Lucretia in the garden of one of his villas, she suddenly snatched the phial, which Richard constantly wore in his bosom attached to his neck by a chain of gold. She had seized it before he was aware, and she held the little bottle up against the light. At first she was highly amused by the antics of the little black figure, but at length she shrieked out—

‘Ah! the nasty creature is a toad!’ and immediately flung chain, phial, and bottle-imp into the river, where the current at once carried them away.

The youth endeavoured to hide his distress lest his mistress should inquire further into the matter. As soon as he could he quitted Lucretia in order to consider what it was best for him now to do. He was still in possession of his palace and villas, and had, moreover, in his pockets no inconsiderable sum in the shape of bright ducats. But on putting his hand into his pocket, how great was his joy to discover there his lost phial. The chain was not on it, and probably remained at the bottom of the

stream, but the phial and its little black tenant had faithfully returned back to their owner.

‘Now then,’ exclaimed he, in a burst of transport — ‘now then I find I possess here a treasure, of which no accident, no earthly power can possibly deprive me.’

He would even have kissed the phial had not the little jumping black figure excited his aversion, so loathsome did it appear.

If his doings had been wild and mad enough before, they were now ten times worse. He regarded even kings and princes with a disdainful compassion, convinced that not one of them was able to indulge in such a luxurious life as himself. Even Venice, the most opulent mart in the world, could hardly find dainties enough for his extravagant banquets.

Did a well-meaning friend hint at the imprudence of this continual rioting, he would reply indignantly—

‘My riches are boundless.’

Often would he, in a fit of intemperate mirth, rudely jest at the folly of the Spaniard, who had cast such a prize from him, and, as Richard had heard it said, had retired into a monastery.

On this earth, however, there is nothing which lasts for ever. In a short time, in consequence of the intemperance and sensuality into which he plunged, a deathly languor seized upon him in spite of all the virtue of his phial, which he vainly kept invoking for health. Recovery visited him not, but, on the contrary, frightful dreams.

One night as he lay sleepless in his bed it seemed to him that one of the phials which were standing by his bedside began to set up a wild dance, jostling against the rest in a furious fashion. After gazing

at it for some minutes, Richard recognised it to be that in which the little spirit was enclosed, and exclaimed—

‘Bottle-devil, bottle-devil, thou assistest me no more, but rather destroyest that which should work my cure!’

Whereupon the little black thing sang in a hoarse voice—

‘Richard, Richard ! thou prayest in vain,
Prepare thee now for eternal pain.
Therein must thou abide and endure,
Since spirit’s power can work no cure.
No herb that groweth death can heal.
I joy, for thou art mine, I feel.’

Then it stretched itself out quite long and thin, and, notwithstanding that Richard kept the phial stopped as closely as possible, it crept out between his thumb and the cork. Then it became a hideous figure, and placed its breast on Richard’s bosom, and its grinning face upon Richard’s face, so that the youth felt as if he were himself assuming the hideous figure, and in a tone of wild agony screamed out for a mirror.

A cold sweat stood upon his brow as he awoke out of the ghastly dream, and he thought he perceived a monstrous black toad creep down beside him into his bed. Upon putting down his hand, he felt only the phial in which the little black figure lay.

How awfully long did the remainder of that horrible night seem to the sick and frenzied wretch ! He dare not again resign himself to sleep lest the terrific vision should reappear. He lay in a state of torturing horror throughout the whole of the long

dreary night, the terror of which was increased when he reflected that if this single night appeared almost an eternity of terrors, what must seem the eternal night of hell on which no day would ever dawn—that night to whose dreadful visions there would be no end? He determined, at all events, upon getting rid of the fatal phial the very next morning.

When morning came, however, he felt his spirits so much revived that he began to ask himself whether he had yet turned the bottle-imp sufficiently to account. Palace and villas, and all the luxuries wherewith they were furnished, seemed not enough. He, therefore, instantly demanded a great heap of ducats to be placed under his pillow, and on finding them there instantaneously, he began to reflect how best to dispose of the talisman. He knew that his physician was a great naturalist, and one who sought much after monsters, and all such wonderful productions as are generally kept in spirits. He hoped, therefore, that he should be able to pass off the bottle-imp on the learned man as a curiosity of that description. The deceit, indeed, could hardly be termed an innocent one, but need knows no niceties.

Accordingly he offered the doctor the little spirit, which the learned man, anxious to examine what he considered a wonderful *lusus naturæ*, agreed to purchase. He would, however, give no more than three ducats for it; and Richard, fearing to lose his customer, at last accepted that sum, taking care, however, to bestow it all in alms to the poor. The money which he had under his pillow he laid by as the only fund upon which his future wealth and prosperity depended.

In the meanwhile his disorder increased, and for some time he lay in a constant delirium. At length

he gradually grew better, and when he came to himself the only thing which seemed to retard his recovery was his solicitude about the ducats, which he did not find beneath his pillow. At first he was loath to make inquiry about them; when he did so, no one could give him any account of them. Being unable to obtain any information respecting the gold, it only remained for him to consider how he might best sell his mansion and villas. But here, too, he reckoned without his host, for a throng of creditors appeared with various claims upon his estates, all duly signed by himself and sealed with his own signet. He recollected that he had, at the time of his boundless prosperity, given these papers to Lucretia, to fill up as she judged proper. All that he could now do was to depart as quickly as possible from Venice with the little he could save from these harpies. He was almost a beggar.

At this juncture his physician made his appearance, with a countenance betokening great displeasure.

'Doctor,' exclaimed the young merchant, 'if it be that you are come here, like the rest of your fraternity, with a long bill, pray add another item to the account, and see, good doctor, that it is for laudanum, or some equally potent drug, for my last bread is now baked, as I know but too well, for I have no money to buy more.'

'Nay, nay,' replied the physician, 'things are not yet so bad as that. I am not only ready to renounce every demand upon you, but I have also prepared a certain most efficacious medicine, that will quickly revive you from this despondency. All I ask for it is two ducats.'

'And most readily will I pay them,' replied the

youth ; and having done this, the doctor handed him a box, and forthwith departed. On Richard's opening the box, wherein he expected to find the cordial restorative, how great was his dismay to discover in it but the phial in which was contained the little bottle-devil. Around the phial was a paper on which were written these words :

'Thy body I strove to cure from ill,
But thou my soul hast sought to kill,
Yet has my art 'bove craft of thine,
Perceived full soon thy base design.
Let me then now retaliate,
To thee again revert thy fate.
Be thine once more the dreadful sprite,
And mayest thou feel his fullest might.'

Great indeed was Richard's alarm at finding that he had repurchased his phial, and that too at so much lower a price. The only consolation that now remained was to employ it as an instrument of revenging himself upon his treacherous mistress, and this he effected in the following manner.

Having first of all summoned by a wish a sum of money double that which he had lost, he carried and deposited it all with the nearest scrivener, except one hundred and twenty pieces, with which, placing the phial in his pocket, he betook himself to the house of the faithless Lucretia. His reception was exactly such as he had supposed that his gold would procure him. After some time he displayed the curious phial he had brought, which he informed Lucretia was exactly like the one she had thrown into the river. She was amused with it, and was desirous of obtaining such a curious thing, and on the youth's sportively asking a ducat for

it, she gave it to him without hesitation. This bargain being completed, Richard hastened away as quickly as he could, and repaired to the scrivener with whom he had deposited his money. He now found, however, that gold sticks so fast to certain people's fingers that they cannot tear themselves away from it. The honest man stared with the utmost astonishment, protesting most vehemently that he had never clapped eyes on the young fellow before. This worthy specimen of probity had written his receipt for the sum deposited with an ink which totally disappeared in the space of a few hours; and when Richard produced his receipt he found that he had merely a piece of plain paper. He thus found himself suddenly reduced to poverty, and would indeed have been a beggar had he not had still thirty ducats remaining of what he had carried with him to Lucretia's.

He who lies in too short a bed must soon pull up his legs. He who has no bed must couch on the floor. He who cannot afford to ride must walk. So it was with the merchant, who was now fain to become a pedlar.

For this purpose he provided himself with a suitable box. With what a heavy heart did he first buckle it on to take his stand with some small ware in those very streets through which, but a few weeks before, he used to pass with a splendid retinue. In a little while, however, he became somewhat reconciled to this new occupation, having no lack of customers.

'If I proceed at this rate,' thought he, 'I may yet again become a prosperous man, and that too at no very distant time. I will then return to my native Germany, where I shall find myself more comfortable

than ever, after having been in the power of the accursed bottle-devil, and having got out of his clutches by my own skill and dexterity.'

With such thoughts did he cheer and console himself on retiring for the night to an obscure inn. On his taking off his box, several of the guests, attracted by curiosity, began to examine the various wares it contained.

'My good friend,' exclaimed one of these inquisitive gentry, 'what queer kind of animal is this which you have got here in this phial, and which keeps jumping about at so strange a rate?'

To his great terror Richard now for the first time perceived that, along with the other articles in his box, he had purchased the fatal bottle-devil. He instantly offered it to the bystanders for a trifling sum, but not one of them could endure the hideous creature, neither could Richard inform them that it was of any particular use. Nevertheless he continued to harass them at such a rate with his entreaties that they would purchase it, that at length they thrust him and his wares out into the street.

In the anguish of his distress he returned to the person who had sold him the box, and pressed him to take back the phial. The fellow, however, quite out of temper at being disturbed at such an unseasonable hour, and little disposed to become a dealer in such strange commodities, bade him begone and take his trumpery to Lucretia, for she it was who had lately sold him the stock of trinkets, among which was that queer-looking phial.

Without waiting to hear another syllable, Richard ran off to Lucretia as quickly as if he had the devil driving him, instead of himself carrying an imp. He found her in company of two gentlemen. At first

they rated the rude pedlar for daring to intrude upon them, but afterwards they purchased nearly all his stock, for Lucretia recognised some of her old valuables and also their present vendor. The sight of him in such a condition did not seem by any means to damp her mirth. As to the bottle-imp, however, no one would purchase it, for Lucretia protested that she could not endure to look at the ugly thing.

‘Say not so,’ replied Richard, ‘my fair inconsiderate! Permit me but to whisper in your ear some of its virtues, and I am sure you will hesitate no longer.’

She retired with him a little aside, and he disclosed to her all the powerful occult qualities of his little bottle-imp.

‘How now, you cheat!’ cried the incredulous girl. ‘Dost thou think to impose upon people with such fine tales as these? Were it true, I am sure thou hadst taken care first to provide thyself with something better than those filthy rags. Out with thee, thou knave! Begone, or I will denounce thee for a sorcerer and dealer in the black art, and then both thyself and thy devil may be burnt together.’

Both the gallants now took part in the fray, and they kicked the unfortunate pedlar and his wares downstairs. Unable to resent the indignity, and terrified at the idea of being burnt as a wizard, Richard hastened to leave Venice with all possible expedition; and on the following day he quitted a territory which he now regarded as the land of all his misfortunes.

In the meanwhile, he did not forget a nearer cause of his unhappiness, but drawing the little dusky imp out of his pocket, he cried—

‘Thou miscreant devil! if I again call on thee for thy services it is that I may rid myself of thee for ever.’

Having thus vented the bitterness of his feelings, he forthwith desired to have a sum much more considerable than the last, and then, almost sinking under its weight, he proceeded to the next town. Here he purchased a splendid equipage, hired a numerous retinue, and set out for Rome, convinced that there he should soon be able to find some one who would not scruple to take his unwelcome little companion off his hands. As often as he expended a ducat he required the imp to replace it by another in order that, after selling his phial, he might still have the same sum. This seemed to him no more than a fair compensation for the horrors he constantly endured, for, in addition to the nightly visits of the terrible apparition, which now never failed to come, he saw also the bottle-devil constantly frisking about the phial with the most horrible glee as if now quite certain of his prey.

Hardly had his wealth and the figure which he made procured him admission into the first circles of society, than his constant dread would not allow him to wait until he found a proper opportunity of freeing himself from his tormentor. He was continually offering his phial to every person, demanding for it three groschen in German money, and so in a short time he became looked upon as a lunatic, and was a subject of ridicule to every one. Money makes a good mood, and many a fair friend withal. So it was with Richard, yet no sooner did he produce his phial and begin to talk of three groschen than all present were glad to escape his importunity.

So great at length was his despair that he could

no longer endure to remain at Rome, but determined to try his fate in war, hoping that, by some chance, he might there at least get rid of the cause of his misery. He had heard that two small Italian states were engaged in hostilities, and he prepared to espouse the cause of one of the parties. Adorned with a rich golden cuirass, a serpent crest of plumes, and armed with two light hunting-pieces, an admirably tempered sword, and two beautiful daggers, he set out mounted on a noble Spanish steed, and attended by three followers, all of whom were bravely equipped.

A volunteer of so gallant a bearing need not offer his services in vain. Richard soon found himself, therefore, attached to a troop of brave comrades, and led such a jovial life in camp with drinking and singing that his mortal apprehensions and nocturnal visions gradually began to leave him. Having learnt a lesson from what he had experienced at Rome, he was now cautious in offering his strange ware for sale, taking care not to urge its purchase with such suspicious earnestness. Indeed, he had hardly spoken of it to any one, hoping thereby to have an opportunity of meeting with some one who would not refuse it if it were offered quite suddenly and with seeming indifference.

One morning as Richard was playing at dice with some companions they were suddenly summoned to battle by an alarm sounded on the trumpet. The cry was instantly, 'To horse!' With joyous spirits did he leap upon his horse as it neighed and pawed the ground. The leaders encouraged their troops. The signal was given for the combat. A troop of the enemy's cavalry advanced, apparently for the purpose of hindering the attack, but they soon retired before the charge of their adversaries, and Richard

and his followers were not the last among the pursuers. The balls now began to whiz in the air, and many a rider fell from his horse, rolling to the earth in his blood. Spite of his personal courage, Richard could not think without shuddering of the immediate peril in which he was placed, fearing that some fatal ball might in a single moment deliver him into the infernal power. Scarcely had he expressed a wish to escape from the scene of danger ere his steed bore him away to a wood which was no great distance off. So hard did he spur the animal and urge it to flight that when it at length stopped it was quite exhausted. He then alighted, being himself greatly fatigued, unbuckled his cuirass, took off his sword and the trappings of his horse, and lying down on the grass, said—

‘This fighting is dangerous work at the best, but much more so with a devil in one’s pocket.’

He now began to consider what course it would be best for him to pursue, and while he was doing this he fell into a profound sleep.

After he had indulged in a repose for several hours, he was awakened by the sound of voices and approaching footsteps. He remained quiet in the hope that he might be passed unnoticed, but he soon found that the attempt would not succeed, for a voice, in no very friendly or musical tone, thundered out—

‘Ho! fellow! art thou already dead or are we to have the honour of killing thee?’

Looking up at this uncourteous address, the unfortunate Richard perceived a musket levelled at his breast. The fellow who held it was a ruffianly looking foot-soldier, and some of his companions had already seized upon the steed and equipments as their booty. Struck with terror, Richard supplicated most

earnestly for mercy, but added that if they were determined to shoot him, he requested that one of them would first purchase a little phial he had in his pocket.

'Senseless fool that thou art,' cried one of the fellows, with a grin, 'to suppose that we here barter for anything. That we will take the phial off thy hands thou needest not fear.'

So saying he seized hold of the phial, and thrust it into his bosom.

'In God's name thou art welcome to it,' cried Richard, 'if thou canst keep it, but that thou canst not do unless thou first purchase it.'

The soldiers laughed at hearing him speak thus, and thinking him somewhat crack-brained, rode off without paying any further attention to him.

On feeling in his pocket Richard found the phial there, whereupon, holding it up that they might see it, he called the soldiers back again.

'Did I not tell thee,' said he mournfully, 'that it would not continue with thee? Pay me but the trifle that I demand, and it is thine own.'

'Juggler,' said the soldier, 'do you think to cheat me with your tricks?'

He took the phial again in his hands, and away he ran to overtake his companions. Suddenly, however he stopped short, exclaiming with an oath that it was gone again. Whilst he was searching for it on the ground, Richard called out to him once more.

'Return hither, my good friend, for it is in my pocket.'

On finding this to be really the case, the soldier became more desirous to possess so curious and wonderful a thing. On these occasions the little spirit always manifested more liveliness and agility, knowing

that such bargains accelerated the final term of its servitude.

Three groschen, however, still seemed too much to the soldier.

‘Well then, since thou art so unwilling to part with thy coin, let it be a single groschen, and take away thy purchase in a good hour.’

The bargain was concluded, the money paid, and the little bottle-devil delivered over to its new master. While the soldier and his companions were examining the creature, and amusing themselves with its grim antics, Richard was reflecting upon his future destiny. His heart now felt quite light, but unfortunately his purse was as light as his heart, nor did he know to what to betake himself, for he would not venture to return to his troop, although he had left there not only his followers and luggage, but also his money. He was partly ashamed of his disgraceful flight, and partly afraid that if he returned he might be put to death as a deserter. It occurred to him that it would not be amiss for him to offer to accompany these troopers, having gathered from their discourse that they belonged to the other party, among whom he was sure to remain unknown. Now that he had lost all his cash and got rid of his little devil as well, he felt that he had got back some of his courage in exchange, and was by no means disinclined to venture his life once again in the hope of obtaining some valuable spoil. He accordingly gave utterance to his wishes, and, his proposal being accepted, he forthwith set off with his new comrades.

The captain was not very scrupulous about taking into his service such a tall and well-built young fellow as Richard, who was therefore considered as fairly enlisted among them. He was still, however,

displeased with his lot, for since the last battle the two armies remained quite inactive without any attack being made, a treaty of peace being agitated. Under these circumstances there was little danger of wounds, but at the same time very little opportunity of fattening on booty and plunder. Instead of that the troops had to content themselves with camp fare and their scanty pay. In addition to this, while his comrades had enriched themselves in the preceding engagements, Richard, the once wealthy merchant, was almost the only one who was a beggar among opulent neighbours. Very naturally, therefore, he grew weary of such a life, so that once having received his monthly pay—too inconsiderable for his wants, and yet too much for him not to attempt to do something with it—he determined to go to a sutling booth and see whether the dice would not befriend him more than either traffic or war had done.

His success was as variable as usual. Now he won, now he lost, and so it continued till late at night, when all the dice turned up against him, so that he lost all that he had. He now offered to stake his cartridges, having nothing else to offer. The proposal was accepted, and as the throw was about to be made, Richard perceived that the soldier who had accepted the stake was the man who had purchased the bottle-devil, by the assistance of which he would doubtless be certain of winning. He would fain have cried 'Hold!' but the dice had already decided in favour of his opponent. Uttering curses on his ill fate, he quitted the company, and retired in the dark to his own tent. A comrade, who had been equally unfortunate at play, but whose brain was less heated with wine, took him by the arm, and as they were

proceeding together he inquired whether he had any more cartridges in his tent.

‘No,’ returned Richard, furiously; ‘did I possess any, they too should serve me for the same purpose.’

‘Then,’ said his companion, ‘you would do well to provide yourself with fresh ones, for should the commissary come to examine them and find you without them he will order you to be shot.’

‘Zounds! That were plaguy work, indeed; but I have neither cartridges nor wherewithal to procure them.’

‘Thine is a sorry case, indeed,’ replied the other, ‘for the commissary comes here to-morrow.’

This intelligence served in some degree to sober Richard, and he went to inquire of his comrades if any one would lend him some cartridges. All, however, laughed at him as a wild fellow, and told him not to bother them with unseasonable stuff. In the utmost apprehension lest he should be ordered to be shot the very next day, he rummaged everywhere in the hope of finding some loose coin, but could meet with no more than five hellers. Late as it now was he hurried from tent to tent in the hope of finding some one who would supply him with the cartridges. Some laughed at, others abused him, but none would give him what he wanted. At length he came to a tent the occupant of which he discovered to be the very soldier who had so lately stripped him of his cartridges at play.

‘Comrade,’ cried Richard, in great agitation, ‘if there is any one it is yourself who must help me in this extremity. Just now you won of me all my cartridges, nor is it the first time in my life that you have proved the cause of my misfortunes. The commissary comes here to-morrow, and unless I can pro-

duce my cartridges he will certainly give orders for me to be shot. You must either give, lend, or sell me some.'

'As to either giving or lending, that I have long ago forsworn, but to ease your distress I will agree to sell you some. What money have you?'

'Five hellers,' replied Richard in a melancholy tone.

'Well,' said the soldier, 'to show thee that I am willing to do thee a comrade's turn, there are five cartridges for thy five hellers. Now, therefore, go to thy rest, and disturb neither me nor my neighbours any longer.'

On the following day the troops were examined, and Richard passed muster with his five cartridges, at which he felt for a while supremely happy in spite of all the misfortunes he had undergone. His joy was, however, of but very short duration, for on returning to his tent he found himself obliged to dine off coarse bread without any better sauce to it than his own reflections.

'What would not I give now,' sighed he, 'had I but one of all the ducats which, in the days of my folly, I so wantonly squandered away!'

Hardly had he formed the wish, when, lo! a beautiful bright golden ducat was in his hand. The thought of the bottle-devil, which instantly flashed across his mind, damped all the satisfaction he might have felt at finding himself the possessor of so acceptable a piece of gold.

At that instant the comrade of whom he had purchased the cartridges entered the tent with a look of anxiety and said—

'Friend, I have missed the phial with the little black creature. You must remember it well. It is

the same I formerly purchased of yourself. Has it happened that I sold it to you by mistake for a cartridge, for I wrapped it up in a piece of paper and it was lying close beside them ?'

With a trembling hand Richard searched in his cartridge-box, and found, the first thing he took hold of, the fatal phial wrapped up as a cartridge.

'Ha !' cried the soldier, 'that is all right. To say the truth, ugly as the creature is, I should be loath to lose it, for I somehow cannot help fancying it helps me to good luck. So, comrade, take one of my hellers back again and return me my bottle.'

Richard readily acceded to this proposal, and the soldier departed equally pleased.

Poor Richard was ill at ease after having met with his bottle-devil once more, and after having had it in his possession. He could not help imagining he saw it grinning at him between the folds of his tent, and that it would strangle him in his sleep. Much as he stood in need of refreshment, he flung the piece of money from him, and at length his terror lest the accursed being should once more return while he continued there rose to such a pitch that he fled from the camp, and entered a thick wood, where, exhausted by alarm and fatigue, he sank down in a lonely spot.

'Ah me,' he exclaimed there, panting, 'if I had but a camp-bottle with water to keep me from dying from faintness !' and the bottle with the water stood beside him. It was not till he had drunk a hearty draught that he thought of asking himself by what means it came there. The bottle-devil occurred to him, when, putting his hand into his pocket, he found the phial there. Overcome with sudden horror he fell down in a deep swoon.

While he continued in this state his former horrible dream returned, wherein he saw the little bottle-imp stretch himself out, longer and longer, and at last fix himself, grinning most hideously, on his breast. He expostulated with the monster, asserting that it no longer belonged to him, but the creature replied with a hollow laugh—

‘Thou bought’st me for a heller, and must therefore either sell me for less or the bargain will not hold.’

Richard leaped up in horror, and thought he again beheld the terrific figure re-entering the phial in his pocket. In a state of agonised phrenzy he dashed the phial down a steep hollow, but instantly afterwards felt it again in his pocket.

‘Alas, alas!’ screamed the unhappy wretch. ‘How fortunate I once considered myself at finding that, let me cast the phial away ever so far, it always returned to me! That it does so is now my misery—yes, my everlasting misery!’

Thereupon he began to run furiously among the wild brushwood, dashing in the dark against trunks of trees and pieces of rock, and hearing, at every step he took, the phial clinking in his pocket.

By daybreak he arrived at an open plain which had the appearance of being well cultivated. Somewhat revived by the prospect, he began to hope that what he had gone through was merely a wild dream and that the phial would prove to be no more than a common bottle. He took it out and held it up against the sun. Alas! he still perceived the little black monster dancing up and down, and stretching out towards him, as usual, its little ugly misshapen arms, as if it would seize hold of him. Uttering a loud cry of agony he let the phial fall on the ground, only to feel it in his pocket immediately afterwards.

The thing of the utmost consequence for him now to do was to inquire everywhere for some coin of less value than a heller. Nowhere could he meet with any such piece of money, so that at length, despairing of ever being able to get rid of the monster that now threatened inevitably to become his master, he no longer thought of calling upon it for its services. His increasing horror would permit him to think of nothing but his miserable situation. He wandered up and down, subsisting upon charity and alms, and as he had a wild, crazy appearance, and was constantly beseeching every one for some piece of money less than a heller, he was considered a madman, and was called 'Crazy Half-heller,' by which name he was soon known far and wide.

It is said that the vulture sometimes fixes itself by its talons to the back of a young deer, and thus hunts to death the poor animal, which, as it flees in agony, still carries along with it its savage relentless enemy. Thus was it with Richard and the Satanic imp in the phial.

Instead of accompanying him in his continued and unvarying misery, let us pass over a considerable interval and arrive at an important event.

He had one day lost himself in a wild rocky country, and had sat down to rest beside a little stream whose murmuring seemed to sympathise with his affliction. A loud sound of a horse's feet rang on the rocky surface of the ground, and there came, riding on a large, black, wild-looking steed, a man of a gigantic figure, and of an exceedingly terrific countenance. He was attired in a deep blood-red garment, and approached the spot where Richard was sitting.

'Wherefore so melancholy, young stranger?' said

he, addressing himself to the youth, who involuntarily shuddered at his voice, as if with a vague presentiment of something evil. 'I should take thee to be a merchant. Hast thou then been making a bad bargain? Hast purchased anything at too high a price?'

'Alas, no! Rather at too low a one,' replied Richard in a tremulous tone.

'Aye, so I should think, indeed,' rejoined the horseman, with a grim laugh; 'and hast thou then got for sale a thing which they call a bottle-imp? Or am I mistaken in conjecturing that you are the Crazy Half-heller?'

The poor youth was hardly able to reply, so great was his horror, for he expected every moment that the apparition's mantle would expand itself into wide-spreading wings, and, while his steed assumed a more terrific spectral appearance, breathing forth infernal flames from its nostrils, the monster would carry him off to the regions of eternal misery.

But the ghastly horseman said, in somewhat milder voice, and with less appalling mien—

'I perceive for whom you take me, yet be comforted, for I am not he. I rather present myself to rescue you, if so may be, from his power, having for some days past been searching for you to become the purchaser of your phial. To tell the truth, my friend, thou hast paid a most terribly small sum for it, nor can even I inform you where it is possible to meet with a coin of less value. Listen and obey me. On the other side of this mountain lives a young prince who is a sad dissolute young dog. When he comes from the chase to-morrow I will first draw him away from his attendants, and will then cause a monster to fall upon him. Wait thou here till midnight, and then proceed, just as the moon rises above that

jagged rock, to the defile towards the left, but neither hurry nor loiter in thy pace. So wilt thou arrive at the spot precisely as the monster seizes the prince. Attack it, but courageously, for it will be bound to yield to thee, and drive it down the steep cliff into the sea. Then, as a recompense for having saved him, demand of the prince that he cause two half-hellers to be coined for thee, and let me have them so that I may become the purchaser of thy bottle-devil with one of them.'

So spoke the horseman, and, without waiting for any reply, he rode slowly off into the wood.

'But where am I to find thee when I have obtained the half-hellers?' cried Richard.

'At the Black Fountain, of which each old crone hereabouts will be able to inform thee'; and then with solemn but with wide out-stretching pace the horrible steed bore away its no less terrific rider.

He who has already lost nearly everything ventures not much by any further risk. Richard therefore determined, as his situation was so desperate, to follow the stranger's counsels.

Night closed in, and the rising moon shortly after appeared above the craggy tops of the rocks which had been pointed out to him. The pale wanderer then raised himself tremblingly and entered the dark defile. All there seemed cheerless and gloomy. Seldom was a pale moonbeam able to penetrate above the lofty precipices. A dark oppressive mist seemed to fill the narrow pass. In other respects there was nothing particularly terrible in it. Richard felt himself by no means disposed to linger in the gloomy valley; but, adhering to the strict injunction laid upon him by the mysterious horseman, he did not quicken his pace, resolutely determined not to snap

short at once the only slender thread that still attached him to light and hope.

After the lapse of several hours, some red streaks of dawn cast a glimmering light across his path. A reviving breeze played upon his forehead. Just as he was about to emerge from the deep valley and enjoy the forest scenery and the azure waters of the sea that lay expanded at no great distance before him, he was disturbed by a piercing cry of distress. On looking around he saw a monster attacking a youth in a magnificent hunting-dress, who had fallen to the ground. Richard's first impulse was to rush instantly to the stranger's rescue, but his courage failed him when he clearly discerned the monster, and saw that it resembled a huge grisly baboon with a stag's antlers on its forehead ; and, notwithstanding the cries of the wretched man for succour, he was about to turn back. Suddenly, however, calling to mind all that the horseman had said, and inspired by the dread of his eternal doom, he ran and attacked the monster of an ape with a knotty club, just as it had seized the unfortunate hunter in its claws to fling him up into the air and then catch him upon its branching horns as he descended to the ground. At the approach of Richard it let fall its prey and began to fly with a hideous terrifying cry. He pursued it all the while till, leaping from a precipice into the sea, it turned its frightful visage upon him, and then disappeared beneath the waves.

Flushed with success, the youth now returned triumphantly to the hunter whom he had just rescued, and who, as Richard expected, announced himself to be the prince of that territory. After extolling the bravery of his deliverer, the prince requested that Richard would boldly ask whatever he wished from him.

'What,' exclaimed Richard in a transport of joyous hope, 'are you serious? Will you pledge me your princely word you will grant what I shall demand of you?'

The prince confirmed his promise, assuring him in the most solemn manner that he would gladly comply with whatever he should request.

'Then I supplicate you, for the love of God, to order that some half-hellers be immediately struck for me, even though it be only two.'

Whilst the prince was regarding his strange petitioner with fixed astonishment, some of his train came up, and, on hearing of the adventure and of the singular reward that had been asked, one of them recognised in the person of the suitor the poor Crazy Half-heller.

The prince began to laugh, while Richard, clasping his knees, conjured him in the most moving manner, protesting that unless he obtained the half-hellers his soul was doomed to everlasting perdition.

To this the prince replied, while he still continued to laugh—

'Rise up, my friend. I have pledged my princely word, and if you persist in demanding them I will engage to supply thee with half-hellers to thy very heart's content. If a still less coin will suit your purpose, I can accommodate thee without the aid of my mint-master, for the neighbouring provinces all maintain that my hellers are so light that three of them are requisite to pass for a single ordinary one.'

'Were that, indeed, the case——' said Richard.

'Thou art the first,' returned the prince, 'that has ever doubted it. Should they, however, upon trial

prove unsuitable for your purpose, I here promise to order some less valuable to be coined for your especial use—provided that it be possible.'

Having done this, he gave orders that Richard should first receive a whole bagful of hellers. The latter at once set off at a furious rate towards an adjoining province, where he was exceedingly delighted to find at the very first inn that the people were unwilling to exchange one heller in return for three that he offered them by way of experiment.

He now inquired his way to the Black Fountain, when some children who heard him ran away shrieking with affright, and the host informed him, not without shuddering, that it was an evil place, hardly ever visited by mortal being. He knew perfectly well, however, that the entrance to it was at no great distance through a cavern, at the mouth of which stood two decayed oaks, so that Richard could not mistake finding it; 'but, God forbid that he or any other Christian person should ever seek it.'

At hearing this account Richard was again greatly disturbed, but let the event be what it would he must make the attempt, and therefore he set out to find the place. Even at a distance the cavern had a most dismal and terrifying appearance. It seemed as if the oak trees had died away with horror at the ghastly hollow, which, as he approached it, displayed at its mouth a singular stone. It seemed to be entirely covered with grim countenances, some of which bore a resemblance to the baboon monster on the sea-shore, yet, on looking fearlessly and attentively, one might perceive it was merely a rugged stone. Not without trembling did Richard pass by it. The bottle-imp now became so heavy in his pocket that it seemed as if it wished to

prevent his advancing farther. This circumstance inspired him with courage to proceed, 'for,' thought he, 'it behoves me to do what this creature wishes I should not do.'

On penetrating farther into the cavern, the darkness became so great that he could no longer discern any terrifying shapes. He now proceeded with the utmost caution, groping his way with a stick lest he should fall into some abyss, but he found nothing but a soft mossy turf beneath his feet. At length he reached the outlet of the cavern, and found himself in a dreary hollow, quite enclosed by steep hills. On one side he saw the sable steed of the mysterious customer for his phial, which was standing motionless as a brazen statue. Opposite to him was a spring gushing from the rock, and in this the grim horseman was washing his face and hands. But the horrid stream was of an inky hue with which it stained whatever it touched, and when the gigantic figure turned round towards Richard, the latter perceived that his visage had become like that of a Moor, and thereby formed a terrible contrast against his blood-red garments.

'Shudder not,' cried the mysterious being. 'This is only one of the ceremonies I am obliged to perform. Each Friday am I bound to wash myself thus in scorn of Him whom you call your God. I am also compelled to stain my garments afresh with blood. It is that which gives them a hue of such deadly lustre. Other ceremonies there are which I am obliged to perform. I have formed so strong a compact with the powers of darkness both for body and soul, that it is now utterly impossible for me to obtain redemption on any terms. And what do you imagine are the terms on which I have sold myself? For a

hundred thousand pieces yearly. Seeing how desperate is my own condition, still I am willing to serve thee by purchasing the imp thou carriest in thy phial, and thus frustrate the end of all his long servitude. The rescuing, too, of thee from hell will so enrage them that, reckless of aught else, I'll do it. Then how will their impotent curses peal through the deepest vaults! Ha! ha! ha!

He began to laugh till the rocks re-echoed, and the sable steed, which had hitherto stood motionless, seemed to shrink with terror at the awful sound.

'Now then, friend,' added he, 'hast thou brought me any half-hellers?'

Upon Richard's showing him his purse, he took three of the pieces and gave him a heller in exchange. One of these he directly paid back again as the purchase-money for the bottle-devil, which now lay melancholy at the bottom of the phial, so that he felt quite heavy. At perceiving this the purchaser laughed again most violently and exclaimed—

'Nothing can avail thee, fiend! All resistance is in vain. In token, therefore, of thy obedience, let me have instantly as much gold as my strong steed can bear.'

No sooner had he uttered the command than the enormous beast stood panting beneath the golden load. Then the blood-red horseman having mounted on its back, he and his steed seemed to vanish in the side of the hill, and disappeared for ever.

Richard stood for some minutes fixed to the spot in a stupor of astonishment and joy, but the air of the place seemed troublous and heavy, while a hollow voice, issuing from the dark waters of the Black Fountain, exclaimed—

‘Now then all our labour is frustrated, for he who, while doomed to destruction, could undertake the rescue of another, may even yet himself be saved.’

Struck with horror at the sound, although exulting in the import, Richard rushed through the cavern to again feel the atmosphere of heaven.

He now felt assured that he was delivered of his evil fiend for ever, and he looked once more on the face of nature with feelings that had long been strangers to his bosom. Throwing himself upon the grass, he gazed in an ecstasy of delight on the pure, tranquil, sunny sky, while a warm gush of tears expressed that rapture and gratitude for which he could find no words. The young merchant now became light and gay as an innocent boy, yet without anything resembling his former levity. He devoted himself henceforth to the service of heaven, and soon found himself prosperous from the efforts of honest industry.

Whenever he used afterwards to relate to his awe-struck grandchildren the adventures of his early days, after uttering a pious orison for the soul of his deliverer, he would add, by way of moral to his tale—

‘Desire not, my dear children, after ill-gotten wealth. It is the spirit that leads us to our destruction.’

THE GOLDSMITH OF THE RUE NICAISE

CHAPTER I

IN the Rue St. Honoré till lately stood the small house wherein Magdalene Scuderi (celebrated for her beautiful verses) lived under the patronage of Louis XIV and Madame de Maintenon.

About midnight, in the autumn of the year 1680, there was heard a loud and violent knocking at the door of this house, which echoed through hall and passages. Baptiste, who in Madame Scuderi's small establishment acted as cook, lackey, and porter, had gone, with the permission of his mistress, to the country, to the marriage of his sister, and it so happened that Maria, the chambermaid, was the only person awake in the house. She heard the oft-repeated knocking at the door, and it immediately occurred to her that Baptiste was absent, and that she remained the sole protector of herself and her mistress. All the cruelties of thieves, robbers, and murderers, who were then so prevalent in Paris, rushed to her memory, and it appeared to her highly probable that it might be a party of assassins, aware of the unprotected and lonely situation of the house, who were now making the noise, and who, if

admitted, would execute some base design upon her mistress. She therefore remained in her chamber, trembling and in despair, and at the same time vowing vengeance upon the absent Baptiste for leaving them thus alone and unprotected.

The person at the door meanwhile thundered louder and louder, while in the intervals Maria thought she heard a voice crying—

‘For the love of God, open the door, open the door!’

Trembling, she seized hold of a candlestick in which was a burning taper, and ran out into the passage. There she distinctly heard the voice exclaiming—

‘For heaven’s sake, open the door, open the door!’

‘That hardly sounds like a robber,’ thought the girl. ‘Who knows but that it may be some poor wretch who seeks the protection of my mistress, who is so well known to delight in generous actions? Still, I must be cautious.’

She therefore opened a window, and cried out—

‘Who knocks so loudly at this unseasonable hour, awaking every one from their sleep?’

In the glimmer of the moonbeams which broke through the dark clouds she beheld a tall figure, muffled in a gray mantle, with a broad slouched hat drawn down so far as to shade eyes and countenance. She now called in a louder voice, so that it might be heard by the person below—

‘Baptiste, Claude, Pierre, rise and see what villain attempts to break into the house.’

Upon this a soft and persuasive voice answered from below—

‘Maria, I know full well it is you. I know, too,

that Baptiste has gone into the country, and that you remain at home alone with your lady. Only trust me, open the door, and fear nothing. I must needs speak with your mistress this very moment.'

'Do you imagine,' replied the chambermaid, 'that you can speak with my lady at this hour? You must know that she has long since gone to sleep, and that I would not waken her on any account from the first sweet slumber, which her years so much require.'

'I know,' replied the stranger, 'that your lady is just now writing down some verses which she intends reading to Madame de Maintenon to-morrow morning. I beseech you, Maria, open the door. Know that life itself depends upon my speaking to your mistress.'

'Come back early to-morrow,' said Maria.

'Think you,' said the voice, 'that Fate can pause and suit itself to time and hours, when like the thunderbolt it is about to strike? If there be but one moment for salvation, dare we postpone it? Open the door, and fear nothing from a miserable helpless creature, forsaken by the whole world, pursued and hunted by a horrid destiny, who wishes to implore your lady to save him from a threatened danger.'

Maria felt moved by his earnest words, and went for the keys.

Scarcely had she opened the door when the mantle-muffled figure rushed impetuously forward, and cried, with a commanding and frantic voice—'Conduct me to your lady.'

In the greatest consternation, Maria raised the candlestick, and the rays of the taper fell upon the countenance of a youth, deady pale and distorted ;

and the maid's terror was assuredly not lessened when the stranger threw open his mantle, and her eye caught the bright handle of a stiletto peeping out of his bosom.

'Conduct me to your lady,' cried the man in a tone of greater agitation. 'This instant, conduct me to your lady.'

Maria now imagined her mistress in the greatest danger. The profound respect and love which she had so long entertained for one who had treated her so kindly burned now more strongly than ever in her bosom, and produced a courage which she herself had never dreamt she possessed. She hastily shut the door leading to her mistress's apartment, and placing herself before it, said—

'With my lady you neither can nor shall speak at present. Provided you have no evil design, and fear not to meet the light of day, come to-morrow, and tell her what you are so anxious to relate. At present you must quit the house.'

The man gave a deep sigh, stared at the girl with a terrifying look, and seized hold of his stiletto.

'Let me go to your lady, I tell you,' he said.

'Do what you please,' rejoined Maria. 'I shall not stir from this spot. Execute the foul deed you think of, and you will also find a shameful death on the Place de Grève, like your villainous companions.'

'Ha!' exclaimed the man. 'I do appear like a robber and an assassin; but my companions are not judged—are not executed.'

At that moment the ear of the maid caught the clash of arms and the trampling of horses in the street.

'The patrol—the patrol! Help, help!' she cried.

'Unfeeling woman, you wish my destruction!

All is over ; all is over ! Take this and give it to your lady this very night.'

The man pulled the candlestick from the girl's grasp, extinguished the taper, and pressed a small casket into her hands.

'For heaven's sake, give the casket to your mistress,' he cried, and rushed from the house.

Maria, who had fallen to the ground, arose with difficulty, and groped her way back to her chamber, where, quite exhausted, she sank upon a chair. A few seconds had not elapsed before she heard a noise at the street door. The door was opened, locked again, and light uncertain footsteps approached her room. Unmovably fixed and speechless from terror, the girl awaited her fate ; but how changed were her feelings when the door opened and she recognised the face of the faithful Baptiste, who, looking deadly pale and full of consternation, exclaimed on entering—

'By all the saints, tell me, Maria, what has happened. I don't know how it was, but something impelled me irresistibly to leave the marriage feast yesterday evening, and so I came back. Then I thought to myself, "Maria is easily awakened ; she will hear me though I but tap at the street door, and will admit me." At the moment I arrived at the door a strong patrol of horse and foot, armed to the teeth, seized me and would not permit me to proceed. Most fortunately, Desgrez, the lieutenant of police, who knows me well, recognised me as a lantern was held before my face, and said—"Aha, Baptiste, how are you in the street at this hour of the night ? You should remain in the house to protect it. It is dangerous to be found here at this hour. We expect to seize a good prize to-night !" You cannot conceive how these words struck me, and then when I step

upon the threshold I encounter a disguised man with a bare stiletto in his hand, who in his hurry to escape whirls me round and round. The door was open, the keys were in the lock. Tell me, tell me, what all this means.'

Maria told him what had occurred, and then both of them went into the hall, where they found the candlestick on the ground.

'It is evident,' said Baptiste, 'that our lady would have been robbed, if not murdered. The man knew you were alone with our mistress, and knew likewise that she was still up over her work. And the small casket, Maria; I think we ought to throw it into the deepest part of the Seine. Who knows that this fellow may not, in some way or other, aim at the life of our mistress; that she, opening the casket, may not fall down dead, as the old Marquis de Tournay did whilst merely opening a letter from an unknown hand?'

After consulting for some time, the two resolved to relate everything on the morrow to their mistress, and to present her also with the mysterious casket, which with due caution might be opened.

There were, indeed, good grounds for Baptiste's worst suspicions. At that very moment Paris was the scene of the most diabolical outrages, for it was then that a fatal proficiency in art gave to wickedness the easiest and safest means of accomplishing its purposes.

Glaser, a German apothecary, the best chemist of his time, busied himself, as was usual with persons of his science, in the study of alchemy. An Italian named Exili became his associate. With him, however, the art of making gold was merely a pretence. He only wished to learn the method of preparing,

mixing, and subliming stuffs of a poisonous nature, and he succeeded at last in the preparation of that fine poison which, without smell or taste, was productive of the most fatal consequences, and which would work either immediately or at a distant period—a poison which left not the slightest trace in the human body, and deceived the vigilant and scientific eye of the physician.

However cautiously Exili went to work, still he incurred the suspicion of selling deadly drugs, and he was consequently sent to the Bastile. In the same room, soon after his apprehension, was confined Captain Godin de St. Croix. This person had for a long time lived in that intimacy with the Marchioness de Brinvilliers which brought disgrace upon her family. While the Marquis himself remained totally insensible to the conduct of his wife, her father, Dreux d'Aubray, civil lieutenant of Paris, separated the guilty pair by means of an order of arrest, which was executed against St. Croix. Passionate and careless of character, a despiser of religion, a zealous pursuer of vice from his youth, vindictive and revengeful even to death, there could be nothing so welcome to St. Croix as the diabolical secret of Exili, which put into his hands the means of destroying all his enemies. He became the devoted scholar of the Italian, and equalled his master so soon that, on leaving the Bastile, he was fully qualified to prosecute his art alone. The Marchioness de Brinvilliers was a woman of no principle, and in the hands of St. Croix was ready to do anything. He persuaded her to successively poison her father, with whom she lived, afterwards her two brothers, and finally her sister—the father from revenge, the others to inherit their wealth.

The history of those who have been guilty of poisoning their fellow-creatures convinces us of this horrible truth, that when the mind is once habituated to the crime it becomes a powerful and irresistible passion. Without any ulterior object, but merely from a pleasure similar to that which the chemist enjoys when making experiments, have these miscreants poisoned persons whose life or death was otherwise perfectly indifferent to them.

The sudden death of several persons in the Hotel Dieu created suspicions that the bread which the Marchioness was accustomed to distribute weekly at that hospital had been poisoned; and the pigeon pies which she presented to some guests whom she invited to her house caused the death of those who partook of them. The Chevalier de Guet and several others were the victims of this diabolical entertainment.

For a long time St. Croix, his companion La Chaussée, and Brinvilliers were successful in impenetrably veiling these ends from justice and the world; but what can the cunning and artifice of even the most unprincipled accomplish when Heaven decrees that such crimes shall not go unpunished?

The poison which St. Croix prepared was so fine that if the powder lay open during preparation, a single inhalation of it was sufficient to cause instant death. St. Croix, therefore, always used in his preparation of it a fine glass mask. It happened one day that just when he had completed the preparation, and was about to put it into a phial, the mask fell off, and St. Croix inhaling some of the floating particles in the air, fell dead on the spot. As he died without heirs, the officers of the Government hastened to his house to attach their seals to

his effects. There they found locked up in a chest not only the whole arsenal of poisonous utensils used by St. Croix, but also letters from Brinvilliers, which left no doubt of her infamous transactions. La Chaussée was arrested and beheaded, and soon after the Marchioness suffered the same death, her body after execution being burned and its ashes dispersed in the air.

The joy of the Parisians at what they imagined was the extinction of the band of miscreants was but of short duration. It was soon discovered that the art of the villainous St. Croix was known to others. Like an invisible malicious spirit, death slipt into the closest circles and there seized surely and quickly upon its prey. He who was seen to-day in good health tottered on the morrow sick and languishing, and no art of the physician could save him from the grave. Wealth, a profitable employment, a beautiful wife, attracted the deadly draught. Frightful suspicion severed the most sacred ties. The husband trembled before his wife, the father before his son, the sister before her brother. The meal remained untouched, the wine which one friend offered to another remained untasted on the board, and where formerly gaiety and wit resounded, bewildered and anxious looks tried to discover the hidden poison.

To put a stop to this evil a particular court was constituted by the King to discover and punish these crimes. This court was the well-known *Chambre Ardente* which held its sittings under the Bastile, and over which La Regnie reigned as President.

The labours of La Regnie, with whatever zeal they might have been conducted, would have remained much longer fruitless than they did had it not been left to the artful Desgrez to discover the

secret corner where these frightful crimes were concocted.

In the Faubourg St. Germain there lived an old woman called La Voisin whose profession it was to tell fortunes and to raise spirits; and who, with the assistance of her associates, Le Sage and Le Vigoreux, understood the mode of astonishing and terrifying persons even not weak and credulous. But she understood more than this. The disciple of Exili, she manufactured, like St. Croix, the fine and tasteless poison, and by its means assisted profligate sons to an earlier inheritance, and unprincipled wives to younger husbands. Desgrez discovered her secret operations, she confessed everything, and the *Chambre Ardente* doomed her to the stake for crimes which she soon expiated on the *Place de Grève*. A list of all the persons who had visited her was found in her possession, and it so happened that not only execution followed upon execution, but serious suspicion fell even upon individuals of the highest rank.

It was currently believed that Cardinal Bonzy by means of La Voisin had found out a way to shorten the existence of all those persons to whom he, as Archbishop of Narbonne, was obliged to pay pensions. The Duchess de Bouillon and the Countess de Soissons, whose names were found in La Voisin's list, were also accused of being connected with the secret machinations of this diabolical woman; and even Francis Henri de Montmorenci, duke and marshal of the kingdom, was not free from suspicion. The frightful *Chambre Ardente* prosecuted him, and though he presented himself instantly at the Bastille to answer the allegations made against him, the hatred of Louvois and La Regnie caused him to be confined in a dungeon not exceeding six feet in

height. Months passed before those ministers of justice were forced to acknowledge that there was no proof that the Duke was guilty. It appeared that he had merely had the weakness to apply to Le Sage to have his horoscope cast.

It is but too true that blind zeal misled the President, La Regnie, into violence and cruelty. The tribunal assumed the character of the Inquisition. The slightest suspicion led to immediate and close confinement; and it often happened that the innocence of persons whom it had condemned to death was, by the merest accident, only discovered in time to save them from the scaffold.

La Regnie had, too, such a disgusting countenance, and such a deceitful look, that he brought upon himself the hatred even of those whom he was called upon to protect or avenge. The Duchess de Bouillon, being asked by him on her trial whether she had seen the devil, answered—

‘Methinks I see him now!’

While the blood of the guilty and of the suspected flowed in streams upon the Place de Grève, a series of crimes of another kind occurred which created new consternation throughout the city. A band of thieves seemed to have determined on obtaining possession of all the valuable jewels in the capital. The rich ornament was scarcely purchased before it disappeared, and by means, too, that were undiscoverable. Still more dreadful was it that any one who ventured to wear a costly gem in the evening in the streets or in the dark passages that led to their houses, was in danger of being robbed and perhaps murdered.

The story of those who escaped with their lives was that they were knocked down by a blow upon

the head, and on recovering from their stupefaction found themselves robbed of their jewels. The murdered, who were found almost every morning in the streets or in the entrances to houses, had all a similar wound—a dagger had been thrust to the heart, and, according to the physicians, this had been done so quickly and so surely, that the murdered person must have fallen to the ground without being able to cry for assistance, nay, without emitting the least sound.

Who was there at the gay court of Louis XIV, entangled as they all were in the silken chains of some love intrigue, who did not slip out after sunset to the abode of his mistress, carrying with him some rich treasure for her who at the moment monopolised all his affections? Just as if the thieves had been in league with foretelling spirits, it appeared as if they knew when such a thing would happen. Often the unfortunate victim of their rapacity never reached the house where he had hoped to enjoy an hour of love and gossip; often he fell at the threshold, and even at the very chamber-door of her whose eye, longing to meet the smiling countenance of her fond admirer, was the first to be startled by the ghastly appearance of his corpse.

In vain did Argenson, the minister who had charge of the public safety, cause every one to be arrested who appeared in any way the object of suspicion. In vain did La Regnie rage and endeavour to extort confessions. In vain were watchmen and patrols augmented—no trace of the perpetrators could be discovered.

It was remarkable that, notwithstanding the inquiries and searches that were made at every place where jewellery was bought and sold, not the most

minute portion of any of the trinkets that had been stolen was to be found.

Desgrez foamed with rage that the thieves were thus for so long able to elude his snares. The quarter of the city whereon he happened to be present always remained undisturbed, while in the other quarters of the capital, where no one suspected any danger, the assassin was sure to seek his victim.

The lieutenant of the watch thought upon the snare of creating several Desgrez, so similar in walk, appearance, speech, figure, and countenance, that even the *gens d'armes* themselves should not be able to discover the real one. In the meantime he secretly watched, and at the risk of his own life followed alone into the most obscure corners of the city this or that person who, by his orders, wore a rich and valuable ornament. The person was never attacked, and of this trick it appeared the thieves were aware. The zealous but outwitted lieutenant was in despair.

One morning Desgrez came to La Regnie pale, confused, and agitated.

'What news? Have you discovered any trace?' exclaimed the President, in hasty agitation.

'Ah, noble sir,' began Desgrez, stammering with rage,—'noble sir, yesterday night the Marquis de la Fare was attacked in my presence and in the neighbourhood of the Louvre too.'

'Heaven and earth!' shouted La Regnie, with joy, 'now we have them.'

'Listen but a moment,' interrupted the Lieutenant, with a bitter smile. 'Listen but a moment to what has really happened. I stood at the Louvre in watchful anxiety. Rage burned in my bosom against

those who were thus making game of me. A figure approached, apparently under the influence of some dreaded peril, went close past me, but evidently without perceiving me. In the moonbeams I discovered the figure to be that of the Marquis de la Fare; I could easily account for his presence there at that hour. He had scarcely proceeded ten or twelve paces from the dark spot I occupied, when a figure sprang up as if from the ground, knocked him down, and fell upon him. Surprised at the circumstance that seemed to deliver the assailant into my hand, I gave a loud cry and endeavoured by a leap from my secret corner to pounce upon him at once, but in the act I got entangled in my cloak and fell headlong upon the road. When I recovered my feet I beheld the man hastening away as if on the wings of the wind. I sounded my whistle and pursued him. From a distance the whistle of the *gens d'armes* answered my call. All was alive; every one in motion. The clash of arms, the tramping of horses was heard on every side.'

'This way, this way! Desgrez! Desgrez!' I cried, so loud as to be echoed back from every street.

'In the light of the moon I saw the man always before me, turning here, there, in every direction, in order to confuse me. At length we came into the Rue de Nicaise, and here his strength seemed to fail him. I redoubled my efforts. There were but fifteen steps between us——'

'You came up with him, you seized him, the *gens d'armes* were near——' cried Regnie, with eyes of fire, laying hold of the arm of Desgrez as if he were the flying murderer.

'But fifteen steps,' continued the Lieutenant, in a

hollow and perturbed voice, 'were between us when the man sprang aside into the shade, and disappeared through a wall.'

'Disappeared through a wall? Are you raving?' cried the President, stepping back and clasping his hands together.

'Call me,' replied Desgrez, pressing his hand upon his forehead,—'call me one whose mind is disturbed with strange and idle fancies; call me a madman, a lunatic, a foolish believer in spirits, but it is just as I have told you. I stood motionless before the wall while several of the guards approached. Along with them was the Marquis de la Fare, who, having recovered from his blow, appeared with a drawn sword in his hand. The torches were kindled, the wall was examined backwards and forwards, but no trace of a door, of a window, of any opening whatsoever was to be found. The wall is built of stone, and connects two houses in which several persons reside, but against none can there be the least suspicion. To-day I have again examined everything minutely. It must be the devil himself who is plaguing us.'

The story of Desgrez was soon known over all Paris, and the heads of all were filled with enchantments, incantations, and the devil's bonds with La Voisin, Vigoreux, and the ill-famed priest, Le Sage. It can easily be imagined that the Lieutenant's narrative received several odd and marvellous additions.

Argenson, the minister of public safety, saw the efforts of the *Chambre Ardente* shipwrecked, and begged of the King to appoint a court which, possessing more extensive powers, might pursue and punish these new criminals. The King, however,

was convinced that he had already given too much power to the *Chambre Ardente*, and deeply regretting the cruelty of the innumerable executions which the bloodthirsty Regnie had caused, he would not listen to the proposal.

Another mode was then chosen to induce the King to grant this petition. In the apartments of Madame de Maintenon, where His Majesty was in the habit of spending the afternoon, and where he even transacted business with his ministers sometimes till midnight, some verses were put into his hand in the name of threatened and terrified lovers complaining that when gallantry compelled them to carry a valuable present to the mistress of their affections, they had to do so at the imminent risk of their lives. They implored Louis to free them from this danger. After having read the verses the King, without moving his eyes from the paper, abruptly turned to Madame de Maintenon, read the verses to her, and, in a loud voice and with a pleasing smile, asked her what she thought of the request of the terrified lovers.

‘I think,’ said she, ‘that the proceedings of secret tribunals such as the *Chambre Ardente* are unworthy of favour, but still the bloodthirsty and rapacious criminals well deserve particular measures being taken for their detection and punishment.’

The King, dissatisfied with this answer, closed the paper and seemed intent on returning it to the secretary, when his eye fell on Madame de Scuderi. On seeing her he instantly stopped.

‘The Marchioness,’ said he, ‘knows nothing of the gallantries of our beloved subjects, but what does your ladyship think of this poetical petition?’

De Scuderi read the verses.

'A lover who is afraid should not love,' said she.

'By the saints! your ladyship is right,' exclaimed the King. 'No blind laws which may strike against the innocent as well as the guilty shall oppress my subjects. Argenson and La Regnie must do as well as they can.'

CHAPTER II

MARIA, whose mind was full of all the horrors of the period, gave full scope to her imagination as she described to her mistress what had happened during the past night, and with a trembling hand presented the mysterious casket. She, as well as Baptiste, who stood deadly pale in a corner of the apartment twisting his nightcap into a thousand different forms, and scarcely able to speak from anxiety and agitation, implored her ladyship, for the sake of all the saints, to open the casket with great care. Madame de Scuderi, balancing the mysterious casket in her hand and looking towards the two domestics, who were pale as spectres, said with a smile—

'Any robbers must be well aware that I am not rich and have no purse worth plundering, and why would they aim at my life? Who would dream of killing a person of seventy-three who has never harmed any one, and who can leave nothing behind her save the memory of an old lady who went occasionally to court, and a few well-bound books with gilt edges? Thou, Maria, may picture the man in as frightful colours as thou wilt, but still I cannot believe he bore me any evil intention, therefore I shall see what this contains.'

Maria started back several paces, and Baptiste, with a deep sigh, sank half down upon his knee, as their mistress pressed her thumb upon the projecting steel knob of the casket, and its lid sprang up with a rattling noise.

How astonished was Madame de Scuderi when a pair of gold armlets, richly studded with precious stones, and a necklace alike splendid, sparkled before her eyes in the open casket. She took the jewels out, and while she praised the work of the necklace, Maria eyed the rich armlets and exclaimed repeatedly that the proud Montespan herself did not possess such ornaments.

‘But what does all this mean!’ said De Scuderi, and casting her eye to the bottom of the casket she observed a small folded paper which she confidently hoped would unravel the mystery. She opened it, but had scarcely read its contents when it fell from her trembling hands, and throwing an imploring look on Maria, she sank down upon the sofa apparently under the influence of great agitation. Maria and Baptiste, still dreaming of hidden dangers, sprang forward to discover the cause of their mistress’s distress.

‘Oh!’ cried De Scuderi, with a voice half choked with sobs. ‘The mortification! the shame! Am I, then, doomed to suffer this in my old age! Have I, like a young and unthinking girl, treated the matter with a foolish carelessness?’

While De Scuderi uttered these words she held a handkerchief before her eyes, which were pouring forth a flood of bitter tears, and Maria and Baptiste were perplexed as to how to alleviate her sorrow. Maria picked up the paper from the floor. On it was written—

‘A lover who is afraid should not love.

‘Your acute mind, noble lady, has saved from great persecution us who practise the right of the strong upon the weak and cowardly, and appropriate to ourselves those valuables that were about to be bestowed on others less worthy of them. As a token of our gratitude accept of these ornaments. Though they are the most valuable that we for a long time have fallen in with, yet you, most noble lady, are justly entitled to be adorned with gems even still more beautiful. We beg that you will, however, accept them, and trust that you will not refuse us your friendship and remembrance.

‘THE INVISIBLE.’

‘Is it possible,’ cried De Scuderi, when she had somewhat recovered,—‘is it possible that any one could carry his shameless temerity, his villainous outrage so far?’

The sun at this moment shone brightly through the window-curtains of crimson silk, and the diamonds which lay upon the table near the open casket sent forth a sparkling ruddy light. Averting her eyes from the gems, De Scuderi hid a countenance in which horror was portrayed, and ordered Maria to carry away instantly those frightful ornaments, which, perhaps, the blood of the murdered still stained.

Maria, after locking up the necklace and armlets, proposed to deliver up the jewels to the Minister Argenson, and to confide to him everything relating to the appearance of the young man, and the peculiar circumstances attending the delivery of the casket.

De Scuderi rose and walked silently up and down the room, like one considering deeply what ought to be done. She then ordered Baptiste to get ready a

sedan-chair, and at the same time requested Maria to arrange her dress, as she wished to go immediately to Madame de Maintenon.

She found Madame de Maintenon alone in her own apartment. It may be imagined how surprised she was when she saw De Scuderi, usually so full of dignity and grace notwithstanding her advanced years, enter her apartment, pale, distracted, and with a trembling step.

‘In the name of all the saints,’ cried she, ‘what has happened?’

De Scuderi told her what had occurred, and De Maintenon, after having heard every circumstance, declared that she considered De Scuderi had taken the strange occurrence too much to heart, that this daring outrage of the villains could never injure a lady so respected, and at the same time desired to see the jewels.

De Scuderi placed in her hands the open casket, and the Marchioness could not help an exclamation of astonishment as the costly jewels sparkled before her. She took out the necklace and the armlets and approached the window, where she allowed the sun’s rays to fall upon the gems, and then examined narrowly the exquisite workmanship of the setting to form a correct idea of the wonderful art with which each particular link of the chain was finished.

After a few moments’ examination she turned towards De Scuderi, and exclaimed—

‘Of a certainty, there is but one person who could make such ornaments. No one save René Cardillac could finish such a necklace and such armlets.’

René Cardillac was at that time the most skilful goldsmith in Paris. In figure he was rather short, broad-shouldered, strong and muscular, and al-

though sixty years had rolled over his head, he still possessed the vigour and agility of youth. Thick, curly red hair encircled his full and ruddy countenance. If he had not been known throughout Paris for a just, honourable, and disinterested man, ever ready to lend his assistance to the distressed, the sinister expression which lurked in his small, green, piercing eyes might have brought down upon him suspicion of secret and mysterious knavery.

Intimately acquainted with the nature of precious stones, he knew so well the art of treating and setting them that the ornament which at first was considered of little beauty, issued from his workshop possessed of the most dazzling splendour. Every commission he undertook with ardour. He was so eager in his labours that he was heard hammering in his workshop day and night, and often when the trinket was almost finished he would become so displeased with its form, with the setting of some gem, or with the taste of some link, that he would throw the whole again into the crucible and begin his work anew. Thus everything he finished was a masterpiece of art and filled its owner with delight and astonishment. It was now, however, hardly possible to obtain from him anything that was given him to finish. With a thousand excuses he amused the owners from week to week, and from month to month. In vain he was offered double price for his labour, not one louis d'or more would he take than the stipulated sum, and when forced at last by urgent entreaties to deliver up the ornament, he could not conceal signs of the deep vexation, nay, of the inward rage which boiled within him. In the event of parting with an ornament, perhaps worth several thousand livres, either from the costliness of the gems

or the nature of the setting or gold-work, he appeared like a person out of his senses. He would neglect his work and be seen running up and down cursing himself, his labour, and all the world. No sooner, however, did any one approach him and say—'René Cardillac, would you feel inclined to make a beautiful necklace for my bride?' than he stopped at once, glanced with his small piercing eyes at the person who addressed him, and asked, while rubbing his hands—

'What do you want?'

The lover pulls out a small box saying—

'Here are some jewels. They are no great things—common stuff, but under your hands——'

Cardillac interrupts his speech, snatches the box, pulls the jewels out, holds them up to the light, and cries out—

'Ha! Ha! Common stuff! By no means! Beautiful stones! Noble gems! Leave them only to me, and I will make an ornament that shall sparkle in your eyes as bright as the sun itself.'

In a few days, he assures the owner, the jewellery will be ready. He runs to his workshop, and hammers on incessantly for eight days, when a masterpiece is finished. When the owner returns to pay the money and request the ornament, Cardillac becomes sullen, stubborn, and impertinent.

'But, Master Cardillac, consider. To-morrow is my marriage day!'

'What does your marriage signify to me? Call back in a fortnight.'

'The ornament is ready. Here is the money. I must have it.'

'I tell you I have still to alter many things about it, and I will not give it you to-day.'

'And I tell you that if you will not give me the ornament, which I will willingly pay double the money for, you shall soon see me return accompanied by Argenson's officers.'

'May the devil torment you with a hundred burning pinches, and hang three hundredweight by this selfsame necklace that your bride may be strangled withal.'

So saying, Cardillac thrusts the jewels into the breast-pocket of the bridegroom, seizes him by the arm, and turns him out at the room door.

Besides all this it was altogether unaccountable why Cardillac frequently, after having undertaken a piece of work with the greatest enthusiasm, almost immediately after besought his employer, not only by the Holy Virgin and all the saints, but likewise with signs of the greatest agitation, with the most frightful oaths, sometimes even with sobs and tears, to be permitted to give up the work he had undertaken.

Many persons of the Court and of the highest rank had in vain offered large sums to have only the smallest specimen of Cardillac's handiwork. He threw himself at the King's feet, and implored the favour not to be asked to do any work for him. He refused also every order of Madame de Maintenon, and even rejected with scorn and horror the offer she made to him to finish for her an emblematical ring which she proposed sending to Racine.

'I wager,' said De Maintenon, 'that Cardillac, though I send to him merely to discover for whom he made these ornaments, will refuse to attend my summons from fear of being pestered with an order, for you must know he still positively refuses to execute anything for me.'

De Scuderi suggested that the messenger sent should be instructed to say that none of the jeweller's work was required, but merely his opinion desired respecting some jewels. This was approved of by De Maintenon and Cardillac was sent for accordingly, and, being met in the street, it was not long before he entered the apartment.

No sooner did he discover Madame de Scuderi than his countenance showed signs of great agitation. He looked like one that was struck by some most unexpected occurrence, for he forgot the claims that were due to rank, having in the first place made a low and respectful obeisance to the worthy De Scuderi, and then merely turned round to the Marchioness. The latter hastily asked him, while pointing to the ornaments which sparkled on the dark green covered table, whether those were his work.

Cardillac scarcely threw a glance on them but packed them up in the casket, and, while the Marchioness was staring him full in the face, he pushed them away from him with considerable warmth, saying, as a contemptuous smile flitted across his lip—

‘Most noble lady, one must know very little, indeed, about the work of René Cardillac not to see in a moment that no other goldsmith in the world could finish such jewels. Indeed, they are my handiwork.’

‘Then tell me,’ continued De Maintenon, ‘for whom these jewels were made?’

‘For myself,’ replied Cardillac. ‘Yes, you may consider it strange, but it is not. To make a beautiful piece of work I sought out the best gems in my possession, and I laboured upon them with a

diligence, a care, and an enthusiasm, that I never felt before. Some time ago these ornaments disappeared from my workshop in a way quite unaccountable.'

'Heaven be praised!' cried De Scuderi; and approaching Cardillac she unceremoniously laid her hand upon his shoulder and said, 'Receive back again, Master René, the property which the villains robbed you of.'

She then related how the ornaments had come into her possession. Cardillac listened in silence, with eyes that seemed riveted to the ground. When De Scuderi had concluded her story, it seemed as if René's mind was struggling with thoughts which prevented his coming to any determination. He rubbed his brow, sighed, and drew his hand across his eyes as if to wipe away a starting tear.

At length he seized the casket which De Scuderi was presenting to him, dropped slowly upon his knee, and said—

'On you, most worthy lady, has fate bestowed these jewels. Yes, now I remember that while I laboured upon them I thought of you. Refuse not to take these ornaments from me and to wear them. They are the best I have made for a long time.'

'Are you dreaming, Master René?' answered De Scuderi, jocularly. 'Would it become me, do you think, to deck myself out with precious stones? Why present me with such a precious gift? Go! go! Master René, were I as lovely and as rich as the Marchioness de Fontange I would not indeed let such ornaments slip from my hands, but what have I to do with such splendour?'

With an agitated and bewildered look, Cardillac pushed away the casket which De Scuderi offered him.

'Take pity on me,' said he, 'and accept the jewels. You cannot conceive how profound a respect I entertain in my heart for your virtues, for your great services. Accept then this trifling present only for the toil it cost me, and as a token of the respect I feel for you.'

Seeing that De Scuderi still hesitated to accept the gift, De Maintenon took the casket from Cardillac's hands, saying—

'Now, De Scuderi, you always talk of your great age; but, really, why have you or I to trouble ourselves about years and their burthen? Do not refuse to receive from the chivalrous Master René, as a freely offered present, that which thousands could not obtain for gold or for prayers.'

Madame de Maintenon pressed the casket upon De Scuderi, and Cardillac threw himself on his knees before her, kissed her gown and her hands—stammered, sighed, wept, sprang up and rushed from the apartment.

'By all the holy saints,' exclaimed De Scuderi, 'what has come to the man?'

'It is quite evident, Madame,' said De Maintenon, laughing, 'that Master René Cardillac is dying of love for you, and begins, according to the approved methods of ancient gallantry, to storm your heart with valuable presents.'

De Maintenon carried the jest further, and exhorted De Scuderi not to be too cruel to her despairing lover; and she, carried away by the other's gaiety, joined in her merriment.

When at length De Scuderi rose to leave the Marchioness, her countenance, notwithstanding all their jesting, assumed a very serious look, especially when she took the casket of jewels in her hand, and said—

‘Notwithstanding all you can say, Madame de Maintenon, I shall never be able to make any use of these ornaments. They have been, by whatever means recovered, once in the possession of those wretched people who, with the boldness of the devil, or rather, it would almost seem, in league with him, rob and murder. I shudder at the blood which seems still to cling to the sparkling gems. And then, too, Cardillac’s behaviour! I must say it seemed to me most odd. Nor can I get rid of a dark presentiment that behind all this there is some frightful secret concealed. Yet when I bring the whole matter distinctly and circumstantially before me, I cannot very well perceive wherein any secret can be concealed, and particularly what the worthy Master René, the very model of a good and pious citizen, should have to do with anything that is bad and villainous. However, it is very certain I shall never be able to bring myself to wear these ornaments.’

Madame de Maintenon thought that De Scuderi carried her scruples too far, especially when, on asking her what she would really do, she answered firmly and seriously that she would rather throw the jewels into the Seine than ever wear them.

And so the interview ended.

CHAPTER III

SEVERAL months had elapsed since the foregoing interview, when one day fate determined Madame de Scuderi should pass the Pont Neuf in the glass coach of the Duchess de Montansier. The invention of

neat glass coaches was at that period so recent that the curiosity of the people was awakened, and a crowd was collected around it as great as congregates around a quack-doctor's waggon. On this occasion it happened that the multitude surrounded the coach of Montansier to the complete stoppage of the horses. In a moment De Scuderi heard a bustle and cursing, and observed a man who, with blows and pushing, was making his way through the thickest of the crowd to the spot where the carriage was. As he approached, the piercing eyes of a youthful countenance, deadly pale and much agitated, attracted her attention. The young man, keeping his eye firmly fixed upon De Scuderi, worked himself forward to the carriage door, which he opened with a hurried hand, threw a letter into her ladyship's lap, and, giving and receiving numerous blows, disappeared through the crowd as he had come.

No sooner had the man appeared at the door than Maria, who was at the side of her mistress, gave a cry of horror and fell back in a swoon. In vain did De Scuderi pull the cord and call to the coachman. He, as if impelled by some foul spirit, laid his whip to the horses, which, dashing the foam from their mouths, capered, pranced, and at length thundered on at a sharp pace across the bridge.

De Scuderi in the meantime attended to her maid, who in a short time opened her eyes, and, clinging with a trembling hand to her mistress, stammered out, with a face wherein anxiety and horror were strongly painted—

‘For the sake of the Holy Virgin, what did that frightful being want? It was he; it was he who brought you the casket on that fearful night.’

De Scuderi quieted the girl's fears by assuring her

that nothing bad had happened. Then she opened the letter and found in it these words—

‘An evil destiny which you can avert sinks me into the very abyss of misery. I implore you, as a son in the warmest glow of affection would implore a mother from whom he would conceal nothing, to allow the necklace and armlets which you received through me to be sent under some pretence, or in whatever way you think best, to Master René Cardillac. Your welfare, your life, depends upon it. Let not two days elapse before you do so, or else I shall force myself into your dwelling and kill myself before your eyes.’

‘It is evident,’ said De Scuderi when she had read this, ‘that this unknown man belongs to the band of thieves and murderers that infests the city, but against me he bears nothing bad in his heart. Had he been permitted to speak with me that night, who knows how many wonderful accidents and how many profound secrets would have been cleared up, of which we now seek any clue in vain? But such matters must now be left to themselves. That which is requested of me in this letter I will do, were it only to get rid of those unhallowed ornaments, which, methinks, are the talisman of the devil. Cardillac shall have them.’

On the following day De Scuderi thought of going herself with the ornaments to the old goldsmith, but it so happened that all the *beaux esprits* of Paris had that morning resolved to storm her ladyship with verses, plays, and anecdotes. By the time her visitors left her it was past mid-day, and De Scuderi being obliged to wait upon the Duchess de Montansier, her visit to Master René Cardillac was put off till the next day.

De Scuderi felt herself tormented during the night with a more than ordinary restlessness. The young man who had given her the letter on the Pont Neuf stood continually before her eyes, and from the bottom of her heart a reminiscence seemed to arise of her having once seen such a form and features.

She arose early from her restless couch, ordered herself to be dressed, and proceeded, not forgetting the casket, to the house of the goldsmith.

Towards the Rue Nicaise, where Cardillac lived, the populace were flocking in vast crowds. They had already collected before his house and were bawling and thundering at the door, which they would, doubtless, have broken open had they not been prevented by the guard which surrounded the house. A thousand voices, in wild and angry confusion, cried out—

‘Tear him to pieces! Kill the base villain!’

At length Desgrez appeared with a band of officers, who soon cleared a way through the thickest of the crowd. The house door opened, and a man loaded with chains was brought out and, amidst the most horrible imprecations of the crowd, was dragged along.

At this very moment De Scuderi arrived, and while she was almost fainting with terror and fearful foreboding, a wild and sorrowful cry caught her ear.

‘Forward! farther forward!’ cried she, almost unconsciously to the coachman, and he, by a clever and bold turning, darted through the thickest of the crowd, and stopped directly in front of the goldsmith’s door. There she beheld Desgrez, and at his feet a young and lovely girl, whose fair and dishevelled hair fell upon a bosom the wild and passionate throbbings of which a simple morning garb could ill conceal, and in whose countenance there

were only at that moment to be seen the marks of fearful anxiety and comfortless despair. She convulsively clasped Desgrez's knees, and cried in tones full of terrible and piercing sorrow—

‘He is innocent! Yes, he is innocent!’

In vain were the efforts of Desgrez, in vain were the endeavours of his people to tear her away from him or raise her from the ground. At length a strong unfeeling wretch, with coarse and clownish hands, seized upon the girl, tore her with brutal force from the lieutenant, and, staggering back himself, awkwardly left the poor girl unsupported. She fell back speechless upon the stone steps of the door, and remained, lying as if dead, upon the street.

Madame de Scuderi could bear it no longer.

‘What has happened?’ she cried, as she hastily opened the door of the carriage and stepped out.

The people bowed respectfully to her, and she, observing that some compassionate women had raised up the girl, had set her upon the steps, and were now bathing her forehead with some strong balsam, advanced towards Desgrez and, with some warmth, repeated her question.

‘A most horrible affair has happened,’ replied Desgrez. ‘René Cardillac was this morning found murdered by means of a stiletto, and his assistant Oliver Brusson is the murderer. He has just been sent to prison.’

‘And the girl?’ exclaimed De Scuderi.

‘She,’ said Desgrez, ‘is Madeline, Cardillac’s daughter. The base villain was her lover. She now weeps, wails, and cries out above all things that Oliver is innocent—perfectly innocent. In fine, she knows something of the matter, and I must order her also to be carried to the *conciergerie*.’

Desgrez threw a glance at the girl which made De Scuderi tremble. In the meantime the girl had begun to breathe lightly, but still she lay with closed eyes, incapable of speech or motion, and no one knew what to do, whether to carry her into her father's house, or to let her lie till she had in some measure recovered.

Deeply affected, and with eyes streaming with tears, De Scuderi felt fears for the girl from the licentiousness of Desgrez and his associates. At that moment there was a noise of many feet upon the stair. It was the guard bringing down the corpse of the goldsmith. On observing this, De Scuderi, with ready decision, called out—

‘Desgrez, I shall take the girl home with me. You may take care of the rest.’

A hollow murmur of approbation flew through the crowd. The women raised up the girl in their arms, a hundred hands were stretched out to render assistance, and the insensible girl was borne into the coach, while a shower of blessings on the worthy lady who had taken innocence under her protection flowed from the lips of the people.

As she recovered, a flood of tears gave vent to the anguish that was preying on the girl's mind. She then endeavoured, as far as her sobbings would permit, to relate to Madame de Scuderi what had occurred.

Her story was, that she was awakened at midnight by a light tapping at her chamber door, and she immediately recognised the voice of Oliver, who implored her in the most earnest manner to get up instantly, as her father lay at the point of death. In terror she leaped from her bed, opened the door, and followed Oliver, who, pale and distracted, proceeded

with trembling steps, and bearing a light in his hand, to the workshop. There her father was lying with fixed eyes and in the agony of approaching dissolution. With the most poignant lamentations she threw herself upon him, and immediately noticed his blood-stained shirt. Oliver softly drew her back, and began to wash with some healing balsam and to bind up the wound which was in his left breast. During this operation her father's senses again returned and the death-rattle for a moment ceased. He cast upon his daughter, and then upon Oliver, the most tender look, seized Madeline's hand, laid it in that of Oliver, and pressed them convulsively together. Both of them dropped upon their knees by the side of the dying man, who, with a piercing cry, directed his eyes to heaven, sank back, and expired. Both were now plunged in the most profound anguish, and gave vent to their sorrow in sobs and tears. Oliver then told her how his master, in a visit he was called on to make in the night, and on which he was ordered to accompany him, was stabbed in his presence, and how he, with the greatest exertions, had borne the heavy man to his house, never once dreaming that he was mortally wounded. Madeline said that the morning had scarcely dawned before the people of the house, who had heard the noise of feet and of weeping, entered, and found her and Oliver still kneeling, comfortless, by the corpse of her father. An alarm was instantly raised, the police arrived, and Oliver was dragged away to prison as the murderer.

Madeline drew the most touching picture of the virtue, the piety, and the constancy of her lover. She said that he held his master in as high respect as if he had been his own father, and that her father

returned his affection in full measure ; that he had chosen him for his son-in-law in spite of his poverty, because he considered his ability and his diligence were equal to his constancy and to the nobleness of his disposition. All this Madeline said, apparently from the conviction of her heart, and added that even if Oliver had, in her very presence, appeared to strike the dagger into her father's heart, she would rather have believed it to be a delusion of hell than have once thought that he was capable of such a crime.

Madame de Scuderi was deeply moved, and caused inquiries to be made which confirmed what the girl had stated about the relations between Cardillac and his associate. The neighbours with one accord praised Oliver. No one knew any bad of him, and yet, when the deed was mentioned, every one shrugged his shoulders and said there was something unaccountable and mysterious in the affair.

Oliver, placed before the *Chambre Ardente*, denied with the greatest firmness the crime that was laid to his charge, and maintained that his master had been struck down in his presence, in the street, and that he had dragged him alive to his own house. This account agreed with everything Madeline had related.

De Scuderi went over and over again every minute circumstance attendant on the dreadful affair. At last, in the firm persuasion that Oliver was innocent, she resolved to save him, cost what it might.

It appeared to her that it would be better to go first to the President, La Regnie, in order to draw his attention to all the circumstances which bespoke the innocence of Oliver Brusson, and thus, perhaps,

awaken in his mind a favourable impression of the accused.

La Regnie received her with the greatest respect and listened attentively to everything she said respecting the deed, Oliver's part in it, and particularly the young man's unexceptionable character. A cunning smile played upon his lip as he observed that the affirmations and floods of tears that accompanied exhortations should not be passed over without consideration—that a judge should not be the enemy of the accused, but should respect and lend a ready ear to everything that might operate in his favour.

When De Scuderi had finished what she had to communicate, she wiped the tears from her eyes and remained silent. La Regnie then began—

‘It is well worthy of your compassionate heart, that you, moved by the tears of a young girl under the influence of love, should believe everything she brings forward, and even that you should be blind to every trace of a most villainous transaction ; but it is otherwise with the judge who is accustomed to tear away the mask that conceals the basest hypocrisy. It would, indeed, be improper for me to unravel to every one who might ask me the progressive course of a criminal process. I do my duty, and the opinion of the world has but little influence with me. Villains should tremble before the *Chambre Ardente*, which metes out no other punishment but blood or fire. In order that I may not be accounted by you a severe and terrible executioner of the law, I propose, in a few words, to convince you of the guilt of the young villain upon whom, heaven be praised, vengeance is now about to fall. Your acute mind will then despise the compassion which does

honour to your heart, but which would be altogether unsuitable to me. Listen. In the morning René Cardillac is found murdered by the stiletto. Nobody is near him except his associate, Oliver Brusson. In Brusson's chamber a stiletto is found newly stained with blood, and which precisely fits the wound. "Cardillac," Oliver has said, "was murdered during the night before my eyes." "Did the person wish to rob him?" "That I know not." "You went with him, and it was not possible for you to prevent the murder—to hold the murderer fast—to call for help?" "My master went fifteen or twenty paces before me. I followed him." "Wherefore, in all the world, were you so far behind him?" "My master wished it." "What did Master Cardillac particularly do in the street so late at night?" "That I cannot tell." "Did he ever go out formerly from his house after nine o'clock at night?" Here Oliver stammered, sighed, and burst into tears. He swore, however, by all the saints, that Cardillac went out that night and received his death-blow. Now it is particularly to be remarked that it is proved in the clearest manner that Cardillac never left his house that night, and Oliver's assertion that he went out with him is a daring lie. The street door has a loud, heavy lock which, on opening and shutting, makes a great noise, and the door itself grates so harshly on its hinges that every time it is opened the sound is echoed even to the highest floor of the house. Now there dwell on the lowest floor, quite close to the street door, old Master Claud Patru and his maid-servant. He is a person of almost eighty years of age, but still lively and acute. Both these persons heard Cardillac, according to his usual custom, come up the steps that evening at nine o'clock precisely,

shut and fasten the door with considerable force, then mount the stairs, repeat in a loud voice the evening prayer, and, from the shutting of the room door, they are convinced he went into his own sleeping apartment. Master Claud complained of sleeplessness, which is but too common among persons of his great age. That night, at least, he did not shut an eye. The maid went into the kitchen, it might be, probably, about half-past nine, and in going thither she had to cross the passage. She brought a light and sat down near the table to read to Master Patru an old chronicle, while the old man, occupied with his own thoughts, sometimes sat in the arm-chair, and sometimes walked up and down the room to bring on weariness and sleep. Everything remained still and silent till midnight. Then, however, there were heard above quick steps, a loud crash, as if some one had let fall a heavy burden on the ground, and almost at the same moment a hollow groan. Both were seized with a singular anxiety and trembling. The horror of the dreadful deed which at that moment was perpetrated passed away, but with the dawn of morning there came to light what was executed in the darkness.'

'But,' said Madame de Scuderi, 'considering all the circumstances I have mentioned, can you give any reason why Brusson should commit such a crime?'

'Hem,' replied La Regnie. 'Cardillac was not poor. He was the possessor of many valuable gems.'

'But,' continued De Scuderi, 'would they not all go to his daughter? You forget that Oliver was to be his son-in-law.'

'He was, perhaps, obliged to share them or even to murder for others,' said La Regnie.

'Share them—murder for others!' cried De Scuderi in astonishment.

'Know,' continued the President, 'know then, most noble lady, that Oliver should long ago have bled upon the Place de Grève. Does not this deed of his most probably stand connected with that thick veiled mystery which until now has so frightfully hung over the whole of Paris? Oliver manifestly belongs to that base band which has so long carried on its diabolical practices safe and unpunished. Through him must, through him shall, everything become clear. Cardillac's wound is precisely similar to those of the persons who have been found robbed and murdered in the streets. But the most convincing thing of all is, that since Oliver Brusson's apprehension all robberies and murders have ceased. The streets have now become as safe at night as during the day. It is very probable that Oliver was the leader of the band. He does not confess, but there are means to make him speak against his will.'

'And Madeline?' cried De Scuderi.

'Aye,' said La Regnie, with a bitter smile, 'who can assure me confidently that she is not an accomplice? Why may not her tears flow more for the murderer than for the murdered?'

'What do you say?' cried De Scuderi. 'It is not possible.'

'Oh,' said the President, 'think but on Brinvilliers. You must forgive me should I see it necessary to tear from you your protégée, and order her to prison.'

De Scuderi trembled at the horrible suspicion. It seemed to her that no affection, no virtue could exist in the opinion of such a man as this. His most secret thoughts spoke but of murder and bloodshed. She rose.

'Be humane,' was all her agitated and trembling lips could utter.

When she was descending the steps, down which the President, with ceremonious politeness, accompanied her, a strange thought came into her head.

'Could I be permitted,' said she, turning round abruptly to the President, 'to see Oliver Brusson?'

La Regnie looked at her with a thoughtful countenance, then putting on that contemptuous smile so peculiarly his own, he said—

'I see plainly you would trust more to your own feelings, to your internal voice, than to that which is done before your eyes in proof of Oliver's guilt. If you are not terrified to enter the abode of crime, or if it is not disagreeable to you to behold the instruments of torture in all their dreadful variety, the doors of the *conciergerie* shall be open to you in the course of two hours, and this Oliver, whose fate has awakened so much interest in you, shall be placed before you.'

De Scuderi determined to go. Arrived at the *conciergerie* at the appointed time, she was conducted into a large well-lighted apartment, and not long afterwards the clanking of heavy chains struck upon her ear. It was Oliver Brusson who was approaching.

No sooner had he entered the door than Madame de Scuderi fell down insensible upon the floor.

When she recovered, the young man had disappeared, and she desired that her carriage might be at once ordered, that she might at once quit the prison. Alas! at the first glance she had recognised in Oliver Brusson the young man who, upon the Pont Neuf, had thrown the letter into the carriage—the man whom Maria had identified as the bearer of

the casket. Every doubt was now dispelled. La Regnie's conjecture was but too well confirmed. Oliver Brusson belonged to the band of murderers,—and Madeline? When De Scuderi reached her own house, as she entered the chamber, Madeline met her.

'Go! go!' cried De Scuderi, 'console the murderer who now awaits the rightful punishment of his horrible crimes. May the Holy Virgin grant that you yourself be not worthy to suffer the misery of a doom such as his!'

'Alas! alas! All now is lost!' With these words, uttered in heart-piercing tones, Madeline fell senseless to the floor.

De Scuderi ordered Maria to take care of the girl, while she herself retired to another apartment. The tones of that tender voice had pierced her heart, and again the presentiment of some hidden mystery awoke in her bosom, and still made her hope in Oliver's innocence.

At that moment, Baptiste, pale and agitated, entered the room with the news that Desgrez was below. Since the horrible trial of La Voisin the appearance of Desgrez at a house was a certain forerunner of some serious accusation. Hence Baptiste's alarm.

'Well, Baptiste, what has Desgrez to do with me?' said De Scuderi. 'Nothing, surely. The name of De Scuderi was not in the list of La Voisin. Let him be admitted.'

Desgrez entered the room.

'The President,' said he, 'La Regnie, has sent me to you with a request, upon the granting of which he could not hope were he not fully acquainted with your worth and courage. It is to put in your hands the last means of bringing a base transaction to light. You have already, I understand, taken part in a pro-

cess which at present keeps the *Chambre Ardente* and all Paris in breathless anxiety. Oliver Brusson, since he saw you, is half mad. He now appears to make confessions, but swears by Heaven and all the saints that he is altogether guiltless of Cardillac's murder, although he says he will willingly suffer death, which, he avows, he has by his conduct deserved. Remark, my lady, that this last avowal evidently points to other crimes. As yet all our endeavours have been of no avail to extort a confession from him, and even threats of torture have elicited nothing. He has implored us to procure him an interview with you. To you, to you alone, he will confess everything. Do you consent, then, to hear the confession of Oliver Brusson ?

'How,' exclaimed De Scuderi,—'how shall I act as the organ of a bloodthirsty judge? Shall I abuse the confidence of an unfortunate man? It is useless for me to receive secrets which must remain locked up in my bosom as a sacred confession.'

'Perhaps,' added the Lieutenant, with a sly smile,—'perhaps, my lady, your opinion may change when you have listened to the accused. Did not you yourself beseech the President to be humane? He is so when he assents to the wish of Brusson, and thus adopts the last means left him ere he applies the torture, which has been long ready for him.'

Madame de Scuderi shrank back involuntarily at the mention of torture.

'Know,' continued Desgrez, 'that you will not be required to once more enter the prison. In the night, unknown to any one, Oliver Brusson shall be brought to your own house. There, without any witnesses, although well guarded, he may, without compulsion, acquaint you with everything which now

presses upon his conscience. That you have nothing to fear from the wretched man I pledge my life, for he speaks of you with affection and with the most profound respect. He swears that his cruel fate, by preventing him from seeing you sooner, has been the cause of his ruin, and has led him to look for nothing but immediate death. It will, after you have heard him, remain with you to tell as much of what the young man reveals to you as you please. Could any one expect more from you ?'

Madame de Scuderi raised her eyes from the floor, on which she had bent them in deep thought.

'Heaven,' said she, 'will give me understanding and firmness. Conduct Oliver Brusson here. I will speak with him.'

CHAPTER IV

As upon the memorable occasion when Oliver Brusson brought the casket of jewels, there was now again heard about midnight a knocking at the street door of Madame de Scuderi's house. Baptiste, informed of the nightly visitors, opened. An icy chill came over the lady when she ascertained, from the soft steps and hollow murmurs that struck upon her ear, that the officers who had brought the accused were posting themselves along the various passages of the house.

At length the door of the apartment was softly opened ; Desgrez entered, and behind him Oliver Brusson, unfettered and in respectable attire.

'Here, most noble lady,' said the Lieutenant, 'is Brusson,' and he left the room.

The young man fell on his knees before Madame de Scuderi. Even then it seemed to her there beamed through his features the expression of an honest heart.

'Well, Oliver Brusson,' said she, 'what have you to say to me?'

'Have you then,' replied he,—'have you then entirely forgotten Anne Guiot? her son Oliver, the boy whom you so often fondled on your knee? 'Tis he, 'tis he who now stands before you.'

'By all the saints,' cried De Scuderi, as she covered her face with her hands and sank back upon the couch.

She had great reason for astonishment. Anne Guiot, the daughter of a poor citizen, lived from her earliest years in the house of Madame de Scuderi. There she was brought up and educated by her patroness with all the care and all the affection that the fondest mother could bestow upon a darling child. When she reached womanhood, a handsome and respectable youth called Claude Brusson had fallen in love with her. He was an expert and clever watchmaker, and at that period found full and lucrative employment in Paris. Anne returned his love, and Madame de Scuderi, seeing no objection to the marriage, gave her consent. The young pair were united, lived in the calm happiness of domestic comfort, and soon had their bond of bliss more firmly cemented by the birth of a lusty boy. De Scuderi made a perfect idol of the little Oliver. She tore him from his mother for hours, nay, for days, to kiss and fondle him, and it so happened that the boy lived almost entirely with her, and was even more pleased in her arms than in those of his mother. Three years passed, and the industry of the expert

Brusson became so unproductive, and his business so decreased, that he found himself at last unable to support his family. Upon this he commenced to long to return to his native city, Geneva, and the little family removed thither, in spite of all the opposition of De Scuderi, who promised them all the support it was in her power to bestow. Anne wrote to her foster-mother several times and then was silent; and the latter became convinced that her new mode of life had obliterated all recollection of her former happy days.

It was now exactly three-and-twenty years since Claude Brusson, his wife, and child had left Paris.

‘Oh, dreadful!’ cried De Scuderi. ‘Art thou Oliver?’

‘You could little have imagined, most noble lady,’ said Oliver, ‘that the boy whom you, like the fondest mother, so tenderly fondled, whom you clasped to your bosom, into whose mouth you put sweetmeats, on whom you bestowed the most endearing names, should, ripened into manhood, stand before you accused of the most frightful murder. ’Tis true I am not free from all guilt. The *Chambre Ardente* may with perfect justice convict me of a crime, but as I hope to die happy and to gain heaven, though it be by the executioner’s hand, I am free of every bloody stain. It was not by *my* hand, it was not by *my* hand René Cardillac fell.’

For a moment he was silent, and then he continued—

‘I had time enough to prepare myself for this interview, which I considered as the last favour granted to me by an appeased God, and to gain also as much calmness and recollection as is necessary to

relate to you the story of my misfortunes. Have compassion on me and listen to me calmly, lest the discovery of a dreadful secret should overpower you with surprise, and fill you with horror. Oh! that my poor father had never left Paris! My earliest recollections of Geneva are associated with the tears of my disconsolate parents, with their complaints which I did not comprehend, but which often drew tears from *my* eyes. At a later period I was fully aware of the oppressive poverty and deep misery in which my parents lived. My father was disappointed in all his hopes. Borne down by sorrow and by suffering, he died at the very moment he had succeeded in getting me bound apprentice to a goldsmith. My mother spoke much of you. She wished to inform you of everything, but that reserve which so frequently arises from poverty held her back. That and false shame, which so often gnaws at the broken heart, prevented her communicating with you. A few months after the death of my father, my mother followed him to the grave.'

'Poor Anne, poor Anne,' murmured Madame de Scuderi.

'Thanks and praise be to the eternal powers in heaven that she is gone, and is not allowed to behold her beloved son fall by the hand of the executioner, branded with infamy.'

Oliver uttered these words in a loud voice, while he threw a wild and terrible look on high. A noise was heard from below as of persons walking up and down.

'Ha! ha!' said Oliver, with a bitter smile, 'Desgrez awakens his comrades, as if I could escape hence. But, to proceed. I was worked hard by my master; but in spite of this I laboured as much as

possible, and very soon surpassed him in expertness. A stranger happened to enter our workshop one day to purchase a trinket. A necklace which I was just finishing took his fancy. He clapped me on the shoulder with a friendly look, while eyeing the ornament, and said, "Aye, aye, my young friend. This is, indeed, a very excellent piece of work. I know not any one who could surpass you but René Cardillac, who is, assuredly, the first goldsmith in the world. To him you should go. He will be pleased to give you employment; for it is only such a one as you as could assist him in his workmanship, and it is only from him that you can ever learn anything more of your profession."

'The words of the stranger sank deep into my soul. I left Geneva and came to Paris. René Cardillac received me coldly and harshly, but I told him I would not leave him till he gave me something, however trifling, to execute. I got a small ring to make. When I brought back the finished trinket, he stared at me with his sparkling eyes, as if he would look into my very soul, and said—

"Thou art a clever expert fellow. Thou mayest come and help me in my workshop. I will pay you well. You will be quite content."

'Cardillac kept his word. I had already passed several weeks in the house without having seen his daughter, who was residing in the country with one of her aunts. She came home at last, however. Did ever man love half so fondly as I did? Ah, Madeline, Madeline!'

Struggling with the grief that overcame him, Oliver at length continued—

'Madeline looked upon me with friendly eyes. She came oftener and oftener into the workshop.

Her love was evident, and I observed it with unspeakable joy. Cardillac appeared not to remark our mutual love, and I thought it would be best first to win his favour by becoming a proficient in my work before asking his permission to woo his daughter. One morning, as I was in the act of commencing my day's labour, Cardillac entered the workshop with anger and contempt painted on his gloomy countenance. "I shall not require your assistance any longer," said he. "Leave my house this instant, and let me never again see you within its walls. Why I can no longer suffer you to remain here it is not necessary for me to tell you, or for you to know."

'I wished to speak, but he seized me with his powerful hands and pushed me out of the door.

'Insulted and torn by the most gnawing grief, I quitted the house, and found, at last, in the extremity of the Faubourg St. Martin, a kind acquaintance who took me into his room. I could find no consolation, no rest. During the night I slipt out to Cardillac's house, thinking that Madeline might hear my sighs and my complaints—that she might, perhaps, desire to speak to me in secret from her window.

'I repeated my nightly visits to the house regularly.

'To Cardillac's house in the Rue Nicaise is attached a high wall with recesses, in which stand several old half-patched statues. As I stood close by one of those figures and was gazing up towards the windows of the house, which look into the court which is enclosed by the wall, I discovered a light in the goldsmith's workshop. It was midnight, and Cardillac never used to be awake at that hour;

indeed, he was always accustomed to go to bed at nine. My heart beat with anxious expectation. I thought that some accident might probably open a path to my entering the house, but while I yet looked the light disappeared. I pressed myself close to the statue which was placed in one of the recesses, but was soon glad to scramble back, not a little terrified, when I felt an opposing pressure—in fact, when I felt the figure become as it were alive. By the glimmering light of the stars I noticed that the statue moved round, and from behind it there slipt out a dark figure, which crossed the street with a light step. I sprang towards the statue, but it stood, as at first, quite close to the wall. Unconsciously, or rather like one impelled by some inward power, I followed, with cautious step, the retreating figure. Near to a statue of the Virgin the figure turned round, and the full light of a bright lamp which burned before the image of the holy mother illuminated the countenance of the mysterious being, and discovered to my astonished eyes René Cardillac. An inexpressible anxiety, an unaccountable tremor, took possession of me, and as if bound by some magic spell, I felt obliged to move on after the ghostlike wanderer. In truth, although it was not then full moon, I considered my master an enchanted sleep-walker. Cardillac, however, disappeared all at once in the deep shadow of the street. I discovered that he had entered into the gateway of a house.

“What does this betoken? What will he do?” thought I, and while thus questioning myself, full of astonishment, and pressing close to the houses lest I should be seen, a man, wearing the gayest feathers and most glittering spurs, approached, whistling and singing. Like a tiger upon his prey, Cardillac leaped

from his concealment upon the unthinking cavalier, who, in the twinkling of an eye, fell groaning to the ground. I sprang forward, with a cry of horror. Cardillac was above the man, who lay stretched upon the street.

"Master Cardillac, what do you do?" cried I in a loud voice.

"Most accursed of hell!" bellowed the goldsmith, while he rushed past me and disappeared.

'Almost petrified, I approached the wounded man and knelt by his side, thinking that he might perhaps yet be saved, but, alas! every spark of life had fled. In my anxiety and consternation I did not perceive that the patrol had surrounded me.

"Another struck down by those devils! Young man, what are you doing here? Are you one of the band? Away with him!" was the general exclamation, and I was instantly laid hold of. So much was I thunderstruck that I had scarcely presence of mind to stammer out that I was incapable of such a deed, and that they should allow me to go in peace. Upon this one of the party held up a lantern to my face.

"Why, this is Oliver Brusson, the goldsmith's assistant, he who works with the honoured Master René Cardillac. Aye, aye! he would murder people in the street? Look at me straight in the face. Is it the custom of murderers to lament over the corpses of their victims and allow themselves to be caught? How is it, young man?"

"Straight before me." cried I, "a man sprang out upon the person there, struck him down, and ran quick as lightning from the spot. I gave a loud cry, and approached to see whether the person fallen could be saved."

“‘Twas impossible,” said one of the men who were raising up the body. “He is dead. The dagger has gone through the heart as usual.”

“‘Tis true. It has,” said another. “We have arrived again, like yesterday night, a moment too late.” Then they departed with the body.

‘How I came to myself I cannot well tell. I felt as if I had just awoke, and was wondering at the foolish imposture. Cardillac, the father of my Madeline, a base murderer! The idea seemed absurd. By degrees the morning grew lighter. I looked around me. An officer’s hat, richly ornamented with feathers, lay before me on the pavement. Cardillac was guilty! I ran in terror from the spot.

‘Bewildered and almost senseless, I sat in my chamber when the door opened, and René Cardillac stepped in.

“‘For heaven’s sake, what do you want?’” cried I.

‘Without taking the least notice of what I said, and smiling with a calmness and light-heartedness which increased my inward horror, he approached me.

‘Having drawn towards him an old broken stool, he sat himself down close by the straw mattress upon which I had thrown myself, and from which I could not rise.

“‘Well, Oliver,” began he, “how are you, my poor lad? I erred, indeed, when I drove you from my house. I feel the want of you at every turn. Even now I have a piece of work which I cannot completely finish without your assistance. What do you think of coming again to my workshop? You are silent. I know I have displeased you. I will tell you, I felt angry with you for your love affair with Madeline. Now I have weighed the

matter well, I am convinced that, considering your ability, your diligence, and your honesty, I could not wish for a better son-in-law. Come then with me, and try whether you will be able to gain my daughter's love!"

'Cardillac's words pierced my very soul. I trembled, and could not utter a syllable.'

"'Thou tremblest,' continued he, in a sharp voice, while he stared at me with his sparkling searching eyes. "Thou tremblest. Perhaps thou canst not go with me to-day? Thou hast other things before thee? Thou wouldst, mayhap, pay a visit to Desgrez, or allow thyself to be conducted into the presence of Argenson or La Regnie! Take care, young man, that the deed thou wouldst communicate and lay to the charge of another do not fall upon thine own head and destroy thee."

'The words gave to my deeply loaded soul an immediate vent.

"'Thou mayest tremble," said I, "who art acquainted with such frightful deeds. I have nought to do with them."

"'Assuredly," continued Cardillac. "You did yourself honour by working with me,—with me, the most celebrated master of his time, one above all, highly respectable, not only for his ability, but for his honour. Every base calumny would only fall with redoubled force on the head of the calumniator. As for Madeline, I must now confess it is for her sake I urge you to return. She loves you with a warmth which I could not have expected from such a girl. When you departed she fell at my feet, clasped me round the knees, and confessed, with a thousand tears, that she could not exist without you. I thought she only acted like others of her sex in love, who

swear eternal affection, and yet look upon the next fair face with as much pleasure as on that of their lost lover. But my Madeline languished and fell sick. What could I do? Yesterday evening I promised her I would grant her all she wished, and would bring you back to-day. During the night her cheeks have regained their wonted colour, and she even now awaits your return."

'May the eternal powers forgive me! I know not how it happened, but soon I stood again in the goldsmith's house. Soon I heard my Madeline sob out—

"“Oliver—my Oliver—take me in your arms—press me to your bosom!” while I, in a transport of the greatest joy, swore by the Virgin and all the saints never more to leave her.'

For a moment Oliver was silent as he recalled that moment.

'Tis horrible,' said De Scuderi. 'René Cardillac belong to that band of murderers?'

'What do you say, my lady?' exclaimed Oliver. 'To the band? There is no such band. It was Cardillac alone who, with base activity, sought out and found his unfortunate victims.'

He again continued his narration.

'What I have to tell will clear up the mystery that hangs over the basest but, at the same time, the most unfortunate of men.

'The situation in which I stood with my master made us both think. The step was taken. I could not now retreat. At the same time it appeared to me as if I had been Cardillac's associate in murder, and it was only in Madeline's love I forgot the inward pain which afflicted me. It was only in her presence I could ever succeed

in blotting out the memory of that nameless crime.

‘I wrought daily with the old man in his workshop, but could not look him in the face, and could scarcely utter a word from the horror which the companionship of the man naturally produced,—a man who, though fulfilling all the duties of a most affectionate father and of a most worthy citizen in the day, could practise at night the most frightful of crimes. Madeline regarded her father with a love almost approaching to idolatry. My heart was deeply pierced, indeed, whenever I thought, if ever vengeance should fall upon the masked hypocrite, how frightful would be her wild despair. That oft-recurring thought sealed my lips. Cardillac’s motive and his mode of acting appeared like a riddle to me. They, however, were soon made clear enough.

‘It happened one day that Cardillac was laughing and joking over his work (a manner of his which, even more than any other, tended to excite my horror), when he became, on a sudden, completely abstracted. The ornament he was labouring at was thrown hurriedly aside, so that the stones and pearls rolled out upon the floor. Starting up from his seat, he said—

“Oliver, we cannot remain thus any longer. This suppression is, to me, unbearable. What all the sly cunning of Desgrez and his associates was unable to discover, fate has put into your hands. Thou hast seen me at my nightly work, a work to which my evil star impels me—all resistance is in vain. It was thy evil star, too, that made thee follow me, that enveloped thee in an invisible mantle, that gave lightness to thy footsteps, so that I, who can see as

clearly in the darkest night as the ravenous tiger, and who can discover the least noise, though afar off—even the very hum of an insect—did not remark thee. It was thy evil star that led thee to become my associate. Thou shalt now know everything.”

“These words of Cardillac completely stopped my utterance. He sat down upon his workstool. He wiped the sweat from off his brow, and appeared so much agitated with the remembrance of the past as to be almost unable to collect himself. At length he began thus—

“Wise men speak much of the strange impressions many women receive when they are about to bear children, and of the wonderful influence of such impressions upon the children they carry in their womb. A very singular story of this kind was told of my mother. She had gone, when scarcely more than a month with child of me, along with some other female acquaintances, to a splendid fête which was given at the Trianon at Versailles. There her eye fell upon a cavalier in Spanish attire, who wore a splendid chain of precious stones suspended from his neck, and from which she tried in vain to avert her eye. Her whole existence was an ardent desire for precious gems, which appeared to her above all earthly possessions. The cavalier who now so much attracted her by the splendour of his jewels had, several years previous to my mother’s marriage, made proposals to her, which, however, she had rejected with contempt. Her eye instantly recognised him, but now, instead of appearing to her as he had once done the basest of men, he seemed, in the brilliant glow of the sparkling diamonds, to be a being of a higher order, nay, the very perfection of beauty itself.

The cavalier marked the longing and passionate look of my mother. He flattered himself that he might be more fortunate than formerly, and took an opportunity to approach her, and to lead her away from her friends to a retired spot in the garden. There he clasped her in his arms. My mother seized upon the beautiful necklace, and at that very moment the cavalier fell and drew my mother along with him to the ground. Whether it was from the fall or from some other cause, I know not ; it is enough to say that he at that moment breathed his last. Vain were my mother's exertions to extricate herself from the grasp of the corpse. His hollow eyes were fixed on her in lifeless fixedness ; death, as it were, grappled with her and held her to the ground. Her piercing cries for help reached the ears of her distant friends, who ran towards the spot and released her from the arms of her horrible lover. This event threw my mother into a dangerous illness. I was given up for lost, but she recovered, and her delivery was more fortunate than any one could have anticipated. But the terror of that frightful moment had affected me. My evil star had risen and kindled in me one of the strangest and most destructive of passions. From my earliest years glittering diamonds and golden ornaments were above all things valuable in my eyes. It was considered by all only a common childish inclination, but it soon showed itself something else, for, when merely a boy, I stole every jewel and every piece of gold I could lay my hands on. Like the ablest connoisseur, I knew by instinct the artificial from the real gem. The latter alone had power to entice me. Artificial stones and common trinkets I allowed to lie untouched. This innate desire my father tried to weaken and subdue by many dreadful

chastisements, but as I still busied myself with gold and precious stones, I was put to the profession of a goldsmith. I laboured at it with delight and assiduity, and soon became the first master of the art. A period now began when my natural impulse, so long subdued, broke forth with new power, and increasing in strength, monopolised my very being. No sooner had I finished a set of ornaments than I fell into a state of discomfort and restlessness which robbed me of sleep, health, nay, the very love of existence itself. The person for whom I had wrought stood like a spectre, day and night, before me, decorated with my ornaments, and a voice whispered in my ear—

“‘They are thine, they are yet thine. Take them. What has the dead to do with diamonds?’

“‘I listened inwardly and lent myself to the arts of private robbery. I had an easy access to the houses of the great, and I took advantage of every opportunity. No lock withstood my ingenuity, and very soon all the ornaments I had made were again in my possession. But at length even that would not allay my restless passion. A deep internal voice attracted my attention, and it said—

“‘Why should mortal man wear thy jewels?’

“‘I know not how it happened, but I threw a look of inexpressible hatred upon those for whom I had finished any ornament. Yes, in the deepest recesses of my heart there raged a desire to murder those before whom I even trembled. About that time I purchased this house. I had come to complete the business with the proprietor, and in this very room we sat mutually pleased with the concluded bargain, and drank a flask of wine together. It was night and I was anxious to depart when my landlord said—

“‘Hark ye, Master René; before you leave me I must make you acquainted with a secret in this house.’ Upon that he unlocked a cabinet which is constructed in the wall, slipped aside the back of it, entered a small apartment, and then bent down and raised a trap-door. Through this we descended a steep and narrow stair, reached a small gateway which he unlocked, and then stepped into the court. The old man then proceeded towards the wall, pushed aside an almost invisible piece of projecting iron, and immediately a portion of the enclosure moved round, so that a man could easily slip through the opening and get into the street. You must see, some time or other, Oliver, this artful contrivance, which the cunning monks of the cloister which once stood here had evidently erected to enable them to steal out unperceived. It is made of wood, but, from without, is plastered over and painted; and in front of the opening is placed a wooden statue in imitation of stone, which turns round, along with a portion of the wall, on concealed pivots. Gloomy thoughts arose within me when I saw this accommodating mechanism. It seemed to me as if it could further the execution of deeds of which I was myself yet unconscious. Just about that time I had delivered up to a gentleman of the court a very rich set of jewels which, I knew, were intended for an opera-dancer. From that moment the death-tormentor had never left me. The spectre attended on my every step. The whispering devil was at my ear. I rushed into my house, and threw myself, sleepless, upon my bed. My fancy pictured the man stealing to the dancer’s house with the jewels. In a frenzy I sprang up, threw my mantle around me, descended the secret stair, and passed through the wall to the Rue Nicaise. He approached.

I fell upon him. He gave a cry, but, firmly holding him from behind, I thrust a dagger through his heart. The jewels were mine! This executed, I felt a quiet, a satisfaction which I had never felt before. The spectre had disappeared, and Satan's voice was still. I had now discovered what my evil star required. I must needs yield to it or perish. Thou art now acquainted, Oliver, with my action and my impulse. Think not, because I do what I cannot leave undone, that I have forsworn every feeling of pity and compassion, which so peculiarly belong to human nature. You know what a painful task it has ever been to me to deliver up a set of jewels, that for those whose death I would prevent I never would do any work, and how, knowing as I do, that on the morrow, perhaps, the spectre will call for blood, I sometimes drive away with a blow the owner of the gems I have wrought, that they may be allowed to remain in my hands!"

'Having said this, Cardillac conducted me into a secret vault and showed me his cabinet of jewels. The King himself does not possess a richer. Upon every set of ornaments was a small ticket, on which was marked for whom it was made, when it was regained, and whether by robbery or murder.

"On thy marriage day," said the goldsmith in a hollow yet passionate voice,—“on thy marriage day, Oliver, thou shalt swear to me, with thy hand upon the pictured cross of Christ, that when I die all of these valuables shall be reduced to dust by means which I shall then make known to you. I wish not that a human being, least of all that Madeline and thou, should ever come into possession of what was purchased with blood!"

'Imprisoned in this labyrinth of crime, torn

alternately by love and horror, by joy and terror, I could only liken myself to the damned on whom a compassionate angel mildly smiles, but whom Satan firmly holds, and who finds in the sympathetic smile of the angel—a smile wherein is seen to play the very happiness of heaven—the most frightful remembrance of his own misery. I thought on flight, yea on suicide—but Madeline ! Blame me, blame me if you will, that I was too weak to subdue a passion which enchained me to a crime. Shall I not expiate it by my death ?’

Again Oliver paused, but calling resolution to his aid, he proceeded with his relation.

‘One day Cardillac returned home uncommonly gay. He fondled Madeline, cast upon me the most friendly looks, drank with us at table a flask of his choice wine, and sang and enjoyed himself exceedingly. Madeline left us, and I rose to go to the workshop.

“Sit you down, young man. No more work to-day,” said he ; “let us drink to the health of the most worthy and the most extraordinary lady in Paris.”

‘Upon that I sat down, and he, quaffing off a full glass, said—

“Tell me, Oliver, how does this saying please you—‘A lover who is afraid should not love.’”

‘He then told me what had occurred in the apartments of Madame de Maintenon, between His Majesty and yourself, and added that he had long respected you more than he had any one else. That before you, possessed as you were of the greatest virtue, his evil star would grow pale and powerless ; and though you should even be wearing one of his most costly ornaments, there would be in the wearer what would put to flight the base spectre that haunted him, and would

lull to rest the thought of murder, that continually assailed him.

“Listen,” said he, “Oliver, to what I have determined on. A considerable time ago I should have finished for Henrietta of England a necklace and armlets, and I had even looked out the gems for that purpose. The work succeeded better than any other I ever tried; but it almost broke my heart when I thought of parting with the ornaments which were the very idol of my soul. You have heard of the princess’s unhappy death. I kept the jewels, and propose now to send them in the name of the suspected band of robbers to Madame de Scuderi simply out of my respect and gratitude. The worthy lady shall receive the token of her triumph, and I shall hold Desgrez and his associates in the derision they deserve. You, Oliver, shall carry the ornaments to her house.”

‘As soon as Cardillac mentioned your name, I felt as if a dark veil was torn asunder, and the lovely picture of my happy childhood rose up before me. A strange confidence took possession of me, and I felt my soul irradiated by a beam of hope, before which all the gloomy phantoms that afflicted me disappeared.

‘Cardillac was at no loss to discover the impression made upon me, and he interpreted it in his own way.

“I see,” said he, “you approve of my intention. I confess to you truly that a deep inward voice, very different from that which, like a hungry and blood-thirsty animal, demands a sacrifice, has commanded me to do this. My heart is often strangely afflicted—an inward restlessness—the fear of something dreadful, the horror of futurity, powerfully impresses me.

It appears, though, to me as if the deeds that have been executed by my evil star by means of these hands could not be laid to the account of my immortal soul, which had no share in the transaction. In such a state of mind I determined on finishing a beautiful diamond crown for the Holy Virgin in the church of St. Eustatius, but an agony altogether incomprehensible overcame me as often as I attempted to commence the work, so at last I gave it up entirely. Now, in sending the most beautiful ornaments I ever made to Madame de Scuderi, I feel as if, in the deep humility of my soul, I brought an offering to virtue and piety, with prayers that would prove effectual."

'Cardillac, acquainted with the most minute particulars of your history and motions, gave me every information respecting your house and household, and the manner in which I should deliver to you the jewels, which he himself enclosed in a handsome casket. I was delighted with the project. I thought heaven itself showed me the way, through this outrageous act of the goldsmith, whereby to save myself from the hell in which I languished. Contrary to Cardillac's wishes, I was anxious to meet with you. As Anne Brusson's son, as your foster-child, I thought of throwing myself at your feet and making a full confession of everything to you. Touched by the nameless misery which threatened the innocent Madeline, you might have kept the secret, while your acute mind might have found out some means to prevent the repetition of Cardillac's villainous deeds, without making those deeds known to the whole world. Ask me not wherein those means existed. Sure I am there lay within my soul a conviction, firm as my belief in the all-powerful support of the Holy Virgin, that you would save both

Madeline and myself. You know my design was frustrated on that night when I so much alarmed your servant, but I lost not the hope of being more fortunate on another occasion.

‘It now happened that Cardillac at once lost his gaiety. He stalked about in deep distress, stared with fixed eyes on all around, muttered unintelligible words, and struggled with his hands as if repelling some frightful object ; in short, his mind appeared to be again tortured with evil thoughts. He had been thus affected for a whole morning, when he sat down upon his workstool, but almost instantly sprang up again, and looking fearfully through the window, said—

“I wish Henrietta of England had worn my jewels.”

‘The words filled me with terror. I knew his erring mind was again possessed with the murdering spectre, that the voice of Satan was again loud in his ears. I saw your life threatened !

“Had Cardillac only once more his ornaments in his hands,” thought I, “she would be saved.”

‘The danger waxed greater and greater. I met you on the Pont Neuf, pressed forward to your carriage, and threw you the letter in which I begged you to at once return the jewels which you had received to the hands of the goldsmith. You came not. My anxiety became despair. Cardillac spoke of nothing else for several days but costly jewels, which he said were continually before his eyes in his dreams. I could think of no other set of ornaments but yours, and it seemed but too evident that he was plotting another assassination, which he intended putting into execution that very night. I was determined to save you though it should cost Cardillac his life. When

the goldsmith, after the evening prayer, locked himself up as usual, I let myself down through a window into the court, slipped through the opening in the wall, and placed myself in the deep shadow of the houses, where I stood unobserved. I had not waited long before Cardillac came out from behind the statue, and proceeded quietly along the street. I followed him. He went to the Rue St. Honoré. My heart trembled. In a moment Cardillac disappeared. I determined upon placing myself at your door. At that very moment, as on the former occasion when chance made me a witness of the goldsmith's murderous deeds, there approached a gaily dressed officer, who passed close by me without, however, observing me. A dark figure instantly sprang out and fell upon him. It was Cardillac!

"I will prevent this murder," thought I, and giving a loud cry, in two or three leaps, I was upon the spot. Not the officer but Cardillac had fallen upon the ground, amid the groans of death. The officer let his dagger fall, drew his sword from its scabbard, and, thinking me an accomplice of the would-be murderer, put himself on his guard. Observing, however, that I paid no attention to him, but was only taken up with the wounded man, he scampered off as fast as possible. The goldsmith was still alive, and, after picking up the dagger which the officer had left and placing it in my girdle, I took him on my back, and carried him carefully home, through the secret way to his workshop. The rest is known to you.

'You see, most worthy lady, that my whole guilt lies in not having betrayed the father of Madeline to the judges, and thus putting an end to his crimes. I am free of the guilt of blood. No torture will draw from me the secret of Cardillac's misdeeds.

I wish not, in defiance of the eternal power that veiled from the virtuous daughter the frightful crimes of the beloved father, that the whole misery of the past should fall upon her, and with its withering power blast her future life for ever—that now the world's vengeance should tear up the corpse from the yet loose earth that covers it—that now the executioner should brand with infamy his mouldering bones. No! The beloved of my soul shall bewail me as an innocent sacrifice. Time will alleviate such sorrow, but unappeasable, indeed, would the sorrow be which arose from the knowledge of the deeds of her beloved father.'

Oliver was silent, and a flood of tears gushed from his eyes.

'Now,' said he, 'are you convinced of my innocence? I am sure that you are! Have pity on me, and say how is Madeline.'

Madame de Scuderi called to her chambermaid, and in a few moments Madeline was hanging on the bosom of Oliver. In the joy of that moment, Oliver forgot his fate, the miseries, and the death which awaited him. He was free, he was happy.

They embraced each other again and again, and wept for joy that they had been once more permitted to see each other.

Had not Madame de Scuderi been already fully convinced of the innocence of Oliver Brusson the scene that was transacted before her would of itself have convinced her of it, for she beheld two individuals in the blessedness of the bond of love forgetting the world, their misery, and all the nameless sorrows which threatened them.

'No!' exclaimed De Scuderi. 'A pure heart alone is capable of such happy forgetfulness.'

The bright beams of the morning had broken through the window of the apartment, when Desgrez tapped lightly at the door, to remind De Scuderi that it was now time to carry away Oliver Brusson, for if he was to return to prison unseen, that could not be accomplished later.

The lovers were obliged to separate.

CHAPTER V

MADAME DE SCUDERI could think of no mode by which she might tear the unfortunate Oliver from the hands of the terrible *Chambre Ardente*. She tortured herself with many schemes, and even with plans which touched upon the marvellous, but they were all as quickly abandoned as conceived. Then she sat down and wrote a long letter to La Regnie in which she told him that Oliver Brusson had proved to her, in the most satisfactory manner, his complete innocence; that only the heroic resolution of carrying to his grave a secret the discovery of which would be alike destructive to innocence and virtue, prevented him from making a full relation to the judges. All that warm feeling and powerful eloquence could do, De Scuderi made use of to soften the hard heart of La Regnie.

Within a few hours the President replied. He said that he was heartily pleased the prisoner had so completely succeeded with his able and worthy judge. With respect to Oliver's heroic resolution he was extremely sorry that the *Chambre Ardente* could not respect such heroism, but must endeavour to break it by the most powerful means. In three days

he hoped to be in possession of the strange secret, which doubtless would tend to bring many wonderful and inexplicable deeds to light.

De Scuderi knew too well what La Regnie meant by the means whereby he should break the heroism of Brusson. The torture hung over him.

Pierre Arnaud d'Andilly was then the most celebrated advocate in Paris. His profound knowledge and acute understanding were only equalled by his integrity and virtue. To him Madame de Scuderi determined to go, and tell him as much as she possibly could without revealing Brusson's secret.

The advocate heard everything she had to say with calmness and attention. Alas! Madame de Scuderi's hopes were most grievously disappointed. He showed her that there were the strongest grounds of suspicion against Oliver, that La Regnie's procedure could not be called in any way harsh or overstretched, that it was perfectly legal, and, moreover, that he could not proceed in any other manner without violating his duty as a judge. The advocate could see nothing that could be presented to save the accused from undergoing the torture. Oliver, he said, could only escape it by candid confession, or, at least, by such a minute relation of the circumstances attending the murder of Cardillac as might enable the authorities to detect the guilty.

'Then,' said De Scuderi, 'I will throw myself at the feet of His Majesty, and implore his favour.'

'Do not do so,' said D'Andilly; 'for Heaven's sake, do not do so. Reserve that last resort, for should that prove ineffectual, all is lost. The King will never pardon such a crime.'

Madame de Scuderi returned to her home in deep distress. She was musing what she had best

now do when Maria announced to her that the Count de Miossons, colonel of the King's guard, anxiously wished to speak with her.

'Pardon me,' said Miossons, bowing with all military respect,—'pardon me for troubling you at so late and so unreasonable an hour. We soldiers do not act like the rest of the world, and I expect to be forgiven. I have come with respect to Oliver Brusson.'

'Oliver Brusson!' exclaimed De Scuderi. 'What have you to do with that most unfortunate man?'

'I thought,' replied the colonel with a smile, 'that the name of your protégé would procure for me your ladyship's particular attention. The whole world is convinced of Brusson's guilt. I know that you are of a different opinion, which can only be founded on the asseverations of the accused.'

'What do you come here to tell me?' asked De Scuderi.

'Merely that I too am persuaded of Oliver Brusson's innocence in regard to Cardillac's murder. Nobody can be better convinced of it than myself.'

'Why so?' asked Madame de Scuderi.

'I,' said De Miossons,—'it was I myself who struck down the old goldsmith in the Rue St. Honoré, at your very door.'

'You?' exclaimed De Scuderi. 'You?'

'Yes,' continued the colonel. 'I confess to you I am proud of the feat. Cardillac was one of the basest and most hypocritical of villains, who during the night secretly robbed and murdered, and escaped so long every snare that was laid. I cannot tell how it occurred to me, but suspicion arose in my mind of the old villain when, full of visible disquietude, he

brought me a set of jewels which I had ordered, and when I found he had made most minute inquiries for whom the jewels were intended, and with the most skilful cunning had drawn from my servants the hour I was in the habit of visiting a certain lady. It had long struck me that the unfortunate victims of these mysterious murders bore precisely the same wounds. I was, therefore, certain that the murderer who could thus kill in an instant, with one dagger stroke, must be a practised proficient, and would always reckon on the success of the same course. I was determined that with me the combat should be on equal terms. I therefore put on a light breast-plate under my vest. Cardillac attacked me from behind. He seized me with a giant's grasp, but the sure-aimed blow glided off the iron, and at that moment I struck my dagger, which I had in readiness, into his heart.'

'And why,' said De Scuderi, 'are you silent? Why have you not informed the judges what you have done?'

'Permit me,' said Miossons,—'permit me to remark that though such a disclosure might not precisely criminate me, it would still entangle me in the most frightful of processes. La Regnie might, suspecting crime in every action, believe he had discovered it in me. Could I have accused the honest Cardillac, the model of piety and virtue, of attempted murder? If the sword of justice had been directed against me, could I have parried the blow?'

'Certainly,' replied De Scuderi. 'Your birth, your station in society.'

'Ah,' continued the colonel, 'think of the Marshal de Luxemburg, whom the mere circumstance of consulting Le Sage's horoscope caused

to be suspected of being a poisoner and doomed to the Bastille. No, I would not trust an hour's freedom or the tip of my ear to La Regnie, who would, with the utmost pleasure, put the knife to all our throats.'

'But,' exclaimed De Scuderi, 'would you allow the innocent Brusson to go to the scaffold?'

'Innocent?' replied Miossons. 'Innocent? Do you call the accomplice of Cardillac innocent? The man who stood by while he performed his deeds of blood! He has deserved death a hundred times. No, indeed, in strict justice he should bleed, and I only make this disclosure to you, most worthy lady, because I hear that you are interested in this young man's fate, and not from any concern I have for him.'

Miossons left, and De Scuderi considered what she should do. The next morning she summoned Miossons to accompany her to the house of the advocate D'Andilly. To him, under the seal of secrecy, she told everything. D'Andilly put several questions to the colonel, and, among others, asked him if he was firmly convinced that it was Cardillac who attacked him, and whether he could recognise Brusson as the person who dragged away the body.

'I am most certain,' replied the colonel. 'And I have also seen in La Regnie's possession the very dagger with which Cardillac was killed by me. The dagger is mine. Its handle is most elegantly worked. As to the young man, since we only stood about a pace asunder, I observed every feature of his face, more particularly because his hat had fallen off. I should know him again anywhere.'

The advocate looked, in silence, on the ground—

'Brusson,' said he, 'is not to be saved in any common way. He will not, for Madeline's sake, call

her father an assassin. Even did he do so, and were he to prove it by the discovery of the secret entrance to the house, and by the collected treasures, still he would be given up to death as an accomplice. It would be the same were Miossons to discover to the judges the whole of what happened. Delay is all that can be obtained at present. The colonel must go to the *conciergerie*, order Brusson to be brought before him, and recognise him as the person who dragged away the body. This will cause delay for further inquiries to be made. Then we must appeal to the King. To you, Madame de Scuderi, must that be left. No law, but merely the King's clemency can grant us what we require.'

Miossons did what was desired, and Brusson was put back for further inquiries to be made before applying the torture.

Madame de Scuderi thought how she should best approach the King. De Maintenon, faithful to her principle of not speaking to His Majesty on subjects disagreeable to him, threw up all participation in the matter, and consequently the fate of Brusson was now left wholly in the hands of De Scuderi.

Arrayed in a deep mourning dress, she put on the costly ornaments Cardillac had sent to her and made her appearance in the apartments of Madame de Maintenon at the time the King was in the habit of going there. Her noble figure, arrayed in this imposing manner, had a majesty which did not fail to awaken profound respect, even in the idlers accustomed to occupy the ante-chambers of a palace. Every one stood aside as she entered, and the King himself arose in astonishment and advanced to meet her. The brilliant diamonds of the necklace and armlets struck his eye.

'By the holy Dionysius!' cried he, 'these are the ornaments of René Cardillac.'

'Aye, gracious sire,' said De Scuderi; 'but I would fain forget the goldsmith altogether, and I hope the horrid scene when, a corpse, he was borne away before me by the officers may not often haunt my mind.'

'How?' asked the King. 'You saw him then, poor wretch?'

De Scuderi related how accident had taken her to the goldsmith's house; she painted the affliction of Madeline, the impression the girl made upon her, and the manner in which she had saved her from the hands of Desgrez and his associates. She described the interviews she had had with La Regnie, with Desgrez, with Oliver Brusson himself. The King, carried away by the power of De Scuderi's description, gave vent to his emotion by exclamations. Before he was aware, Madame de Scuderi had fallen at his feet and was imploring mercy for Brusson.

'What are you doing?' cried he. 'You have taken me by surprise. This is a dreadful story. Who answers for the truth of Oliver Brusson's story?'

'The Count Miossons, the examination of Cardillac's house, Madeline,' said De Scuderi.

The King was about to reply when he was interrupted by a bustle at the door of the apartment. Louvois, who had been transacting business in an adjoining room, looked in with a face that betokened astonishment and anxiety, which the King no sooner observed than he left the room.

Both De Maintenon and De Scuderi considered this interruption dangerous, for having been once taken by surprise, the King might be cautious of

falling a second time into such a situation. A few minutes elapsed before he returned again to the room. At last, stopping short, with his hands behind his back, opposite to where De Scuderi was sitting, he said—

‘I wish to see Madeline.’

De Scuderi ordered the girl to be summoned. In a few minutes she was in the presence of the King.

Anxiety, fear, bashfulness, love, and sorrow, impelled the blood quicker and quicker through her veins. Her cheeks glowed with the deepest red, and anon became snow white. Her eyes beamed through pearly tears, which falling through silken eyelashes dropt upon her palpitating bosom, white as ivory.

The King seemed struck with her beauty. He softly raised her up, and once appeared as if about to kiss the hand he had seized. He quitted it, however, and looked at Madeline with an eye which vainly struggled against tears, evidently moved by feelings of the deepest emotion.

De Maintenon whispered to De Scuderi—

‘Don’t you think the little creature bears a striking resemblance to La Valliere? The King indulges the fondest recollections. Your game is won.’

In a few days Brusson was liberated, and very soon after he was married to Madeline. The young goldsmith felt that he could not remain in a place where everything reminded him of Cardillac’s crimes, and immediately after the marriage he set out with his wife for Geneva, accompanied by the blessings of Madame de Scuderi.

Scarcely a year had passed since his departure,

when a proclamation, signed by Harloy de Chauvalon, Archbishop of Paris, and by Pierre Arnaud d'Andilly, advocate, was issued to the effect that a repentant sinner, under the seal of holy confession, had given up a rich treasure of stolen jewels and ornaments. The proclamation desired any one who, previous to the end of the year 1680, had been robbed in the open streets of any ornament, to immediately make himself known to D'Andilly, when, provided the description of the lost jewel agreed with any in the treasure, and there were no objection to the claim of the applicant, the jewel would be instantly given up.

Many whose names were in Cardillac's list, as having been knocked down and plundered, resorted to the house of the advocate, and received back, with no small astonishment, the ornaments they had supposed lost for ever. The rest were given to the treasury of the Church of St. Eustatius.

THE END

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