My Memoirs, Vol. III, 1826 to 1830

Alexandre Dumas

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MY MEMOIRS

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

TRANSLATED BY

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WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

ANDREW LANG

VOL. III

1826 TO 1830

WITH A FRONTISPIECE

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THE MEMOIRS OF ALEXANDRE DUMAS

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BOOK I — CHAPTER I

CHAPTER I

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On 1 January 1824 I was promoted from being one of the supernumerary clerks at twelve hundred francs per annum to the position of being a regular employé at fifteen hundred. I considered this a most flourishing condition of affairs, and thought that it was now time to send for my mother. I had not seen her for nine months, and the long separation began to grieve me. During these nine months I had made a sad discovery, which it was quite as well I should make, namely, that I had not learnt anything at all that I needed to learn, in order to further my progress in the career I wished to take up. But this did not discourage me, for I felt satisfied that I was now, once for all, firmly established in Paris and that I should not starve, thanks to my 125 francs per month; so I redoubled my zeal, and, ceasing to think of the limit of time I had fixed wherein to attain my end, I resolved to use it in applying myself to study.

Unfortunately, after subtracting my office hours, very little time remained to me. I had to be at the Palais-Royal by half-past ten in the morning, and we did not leave until five in the evening. Moreover, there was a peculiar function connected with the secretary's office, which did not hold with respect to any other office. Either Ernest or I had to return, from eight till ten o'clock in the evening, while the Duc d'Orléans lived at Neuilly, in order to attend to what was called the *portefeuille*; and the Duc d'Orléans, being fond of a country life, spent three-quarters of the year at Neuilly. The task was not a difficult one, but it was imperative; it

consisted in sending off by courier to the Duc d'Orléans the evening papers and his day's letters, and in receiving in return the orders for the next day. This meant a loss of two hours in the evening, and, of course, made it impossible to go to any play except at the Théâtre-Français, which adjoined our offices. It is but fair to say that M. Oudard, who had three tickets a day at his disposal for any seat in the theatre, sometimes indulged us with one of them--an act of generosity hardly ever displayed except when poor plays were on. Still, the expression "poor plays" must only be understood to mean the days when neither Talma nor Mademoiselle Mars was acting. But, since I wanted to go to the theatre for purposes of study, those days of poor plays were often profitable exhibitions for me. Then, too, I entered into an arrangement with Ernest by which each of us had his week, and, in this way, we secured fifteen free nights per month.

I had made the acquaintance of a young doctor, named Thibaut; he had no practice at that time, although he was not without ability. One cure he brought about made his reputation, and another his fortune. He cured Félix Deviolaine--the young cousin of whom I have several times spoken and of whom I shall have occasion to speak again--of a chest complaint that had reached the last stages, by means of inducing articular rheumatism, which drew off the inflammation; and by sheer skill he managed to cure the Marquise de Lagrange, whom he accompanied to Italy, of a chronic affection which was considered incurable. When the marquise was restored to perfect health, she was so grateful that she married him, and they both live to-day on their estates near Gros-Bois. As Thibaut has the control of a fortune of forty to fifty thousand livres income, he no longer practises the craft of medicine except to benefit his flowers and fruits.

But, at this period, Thibaut, like Adolphe and myself, was penniless; we were both his patients, and, pecuniarily speaking, very bad ones. How came we to be Thibaut's patients? I will explain. In 1823 and 1824 it was

all the fashion to suffer from chest complaint; everybody was consumptive, poets especially; it was good form to spit blood after each emotion that was at all inclined to be sensational, and to die before reaching the age of thirty. Of course, Adolphe and I, both young, tall and thin, considered we were fully entitled to this privilege, and many people who knew us agreed we had some right thereto. I have now lost all claim to this distinction, but, to be fair towards Adolphe, he still has his; for now, at forty-six, he is just as tall and as thin as he was then, when he was twenty-one.

Thibaut knew everything of which I was ignorant, so he undertook my education, and it was no light task. We spent nearly all our evenings together in a tiny room in the rue du Pélican, which looked out on the passage Véro-Dodat. I was a hundred yards off the Palais-Royal, so it was the easiest thing imaginable to go from my quarters to make up my packet for the courier. In the morning, I often accompanied Thibaut to the Hôpital de la Charité, where I picked up a little knowledge of physiology and anatomy, although I have never been able to overcome my aversion towards operations and dead bodies. From these visits accrued a certain amount of medical and surgical knowledge, which has often come in very usefully in my novel-writing. As, for example, in *Amaury*, where I traced the various phases of a lung disease in my heroine, Madeleine, with such accuracy that once I was paid the compliment of a visit from M. Noailles, who came to ask me to stop the run of this novel in the *Presse.* His daughter and his son-in-law, who were both in the same stage of consumption, had recognised their precise symptoms in Madeleine's illness, and both waited impatiently each morning for the paper, to know whether M. d'Avrigny's daughter was going to die or not. As M. d'Avrigny's daughter had been condemned to death both by fate and by her author, the *feuilleton* was interrupted and, to comfort the two poor invalids, I improvised, in manuscript, a conclusion which raised their hopes, but which, alas! did not restore them

to health. The *feuilleton* was not resumed until after their death. The readers of the *Presse* had noticed the interruption, but were ignorant of its cause. Now they know.

I have said that I went with Thibaut to the Hôpital de la Charité most mornings, from six to seven o'clock. In the evening, we studied physics and chemistry in his room; and it was in his room that I made my first study of the poisons used by Madame de Villefort in *Monte-Cristo*--a study which I followed and perfected later, with Ruolz.

A good-looking young neighbour named Mademoiselle Walker, who was a milliner, used to join us in our researches. Like la Fontaine's hen, she failed to set Thibaut and me at variance, although she tried all sorts of devices, but happily none was successful, and we all three managed to keep on friendly terms.

I owe much to Thibaut for teaching me method in working, as well as for actual knowledge. I will relate later how Thibaut, whose name is several times quoted in *l'Histoire de dix ans*, by Louis Blanc, was obliged, by reason of his relationship with the family of Maréchal Gérard, to play a certain part in the Revolution of July.

At Lassagne's persuasion I branched out in other directions, and began a course of reading. Walter Scott came first. The first novel I read by the "Scottish Bard," as he was then called, was *Ivanhoe*. Accustomed to the mild plots of Madame Cottin, or to the eccentric pranks of the author of the *Barons de Felsheim* and of the *Enfant du Carnaval*, it took me some time to get used to the rude, uncouth ways of Gurth the swineherd, and to the facetious jokes of Wamba, Cedric's jester. But when the author introduced me to the old Saxon's romantic dining-hall; when I had seen the fire on the hearth, fed by a whole oak tree, with its light sparkling on the monk and on the dress of the unknown pilgrim; when I saw all the members of the family of the thane take their places at the long oak board, from the head of the castle, the king of his territory, to the meanest

servitor; when I saw the Jew Isaac in his yellow cap, and his daughter Rebecca in her gold corselet; when the tourney at Ashby had given me a foretaste of the powerful sword-shakes and lance-thrusts that I should again come across in Froissart, oh! then, little by little, the clouds that had veiled my sight began to lift, I saw open out before me more extended horizons than any that had appeared to me when Adolphe de Leuven worked these changes in my provincial imagination that I have already mentioned.

Next followed Cooper, with his big forests, his vast prairies, his boundless oceans, his *Pioneers*, his *Prairie*, his *Redskins*--three masterpieces of description, wherein absence of substance is well concealed beneath wealth of style, so that one goes the whole way through a novel of his, like the apostle, upon ground ever ready to yawn open and swallow one up, and yet, nevertheless, one is upheld, not by faith but by style, from the first page to the last.

Then came Byron--Byron, lyric and dramatic poet, who died at Missolonghi just when I was beginning to study him in Paris. There had been a tremendous rage over Lord Byron for some time; the glory of the poet had derived fresh glamour from the Greek camp bivouacs; his name would henceforth be associated with those of the famous Greeks of old; not only would Byron be spoken of as akin to Sir Walter Scott and Chateaubriand, but in the same breath as the names of Mavrocordato, Odysseus and Canaris.

One day, before the world even knew that the famous poet was ill, we read in the papers as follows:--

"MISSOLONGHI, 20 *April*

"Our town presents a most touching spectacle; we have all gone into mourning, for our illustrious benefactor died at six o'clock yesterday evening, the 19th instant."

Byron had died at the age of thirty-seven, like Raphael; he had died during the Easter celebrations, and thirty-seven volleys were fired--one for each year of his life--in every town, spreading the news of his death from Thrace to the Piræus, and from Epeirus to the Asiatic coasts.

Courts of justice, public offices and shops were closed for three days; for three days dancing, public amusements and the sound of musical instruments were forbidden; and the public mourning lasted for three weeks.

Poor Byron! he only desired to fight and to help to win a victory, or, if conquered, to die arms in hand. As a general, it would have given him great joy to lead the Souliotes at the siege of Lepanto; Lepanto, the land of Don Juan and of Charles the Fifth, seemed to him a fitting name with which to link his own; it was a noble land to bleed for and to die in.

But he was not to realise that happiness; he died at Missolonghi, and it was he who made an unknown land famous, instead of himself receiving lustre from a sacred land; people say, "Byron died at Missolonghi," not "Missolonghi, the place where Byron died."

The great man had no notion that, in dying for the Greeks, he was only dying so that Europe, as the Duc d'Orléans once expressed it to me, might have the pleasure of eating sauerkraut at the foot of the Parthenon!

Poor immortal bard, who died in the hope that the news of his death would resound through all hearts! what would he have said if he could have heard, as I rushed in, the newspaper containing the fatal notice in my hand, crying despairingly, "Byron is dead," one of the assistants in our office ask, "Who was Byron?" Such a question caused me both pain and pleasure mixed; I had, then, found someone even more ignorant than myself, and he one of the chief clerks in the office. Had it been only an ordinary copying clerk I should not have felt so consoled.

This unlooked for death of one of the greatest poets of the time made a deep impression upon me; I felt instinctively that Byron was more than a poet, that he was one of those leaders whose inspired utterances, in the silence of the night and in the obscurity in which art lives, are heard throughout all nations, whose shining rays lighten the whole world. Such men are usually not only prophets but also martyrs. They create from out their own sufferings the divine thoughts which act as incentives to others; it is at the spectacle of their own tortures that they utter cries which clutch the heart. Had Prometheus or Napoleon been poets, think what verses each would have engraved on his rock of doom!

We will try, then, to give an account of the sufferings of this man, who was driven from his own country as though he were a Barabbas, to die for the Greeks as Christ did for the Jews.

Death must be passed through before there can be transfiguration.

BOOK I — CHAPTER II

CHAPTER II

Byron's childhood--His grief at being lame--Mary Duff--The Malvern fortune-teller--How Byron and Robert Peel became acquainted--Miss Parker--Miss Chaworth--Verses on her portrait--Mrs. Musters--Lady Morgan--*English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*--Byron's letters to his mother--He takes his seat in the House of Lords

Byron was born on 22 January 1788, of so ancient and noble a family that it could take rank with many royal families. At his birth, the child who was predestined to become so famous had his foot dislocated and no one noticed the fact. This accident made him lame, and we shall see what an influence this infirmity had upon his life.

Four celebrated men belonging to the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries were lame: Maréchal Soult, M. de Talleyrand, Walter Scott and Lord Byron. A woman writer has said that "Byron would have given half his fame if he could but have been as proud of his feet as he was of his hands." We are assured that Juno's bird, the peacock, forgot his rich plumage and uttered a cry of distress every time he looked down at his feet. And Byron, king of poets, who had a good deal of the peacock about him, was not more philosophical than that king of birds.

"What a beautiful child!" some lady once remarked, when Byron was three years old and she saw him, whip in hand, playing at his nurse's knee; "but what a pity he is crippled!"

The child turned round, lifted up his whip and lashed the woman with all his might. "Dinna say that!" he said.

His mother, strange to say, never understood how proud the child was. Byron was misunderstood by the two beings who, when they understand a man, can shed most happiness upon his life--his mother and his wife. Byron's mother, as we have said, never realised the child's pride, and used to call him "my lame boy."

If you would learn what this flaw in maternal love cost the lad, read what Arnold says in the first scene of *The Deformed Transformed*:--

"*A Forest Enter* ARNOLD *and his mother* BERTHA

Bert. Out, hunchback!

Arn. I was born so, mother!

Bert. Out, Thou incubus! Thou nightmare! Of seven sons, The sole abortion!

Arn. Would that I had been so, And never seen the light!

Bert. I would so too! But as thou *hast*--hence, hence--and do thy best! That back of thine may bear its burthen; 'tis More high, if not so broad as that of others.

Arn. It *bears* its burthen:--but, my heart! Will it Sustain that which you lay upon it, mother? I love, or, at the least, I loved you: nothing Save you, in nature, can love aught like me. You nursed me--do not kill me!"

At the age of five Byron was sent to school in Aberdeen, where they paid but five shillings a quarter for him. I had thought no child had ever been educated more cheaply than I had; but I was mistaken, and I present my congratulations to Byron as a brother at least in poverty.

Although the future poet spent a whole year in this school, one of his biographers tells us he hardly managed to learn his letters. I had this further advantage over Byron that my mother taught me to read: God gave me at least half of what Byron was denied--a good mother.

From the school at Aberdeen, Byron passed to the university of the same town. Alas! he was one of the worst scholars, and was always at the bottom of his class. Many of his schoolfellows can tell stories of the jokes which his masters made at his expense.

In 1798 the old Lord Byron died. He had been a roué of quality, who had had any number of love affairs and duels. He killed his friend Chaworth in one of his duels--an event which was to have its influence upon his son's life too.

Two years before, young Byron had paid a visit to the Scotch Highlands, from whence he derived that love of high peaks, shared by eagles and poets, which made him later sing the praises of the Alps, the Apennines and Parnassus.

It was during this tour our Dante met his Beatrice; her name was Mary Duff, and she was only eight years old.

The old Lord Byron died at Newstead Abbey, and Byron was his heir. He left Aberdeen with his mother. They sold their furniture for seventy-five pounds sterling--another point of similarity between us (I hope I may be pardoned my comparisons, I shall not have much pride in pressing them further)--and they reached Newstead. There they put the young man under the care of a quack doctor called Lavemde to try and cure his foot, for this infirmity occupied the greatest portion of his thoughts. As it was seen that the young lord's lameness was neither better nor worse for this charlatan's treatment, he was sent to London, where he was entrusted for his physical requirements to Dr. Baillie, and for his moral equipment to Dr. Glennie. There, both doctors had a certain measure of success, for Dr. Glennie had the satisfaction, after having put him on the way, of beholding his pupil surpass all his contemporaries, in letters and poetry.

Dr. Baillie managed to cure his foot sufficiently to enable him to wear an ordinary boot, so that his lameness did not seem more than a slight limp.

Great was the proud youth's joy, and he communicated it to his nurse, whom he greatly loved.

In 1801, when he was thirteen, Byron followed his mother to Cheltenham, where the view of the Malvern Hills, recalling his first visit to the Highlands, made a deep impression upon him, especially as he saw them in the early morning and evening. When he and his mother were out riding together they learnt from the country people of a celebrated sorceress of those parts, and Lady Byron took a fancy to consult her. She said nothing of the lad, and introduced herself to the witch as an unmarried woman. But the sorceress shook her head.

"You are not a maid," she said; "you have been a wife and are now a widow; you have a son who will be in danger of being poisoned before he has attained his majority; he will marry twice, and the second time it will be with a foreigner."

We shall see directly that, if he was not exactly poisoned, he was in fear of being so, and it is well known that, if he did not marry a second time, at all events he found a beautiful Venetian lady of rank who made up to him for his first marriage, save in the recollection of its unhappiness.

From Dr. Glennie's tutelage, Byron proceeded to Harrow. Dr. Drury was then headmaster, and he was the first to detect some few faint glimpses of what the poet would one day become.

"Here I made my first verses," said Byron, "they were received but coldly; but, in revenge, I fought glorious battles at Harrow: I only lost one fight out of every seven!"

It was at Harrow that he made the acquaintance of Sir Robert Peel, and the way in which they became fast friends gives some idea of the character of Byron.

One of their comrades, taller and stronger than they, with whom consequently they had no dealings, was discovered by Byron thrashing poor Peel.

Byron came up and said--

"How many more blows do you mean to give Robert?"

"What business is it of yours?" retorted the combatant. "Why do you ask such a question?"

"Because, if you please, executioner, I will take half the blows you intend for him and will return them to you later, you understand, when I am bigger."

After Harrow, the young man went to finish his education at the University of Cambridge; but he was ever impatient of regular study, just as he was of ordinary modes of enjoyment: the only thing he learnt was how to swim; his only recreation was the training of a bear.

In 1806, when he was eighteen, he joined his mother at Newstead. The relations between mother and son were not at all of a tender nature; on the contrary, the two were nearly always quarrelling. One of these quarrels even went so far one day that each in turn called at a chemist's, within five minutes of one another, to inquire if he had sold the other poison, and, on being told not, begged him not to do so. Besides little Mary Duff, with whom he fell in love when he was nine, Byron conceived a passion when he was twelve for his cousin, Miss Parker, for whom he composed his first verses. They were lost, and the poet never remembered what they were. Miss Parker died, and gave place to Miss Chaworth, the daughter of the man whom old Lord Byron had killed. But this time it was the real passion of budding manhood, tender and deep, and it left its mark for the rest of his life. Miss Chaworth was beautiful, charming in manner and wealthy.

"Alas!" said Byron, "our union would have wiped out the recollection of the blood shed between our fathers; it would have reunited two rich estates and two beings who would have agreed well enough together, and then--and then--Ah, well, God knows what might have happened!"

But Byron was lame; he was obliged to avoid all kinds of exercise that could expose his deformity, and consequently dancing. Now Miss Chaworth was particularly fond of dancing, and Byron would stand, leaning against a corner by the door or against the chimneypiece, his arms crossed, frowning, with his lips curled with anger, whilst the music carried far away from him the girl he loved, some dancer more lucky than he leading her through the figures of a quadrille or guiding her in the whirl of a valse. Once, someone said to Mary Chaworth--

"Do you know that Byron seems deeply in love with you?"

"Well, what does it matter to me?" replied Mary.

"What! do you mean what you say?"

"Of course I do. Do you really think I could care for that lame boy?"

Byron heard both questions and answers, and he said it was as though a dagger had struck him to the heart. These words were uttered at midnight; but he rushed out of the house like a madman and ran without stopping to Newstead, where, on arrival, he fell nearly fainting from exhaustion.

And yet, the disdainful Miss Chaworth having one day sent her portrait to him, Byron, in exchange, sent her the following verses:--

TO MARY

ON RECEIVING HER PICTURE

"This faint resemblance of thy charms, Though strong as mortal art could give, My constant heart of fear disarms, Revives my hopes, and bids me live.

Here I can trace the locks of gold Which round thy snowy forehead wave, The cheeks which sprung from beauty's mould, The lips which made me beauty's slave.

Here I can trace--ah, no! that eye, Whose azure floats in liquid fire, Must all the painter's art defy, And bid him from the task retire.

Here I behold its beauteous hue; But where's the beam so sweetly straying, Which gave a lustre to its blue, Like Luna o'er the ocean playing?

Sweet copy! far more dear to me, Lifeless, unfeeling as thou art, Than all the living forms could be, Save her who placed thee next my heart.

She placed it, sad, with needless fear, Lest time might shake my wavering soul, Unconscious that her image there Held every sense in fast control.

Through hours, through years, through time, 'twill cheer; My hope, in gloomy moments, raise; In life's last conflict 'twill appear, And meet my fond expiring gaze."

A year later, Miss Chaworth married.

"Pull out your handkerchief, my son," Lady Byron said to the lad, one day on returning home.

"What for, mother?"

"Because I have bad news for you."

"What is it?"

"Miss Chaworth is married."

Byron drew his handkerchief out of his pocket and blew his nose, and with that expression of sarcasm which he knew so well how to assume at certain times, he said--

"Is that all?"

"Isn't it enough?" asked Lady Byron, who knew well enough the real pain he was concealing beneath that apparent indifference.

"Enough to make me shed tears? No indeed!" and Byron put his handkerchief back into his pocket.

When Lady Byron had announced to her son in this callous, mocking way his adored Mary's marriage, and Byron had put on a smiling appearance of indifference to the news, returning his handkerchief to his pocket unwet by a tear, the poor youth went to his own room heart-broken, and, taking up in his hand the portrait of his unfaithful sweetheart, the poet tried to comfort the lover, inviting himself to mourn, lashing his passion into words.

Hence resulted those mournful sighings of a broken heart addressed to *Mrs. Musters:*--

TO A LADY

"Oh! had my fate been join'd with thine, As once this pledge appear'd a token, These follies had not then been mine, For then my peace had not been broken.

To thee these early faults I owe, To thee, the wise and old reproving: They know my sins, but do not know 'Twas thine to break the bonds of loving.

For once my soul, like thine, was pure, And all its rising fires could smother; But now thy vows no more endure, Bestow'd by thee upon another.

Perhaps his peace I could destroy, And spoil the blisses that await him Yet let my rival smile in joy, For thy dear sake I cannot hate him.

Ah! since thy angel form is gone, My heart no more can rest with any; But what it sought in thee alone, Attempts, alas! to find in many.

Then fare thee well, deceitful maid! 'Twere vain and fruitless to regret thee; Nor hope, nor memory yield their aid, But pride may teach me to forget thee.

Yet all this giddy waste of years, This tiresome round of palling pleasures; These varied loves, these matron's fears, These thoughtless strains to passion's measures--

If thou wert mine, had all been hush'd:-- This cheek, now pale from early riot, With passion's hectic ne'er had flush'd, But bloom'd in calm domestic quiet.

Yes, once the rural scene was sweet, For Nature seem'd to smile before thee; And once my breast abhorr'd deceit,-- For then it beat but to adore thee.

But now I seek for other joys: To think would drive my soul to madness; In thoughtless throngs and empty noise I conquer half my bosom's sadness.

Yet, even in these a thought will steal In spite of every vain endeavour,-- And friends might pity what I feel,-- To know that thou art lost for ever."

Alas! Miss Chaworth was not, as Mrs. Musters, to be happier in her marriage than the man she had forsaken. She married John Musters, Esq., in the August of 1805, and lived miserably until 1832, when she died in as melancholy a way as she had lived. A band of insurgents from Nottingham came and set fire to Colwick Hall, where she lived. She and her daughter took refuge in a potting-shed, and, being already in poor

health, she took cold and fell ill, and died practically of the same complaint that Byron had died of eight years before.

As Byron says in the second verse of his poem to Mrs. Musters, it was in consequence of the rupture of his friendship with Miss Chaworth that he flung himself exclusively into the pursuit of pleasure. He flirted, rode, gambled, kept dogs, took up swimming, fencing and pistol-shooting.

But he found time to write a book called *Hours of Idleness* in the midst of all these revels and athletic exercises. He had just published this book when Lady Morgan, with whom I was to become acquainted thirty years afterwards, met him for the first time.

This is her description of the meeting:--

"Suddenly my dazzled looks were arrested by an exceedingly beautiful young man. His expression was taciturn, and yet there seemed as much shyness as scorn in it. He was alone, and stood in a corner near a door, with his arms folded across his breast, and one felt that although he was in the middle of an animated and brilliant crowd, yet he did not belong to it.

"'How do you do, Lord Byron?' a pretty young creature, dressed in the height of the fashion, asked him.

"Lord Byron! At that word all the brave Byrons that had belonged to English and French chivalry rose before my mind; but I did not know that the handsome youth who was their descendant was destined to give an even greater right to the name for the admiration of posterity than the most valiant knight of France, or than the most loyal cavalier of England who had ever borne the same name. Fame spread very slowly in our province of Tirerag; and although Lord Byron had already *taken the first step* in that career which was to end in the triumphant acknowledgment of his wonderful genius, and the injustice and ingratitude of his fellow-countrymen, I knew nothing of this future fame then, when I

heard the name of Byron, save what prompted me to say to myself, the 'Go, hang thyself, Byron,' of Henry IV."

Poor Lady Morgan! she was not happy in her historical quotations! but what matters it? she did not look too closely into them. It was Biron without the *y* whose head Henry cut off; and it was of Crillon that he wrote, "Go, hang thyself!"

But the literary fame Byron lacked was soon to be given him by the critics. The *Edinburgh Review*, in an article written by Mr. Brougham, who afterwards became Lord Brougham, attacked the young poet violently.

Lord Byron's life was destined to be one continuous fight. Born lame, he persevered until he became the finest swimmer, the best shot and the most dauntless horse-rider of his time. The world denied his genius, so he made up his mind he would become the first poet of his age.

His response to the article in the *Edinburgh Review* was that terrible satire hurled at his critics under the title of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, at the head of which appeared these two epigrams from Shakespeare and Pope:--

"I had rather be a kitten, and cry mew! Than one of these same metre ballad-mongers!"--*Shakespeare.*

"Such shameless bards we have; and yet 'tis true, There are as mad, abandon'd critics too."--*Pope.*

When Byron had hurled this lance, he could not draw back. He had pledged himself heart and soul to poetry, he had taken upon him the mantle of Nessus which was to consume him but also to immortalise him. And yet he hesitated for a brief period. By birth he had a right to sit in the House of Lords, and he decided he would take his seat there. If his aristocratic peers received him cordially, who knew what might happen?

He might give up everything, even the idea of his journey to Persia with his friend Hobhouse, to follow his schoolfellow Robert Peel in a political career. It should all depend on a smile or a hand-shake; and for such an acknowledgment he would fling away the pen that had written the *Hours of Idleness* and *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*; for a smile and a hand-shake he would bid farewell to games, betting, races, drunkenness, and break himself off from those youthful follies in which he had tried to drown the memory of Miss Chaworth; he would leave them all, even the woman who had followed him to Brighton dressed as a man, whose scandalous presence had roused the indignation of the prudish English aristocracy!

It was at this crisis he wrote to his mother the following letter, which shows what a degree of coldness existed between mother and son:--

"TO THE HONOURABLE LADY BYRON

"NEWSTEAD ABBEY, NOTTS *October* 7, 1808

"DEAR MADAM,--I have no beds for the Hansons or anybody else at present. The Hansons sleep at Mansfield. I do not know that I resemble Jean Jacques Rousseau. I have no ambition to be like so illustrious a madman--but this I know, that I shall live in my own manner, and as much alone as possible. When my rooms are ready I shall be glad to see you: at present it would be improper and uncomfortable to both parties. You can hardly object to my rendering my mansion habitable, notwithstanding my departure for Persia in March (or May at farthest), since *you* will be *tenant* till my return; and in case of any accident (for I have already arranged my will to be drawn up the moment I am twenty-one), I have taken care you shall have the house and manor for *life*, besides a sufficient income. So you see my improvements are not entirely selfish.--Adieu. Believe me, yours very truly, BYRON"

In another letter to his mother, dated 6 March 1809, he adds:--

"What you say is all very true: come what may, *Newstead* and I *stand* or fall together. I have now lived on the spot, I have fixed my heart upon it, and no pressure, present or future, shall induce me to barter the last vestige of our inheritance. I have that pride within me which will enable me to support difficulties. I can endure privations; but could I obtain in exchange for Newstead Abbey the first fortune in the country, I would reject the proposition. Set your mind at ease on that score; Mr. Hanson talks like a man of business on the subject,--I feel like a man of honour, and I will not sell Newstead. *I shall get my seat on the return* of the affidavits from Carhais, in Cornwall, *and will do something in the House soon: I must dash, or it is all over.* My Satire must be kept secret for a *month*; after that you may say what you like on the subject. Lord Carlisle has used me infamously, and refused to state any particulars of my family to the Chancellor. I have *lashed* him in my rhymes, and perhaps his lordship may regret not being more conciliatory. They tell me it will have a sale; I hope so, for the bookseller has behaved well, as far as publishing well goes.--Believe me, etc., BYRON

"*P.S.*--You shall have a mortgage on one of the farms."

But Byron was doomed in advance. He had the greatest difficulty in obtaining the papers necessary to establish his title to the peerage, and, three days after writing the above letter--that is to say, on 9 March 1809, six weeks after having attained his majority--he presented himself in the House of Lords.

As we have said, upon this test his whole career was to depend. As he told his mother, his Satire was to be kept a secret for a month longer, and if he were well received by his illustrious colleagues, it was to remain unpublished and the poet unknown.

It was the will of Providence that these aristocrats should be unjust towards this young man, this boy, nay, more than unjust, cruel.

He entered the House alone, and looked calm, although his face was deadly pale; not one kindly glance encouraged him, not a single hand was held out towards his; he searched in vain for a single friendly look throughout that illustrious assembly, but all heads were turned away.

He then made up his mind. He, Lord Byron, would make a fresh claim to nobility for his posterity, since his present title to it was slighted by his contemporaries. He published his Satire, and set out, with Mr. Hobhouse, in the June of that same year 1809.

BOOK I — CHAPTER III

CHAPTER III

Byron at Lisbon--How he quarrelled with his own countrymen--His poem *Childe Harold*--His fits of mad folly and subsequent depression--His marriage--His conjugal squabbles--He again quits England--His farewell to wife and child--His life and amours at Venice--He sets out for Greece--His arrival at Missolonghi--His illness and death

The first news received from the poet-traveller was from Lisbon, and it bore the mark of that gloomy spirit of mockery which, when fully developed, becomes genius.

The letter was addressed to Mr. Hodgson, and began in the following strain:--

"I am very happy here, because I loves oranges, and talk bad Latin to the monks, who understand it, as it is like their own,--and I goes into society (with my pocket-pistols), and I swims in the Tagus all across at once, and I rides on an ass or a mule, and swears Portugese, and have got a diarrhœa and bites from the mosquitoes. But what of that? Comfort must not be expected by folks that go a pleasuring."

And yet, while he was mocking in this fashion, he could write such mournful lines as these in *Childe Harold*:--

CANTO I

IX

"And none did love him: though to hall and bower He gather'd revellers from far and near, He knew them flatt'rers of the festal hour; The heartless parasites of present cheer. Yea! none did love him--not his lemans dear-- But pomp and power alone are woman's care, And where these are light Eros finds a feere; Maidens, like moths, are ever caught by glare, And Mammon wins his way where Seraphs might despair.

X

Childe Harold had a mother--not forgot, Though parting from that mother he did shun; A sister whom he loved, but saw her not Before his weary pilgrimage begun: If friends he had, he bade adieu to none. Yet deem not thence his breast a breast of steel: Ye, who have known what 'tis to dote upon A few dear objects, will in sadness feel Such partings break the heart they fondly hope to heal.

XI

His house, his home, his heritage, his lands, The laughing dames in whom he did delight, Whose large blue eyes, fair locks, and snowy hands, Might shake the saintship of an anchorite, And long had fed his youthful appetite; His goblets brimm'd with every costly wine, And all that mote to luxury invite, Without a sigh he left, to cross the brine, And traverse Paynim shores, and pass Earth's central line."

And it was in this spirit that he left England to begin his early travels; and if, perchance, any member of the aristocracy inquired who this young Lord Byron was who had inscribed his name on the list of peers, those who were best informed would reply--

"He is a young rake, grand-nephew of the old Byron who killed Chaworth in a duel; he possesses an old tumbledown Abbey; and a fortune that has been cut up and squandered. When he was at college, where he never did any good, he kept a bear; since he left college he has associated with prostitutes and swindlers, drinking till tipsy out of a human skull, and, when drunk, writing poetry."

Byron left his country at war with his fellow-men, and one stanza of the first canto of the poem just referred to was enough to set him at loggerheads with women too--a much more serious matter:--

CANTO I

LVIII

"The seal Love's dimpling finger hath impress'd Denotes how soft that chin which bears his touch: Her lips, whose kisses pout to leave their nest, Bid man be valiant ere he merit such: Her glance how wildly beautiful! how much Hath Phœbus woo'd in vain to spoil her cheek, Which glows yet smoother from his amorous clutch! Who round the North for paler dames would seek? How poor their forms appear! how languid, wan and weak!"

Such an anathema as this, hurled by the poet at that England which Shakespeare compared to a swan's nest in the midst of a great lake, met with widespread notoriety; for *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, the first canto of which Byron wrote during his travels, had a tremendous reception.

Byron visited Portugal, the South of Spain, Sardinia and Sicily; then he went through Albania and Illyria, travelled through the Morea, stopping at Thebes, Athens, Delphi and Constantinople. If we are to believe his own words, he looked forward with dread to his return:--

"Indeed, my prospects are not very pleasant. Embarrassed in my private affairs, indifferent to public, solitary without the wish to be social, with a body a little enfeebled by a succession of fevers, but a spirit, I trust, yet unbroken, I am returning *home* without a hope, and almost without a desire. The first thing I shall have to encounter will be a lawyer, the next a creditor, then colliers, farmers, surveyors, and all the agreeable attachments to estates out of repair, and contested coal-pits. In short, I am sick and sorry, and when I have a little repaired my irreparable affairs, away I shall march, either to campaign in Spain, or back again to the East, where I can at least have cloudless skies and a cessation from impertinence."

The writer of the above was barely twenty-four years of age, he bore one of the oldest names in the British Isles, he was a peer of England and was to become the leading poet of his time!

The first canto of *Childe Harold* was to reveal him in the latter capacity, and he sold his poem for two hundred pounds sterling.

His mother died suddenly in Scotland two months after his return, in 1811.

"One day," said Lord Byron, "I heard she was ill; the next, I learnt that she was dead!"

Nor was this all. Almost at the same time his two best friends, Wingfield and Matthews, both died.

Byron wrote to Mr. Davies:--

"Some curse hangs over me and mine. My mother lies a corpse in this house; one of my best friends is drowned in a ditch. What can I say, or think, or do? Come to me. I am almost desolate--left almost alone in the world."

We find traces of these sorrows at the close of the second canto of *Childe Harold*:--

"All thou couldst have of mine, stern Death! thou hast; The parent, friend, and now the more than friend; Ne'er yet for one thine arrows flew so fast, And grief with grief continuing still to blend, Hath snatch'd the little joy that life had yet to lend.

What is the worst of woes that wait on age? What stamps the wrinkle deeper on the brow? To view each loved one blotted from life's page, And be alone on earth, as I am now. Before the Chastener humbly let me bow, O'er hearts divided and o'er hopes destroyed: Roll on, vain days!

full reckless may ye flow, Since Time hath reft whate'er my soul enjoy'd, And with the ills of Eld mine earlier years alloy'd."

Byron rejoiced greatly in the success that had greeted the first canto of his *Childe Harold*; the second was composed after his return to England, as the stanza upon his mother's death proves.

Even the *Edinburgh Review* made amends for its mistake in denying that the author of *Hours of Idleness* had a vocation for poetry.

"Lord Byron," the Scottish critics now remarked, "has improved much since we last had his work under review. This new volume is full of originality and talent; the author herein makes amends for the literary sins of his youth, and does more, for he promises to give us better work still."

Lord Byron received £600 for the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, and so great was its success that, for the third part, he was paid £1575, and for the fourth £2100. It was said then, and with some truth, that he sold his poems at the rate of a guinea a line.

With success came popularity. All the world wanted to see this poet who had appeared suddenly among them like a brilliant meteor, lighting up the darkness of the night, and to buy his works. They beheld his face and saw that he was beautiful; they uttered his name and remembered that, by his father, he came of an illustrious race, and, by his mother, being descended from Jane Stuart, daughter of James II. of Scotland, he had royal blood in his veins. He had said in his poem that he had seen everything worth seeing and was bored with it all, that he had committed all kinds of sins and even crimes; he had said--a most extraordinary confession for a poet of only twenty-five years of age--that he could not fall in love with even the most beautiful of women London had to show. *Those pale and languid flowers of the Norths*, as he called them, vowed, in their turn, to make him break his oath.

It was not a difficult matter for those who knew Lord Byron; many succeeded without much effort; Lady Caroline Lamb succeeded best of all. She was the daughter of the Earl of Bamborough, and had married, in 1805, William Lamb, second son of Lord Melbourne.

Byron fell madly in love with her, and offered to run away with her; but she declined. What was the cause of the bitter rupture between them that ended in Lady Lamb writing the novel called *Glenarvon* against her former lover, and in his treating her with great disdain throughout the remainder of his life? We should probably have found an answer to these questions in the Memoirs of Lord Byron that Thomas Moore burnt. Who knows? perhaps he burnt them on account of that episode. After this quarrel, Byron earned a reputation for being a dandy; he became the fashionable frequenter of watering-places and of aristocratic assemblies. But this kind of life ended as it was sure to do, in weariness and in disgust; and on 27 February 1814 the poet wrote:--

"Here I am, alone, instead of dining at Lord H.'s, where I was asked,--but not inclined to go anywhere. Hobhouse says I am growing a *loup garou*,--a solitary hobgoblin. True:--'I am myself alone.'"

A strange idea next took hold of the misanthrope, of the poet whose inspirations had run dry, of the man of many dissipations: he would marry and settle down. He had exhausted every pleasure youth could give; he aspired to something fresh, no matter even if it meant misery. This unknown and painful experience Lady Byron had in store for him. But the strangest thing was that he wished to marry for the sake of getting married, and not for the sake of the woman. He, who had once betted fifty pounds with Mr. Hay that he would never marry, was in such a hurry to marry that he did not mind who the lady was.

He discussed his intention with Lady Melbourne, and Lady Melbourne proposed a young lady whom Byron did not know; Byron suggested Miss Milbanke.

"You are wrong," said Lady Melbourne, "and for two reasons: first, because you have need of money and Miss Milbanke could only bring you ten thousand pounds; and in the second place, because you want a wife who will admire you, and Miss Milbanke admires no one but herself."

"Well, then," said Lord Byron, "what is the name of your young lady?"

Lady Melbourne mentioned her name, and Byron at once wrote to her parents, who sent him a refusal.

"Good!" said Byron. "You now see that Miss Milbanke is to be my wife." And he sat down at once and wrote to Miss Milbanke to make known his wishes to her.

But Lady Melbourne did not mean matters to end thus; she snatched the letter out of Byron's hands when he had finished it and took it to the window to read, while Byron remained quietly in his seat. When she had read it, she said, "Well, I must admit this is a very pretty letter; it is a pity it should not go."

"Then give it me," said Byron, "and I will seal it and send it off."

Lady Melbourne gave the letter back to Byron, and he sealed it and saw that it reached its address.

He was married on 2 January 1815, from Sir Ralph Milbanke's house. He sent the fifty pounds to Mr. Hay the same day, without waiting till he was asked for the money.

Exactly a month later, he wrote:--

"Feb. 2, 1815

"The treacle-moon is over, and I am awake, and find myself married. Swift says, 'No *wise* man ever married'; but, for a fool, I think it is the most ambrosial of all possible future states."

The honeymoon was spent at Sir Ralph Milbanke's house; after that, the young couple went to their house in Piccadilly. But here the worries of housekeeping overtook them. Miss Milbanke's £10,000 dowry had only served to irritate Lord Byron's creditors. Creditors only rest quietly whilst nothing at all is given them, for then they are in despair; but partial payment rouses them to fury. Urged on by the £10,000 they had secured, the duns did not give the young couple a moment's peace; in proportion as these annoyances increased, the relations between the husband and wife grew colder and more distant. Then, when her husband was at his unhappiest, and only saved from imprisonment through being a peer of the realm, Lady Byron left London under cover of a visit to her father. Their farewell parting was, conventionally speaking, quite affectionate, and they agreed to meet in a month's time. During her journey, Lady Byron wrote quite a tender letter to her husband; then, one morning, Lord Byron learnt from his father-in-law, Sir Ralph Milbanke, that he must not expect ever to see his wife and his daughter again.

What was the reason for this sudden separation, which, in spite of all Byron's protests, ended in a divorce? The poet put it down to the influence of an old governess of Lady Byron, Mrs. Clermont, against whom he launched that terrible satire entitled "A Sketch," and this epigram and apostrophe from the the Moor to Iago:

"Honest, honest Iago! If that thou be'st a devil, I cannot kill thee."

which begins with these lines:--

"Born in the garret, in the kitchen bred, Promoted thence to deck her mistress' head; Next--for some gracions service unexpress'd, And from its wages only to be guess'd-- Raised from the toilette to the table,--where Her wondering betters wait behind her chair. With eye unmoved, and forehead unabash'd, She dines from off the plate she lately wash'd."

Immediately a tremendous clamour arose in the papers and in society against the poet who, by force of genius, had already overcome those of his opposers who might be termed the first coalition against him.

It is ever the case with men in high places who are before the eye of the public: tempests arise unexpectedly, the existence of which is not suspected by the victim till they burst over his head. They may be compared with waterspouts, and they pour down on the poet, be he a Schiller or a Dante, an Ovid or a Byron, utterly overwhelming him, rending his heart and body, tearing down his fame, overturning his reputation, uprooting his honour. These storms come from the enmities, hatred and jealousies roused by his genius; they are the hyenas that dog his steps through the darkness, who dare not attack him while he can stand firm and upright, but which spring on him directly he totters, and devour him as soon as he falls.

Byron realised he would have to give way before his enemies; so he left England, meaning to rally his forces amidst the undisturbing surroundings of foreign lands, for some means of revenging himself upon them. He left England on 25 April 1816. He had published during his six years in London, the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*, *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Siege of Corinth*, *Lara* and *The Corsair.*

He departed, and his saddest regrets were for the wife who had exiled him, and for the daughter whom he had hardly seen, and whom he was never to look upon again.

"Fare thee well! and if for ever. Still for ever, fare thee well: Even though unforgiving, never 'Gainst thee shall my heart rebel.

Would that breast were bared before thee Where thy head so oft hath lain, While that placid sleep came o'er thee Which thou ne'er canst know again: . . . . . Both shall live, but every morrow Wake us from a widow'd bed. . . . . And when thou wouldst solace gather, When our

child's first accents flow, Wilt thou teach her to say 'Father!' Though his care she must forego?

When her little hands shall press thee, When her lip to thine is press'd, Think of him whose prayer shall bless thee, Think of him thy love had bless'd!

Should her lineaments resemble Those thou never more may'st see, Then thy heart will softly tremble With a pulse yet true to me."

This was to the mother: then, in *Childe Harold*, he addresses his child:--

"Is thy face like thy mother's, my fair child! Ada, sole daughter of my house and heart? When last I saw thy young blue eyes they smiled, And then we parted,--not as now we part, But with a hope.-- . . . . . My daughter! with thy name this song begun; My daughter! with thy name thus much shall end; I see thee not, I hear thee not, but none Can be so wrapt in thee; thou art the friend To whom the shadows of far years extend: Albeit my brow thou never shouldst behold, My voice shall with thy future visions blend, And reach into thy heart, when mine is cold, A token and a tone, even from thy father's mould.

To aid thy mind's development, to watch Thy dawn of little joys, to sit and see Almost thy very growth, to view thee catch Knowledge of objects,--wonders yet to thee! To hold thee lightly on a gentle knee, And print on thy soft cheek a parent's kiss,-- This, it should seem, was not reserved for me; Yet this was in my nature: as it is, I know not what is there, yet something like to this.

Yet, though dull Hate as duty should be taught, I know that thou wilt love me; though my name Should be shut from thee, as a spell still fraught With desolation, and a broken claim: Though the grave closed between us,--'twere the same, I know that thou wilt love me; though to drain *My* blood from out thy being were an aim, And an attainment,--all would be in vain,-- Still thou wouldst love me, still that more than life retain.

The child of love, though born in bitterness, And nurtured in convulsion. Of thy sire These were the elements, and thine no less. As yet such are around thee, but thy fire Shall be more temper'd, and thy hope far higher. Sweet be thy cradled slumbers! O'er the sea And from the mountains where I now respire, Fain would I waft such blessing upon thee, As, with a sigh, I deem thou might'st have been to me."

"Ah!" remarked Madame de Staël (the poor exile who, standing by the Lake of Geneva, sighed for the gutter that ran in the rue du Bac),--"ah! I would not mind being unhappy if I were Lady Byron, to have inspired such lines as those in my husband's brain!"

May be; but Lord Byron and Madame de Staël would have made an extraordinary couple, and no mistake.

Byron was not in such a hurry to travel far afield this time; perhaps he only wanted to stretch the double cord that bound him to England, and not to snap it altogether.

He landed in Belgium, visited the field of Waterloo, still wet with the blood of three nations; sailed down the Rhine and settled for a time on the borders of the Lake of Geneva. Here it was that he met Madame de Staël, who was almost as much of an exile under the Restoration as under the Empire. "My greatest pleasure amidst the magnificent pictures round Lake Geneva was to gaze upon the author of *Corinne*."

At Diodati, Byron renewed his swimming feat of Abydos by crossing the Lake of Geneva where it is four leagues wide. And it was at Diodati that he wrote the third canto of *Childe Harold*, *The Prisoner of Chillon* and *Manfred.* Goethe in a German journal laid claim to the original idea of *Manfred*, as though *Manfred* did not descend as directly from Satan as *Faust* had from Polichinelle! O thou poor rich man! with all thy European fame and thy world-wide reputation, wouldst thou snatch back the leaf that thy brother-poet so sinfully plucked from thy laurel crown!

Can we not almost hear what D'Alembert said of the author of *Zaïre* and of the *Dictionnaire philosophique*:--

"This man is past comprehending! he has fame that would satisfy a million of men, and yet he wants another ha'porth."

Byron took his revenge by dedicating some of his poems to Goethe.

Byron left for Italy in the month of October, stopping first at Milan to visit the Ambrosian Library. His next halt was at Verona, where he saw the tomb of Juliet; and, finally, he took up his residence in Venice, where his name became a household word.

Venice had never possessed any horses except the four bronze ones which had figured for twelve years on top of Carrousel's triumphal arch. But Byron never walked, and he was therefore the first person whose living horses clattered in the Square of Saint Mark, on the quai des Esclavons and on the banks of the Brenta.

It was in Venice that the real romance of his life began. Here he had three love affairs, each in a different rank of Venetian society: with Marguerite, Marianne and ... Alas! the most faithless of the three was the great lady who shall be nameless--she whom Byron loved more than all, perhaps, more than Miss Chaworth, more than Caroline Lamb.

It is curious to think that this lady, even at this day, thirty-three years after the time of which I am writing, is still a fascinating woman. I made her acquaintance in Rome when she was in the full bloom of her beauty, when she was almost as wonderful to listen to as to look at, to hear as to see.

She lived solely upon the memories of the great poet whom she had loved. It seemed as though the years of their love constituted the one bright spot in her life, and in looking back the obscurity that formed the rest of her life was ignored by her. But if I began to speak of her, I should

have to reveal her name; I should have to speak of the walks we had together by moonlight in the Forum and the Coliseum; I should have to repeat what she told me among the shadows of those great ruins, when she never spoke but of the illustrious dead, who had trodden with her the same stones that we were treading and had sat by her side in the same places where we rested.

Oh! madam, madam! Why were you unfaithful to the poet's memory, when your memories of him had gone on increasing in strength, aided by his death, until you had magnified your love into a god? Why was not the honour of having been Byron's mistress quite sufficient, instead of taking any title that a husband, no matter how distinguished he might be, could give you?

If I might only venture to repeat here what Déjazet once said to Georges, with reference to Napoleon!

It is true that Byron, with all his fancies and eccentricities and passions, cannot have been a very pleasant lover. But she should have been faithless to him when he was alive, and not after he was dead.

The world has forgiven the Empress Joséphine her infidelities in the Tuileries, but it will never forgive Marie-Louise, the widow, her faithlessness at Parma.

We will not say any more, madam; we will think, instead, of the poems Byron wrote at Venice. Here he composed *Marino Faliero*, *The Two Foscari*, *Sardanapalus*, *Cain*, *The Prophecy of Dante* and the third and fourth cantos of *Don Juan.*

When Naples rebelled in 1820 and 1821, Byron wrote to the Neapolitan Government and offered his purse and his sword. So, when reaction set in, and Ferdinand returned a second time from Sicily, and the lists of proscribed persons were published throughout Italy, it was feared Byron's name might be of the number of exiles. Then it happened that the

poor people of Ravenna drew up a petition to the cardinal praying he might be allowed to stay among them.

This man who boldly and openly offered the Neapolitans a thousand louis was a never failing source of helpfulness to the poor of Venice and its surrounding countryside; no poor man ever held out a hand towards him and drew it back empty, even if Byron himself were in the greatest straits, and more than once he had to borrow in order to give. He knew this but too well when he said, "Those who have persecuted me so long and so cruelly will triumph, and justice will only be done to me when this hand is as cold as their hearts."

Thus, wherever he went, he left an impression as of fire,--he dazzled, warmed or scorched.

In 1821, Byron left Venice, in whose streets no one had ever seen him on foot; the Brenta, upon whose banks no one had ever seen him take a walk; the Square of St. Mark, whose beauties he had never contemplated except from a window, for fear of revealing to the beauties of Venice the slight deformity of his leg, which not even the width of his trousers could disguise.

From Venice he went to Pisa. There the news of two fresh troubles awaited him: the death of his natural daughter by an English woman, and the death of his friend Shelley, who was drowned during a sailing trip from Livorno to Lerici. He sent his daughter's body to England for burial.

To save the body of his friend Shelley from the attentions Italian priests would no doubt have given it, he determined to have it burnt after the custom of the ancients.

Trelawney, the bold pirate, was present, and relates the strange funeral rites, as he relates his lion hunt or his fight with the Malay prince. He was a companion worthy of the noble poet, and was himself a poet; his book

is full of marvellous descriptions, all the more wonderful because they are always true, although sounding incredible.

"We were on the seashore," said Trelawney; "in front of us lay the sea and its islands, behind us the Apennines, and by our side was the great blazing funeral-pyre. The flames, fanned by the wind from the sea, took a thousand fantastic shapes. The weather was very fine; the lazy waves from the Mediterranean gently kissed the shore, the sands were golden yellow and contrasted sharply with the deep blue of the sky; the mountains lifted their snowy crests up into the clouds, and the flames from the pyre steadily burnt higher and higher into the air."

From Pisa Byron went to Genoa. It was in this city--once the Queen of the Mediterranean--that he conceived the idea of going to Greece, to do for that "Niobe of the Nations," as he called her, the same offices Naples had not thought fit to accept when offered to her.

So far, Byron had devoted himself mainly to individuals; now he intended to devote himself to a people.

In the month of April 1823 he entered into communication with the Greek Committee, and towards the end of July he left Italy. His reputation had increased extraordinarily, not only in Italy, France and Germany, but in England too.

One fact will give some idea of the height to which his reputation had attained.

An insurrection had broken out in Scotland in the county where his mother's property was situated. The rebels had to cross Lady Byron's estates to reach their destination, but on the confines of the property they paused and decided to cross in single file, so as only to tread down a narrow path in the crops. They did not take the same precaution on other estates, which they completely devastated.

Byron often related this incident with pride.

"See," he said, "how the hatred of my enemies is being avenged."

Before he left Italy he wrote on the margin of a book that had been lent him--

"If all that is said of me be true, I am unworthy to see England again; if all they say of me is false, England does not deserve to see me again."

But he had a presentiment that he had left his native land for ever; and Lady Blessington told me herself that, when she met Byron at Genoa, the day before he was to set sail, he said to her--

"We have met again to-day, but to-morrow we shall be separated, who knows for how long? Something here (and he laid his hand on his heart) tells me that we are meeting for the last time; I am going to Greece, and shall never return from it."

Towards the end of December Byron landed in Morea, and, a few days later, he made his way into the town, in spite of the Turkish flotilla that was besieging Missolonghi. He was greeted with enthusiastic shouts by the people, who led him in triumph to the house they had got ready for him.

When established there, Byron's whole soul was concentrated in the one desire to see the triumph of the cause he had espoused, or to die in defending a fresh Thermopylæ. Neither of these hopes was to be granted him. He was seized by a violent attack of fever on 15 February 1824, which ran its course rapidly, caused him much suffering and weakened him greatly. But as soon as he was sufficiently recovered he resumed the daily rides on horseback which were his greatest recreation. On 9 April he got very wet when out riding, and although he changed everything on his return home, he felt ill, for he had been more than two hours in his wet clothes. During the night there was a slight return of the fever,

although he slept well; but about eleven o'clock on the morning of the 10th he complained of a violent pain in the head and of suffering in his arms and legs; nevertheless, he managed to mount his horse in the afternoon. His old servant, Fletcher, from whose account we shall now borrow the final details, waited for his return.

"How have you got on, my lord?" he asked.

"The saddle was not dry," replied Byron, "and I am afraid the dampness has made me ill again."

And indeed it was plain to see next morning that Byron's indisposition had become more serious: he had been feverish all night, and seemed very depressed. Fletcher made him a cup of arrowroot; he tasted a few spoonfuls, then he handed the drink back to the old servant.

"It is excellent," he said, "but I cannot drink any more of it."

On the third day Fletcher grew seriously uneasy about him. During all his other rheumatic attacks his master had never been sleepless, but this time he could not sleep at all.

So he went to the two doctors in the town, Drs. Bruno and Millingen, and asked them several questions as to the nature of the illness from which they thought Lord Byron was suffering. Both assured the old valet that he need not be alarmed, that his master was in no danger, but that in two or three days he would be up again, and then, they said, the attack would not return again. This was on the 13th. On the 14th, as the fever had not left his master and the invalid still had no sleep, Fletcher begged Byron, in spite of the assurance of the two doctors, to let him send for Dr. Thomas, from Zante.

"Consult the two doctors," the sick man replied, "and act as they direct."

Fletcher obeyed, and the two doctors said that there was not any necessity for a third opinion. Fletcher brought back this answer to his master, who shook his head and said--

"I am much afraid they do not know anything at all about my illness."

"In that case, my lord," Fletcher insisted, "do call in another doctor."

"They tell me," Byron continued, without replying directly to Fletcher, "that it is a chill such as I have had before."

"But I am sure, my lord, you have never had such a serious one before," replied the valet.

"I agree with you," was Byron's reply; and he fell into a reverie from which no amount of persuasion could arouse him.

On the 15th, Fletcher, whose faithful devotion divined the real condition of his master, again asked permission to be allowed to fetch Dr. Thomas; but the doctors of Missolonghi still persisted there was no cause for alarm. Until now, they had treated their patient with purgatives, which, as Byron had only taken a cup or two of broth during eight days, were much too strong remedies and could not have any desirable effect. They but increased the weakness, which was already extreme because of want of sleep.

On the evening of the 15th, however, the doctors began to be uneasy, and talked of bleeding their patient; but he strenuously opposed this, asking Dr. Millingen if he thought the need for bleeding was urgent. The doctor replied that he believed he could put it off, without danger, until next day. So, on the evening of the 16th, they bled Byron in the right arm, taking sixteen ounces of greatly inflamed blood out of him. Dr. Bruno shook his head as he examined the blood.

"I always told him he ought to be bled," he murmured, "but he would never let it be done."

Then the doctors fell into a lengthy dispute over the time lost.

Again Fletcher proposed to send to Zante for Dr. Thomas, but the doctors replied--

"It would be useless; before he could get here, your master will be either out of danger or dead."

In the meantime the disease grew worse, and Dr. Bruno advised a second bleeding. Fletcher broke it to his master that the two doctors deemed another bleeding indispensable, and this time Lord Byron did not make any resistance; he held out his arm and said--

"Here is my arm: they may do what they wish." Then he added, "Did I not tell you, Fletcher, that they do not understand anything at all about my illness!"

Byron grew weaker and weaker. On the 17th, they bled him in the morning, and twice again in the afternoon of the same day. He fainted away after each bleeding, and from that day he himself gave up all hope.

"I cannot sleep," he said to Fletcher, "and you know that I have not had any sleep for a week; now, it is a fact that a man cannot live without sleep for any length of time; after a time he goes mad, and nothing can save him. I would rather blow my brains out ten times than go mad. I am not afraid of death, I shall watch its approach with more composure than people would believe."

On the 18th, Byron was perfectly satisfied of his approaching end.

"I fear," he said to Fletcher, "that Tita and you will both fall ill with nursing me like this, day and night."

Still, both refused to take any rest. Fletcher had been wise enough to take away his master's pistols and dagger out of his reach, ever since the 16th, when he saw that the fever was likely to produce delirium.

On the 18th, he repeated several times that the Missolonghi doctors did not understand his case at all.

"Well, then," Fletcher replied for the tenth time, "let me go and fetch Dr. Thomas from Zante."

"No, do not go.... Send for him, Fletcher, but be quick about it."

Fletcher did not lose a second in despatching a messenger, and then he informed the two doctors that he had just sent for Dr. Thomas.

"You were quite right," said they, "for we have ourselves begun to feel very anxious."

On re-entering his master's room, Byron said to Fletcher--

"Well, have you sent?"

"Yes, my lord."

"Good! I wish to know what is the matter with me."

A few moments later, he was seized with a fresh attack of delirium, and when he recovered consciousness, he remarked--

"I begin to believe I am seriously ill. If I am to die sooner than I expected, I desire to give you some instructions. Will you be sure to carry them out for me?"

"Oh, my lord, you can be sure of my faithfulness," the valet replied; "but you will live for long enough yet, I hope, and be able to attend to your own affairs."

"No," said Byron, shaking his head; "no, the end has come.... I must tell you everything, Fletcher, and without a moment's loss of time."

"Shall I fetch pen and ink and paper, my lord?" asked the valet.

"Oh no; we should waste too much time, and we have none to lose. Pay attention."

"I am listening, my lord."

"Your future is assured."

"Oh! my lord," cried the poor valet, bursting into tears, "I entreat you to think of more important matters."

"My child!" murmured the dying man, "my dear daughter, my poor Ada, if I could but have seen her! Take her my blessing, Fletcher; also to my sister Augusta and to her children.... You must take it, too, to Lady Byron.... Tell her ... tell her everything ... you stand well in her estimation...."

The dying man's voice failed him, and, although he made efforts to continue speaking, the valet could only make out disjointed expressions, from which, with the greatest difficulty, he gathered the following:--

"Fletcher ... if you do not carry out ... the orders I have given you ... I will haunt you ... if God will let me...."

"But, my lord," cried the valet in despair, "I have not been able to hear a word of what you have been saying to me."

"Oh! my God, my God!" whispered Byron, "then it is now too late.... Have you really not heard me?"

"No, my lord; but try again to make me understand your wishes."

"Impossible!... impossible!" murmured the dying man; "it is too late ... all is over ... and yet ... come close, come close, Fletcher ... I will try again."

And he renewed his attempts, but all was in vain; he could only utter a few broken words, such as, "My wife!... my child ... my sister. You know all ... you will tell them everything ... you know my wishes."

Nothing more was intelligible.

This was at midday on the 18th. The doctors held a fresh consultation, and decided to give the patient quinine in wine.

He had only taken, as I have said, a little broth and two spoonfuls of arrowroot for eight days. He took the quinine, and showed by signs that he wanted to sleep; he did not speak again unless questioned.

"Would you like me to fetch Mr. Parry?" Fletcher asked him.

"Yes, go and fetch him," he replied.

A moment later, the valet returned with him. Mr. Parry leant over his bed, and Byron became excited as he recognised him.

"Lie quite quiet," said Mr. Parry; and the invalid shed a few tears and then seemed to fall asleep.

This was the beginning of a state of coma that lasted nearly twenty-four hours.

Then, towards eight in the evening, he roused, and Fletcher heard him say, "And now I must go to sleep...."

They were the last words he uttered. His head fell back motionless on his pillow. He never moved for twenty-four hours; there were occasional spasms of suffocation and a raucous sound in his breathing: that was all. Fletcher called Tita to help him raise the head of the invalid, who seemed quite numbed, and the two servants raised his head every time the signs of suffocation returned.

This lasted until the 19th, when, at six in the evening, Byron opened and closed his eyes without any sign of pain and without moving any other part of his body.

"Oh! my God," cried Fletcher, "I think my lord has breathed his last!"

The doctors came near and felt his pulse.

"You are right," said they; "he is dead!...."

On 22 April, Byron's remains were taken to the church where Marco Bozariz and General Normann lie buried. The body was enclosed in a rough wooden coffin; it was covered by a black mantle, and on the mantle they placed a helmet, a sword and a wreath of laurels.

Byron had expressed a wish that his body should be buried in his native land; but the Greeks asked to be allowed to keep his heart, and those who had cruelly made that heart bleed when he was alive, gave it up when he was dead.

His daughter Ada, whom I have since seen in Florence, was declared the adopted daughter of Greece. I do not know whether King Otho I. remembered this fact when he came to the throne.

BOOK I — CHAPTER IV

CHAPTER IV

Usurped celebrity--M. Lemercier and his works--Racan's white hare-*Le Fiesque* by M. Ancelot--The Romantic artists--Scheffer--Delacroix --Sigalon--Schnetz--Coigniet--Boulanger--Géricault--*La Méduse* in the artist's studio--Lord Byron's funeral obsequies in England--Sheridan's body claimed for debt

While Lord Byron's body was being carried from Missolonghi to England, the literary movement in France was steadily progressing. M. Liadière and M. Lemercier each did their best in grappling with Shakespeare and Rowe, each produced *Jane Shore*; M. Liadière at the Odéon on 2 April, and M. Lemercier at the Théâtre-Français on the 1st. M. Liadière's production just managed to pay its way, while M. Lemercier's was a failure, in spite of Talma, who played two parts in it--those of Gloucester and a beggar. Talma was wonderful in this play, poor though it was. In it he attempted what was in those days looked upon as a very extraordinary thing. He, a man of fine presence, graceful in bearing, full of poetry, lofty in mind and eloquent, played the part of the hunchbacked cripple Richard. The way he managed to make his right shoulder look higher than his left and his arm appear paralysed was a miracle of skill, and the denunciatory scene was a miracle of talent. But nothing could save such a wretched piece. It is now high time some undeserved reputations, supported by fine coteries and associations of intrigue and shuffling, should be shown in their true light.

For instance, there is the author of *Agamemnon* and of *Pinto*,--he did not deserve a quarter of the reputation he received. *Agamemnon* is a dull, lifeless play, devoid of poetic feeling, sense, rhythm and style; what is it compared with the *Orestes* of Æschylus? *Pinto* is a drama of the school

of Beaumarchais, the worst type of dramatic school I know; the play would have died a natural death at the end of eight or ten representations if the Imperial Censor had not been so stupid as to attempt to stifle it. The persecution accorded to *Pinto* gave it a species of celebrity, but, let it be played nowadays and one would soon see the worthlessness of the imitation of Æschylus and Seneca, the so-called original creation. And yet these two plays were the author's principal works.

Try, too, to read a number of other tragedies and dramas and poems that have fallen, buried beneath the cat-calls, laughter and hootings of the public! Try to read *Méléagre* or *Lovelace* or *le Lévite d'Éphraïm*; then, when you have thrown these first three works of the same author aside, and feel sufficiently recovered and can breathe freely once more, take up the task again and try to read *Ophis, Plaute* or *la Comédie latine, Baudouin, Christophe Colomb, Charlemagne, Saint Louis, la Démence de Charles VI., Frédegonde and Brunehaut*, which Mademoiselle Rachel for some unknown purpose drew from the tomb, and galvanised three or four times without being able to bring back to life. Then, what else? Stay...we should be lost on the battlefield, among the productions that did not even linger wounded, but fell stark dead--*Camille* and *le Masque de poix*, and *Cahin-Caha* and *la Panhypocrisiade*: folly succeeding mediocrity; sheer nonsense and balderdash.

And yet, although wounded by these rebuffs and completely maimed by his falls, M. Lemercier sat quietly on in his arm-chair in the Palais Mazarin--as did his colleagues, M. Droz, M. Briffaut, and M. Lebrun, one trying to make people forget that he had written a little volume on *Bonheur*, another that he had perpetrated a tragedy called *Minus II.*, and the third, that he had missed fire in his *le Cid d'Andalousie* and mangled Schiller's *Maria Stuart*--he need not have troubled to say anything, the world would have let him sleep as quietly in his tomb as the spectators had fain have slept at the performance of his pieces, if hissing had never been invented. But nothing of the kind happened! When M. Lemercier

perceived the literary movement of 1829 he cried out at the sacrilege, want of good taste and scandal of the thing; he signed petitions to the king to have the representation of *Henri III.* and of *Marion Delorme* stopped; he barred the entrance to the Academy when Lamartine and Victor Hugo endeavoured to gain an entrance; he set the Archbishop of Paris against the one and produced a M. Flourens to checkmate the other; he recovered the use of his legs sufficiently to run about collecting votes against them, and the use of his right hand to turn the lock against them. Thank Heaven I had very little to do with this wicked little cur, neither have I had any personal quarrel with him, as I have never had any dealings with the Academy; but since someone must rise up and speak for justice I claim the privilege of being the first to set the example.

When M. Flourens was nominated in place of Hugo, I was passing through the green-room of the Théâtre-Français. I forget what the new play was, but M. Lemercier was holding forth there against the author of *Notre-Dame de Paris* and of *Marion Delorme* and the *Orientales*, just as he had opposed him all day long, silently, in the Academy. I listened to his diatribe for a few minutes, then, shaking my head, I said to him--

"Monsieur Lemercier, you have refused your vote to Victor Hugo; but there is one thing you will some day be compelled to yield him, and that is your own place. Take care lest, instead of the ill-natured things you are saying against him here, he be not obliged to say a kind word for you some day to the Academy."

And it happened just as I had predicted. It was no easy matter to praise Lemercier, but Hugo accomplished the matter by describing the period instead of speaking of the man, by referring to the emperor rather than to the poet.

"Have you read my speech?" Hugo asked me the day after he had made it.

"Yes."

"Well, what do you think of it?"

"I think you read as though you had just succeeded Bonaparte as a member of the Institute, instead of M. Lemercier as a member of the Academy."

"The deuce! I would much rather have seen you there than myself. How would you have got out of it?"

"As Racan did, by saying my big white rabbit had eaten my speech."

Racan, it will be remembered, once presented himself before the Academy with the scraps of a speech he had meant to read.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I had prepared a splendid speech, which could not fail to have won your suffrages; but my big white rabbit gobbled it up this morning.... I have brought you the remains, and you must try to make the best you can of them!"

"Ah! indeed," replied Hugo; "I could have done that, but it never occurred to me."

M. Liadière's *Jane Shore* did for Mademoiselle Georges what M. Lemercier's *Jane Shore* had done for Talma. It was, besides, the first attempt Mademoiselle Georges had made in Shakespearean drama: she led up to it in *Christine* and in *Lucrèce Borgia.*

It was the age of limitations; no one was strong enough to be original. They had to look for fresh things across the frontier; they sought admission to the theatres on the shoulders of Rowe or Schiller: if they were successful, they quietly put the German or English author outside; if they came a cropper, they fell on him, and it broke the shock of their fall.

After M. Liadière's production of *Jane Shore*, the Odéon presented M. Ancelot's *Fiesque.* But M. Ancelot was a purist: he never for one moment

supposed that Schiller's *Fiesque* could be presented complete as in the German play; therefore he entirely and discreetly suppressed the character of the Moor.

Can you imagine *Fiesque* shorn of the Moor! without the Moor! the main peg on which the drama is hung! Without the Moor! the character for which Schiller constructed his play! When shall we have a law which, whilst permitting translation, will forbid mutilation? The Italians have no law affecting translators; but they have a proverb as short as it is expressive, as concise as it is true, "*Traduttore, traditore.*"

Meanwhile, the Romantic school, although still shy in theatrical and literary circles, was boldly invading other branches of art.

M. Thiers, in history, had published his *Révolution française*, and Botta his *Histoire d'Italie*; M. de Barante was producing his excellent *Chronique des ducs de Bourgogne*, a work full of knowledge and brilliancy, which justly, this time, though accidentally, opened the Academy doors to its author. But the struggle was more noticeable in painting. David dead and Girodet just dead, their successors were such men as Scheffer, Delacroix, Sigalon, Schnetz, Coigniet, Boulanger and Géricault. The works of this galaxy of bold young artists adorned the walls of the Salon of 1824. Scheffer hung his *Mort de Gaston de Foix.* It was one of his first pictures, and rather gaudy in colouring, but the face of the warrior kneeling at the head of Gaston stood out most remarkably; Scheffer was the painter-poet, the best translator of Goethe I know; he re-created a whole world of German characters, from Mignon to the King of Thule, from Faust to Marguerite.

It was Scheffer who transferred to canvas Dante's great and exquisite story of Francesca da Rimini, a conception which all dramatic poets have failed to reproduce; Scheffer found time to join in every conspiracy going, in Dermoncourt's, Caron's and la Fayette's, and yet managed to become one of the finest painters France has ever produced.

Then there was Delacroix, whose *Massacre de Scio* roused much discussion among all schools of painters. Delacroix was doomed to be pursued by fanatical ignoramuses and determined vilifiers, just as was Hugo in literature; he had already become known though his *Dante traversant le Styx*; and all his life he maintained the privilege--rare among artists--of being able to arouse a storm of hatred and of admiration upon the production of each fresh work. Delacroix is an intellectual man, full of knowledge as well as imagination, but he has one idiosyncrasy, he will persist in trying to become the colleague of M. Picot and of M. Abel de Pujol, who, let us hope, will happily have none of him.

Next comes Sigalon, with his rough, passionate Southern nature. His picture, *Locuste faisant sur un esclave l'essai de ses poisons*, had been recommended to the notice of M. Laffitte, and this banker patron of art bought it, probably before he had seen it; when it was hung in his salon, it terrified the bank clientèle and all the jobbers of the money market. Everyone asked the future minister why he had bought such a horrible picture, rather than one of Madame Haudebourg-Lescaut's or Mademoiselle d'Hervilly's little gems. M. Laffitte was plagued to such an extent that he sent for Sigalon and begged him to take back his *Locuste*, which threatened to send the great ladies of the commercial world into hysterics, imploring him to paint him something else in its place.

Sigalon took back his *Locuste*, but I do not know what he gave in exchange. Alas! Sigalon was among the number of those destined to premature death. He was sent to Rome to copy Michael Angelo's *Last Judgment*, and he had but just time to bequeath that great piece of work to France, and to stretch out his arms towards his country, before he died.

Schnetz had three pictures in the Salon of 1824--two great canvases which might have been painted by anybody just as well as by himself, and one of those *genre* paintings in which he is inimitable. This *genre*

painting was called *un Sixte-Quint enfant*, the subject being a gipsy woman predicting he would become pope. The reader will guess with what fidelity Schnetz succeeded in depicting in his canvas, six foot high by four feet wide, an old fortune-teller, a shepherd lad and a young Roman girl: the *Sixte-Quint* was a masterpiece.

Coigniet's *le Massacre des Innocents* was hung opposite the door, and riveted attention directly people entered. It showed a woman crouching down, disordered in appearance by a long journey, terror in her looks and very pale, hiding herself, or rather hiding her child, in the corner of a ruined wall, whilst the massacre was proceeding in the distance. It was a fine piece of work, every detail of which, well thought out, well executed, well painted, I can still recall, after twenty-five years.

Boulanger had taken the subject of his painting from the works of the famous poet who had just died. Mazeppa, captured, is being bound to a wild horse, which is going to bear him away, heart-broken, fainting and dying, to those new lands where a kingdom awaited him on his awaking. The contortions of the strong young limbs as they struggled, stiffening, against the villains who were lashing him to the back of the savage beast, offered a marvellous contrast, not only in the technical presentation of the flesh, which was quite excellent, but even more so in the physical and moral suffering of Mazeppa as compared with the callous strength of his executioners.

Finally, there was Géricault, who, although he was not represented in that year's Salon, was talked about almost as much as those whose pictures hung on its walls. And this was because the new school, wanting a leader, felt that Géricault was the man, even although so far he had only painted a few studies. He had just finished *le Hussard* and *le Cuirassier*,--which the Musée lately bought back, on the accession of King Louis-Philippe,--and he was finishing his *Méduse.* Poor Géricault! he too was to die, and to die miserably, after he had done his *Méduse.* I saw him

a week before his death. The reader wonders how I became acquainted with Géricault? In the same way that I became acquainted with Béranger and Manuel. At my weekly dinners at M. Arnault's house, I often met Colonel Bro, a brave, excellent soldier, to whom every thought of the army was dear, and who had been friendly to me solely because I was the son of a general who served in the Revolution. Of course Bro was opposed to the Bourbon Government. He had a house in the rue des Martyrs, No. 23, and in that house there lodged various people according to their varying fortunes--Manuel the deputy who had been expelled from the Chamber, Béranger the poet and Géricault. One day when we had been speaking of Géricault, who was dying, Bro said to me--

"Come and see his picture *la Méduse*, and the painter himself, before he dies, so that you can at least say you have seen one of the greatest painters who ever lived."

I took care not to refuse, as will readily be believed, and the meeting was arranged for the following day. You ask what Géricault died of? Listen, and observe how, at every turn, fate seemed to put a cross against his name. He possessed some fortune, an income of about twelve thousand livres; he loved horses and painted them admirably. One day, as he was mounting a horse, he noticed that the buckle of his breeches belt had come off: he tied the two ends of the strap together and set off at a gallop. His horse threw him, and the knot of the strap bruised two vertebrae of the spinal cord as he fell. He was under treatment at the time for a disease which settled in this place; the wound never healed, and Géricault, the hope of a whole century, died of one of the longest and most painful diseases there is--decay of the spine. When we called upon him, he was busy drawing his left hand with his right.

"What on earth are you after, Géricault?" asked the colonel.

"You see, my dear fellow," said the dying man, "I am turning myself to account. My right hand will never find a better anatomical study than my left hand can offer it, and the egoist is taking advantage of the fact."

And, indeed, so thin was Géricault that one could see the bones and the muscles of his hand through the skin, as they are seen in plaster casts used for models by art students.

"My dear friend," asked Bro, "how did you bear your operation yesterday?"

"Very well ... it was a very curious experience. Just imagine, those butchers were cutting me about for ten minutes."

"You must have suffered horribly."

"Not very much.... I thought of other things."

"What did you think about?"

"A picture."

"How was that?"

"It was very simple. I had the head of my bed turned to the glass, so that, while the doctors were working at my back, I could see what they were doing when I raised myself on my elbows. Ah! if I could but recover, I swear I would make a noble sequel to André Vésale's study in anatomy! Only, my anatomical study would be taken from a living man."

This was the very scene which, two years later, Talma rehearsed before Adolphe and me, when he was in his bath.

Bro asked permission of the sick man for me to go upstairs and see his *Méduse.*

"Do what you like," said Géricault; "you are in your own house." And he went on drawing his hand.

I stood a long time before the marvellous picture, although I was at that time ignorant about art and unable to estimate it at its true worth. As I left the studio, I stepped upon an overturned canvas. I picked it up, looked at the right side of it and saw a wonderful head of a fallen angel: I gave it to Bro.

"See," I said, "what I have found on the floor."

Bro went back to the sick man's room.

"Why, my dear fellow, you are mad, to leave such things as these lying about on the floor."

"Do you know whose head that is?" Géricault asked laughingly.

"No."

"Well, my good friend, it is the head of your porter's son. He came into my studio the other day, and I was so struck with the possibilities of his face that I asked him to sit for me, and in ten minutes I had done that study from it. Would you like to have it? Take it."

"But if it is a study, you did it for an object."

"Yes, for the object of study itself. It will perhaps come in useful to you some day."

"Some day, my dear Bro, is a far cry, and in the meantime much water will have flowed under the bridges and many dead bodies will have been taken through the gates of the cemetery Montmartre."

"Well! well!" said Bro.

"Take it, my friend, and keep it," Géricault replied; "if I ever want it, I shall be able to find it at your house."

Then he bowed us adieu, and we left him; Bro bringing away his angel's head. A week later, Géricault died, and his intimate friend and executor,

Dreux-d'Orcy, had the greatest difficulty in getting the authorities of the Beaux-Arts to purchase *la Méduse* for six thousand francs--a canvas which is now considered one of the most valuable possessions of the Musée. Yet the Government wanted it merely for the purpose of cutting out five or six of the heads as studies for its pupils to copy. Happily, De Dreux-d'Orcy stopped this sacrilege before it got beyond its inception.

But I see I have forgotten to speak of Horace Vernet, of M. Ingres and of Delaroche, each of whom deserves special mention. They shall receive notice presently, but first one word more about Lord Byron.

On 5 July, the body of the noble lord reached London from Missolonghi. It lay in a perforated shell steeped in a cask of spirits of wine. When the body was taken ashore from the *Florida*, in which it had been conveyed, the captain was going to throw this liquid overboard; but now that Lord Byron was dead, even his own countrymen became his worshippers, and these admirers begged the captain for the spirits of wine in which Lord Byron's body had been preserved, offering a louis a pint for it. The captain accepted the offer, and the sum thus received was at the same rate per pint as, so it was said, the poet had received per line. Two days after the arrival of the body, a post-mortem examination was made, and the doctors, who really ought to be able to find out a few things, discovered that Lord Byron had died because he had refused to be bled. His body was laid in state, but only those who had special tickets given them by his executor were admitted; yet, in spite of this precaution, the crowd was so great it was necessary to call in the aid of an armed force to keep order. The spirits of wine had preserved the flesh well enough for the poet to be still recognisable: his hands, especially, had kept almost life-like in their beauty--those hands of which the eccentric nobleman had taken such good care that, even when swimming, he had worn gloves! His beautiful hair, of which he had been very proud, had become nearly grey, although he was but thirty-seven. Each white hair in the poet's head could tell a tale of sorrow. Such had been the public excitement over Byron, that the

question at once arose of burying him in Westminster Abbey; but his friends were afraid the authorities might refuse the request, and the family declared that his body should be buried in the vault at Newstead Abbey, where his ancestors lay. Even his death raised the clamour of tongues that pursued him through life. On the 12th, an immense crowd collected from break of day along the route the cortège was to take. Colonel Leigh, Byron's brother-in-law, was chief mourner; and in the six coaches that followed were the most famous Opposition Members of Parliament--Hobhouse, Douglas Kinnaird, Sir Francis Burdett, and O'Meara, surgeon to the emperor. Then, in their own private carriages, followed the Duke of Sussex, brother of the king, the Marquis of Lansdowne, Earl Grey, Lord Holland, etc. Two Greek deputies closed the procession. When it reached Hampstead Road, the pace was quickened; it was planned to spend the night at Welwyn, and to set out early the next day, Tuesday, to reach Higham-Ferrers that evening; on Wednesday it was to reach Oakham; on Thursday, Nottingham; and Newstead Abbey on Friday. The arrangement was punctually carried out, and on Friday, 17 August, the body was laid in the burying-place of his ancestors. Byron, who had been exiled by his wife, hunted down by his own family and repulsed by his contemporaries, had at last earned the right to return triumphantly to his country and to his home. He was dead! And yet it might have happened to him as it happened to Sheridan's dead body; poor Sheridan, who drank so much rum, brandy and absinthe that Lord Byron once said to him during an orgie--

"Sheridan! Sheridan! you drink enough alcohol to set fire to the very flannel vest you wear next your skin."

And the prophecy was fulfilled: Sheridan drank so much that his flannel vest was scorched. Sheridan was dead; and he left both his pockets and his bottles empty. This did not prevent the highest people in the land from doing him honour, as he lay dead in his home, which had been stript bare of everything by his creditors. Those friends who had, perhaps,

refused to lend him ten guineas the day before, gave him a royal burial. The coffin was just going to be borne to the hearse, when a gentleman clad in deep mourning from head to foot, and apparently overcome with grief, came into the room in which were assembled the most aristocratic gentlemen of the three kingdoms, and, advancing to the coffin, begged, as a particular favour, to be allowed to look for the last time on the features of his unfortunate friend. He was refused at first, but his entreaties were so vehement, his voice was so broken, he was so shaken with sobs, that they did not like to refuse such grief a hearing. The top of the coffin was unscrewed and the body of Sheridan uncovered. Then the expression on the face of the gentleman in mourning changed completely, and he drew out of his pocket an order for the seizure of the body and took possession of it. He was a bailiff. Mr. Canning and Lord Lydmouth took the man outside and settled the amount he claimed, namely, the sum of £480.

BOOK I — CHAPTER V

CHAPTER V

My mother comes to live with me--A Duc de Chartres born to me--Chateaubriand and M. de Villèle--Epistolary brevity--Re-establishment of the Censorship--A King of France should never be ill--Bulletins of the health of Louis XVIII.--His last moments and death--Ode by Victor Hugo--M. Torbet and Napoleon's tomb--La Fayette's voyage to America--The ovations showered upon him

My mother had been quite as lonely without me as I had been without her, so, in response to my letter, she shut up the tobacco-shop, sold a portion of our shabby furniture, and wrote telling me she was coming to Paris, bringing with her her bedstead, a chest of drawers, a table, two arm-chairs, four chairs and a hundred louis in hard cash. A hundred louis! Why, it was exactly double my year's income and we should now have 2400 francs a year for the next two years, so for that time we should feel quite safe. It was all the more important to be settled since, on 29 July 1824, whilst the Duc de Montpensier came into the world at the Palais-Royal, a Duc de Chartres was born to me at No. 1 place des Italiens. This, together with the smallness of my little yellow chamber, where there was no room for my mother, was one of the reasons that obliged me to look out for fresh lodgings. To find a new home was a serious consideration; lodgings were very dear close to the Palais-Royal, and if I were too far away from the Palais-Royal my four journeys a day, to and fro, meant a serious wear and tear in shoe-leather. Any expense comes heavy on a man who only earns four francs five sous per day.

I had, indeed, two or three plays in hand with de Leuven, but I was compelled to admit to myself that probably de Leuven, who had not managed to succeed with Soulié--whom we acknowledged to be the best

of us all--would not have more chance with me. His *Bon Vieillard* had been declined at the Gymnase; his *Pauvre Fille* had been rejected by the Vaudeville, and his *Château de Kenilworth* had not even been read--Mademoiselle Lévêque had politely sent word that she had not "time at the moment" to pay attention to a new part, and the Porte-Saint-Martin had received a melodrama upon the same subject.

So I had to find a lodging, as I have said, that should not be too far away and yet that was not too high a rent. I set to work, and discovered rooms at No. 53 Faubourg St. Denis, in a house adjoining the *Lion d'Argent.* We had two rooms on the second floor looking on the street, one serving for store-room, dining-room and kitchen. We soon found out that for these apartments we paid a great deal too much--they were 350 francs. Finally everything was settled; my mother sent her goods on by carrier, and arrived at the same time they did. We were delighted to be together again once more; my mother, however, was a trifle uneasy and unable to share and believe in all my hopes and plans; for she could look back upon a long and sad life, wherein she had experienced all kinds of disappointments and sorrows. I consoled her to the best of my power, and, in order to make the first four or five days of her life in Paris pleasant, I used all the influence I had with M. Oudard, M. Arnault and Adolphe de Leuven to get her tickets for the theatre. In a week's time we were settled in our little nest, and as accustomed to our new life as though we had never known any other. On the same landing with us, but on the opposite side, lodged a worthy fellow of forty years of age, named Després, who was employed in a ministerial department. He was one of the most regular attenders at the Caveau; he composed songs after the style of Brazier and Armand Gouffé; and he had had one or two pieces played at second-rate theatres. He was dying of consumption. When, after the payment of two terms, we found our lodgings were dearer than we could afford, he said to us--

"Wait until after my death, which will not be long now; then you can take my rooms, which are very convenient, and only two hundred and thirty francs."

And, as a matter of fact, he died six weeks after this--died in that quiet, gentle, calm, philosophical mood that I have noticed in the case of nearly all who were born in the eighteenth century. And, as he had bidden us, we took his rooms when they were vacant, and found ourselves accommodated according to our means.

In the meantime, political changes were taking place. M. de Villèle (whom my friend Méry was to make so celebrated and who, in his turn, also returned the compliment) was sharing political power with M. de Chateaubriand; and for two years they presented the unusual spectacle of an alliance between a financier and a poet. It is easy to believe that such a connection was not likely to last long, and the two ministers quarrelled over two proposed laws. M. de Chateaubriand thought to cement the monarchy by the Act of septennial duration, M. de Villèle thought to enrich the State by an Act concerning the conversion of consols (*rentes*). The law concerning the conversion of consols was rejected by the Chamber of Peers by a majority of 128 votes against 94. It was noticed that M. de Chateaubriand, who seemed opposed to the Act, did not get up to defend it at the Tribune. It was even said that he voted against it. Such opposition as this, directed against the president of the Council, was punished with the callous bluntness of feeling peculiar to men of money.

When M. de Chateaubriand went to mass on Whitsunday, he received information that a very urgent despatch awaited him at the ministry. He immediately went there, and found a letter from the president of the Council in the following terms:--

"M. LE VICOMTE,--I am obeying the King's command in handing you the enclosed mandate."

The mandate enclosed was a dismissal. Ten minutes later, M. de Villèle, in his turn, had received M. de Chateaubriand's reply. The letter of the Minister for Foreign Affairs was just as laconic as the letter received from the Minister of Finance:--

"M. LE COMTE,--I have left the Foreign Office; the department is at your disposal."

There were exactly fifteen words in each letter: it was the fault of the words themselves, and not of M. de Chateaubriand, that the answer[1] contained four letters more.

This dismissal was a very bitter pill for the author of *le Génie du Christianisme*, and it was in connection with this event that he gave utterance to the words which we believe we have already quoted:--

"I hadn't even stolen a watch from the king's mantelpiece!" he had said on leaving the Foreign Office.

The order had been drawn up by M. de Renneville,--to whom we shall refer in due course,--the secretary described by Méry and de Barthélemy as being *sewed to M. de Villèle's coat-tails.*

"M. de Renneville," says Chateaubriand in his *Mémoires*, "is still so good as to appear embarrassed in my presence! And, good God, who is this M. de Renneville, that I should ever think of him? I meet him often enough, ... does he happen to know that I am aware that the order striking my name off the list of ministers was in his handwriting?"

There were actually men, under the Empire, who were cowardly enough to cut off their first fingers to prevent their being made soldiers. It is a pity some men are not brave enough to cut off the whole hand before they write certain things.

But at the time when M. de Chateaubriand was being ejected from the ministry, Providence was signing an order, in terms I almost as brusque,

for Louis XVIII. to quit this life. The king was ill at the time of the Feast of St. Louis, so ill that he was I advised not to entertain on account of the fatigue it would I entail on him; but, with his usual sententiousness, the king answered, "A King of France may die, but he ought never to be ill."

As though Louis XVIII. wished to leave the path easy for his successor, with regard to the rejection of the appeal of the public ministry in the affair of the *Aristarque*, he revived the law of 31 March 1820 and 26 July 1821--that is to say, he re-established the Censorship. It is an odd coincidence that, when this happens, kings are generally either about to fall or to die. The re-establishment of the Censorship produced a terrible commotion; to do justice to the literary men of that time, none of them dare accept or publicly exercise the function of Censor; a secret commission had to be organised and placed under the presidency of the *conseiller d'État directeur general* of the police. M. de Chateaubriand then threw himself openly into the Opposition against the measure, and published his *Lettres sur la Censure.* In a few days, both the Liberal Oppositionist and the Royalist papers offered nothing but blank columns to their subscribers.

Two days after Louis XVIII. had said that a King of France might die but he ought never to be ill--that is to say, on 27 and 28 August, during his last two walks at Choisy, he perceived that he must seriously face the question of death. But he continued to give audiences, to preside in the Council and to direct the work of the ministers with a courage one cannot help but admire, when one remembers that he was suffering from mortification of the legs, the cellular tissue, muscles and even bones of which were decayed; the right foot entirely and the lower part of the leg as high as the calf had become mortified, the bones of it were quite soft, and four toes had rotted away. It was not until after a consultation of doctors held the night of 12 September, that it was decided that the condition of the King of France could no longer be concealed from his subjects. Up to that time Louis XVIII. had been faithful to the principles

enunciated by him, and had refused to admit that he was ill. "You do not know what it means to tell a people its king is ill. It means they must close the Stock Exchange and places of amusement; my sufferings will be protracted, and I do not want public interests to suffer for such a length of time."

On the morning of 13 September two bulletins appeared at the same time in the *Moniteur*, signed by the doctors and by the First Gentleman of the Chamber.

They announced the illness of the king, and made it very evident that his disease was incurable. At the end of the second bulletin came the command which Louis XVIII. had greatly dreaded, ordering the Bourse and theatres to be closed. These were the first bulletins France had read for half a century--that is to say, since the death of Louis XV.--and they were to be the last they were to read.

First Bulletin of the King's health

"THE TUILERIES, 12 *September*, 6 *a.m.* "The King's chronic and long-seated infirmities have become sensibly worse for some time past, his health has been very considerably impaired and his condition necessitates more frequent consultations.

"His Majesty's constitution and the care he has taken of himself had caused hope to be felt for some time that he might be restored to his usual state of health; but the fact cannot now be disguised that his strength has declined considerably and that the hopes entertained are less likely to be realised.

(Signed) PORTAL, ALIBERT, MONTAIGU, DISTEL, DUPUYTREU, THÉVENOT First Gentleman of the King's Chamber

COMTE DE DAMAS"

Second Bulletin

"9 *p.m.*

"The fever has increased during the day. The lower limbs have become extremely cold: weakness and lethargy have also increased, and the pulse has been very weak and irregular.

(Signed) PORTAL, ALIBERT, MONTAIGU, DISTEL, DUPUYTREU, THÉVENOT First Gentleman of the King's Chamber

COMTE DE DAMAS

"In consideration of the King's state of health, all theatres and places of public amusement, as well as the Bourse, will be closed until further orders, and public prayers will be offered in every parish."

On the 16th, at four o'clock in the morning, Louis XVIII. breathed his last breath. He had blessed the two royal children of France the previous, evening. Then, turning to his brother, the Comte d'Artois, who was about to change his title for that of Charles X., and pointing to the Duc de Bordeaux, he said, "Brother, look well after the crown for that child."

The dying king's fears for his nephew's future were almost prophetic. He had rallied all his remaining strength to utter these last words. His breathing soon became husky and his pulse intermittent, and a crisis was reached during which the king sank into an alarmingly quiet state. At two in the morning, the pulse hardly beat and his voice had completely failed him, although he signified, with his eyes, that he understood, and could still hear, the exhortations of his confessor. Finally, at four o'clock in the morning, when the last sign of life ceased and the body became still for ever, M. Alibert drew one of the king's hands outside the bed-covering and said, "The king is dead." At the words, the Comte d'Artois, who had not left his brother's side for two days, knelt down by the side of the bed and kissed his hand. Madame la Duchesse d'Angoulême and Mademoiselle followed his example; then both flung themselves in the

arms of the Comte d'Artois and remained there for some time, weeping bitterly.

As the new king left the death-chamber to return to his apartments, a herald-at-arms exclaimed three times--

"The king is dead, gentlemen! Long live the king!"

And from that moment Charles X. was King of France. On 23 September we watched out of our windows the funeral procession of the last king that was to be taken to Saint-Denis.

Chateaubriand wrote a poem, *le Roi est mort! vive le roi!* about the death of the king, and it was one of the poorest productions that ever came from his pen.

The same occasion inspired Victor Hugo to publish his *les Funérailles de Louis XVIII.,* and it was one of his finest odes. I need not ask the forbearance of my readers if I quote a few stanzas:--

"Un autre avait dit: 'De ma race Ce grand tombeau sera le port; Je veux, aux rois que je remplace, Succéder jusque dans la mort. Ma dépouille ici doit descendre! C'est pour faire place à ma cendre Qu'on dépeupla ces noirs caveaux; Il faut un nouveau maître au monde; A ce sépulcre que je fonde Il faut des ossements nouveaux!

'Je promets ma poussière à ces voûtes funestes. A cet insigne honneur ce temple a seul des droits; Car je veux que le ver qui rongera mes restes Ait déjà dévoré des rois. Et, lorsque mes neveux, dans leur fortune altière, Domineront l'Europe entière, Du Kremlin à l'Escurial, Ils viendront tour à tour dormir dans ces lieux sombres, Afin que je sommeille, escorté de leurs ombres, Dans mon linceul impérial!'

Celui qui disait ces paroles Croyait, soldat audacieux, Voir, en magnifiques symboles, Sa destinée écrite aux cieux. Dans ses étreintes foudroyantes, Son aigle, aux serres flamboyantes, Eût étouffé l'aigle

romain; La victoire était sa compagne, Et le globe de Charlemagne Était trop léger pour sa main!

Eh bien, des potentats ce formidable maître Dans l'espoir de sa mort par le ciel fut trompé. De ses ambitions, c'est la seule peut-être Dont le but lui soit échappé. En vain tout secondait sa marche meurtrière; En vain sa gloire incendiaire En tous lieux portait son flambeau; Tout chargé de faisceaux, de sceptres, de couronnes, Ce vaste ravisseur d'empires et de trônes Ne put usurper un tombeau!

Tombé sous la main qui châtie, L'Europe le fit prisonnier. Premier roi de sa dynastie, Il en fut aussi le dernier. Une île où grondent les tempêtes Reçut ce géant des conquêtes, Tyran que nul n'osait juger, Vieux guerrier qui, dans sa misère, Dut l'obole de Bélisaire A la pitié de l'étranger.

Loin du sacré tombeau qu'il s'arrangeait naguère, C'est là que, dépouillé du royal appareil, Il dort enveloppé de son manteau de guerre, Sans compagnon de son sommeil. Et, tandis qu'il n'a plus, de l'empire du monde, Qu'un noir rocher battu de l'onde, Qu'un vieux saule battu du vent, Un roi longtemps banni, qui fit nos jours prospères, Descend au lit de mort où reposaient ses pères, Sous la garde du Dieu vivant!"

But the poet is too generous towards Napoleon in describing him as "*ce vieux saule battu du vent*" (old weather-beaten willow tree), for at that very moment the authorities in St. Helena having abolished the toll that had at first been exacted from, and submitted to by, visitors to Napoleon's tomb, M. Torbet, the owner of the ground in which the emperor was interred, when he found that he could not gain any more from the body, requested that it should be exhumed and removed elsewhere. There was a long controversy about it, and M. Torbet threatened that he himself would disinter the body of the man who had, notwithstanding what the poet had written, usurped everything, even his own grave, and that he would throw the remains out on the highway, until at last the Government decided that the India Company should purchase the land

from Torbet for five hundred pounds sterling. It was decided that in future, in consequence of this *douceur* given to M. Torbet, people should visit the tomb of Napoleon free of charge. We have already mentioned M. Torbet's name three times: let us say it a fourth, in order that it may not be forgotten.

If anything could make up for such a disgrace to humanity, for such deeds as M. Torbet revelled in, it would be the reception accorded forty years afterwards to la Fayette in America, when that nation sent one of its finest ships, the *Cadmus*, to fetch him to America as the nation's guest. It was indeed a fine sight to see a whole nation rising up to do honour to one of the founders of its liberty.

Directly the two Chambers heard, on 12 January, that la Fayette was contemplating the paying of a visit to the United States, they drew up a resolution, upon the motion of Mr. Mitchell, to the following effect:--

"Seeing that the illustrious champion of our liberty and the hero of our Revolution, the friend and comrade of Washington, Marquis de la Fayette, who was a volunteer general officer during the War of our Independence, has expressed a strong desire to pay a visit to our country, to whose liberty his courage, his blood and his wealth contributed in a very large degree,

"It is resolved, that the President be asked to convey to the Marquis de la Fayette an expression of the feelings of respect, gratitude and affectionate attachment that the Government and the American people harbour towards him, and to assure him that the fulfilment of his desire and intention to visit their country will be received by both people and Government with deep pleasure and patriotic pride.

"It is besides, resolved, that the President shall inform himself as to the time that it would be most agreeable to the Marquis de la Fayette to pay

his visit, so that one of the nation's vessels may be offered him as a means of transport."

So, in accordance with this offer, la Fayette embarked at Havre, on board the *Cadmus*, 13 July, and reached New York on 15 August, after a voyage of thirty-two days. No national fête ever did honour to a finer or a more saintly character. When he left North America it had scarcely a population of three millions; now seventeen millions welcomed him. Everything was changed: forests had become plains, plains had become towns, and millions of steam-boats, the first of which had been launched in 1808 by Fulton, after having been refused by France, now plied up and down rivers as big as lakes, and on lakes as big as oceans. Nor were the towns of the artificial kind that Potemkin built along the Catherine Road which crosses the Crimea; modern civilisation was striding across the Atlantic as though it were a stream, to plant its foot for the first time in the New World.

After four months of fêtes given to and honours showered upon the friend of Washington, a special committee brought in a Bill on 20 December as under:--

"That the sum of 200,000 dollars be offered to Major-General la Fayette in recognition of his valuable services, and to indemnify him for his expenses in the American Revolution; also that a portion of land be set aside from the as yet unappropriated lands, for the establishment of a township for Major-General la Fayette, and that this Act be handed him by the President of the United States."

This Bill was carried with enthusiasm by the Chamber of Representatives on 22 December and by the Senate on the 23rd.

We must just mention before we take leave of the year 1824, that, on 2 December, M. Droz and M. de Lamartine were competitors for the Academy, and that M. Droz was elected and M. de Lamartine rejected.

[Footnote 1: In the French original.--TRANS.]

BOOK I — CHAPTER VI

CHAPTER VI

Tallancourt and Betz--The café *Hollandais*--My Quiroga cloak--First challenge--A lesson in shooting--The eve of my duel--Analysis of my sensations--My opponent fails to keep his appointment--The seconds hunt him out--The duel--Tallancourt and the mad dog

On 3 January 1825, one of our friends, by name Tallancourt, having, by Vatout's solicitations, been promoted from his office, to the Duc d'Orléans' library, he treated me and another of our friends called Betz to a dinner at the Palais-Royal. Both were old soldiers. Tallancourt had fought at Waterloo. After the defeat, he felt in his pockets and found that they were empty, he struck his stomach and felt that it was hollow, therefore, catching sight of a small dismounted cannon, and being endowed with herculean strength, he lifted it upon his shoulder and sold it, two leagues away, to an ironfounder, for ten francs. Thanks to these ten francs, he managed to effect quite a comfortable retreat, and he returned to his native country of Semur, where Vatout got him a berth first in the Duc d'Orléans' offices and finally in the library. After dinner, these gentlemen, who were inveterate smokers, as becomes old soldiers of thirty-two and thirty-five years of age, proposed to adjourn to the café *Hollandais* to smoke a cigar. I did not wish to desert them, in spite of my aversion to tobacco cafés, and for the first, and I hope I may say for the last time in my life, I crossed the threshold of that famous establishment which is decorated outside with the sign of a ship. I possessed a large cloak, romantically called in those days a Quiroga; I had coveted such a cloak as passionately as I had the famous top-boots, and I had ended by obtaining it with just as much difficulty. Apparently, my mode of dress annoyed one of the habitués who at that moment was playing billiards; he exchanged some words with his antagonist, accompanied by a glance in

my direction, and a burst of laughter followed. This was quite sufficient to infuriate me, so I picked up a cue, and mixing up all the balls, I said--

"Who would like to play at billiards with me?"

"But," remonstrated Tallancourt, "the table belongs to those gentlemen."

"Well," said I, looking straight at the player I specially wished to have dealings with, "we will turn these men out, and I will tackle this gentleman"; and I advanced towards him.

The provocation was too gross and too pointed not to raise ire.

Betz and Tallancourt at once sprang to my assistance, for they knew me too well not to be aware that I should not insult anyone in this fashion without good occasion. The chief thing we cared about was that it should not be noised abroad that we had taken part in a miserable café quarrel, so my adversary and I exchanged cards and arranged a meeting for the next day but one, at nine o'clock in the morning, by the café which adjoins the threshold of the big lonely house which stood for a long while in the middle of the place du Carrousel, called the *hôtel de Nantes.* Of course, Tallancourt and Betz were my seconds, although they were a little uneasy about their commission: first, because I was very young, and it was my first duel; then, because I had just come from the provinces and they did not know whether I knew how to handle the firearms I was about to use. They had arranged with the seconds of my adversary, M. Charles B---, our meeting for the following day at four o'clock in the afternoon, in the garden of the Palais-Royal, opposite the Rotonde, in order to give them more time to coach me.

On leaving the café they asked me to tell them the cause of my quarrel, which I hastened to do; then, as they were commissioned to deal with the question of arms, they asked me which weapon I preferred. I replied that the question of weapons was a matter of indifference to me, and that as I had confided my interests into their hands, it was their affair and not

mine. My assurance somewhat eased their minds; but Tallancourt nevertheless insisted I should have some practice, next morning at nine, in Gosset's shooting gallery. I had not put foot in a shooting gallery since I had come to Paris; but my familiarity with M. de Leuven's *Kukenreiter* cannot have been forgotten, nor my broken slates, and the frogs I shot in two and the pieces of cardboard held in the hand as targets at Ponce's. Tallancourt asked for a dozen bullets.

"Does the gentleman want to shoot *à la poupée* or *à la mouche*?" the lad asked me.

As I did not quite understand Parisian shooting habits and terms, I turned to Tallancourt, who asked for a *poupée.* The boy placed a metal doll on the spike--without doubt the biggest the establishment could produce; for the boy (whose name was Philippe--one recalls the minutest details connected with events of this sort) noticing my utter ignorance of shooting-gallery methods, took me for a schoolboy. Tallancourt, too, it was quite evident, shared the lad's opinion concerning me. I must confess this unanimity piqued me.

"Tell me," I asked Tallancourt, "what that metal toy costs?"

"Four sous," he said.

"And how many bullets have you applied for?"

"A dozen."

"Well, then, as I am not rich enough to allow myself the luxury of smashing a dozen dolls, I will make this one a present of eleven of the bullets, and I will smash it with the twelfth."

"What do you mean?" asked Tallancourt.

"You shall see how we played this game at Villers-Cotterets, my dear Tallancourt."

I went up to the target, I drew a circle round the doll, and I began operations. Everything went off as I had anticipated. I did what I had done a score of times with de Leuven and de la Ponce, but as Tallancourt was witnessing my proceedings for the first time, he was perfectly astounded at what took place.

"Well, it will be all right with pistols, I see, and I shall feel easy enough if you get in the first shot," said he; "but suppose they choose swords?"

"Well, if they choose swords, we must fight with swords, my friend, that is all."

"Can you defend yourself with a sword?"

"I hope so."

"I ask this," added Tallancourt, "as I do not like pistols."

"I agree with you, they are fiendish weapons."

"I shall not accept unless I am compelled."

"You will be quite right."

"You agree with me, then?"

"Absolutely."

"Well, so much the better! Give the boy twenty-four sous and let us go to breakfast."

Fortunately, it was but the fourth day of the month, so I could afford the twenty-four sous. We breakfasted, and went to the office. Betz was already there, and he took Tallancourt aside, no doubt to inquire about my qualifications; but I had every ground for believing that Tallancourt reassured him. At five o'clock, Betz and Tallancourt came to tell me my adversary had chosen swords. The rendezvous was to be the same, at nine next day, by the *hôtel de Nantes.* I returned home with a smiling

face, although my heart beat fast enough. In matters of courage I had made the following observations with respect to myself. I was of a sanguine temperament, and readily threw myself in the way of danger; if the danger were imminent, and I could attack it instantly, my courage never failed me, for I was kept up by excitement. If, on the contrary, I had to wait some hours, my nerves gave way, and I relented having exposed myself to danger. But, by degrees, after reflection, moral courage overcame physical cowardice, and vigorously commanded it to conduct itself properly. When arrived on the spot, I shivered to the bottom of my back; but I never showed the slightest external signs of my feelings. I fought a duel in 1834, and Bixio was my second: he was a medical student at the time, and, feeling my pulse just after I had taken up my pistol, it only indicated sixty-nine pulsations to the minute, two beats faster than normal. The longer I wait, the calmer I become. For that matter, I believe every man, especially if endowed with sensitive organisations, naturally fears danger, and if left to his own instincts, would do his best to escape it; he is kept back simply and solely by moral strength and manly pride, and exposes himself to death and suffering with a smiling face. As a proof of this theory, I may mention that a man of this temperament, who is brave in his waking hours, is a coward in his dreams; for in sleep the soul is absent, and the animal part of him alone remains; and, in the absence of his strength, his will-power and his pride, the physical part of him is afraid.

Well, I returned home without saying a word of what had passed; but I stayed in with my mother the whole night.

It was mid-winter, so I had not to go and make up the portfolio. I rose at eight next morning, and making some sort of excuse to my mother, I kissed her, and went out with my father's sword under my cloak. Tallancourt had undertaken to provide a second sword. I reached the *hôtel de Nantes* at ten minutes to nine, and we found there my adversary's two seconds. I had not had any breakfast, for Thibaut, who accompanied

us, had advised me not to eat, in case I might have to be bled. We waited: half-past nine, ten, eleven struck. Betz and Tallancourt were dreadfully impatient, for my adversary's delay was making them late at their office. I must admit that, so far as I was concerned, I was enchanted; I had been in hopes that the affair would conclude with excuses, and I should have liked nothing better. At eleven o'clock my adversary's godparents gave up waiting, in disgust, and suggested to my seconds that they should all go and call upon their godson, who lived, I believe, in the rue Coquillière. As for me, they sent me back to the office, and, in case we were grumbled at for our absence, I was to explain frankly to Oudard what had passed and tell him the cause of our absence. But there was no need to confess anything, as I found Oudard had been sent for by the Duchesse d'Orléans. Betz and Tallancourt returned half an hour later: they had found my adversary in bed! When they pointed out to him that he ought to have been elsewhere than in his bed, M. Charles B--- replied that, having been skating on the canal the whole of the previous day, at seven that morning he felt so utterly fatigued he had not sufficient strength to get up. His own two seconds considered this such a feeble excuse that they told him he need not count on their services again, if the quarrel were followed up. Upon which they withdrew. But Betz and Tallancourt, who were much angrier than I was myself in my heart of hearts, had remained, and they had insisted on M. Charles B--- informing them at what hour they might expect to see him take the field the next day. He promised to meet us, with two fresh seconds, at the Rochechouart barrier, the following day, at nine o'clock. The fight could take place in one of the Montmartre quarries. Thus the matter was only postponed. I thanked my two seconds very cordially, telling them they had done quite right and that I would wait. The day passed by quietly enough, and by becoming absorbed in my work and in conversation I even managed to forget I was to fight on the morrow. Nevertheless, a slight spasm would attack my heart from time to time, to be stifled in a yawn.

I returned home early, as on the previous day, and stayed in with my mother.

Next day was Twelfth Night, and someone had presented us with a bean-cake. My mother was the queen. I kissed her and wished I might be able to kiss her for thirty years longer at the same hour, day and occasion. I knew only too well what I was doing when I wished such a wish. I slept soundly for the first four or five hours of the night, badly enough for the remaining two or three. I left my mother at half-past eight, as on the previous morning, only I had no sword to carry this time, Tallancourt had taken charge of both. At ten minutes to nine we reached the barrier at Rochechouart; and, as nine struck, a cab brought our man and his two fresh seconds. They got out, bowed, silently crossed the outer boulevard and reached the ramparts of the mount. One of the seconds of my adversary, who has since become a friend of mine (in common with the majority of those who, not knowing me, began by being my enemies), came up to me and, evidently taking me for one of the witnesses, entered into conversation with me. We walked for nearly half an hour before a suitable spot could be found. It was very cold and had snowed all night; it was still snowing; so nearly all the quarries were occupied.

As it is not a usual sight for six people to be walking across fields at ten in the morning in such weather, the people in the quarries became inquisitive about our tramp and followed us. We had already quite a considerable following, and it was probable that the farther we thus went the more it would increase; so it was imperative we should stop at the first place that appeared, I will not say suitable, but possible, for our purpose. I confess the walk would have seemed very long had I not talked the whole way with my adversary's witness. At last they settled upon a sort of plateau, ten paces wide by twenty long, which was as much room as we needed. Here we stopped. Tallancourt drew forth the swords from under his cloak and handed them to the witnesses to be examined. The one he had brought was two inches longer than the other;

Tallancourt had not made a choice, he had taken the first that came to his hand; so he proposed to draw lots as to which should have the longest sword. I ended the debate by declaring that I would take the shortest, which was my father's. I much preferred to lose the two extra inches of steel, rather than to have my father's sword turned against my breast. It was only at this juncture that my opponent's second discovered that the man he had been talking with the whole way was the other duellist. There was little time to spare by the time the ground was chosen and the swords distributed; it was horribly cold, and our audience was increasing every moment.

I flung off my coat and stood on guard. Then my opponent asked me to take off my waistcoat and my shirt as well as my coat. The demand seemed to me an exorbitant one; but, as he insisted, I stuck my sword in the snow and I threw down my waistcoat and my shirt on top of my coat. Then, as I did not want even to keep on my braces, and as, like poor Géricault, I had lost the buckle from my trousers, I tied the two straps into a knot to gird up my loins. These elaborate preparations took a minute or two, during which my sword remained fixed in the snow. Then I picked it up, and stood on guard in a pretty bad temper. My opponent had delivered his commands with a great air of self-confidence, and as he had also selected swords as our weapons, I expected to find I had to deal with an experienced swordsman. So I set to work cautiously. But to my great astonishment, I found he put himself very carelessly on his guard and exposed himself to my sword. Of course, his carelessness might be just a ruse to put me off my guard, when he could take advantage of my imprudence. I took a step backwards and lowered my sword.

"Ready, monsieur," I said; "defend yourself!"

"But what if I do not choose to put myself into a position of defence?" replied my adversary.

"Well, that is your affair, ... but your taste is peculiar, I must say."

I fell back on guard, I attacked him *en quarte*, and without making a pass with my sword in order to feel my way with my man, I thrust out freely *en tierce.* He gave a leap backwards, stumbled over a vine-root and fell head over heels.

"Oh! oh!" exclaimed Tallancourt, "have you really killed him at the first blow?"

"No," I replied, "I think not; I had not even passed, I hardly touched him."

In the meantime, my opponent's seconds had run up to M. B---, who was getting up. The point of my sword had pierced his shoulder, and as its position in the snow had frozen the steel, the sensation it had given my opponent was so startling that, lightly though he was wounded, the shock had overturned him. Luckily I had not passed first, or I should certainly have run him right through. It turned out. that the poor lad had never handled a sword before!

When he made this confession, and in consideration of the wound he had received, it was decided the fight should stop there. I put up my sword in its shield; I donned my shirt, waistcoat and coat; I wrapped myself in my Quiroga, and I descended the ramparts of Montmartre with a much lighter heart than I had ascended them.

Such was the cause, such were the sensations, such was the issue of my first duel. What has become of the two men who were my seconds? I have lost sight of Betz: he obtained a post as *receveur particulier* in the provinces. A vague rumour has since reached me of his death. As for Tallancourt, poor fellow! I saw him die most miserably, unfortunate and unhappy. The Duc d'Orléans took a fancy to him; for he was of the type of tools the prince loved--active but not too clever. Moreover, Tallancourt possessed a further qualification: although he was sufficiently intelligent, he knew when to appear stupid. When the Duc

d'Orléans became king, he sent for Tallancourt, for he could not do without him. If his fortune were not exactly made--fortunes are not often made through being associated with kings--his position was, at any rate, secure. As Tallancourt had not left the Duc d'Orléans during 27, 28 and 29 July, he knew a fair number of state secrets concerning the Revolution of 1830. When the king was at Neuilly, he would purposely send Tallancourt to Paris, and the Hercules of a fellow, ill at ease in his arm-chair, seated at his desk, in his office, would walk the distance on foot, in order to breathe the open air and distend his big lungs a bit.

One day, an enormous savage dog leapt out of the ditch by the side of the high road and sprang at him. Tallancourt instinctively put up his hands to save his face, and, by unheard of good luck, in so doing he seized the beast round its neck. It was useless for the dog to struggle against the powerful grip of two such fists as Tallancourt's, which throttled the dog tighter and tighter, and in about five minutes' time the brute was strangled and the giant had never even received a scratch. But during these five minutes of struggle and mortal danger Tallancourt's brain underwent a terrible strain, and five or six months later, softening of the brain set in. For a year poor Tallancourt grew visibly feebler, both morally and physically; his strength and intellect, his power of motion, and even his voice declined, and he died by inches, after eighteen months of suffering.

BOOK I — CHAPTER VII

CHAPTER VII

The Duc d'Orléans is given the title of *Royal Highness*--The coronation of Charles X.--Account of the ceremony by Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans--Death of Ferdinand of Naples--De Laville de Miremont--*Le Cid d'Andalousie*--M. Pierre Lebrun--A reading at the camp at Compiègne--M. Taylor appointed a royal commissioner to the Théâtre-Français--The curé Bergeron--M. Viennet--Two of his letters--Pichat and his *Léonidas*

My mother never knew anything of the story of my duel; she would have died of grief had she had the faintest suspicion of it. As we did not return to the office until nearly one o'clock, we had to tell Oudard everything; and he appeared quite content, after hearing Betz and Tallancourt's account, with the way his employé had conducted himself. Besides, the Palais-Royal had been in a constant state of fête since the accession of His Majesty Charles X. to the throne. The duc d'Orléans had just been granted the title of Royal Highness from the new king--a favour he had begged in vain from Louis XVIII. As we have already mentioned, Louis XVIII. persistently refused everybody who asked him to grant M. le Duc d'Orléans this privilege.

"He will always be sufficiently close to the throne," he would reply.

And in other ways, Charles X. made himself most popular.

As a pendant to his phrase, "Nothing is changed in France, there is simply one more Frenchman in it," he added another dictum, simpler still, and quite as much appreciated--

"My friends, let there be wider criticism!"

And in the midst of the general merrymaking the preparations for his coronation went on in sumptuous style.

The last few coronations had brought ill-fortune in their train. It will be remembered that, at Reims, Louis XVI. had quickly removed the crown from his head.

"What is the matter, sire?" asked the archbishop.

"That crown hurts me," replied Louis XVI. And, twenty years later, he died upon the scaffold.

Napoleon wished to be crowned by a higher official than an archbishop; he wished to have a pope, and had sent for Pius VII. to come from the Vatican at Rome to Notre-Dame at Paris.

"Il fallut presqu'un Dieu pour consacrer cet homme! Le prêtre, monarque de Rome, Vint sacrer son front menaçant, Car sans doute, en secret effrayé de lui-même, Il voulut recevoir son sanglant diadème Des mains d'où le pardon descend!"

Fifteen years later, Napoleon died at St. Helena! And now it was the turn of Charles X.

Every sovereign in Christendom had been informed of the solemn celebration, and sent their ambassadors extraordinary. Austria was represented by Prince Esterhazy; Spain by the Duke of Villa-Hermosa; Great Britain by the Duke of Northumberland; Prussia by General de Zastrow; and Russia by Prince Volkonski.

The king and the dauphin left the Tuileries at half-past eleven on the morning of 24 May, and set out for Compiègne. All went well as far as Fismes; but an accident augured ill to the king, whose reign was only to last six years, and to end in his exile. As they descended at Fismes, the batteries of the Royal Guard, which were mounted in a dingle to the left of the road, fired a salute to greet the king. The detonation and its echo

were terrible, and at the noise of the firing the horses attached to the carriage containing the Ducs d'Aumont and de Damas, and the Counts de Cossé and Curial, ran away; the carriage was overturned and smashed to bits on the causeway. Two out of the four occupants of the carriage were seriously injured--MM. the Duc de Damas and Count Curial; the latter's case was worst, he had his collar-bone broken. Had it not been for the coachman's strength and presence of mind, the king himself would not have escaped a similar accident. His horses bolted; but the coachman had the sense not to try to stop them, and used all his efforts to keep them in the centre of the roadway; and after ten minutes' unrestrained career they calmed down.

At the village of Tinqueux the king found the Duc d'Orléans and the Duc de Bourbon awaiting him. The rain, which had never stopped pouring all morning, ceased, and the sun, which had not hitherto shown itself, now shone forth brilliantly. The king, M. le Dauphin, M. le Duc d'Orléans and M. le Duc de Bourbon entered the coronation coach, and in the language of the *Report of the Coronation*, "the whole of the way to Reims was one *arc de triomphe*."

After the coronation service, Charles X. signed the amnesty granted to men who had deserted from the navy and to political offenders. It was this amnesty that brought Carrel back to France. Thirteen years later, Charles X. died at Goritz.

Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans had been present at the coronation, and wrote an account of it in her private diary in Italian. On her return to Paris, she desired to have it translated into French, and commissioned Oudard to do it. Oudard was much embarrassed, and handed the album over to me, giving me a couple of days' holiday to translate it for him. This album was the book in which the Duchesse d'Orléans wrote her most secret thoughts and related her private deeds. I was not forbidden to read it, so of course I read it. However, there was not a single word

throughout the book that could have put an angel to the blush, though it contained the actions and reflections of the Duchesse d'Orléans for the last ten years, though she never intended it to leave her own hands, not even to pass into those of the Duc d'Orléans, since it was for the Duc d'Orléans that the translation was being made. One thing above all struck me as I read, and that was the profound gratitude of Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans for the favours that the new king, Charles X., had lavished on the prince her husband, and for the kindness displayed every day towards her and her family by Madame la Duchesse de Berry.

Alas and alas! how many times the remembrance of that album came into my mind when I saw King Charles X. at Gratz, and Madame la Duchesse de Berry at Blaye, and it made me shudder as I thought of how deeply the religious-hearted Marie-Amélie must have suffered, when, because of what princes term "political necessities," the honour of the one, and the crown of the other, were broken in her husband's hands.

Another page also riveted my attention and kept me for a long time enthralled, wherein Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans related how lovingly and tactfully her husband broke to her the news of the death of her father, Ferdinand I. Now, Ferdinand I. was the very king who had kept my father a prisoner in the dungeons of Naples for eighteen months; the very same man who had allowed people to try and poison him three times, and once to attempt his assassination; he, the shepherd who had devoured his own flock during those terrible years of 1798-99, had just been called to render an account of his stewardship to the Lord. It was a strange coincidence that I, the son of one of the king's victims, should hold this album in my hands and read the sorrowful outpourings of the daughter's grief at the death of her father! What a strange juxtaposition of destiny and fortunes! However, he was dead, even as just men have to die; he who had watched those whom he called his friends hung before his very eyes, burnt beneath his very windows, disembowelled and torn to pieces in his very presence; the people whom a treacherous capitulation had

yielded into his hands; those who, under another reign, might have been the honour of their king and the glory of the country!

On 3 January 1825 he was quietly sleeping, at two in the morning. His attendants heard him cough several times; then, at eight o'clock, as he had not summoned them to him according to his usual custom, the officers of his chamber, followed by the Court doctors, entered his room, and found him dead from a stroke of apoplexy. Ferdinand I. had just reigned sixty-five years, when he died at the age of seventy-four.

Oudard got his translation, which he re-copied in his own writing, and handed to the Duchesse d'Orléans as his own. True, he faithfully retailed to me the compliments he had received for it, adding that for which I was far more grateful--two tickets for the first representation of *Roman* at the Théâtre-Français; it was a capital five-act comedy in verse, by de Laville de Miremont, already known because of *Folliculaire*, a piece more commendable for its action than for any other quality. I knew de Laville very well: an accusation by Lemercier worried him greatly. Lemercier had accused de Laville, who had occupied the post of Censor, of having suppressed his *Charles VI.* and of having afterwards used his plot and ideas. But, in the first place, de Laville plainly proved both by *Folliculaire* and by *Roman* that he did not need to borrow ideas from other people's plays; besides, he was utterly incapable of doing such an action. There was a charming creation in *Roman*: a father who was friendly to and almost a companion in the escapades of a son born to him when he was only twenty. Nothing could have been more natural than this situation, which de Laville was the first to employ in a play.

Owing to the kindness of Talma, I had several times seen the *Cid d'Andalousie.* Casimir Delavigne's example was infectious: Talma having taken part in comedy, Mademoiselle Mars asked why she might not play in tragedy; hence the new reunion of the two actors in the *Cid d'Andalousie*. But M. Pierre Lebrun, author of an *Ulysse* which had not

been played, or what is far worse, which had only run one or two nights, was not Casimir Delavigne. There was nothing at the time to support him as there had been in 1820 when, in *Maria Stuart*, he had had the sturdy framework of Schiller to fall back upon. Reduced to drawing from Spanish romanceros, which only suggested simple scenes, he was lacking in everything--power, originality and style, and in spite of the unusual support of both Talma and Mademoiselle Mars, who had doubled the power of a strong creator and who could not conceal the weakness of a feeble writer, the *Cid d'Andalousie* fell flat at the first representation, managed to survive the second, upheld by hired applause, dragged on miserably for five or six nights, and then finally was taken out of the bill. This failure was the beginning of the fortune of M. Pierre Lebrun--Academician, peer of France and Manager of the Royal Printing-house.

O thou venerable deity, Mediocrity! Surely thou hast the secret of the precious essence given to Phaon by Venus to assure successfulness in this world of ours! Thou who for long rejected Hugo, Lamartine and Charles Nodier! Thou who left Soulié and Balzac to die without doing for them a third of what thou didst for M. Pierre Lebrun! Thou who ignored Alfred de Musset,--wisely, for all light of originality, all nervous strength, makes thy owl's eyes to blink! Thou whose leaden-based statue ought to be a hundred feet high, so that its shadow should fall on the Pont des Arts and the respectable monument to which it leads! O Mediocrity! sole divinity for whom France has not a 21 January, a 29 July or a 24 February! Thou whom I despise above everything else in the world, and would fain hate if I could ever hate anything! Look ever askance on me and be benign to my enemies, that is the sole favour I ask thee. And, on this condition, may thou remain in undisturbed possession of the future, as thou hast been of the past!

Now let us note well that the failure of the *Cid d'Andalousie* took place in 1825. One might therefore reasonably have hoped that by 1838, thirteen

years later, the unlucky *Cid* would have been forgotten by everybody, even by its author. Nothing of the kind. At Compiègne, in his country house, the Duc d'Orléans entertained his comrades with sport in the forest by day, and at night he opened his drawing-rooms to those who preferred card-playing, dancing and conversation. One evening a fatal idea came into the unfortunate prince's head. Turning towards several poets who stood round, he said to them--

"Gentlemen, let us see which of you has some poetry to read to us."

Everybody kept silence, as will be readily understood, and moved a step or two backwards; except M. Pierre Lebrun, who stepped forward.

"I will, monseigneur," he said; and he sat down and drew a manuscript out of his pocket--think of it! a whole manuscript!--and, in the midst of the general silence, he read the title--

"Gentlemen, the *Cid d'Andalousie.*"

They all stared at him; but there was no way out of it, they were trapped, and M. le Duc d'Orléans most of all. Upon my word, it was a great success. When the reading was over and compliments had been paid, the Duc d'Orléans said to me--

"Dumas, can you tell me what was the reason of the noise I heard by the side of the window, which interrupted M. Lebrun, towards the beginning of the third act?"

"Monseigneur," I replied, "it was A--, who squatted behind the curtains, where he could sleep more comfortably; but it would seem he had a nightmare: he gave a cuff to a small stand, and has smashed a table full of Sèvres china, for which he is excessively sorry."

"He need not be unhappy about it," said the Duc d'Orléans; "tell him he did quite right, and I will bear the cost of the china."

The poor duke was as wise a prince as Solomon, and as good as St. Louis!

In other respects, too, the Théâtre-Français was not very fortunate at this time. After playing the *Cid d'Andalousie* of M. Lebrun, it put on M. de Comberousse's *Judith* and *Bélisaire*, by M. de Jouy. An important change had taken place at the theatre in the rue de Richelieu. Baron Taylor had been appointed royal commissioner in place of M. Choron, upon the recommendation of MM. Lemercier, Viennet and Alexandre Duval.

When Charles X. returned to Paris after the coronation, and the Bishop of Orléans issued orders for prayers to be offered up in thanksgiving for the safe accomplishment of the ceremony just concluded, M. Bergeron, curé of the commune of Saint-Sulpice, canton of Blois, after delivering from his reading-desk the bishop's mandate, added these simple words:--

"My dearly beloved brethren, as Charles X. is not a Christian, as he desires to keep the Charter, which is an Act contrary to religion, we ought not to pray for him, any more than for Louis XVIII., who was the founder of that Charter; they are both damned. Those who agree with me, please rise."

And three hundred listeners out of four hundred rose, and by that act declared that they were entirely of the same opinion as their priest.

Alas! If the Academy could have known what kind of man Baron Taylor was, whom the order of Charles X. had introduced into the sanctuary of the Comédie-Française! If it could only have guessed that he was to open its doors to MM. Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo and de Vigny,[1] it would have followed the curé Bergeron's example and excommunicated King Charles x. But it knew nothing at all about it.

The first bad turn the new commissioner of the king did to his patrons was to have M. Viennet's *Sigismond de Bourgogne* played, and M. Lemercier's *Camille.* I need hardly mention that both these plays fell flat.

This did not discourage M. Lemercier: he decided to change his style of play, and began a melodrama called the *Masque de poix.* This elated M. Viennet, who, instead of changing his method, like his honoured confrère, made up his mind, on the contrary, to force his method into acceptance, and began by reading his *Achille* in the salons, a play which had been written twenty years before, and which had been accepted ten years ago.

"Do you not think my Achille is very heroic?" he said to M. Arnault, after one of these readings.

"Yes," replied M. Arnault, "as fierce as a turkey-cock!"

But very few men could be more brilliant at repartee than M. Viennet. It was like watching a tilting bout in the lists to hear him, save that he never retorted when his adversary missed fire. He certainly offered a favourable target for such attacks, and people were not slow to avail themselves of their opportunities. Once, at Nodier's house, he went up to Michaud.

"Tell me, Michaud," he began, in a manner that was peculiarly his own,--"tell me what you think, I have just finished a poem of thirty thousand lines."

"It will need fifteen thousand men to read them," replied Michaud.

On another occasion, at a dinner party, M. Viennet made an attack upon Lamartine.

"He is a puppy," he said, "who thinks himself the greatest politician of his age, and who is not even the first poet!"

"At all events," Madame Sophie Gay retorted from the other end of the table, "he is not the last--that place is already occupied."

Besides everything M. Viennet wrote in verse--fables, comedies, tragedies, epistles and epic poems--he wrote a couple of letters in prose

which are perfect models. We will quote them in toto and verbatim; extracts would not give a proper idea of their style. One was in reference to the nomination of Hugo as an officer of the Légion d'honneur; the other was in connection with his own nomination to the peerage. For M. Viennet was both a deputy and a peer of France, besides also being a Commander of the Légion d'honneur and a member of the Academy.

Here is M. Viennet's first letter:--

"MONSIEUR,--Je n'ai pas dit que je ne voulais plus porter la croix d'officier de la Légion d'honneur, depuis qu'on l'avait donnée au chef de l'école romantique.

"En ôtant mon ruban de la boutonnière où l'empereur l'avait placé, j'ai suivi seulement l'exemple de la plupart des généraux de la vieille armée, qui trouvaient plus facile de se faire remarquer en paraissant dans les rues sans décoration. Il ne s'agissait ici ni de romantiques ni de classiques.

"Il est tout naturel qu'un ministre romantique décore ses amis; il serait cependant plus juste de donner la croix de chevalier à ceux qui auraient eu le courage de lire jusqu'au bout les vers ou la prose de ces messieurs, et la croix d'officier à ceux qui les auraient compris. Je désire, en outre, qu'on n'en donne que douze par an aux écrivains qui font des libelles contre les grands pouvoirs de l'État, les ministres et les députés: il faut de la mesure dans les encouragements.--Agréez, etc., VIENNET"

And this is M. Viennet's letter about his nomination to the peerage of France:--

"MONSIEUR,--Sur la foi d'un journal judiciaire que je ne connais pas, vous publiez, que, des vendredi dernier, je me suis empressé d'écrire à M. Vedel, pour mettre opposition à la représentation des *Serments*, et vous accompagnez cette annonce d'une fort jolie épigramme contre cette comédie. L'épigramme me touche fort peu, elle sort peut-être de la même plume qui avait loué l'ouvrage quand l'auteur avait cessé d'être un homme

politique. Je ne prétends pas l'empêcher de continuer, mais le fait n'est pas vrai et je me récrie. Il n'y a eu de ma part ni possibilité ni volonté de faire ce qu'on m'impute. Je suis parti vendredi de la campagne, et je suis arrivé chez moi, à Paris, vers les sept heures, sans me douter de ce que *le Moniteur* avait publié, le matin, d'honorable pour moi. C'est mon portier qui m'a salué du titre de pair, attendu qu'il avait expédié, le matin même, pour mon village, une lettre officielle qui portait ce titre, et comme cette lettre ne m'est pas encore revenue, j'ignore à quel ministre je suis redevable de ce premier avis. Quant à ma volonté, elle n'existe point, elle n'existera jamais! c'est m'insulter que de me croire capable d'abjurer les travaux et les honneurs littéraires, pour un honneur politique. La Charte n'a pas établi d'incompatibilité entre le poète dramatique et le pair de France; si elle l'eût fait, j'aurais refusé la pairie. Les lettres et les succès de théâtre honorent ceux qui cultivent les unes et qui obtiennent les autres sans intrigue et sans bassesse. Au lieu d'y renoncer, je sollicite, au contraire, avec plus d'instance la représentation des *Serments*, la mise en scène d'une de mes tragédies et la lecture d'une comédie en cinq actes. Si vous avez quelque crédit auprès de M. le directeur du Théâtre-Français, veuillez l'employer en ma faveur. Les épigrammes dont on m'a poursuivi comme député sont bien usées; vous devez désirer qu'on en renouvelle la matière, et une nouvelle comédie, une nouvelle tragédie de moi, seraient de merveilleux aliments pour la verve satirique de mes adversaires. Rendons-nous mutuellement ce service; je vous en serai très-reconnaissant pour mon compte, et je vous prie d'agréer d'avance les remercîments de votre très-humble serviteur, VIENNET"

We will now return to Baron Taylor and the changes he brought about at the Théâtre-Français. At the Panorama-Dramatique he had produced *Ismaël et Maryam* alone; *Bertram* in collaboration with Nodier; and *Ali-Pacha* with Pichat's assistance.

Pichat was a young man of twenty-eight at that time: a play of his, *Léonidas*, had been received two or three years before at the

Théâtre-Français. Taylor extracted *Léonidas* from the pandemonium he found himself in, and had it put in rehearsal. Talma was cast for the rôle of Léonidas:--not that his supreme intellect was mistaken about the part, which, dramatically speaking, was nothing at all; but in the matter of "business" it contained something fresh to do, and poor Talma, to the day of his death, was ever seeking new worlds, and, less fortunate than Vasco de Gama, he never succeeded in finding them. Besides, it was a very appropriate moment for the playing of *Léonidas*; all Europe was looking towards the successors of the three hundred Spartans. And the new piece, so it was announced in advance, was to be staged with unusual sumptuousness and unheard-of effects. I well remember the first performance of the tragedy of *Léonidas*, wherein one felt the dawn of new ideas, wherein every historic saying which immortalised the famous defence of the Thermopælians was felicitously adapted, and admirably rendered by Talma. One hemistich of the young Agis was Substituted for the written line. Agis wounded, fell, exclaiming--

"Ils sont tous morts ... Je meurs!..."

The play met with a most enthusiastic reception, on account of the circumstances under which it was played. It was a splendid success for Talma: he looked like an antique statue descended from its column. After the performance, when the curtain had fallen, I saw a noisy group of rejoicing people rush along the corridor and the foyer, anxious to convey their friendly congratulation. A fine-looking young man, with a face as radiant as a conquering Apollo, formed the centre and was the hero of the group. He was the author of *Léonidas.* Alas! he died only two years later--died before he had hardly lifted the intoxicating cup of success to his lips. But Taylor had at least the happiness of holding out to him the nectar which sweetened his last moments. Without Taylor, Pichat would have died in obscurity, and even though he were but an ephemeral meteor, many people, myself among the number, recollect the brilliant light he gave during his short career!

[Footnote 1: It will, of course, be understood that I place my own name and those of my honoured confrères according to the chronological order of the representations of *Henri III*, *Marion Delorme* and *Othello.*]

BOOK I — CHAPTER VIII

CHAPTER VIII

Death of General Foy--His funeral--The *Royal Highness*--Assassination of Paul-Louis Courier--Death of the Emperor Alexander--Comparison of England and Russia--The reason why these two powers have increased during the last century--How Napoleon meant to conquer India

Since we have just uttered the word *death* let us consecrate this chapter entirely to the pale daughter of Erebus and Night.

On 26 June, Princess Pauline Borghèse died at Florence, and, with her, one of the most striking memories of my early youth passed into the regions of eternity.

Then, on 28 November, I learnt news which was a more personally disastrous shock to me. As I was coming out of the office, I saw people talking together and heard them say, "You have heard that General Foy is dead!"

They were inclined to doubt the information! But there is a kind of news about which one is never in doubt; for who, if it were false, dare spread the news which the brazen lips of Destiny alone has the right to announce? Yes, General Foy had died directly after returning from a journey among the Pyrenees, where he had been to take the waters; he died of an aneurism, and news of his death came before the news of his illness. They had concealed the fact of the disease, in hope that it might not prove fatal; but for a week past it had made terrible strides; attacks of suffocation, beginning at intervals of fifteen minutes, succeeded one another more rapidly, and sickness occurred constantly. The general's two nephews were with him, never leaving his bedside for a moment,

lavishing every possible care on him, and as they were both men, he did not attempt to hide from them his serious condition.

"I can feel," he said, "some destroying power at work within me; I am fighting against it, but it is too strong for me, and will conquer my efforts."

When the final hour approached, he felt the need of more air, although it was November, and he longed for the comforting rays of the pale winter sunshine. His nephews placed him on a couch in front of the window, but he could not manage to sit up for more than a moment.

"My lads," he said to his nephews, "my dear lads, carry me back to my bed, and with God be the final issue."

He had scarcely spoken the words before God freed his pure and loyal spirit from the body in which it was confined. I went home to my mother utterly miserable. Obscure as I was, I felt that the great man who had just passed away had a right to have expected some return from the unknown youth whose career in life he had really started. So I wrote the piece of poetry of which I have already quoted a stanza. They were not my first lines,--God pardon me the others,--but they were the first in which, however old and defective the form, appeared something that resembled an idea. Of some two hundred and fifty to three hundred lines, only that one stanza, happily, has remained in my memory. I had this ode printed--at my own expense, of course. It cost my poor mother two or three hundred francs; still, neither of us regretted it. All the poems that were written on this occasion were collected under the title *Couronne poétique du General Foy*, and they made a volume in themselves.

The most remarkable verses in the whole volume were by a beautiful young girl of seventeen or eighteen, called Delphine Gay, who had just become known by a volume of *Essais poétiques.* This is the elegy which

the death of General Foy inspired her to write; it was quoted in all the newspapers of the day and was immensely popular:--

"Pleurez, Français, pleurez! la patrie est en deuil; Pleurez le défenseur que la mort vous enlève; Et vous, nobles guerriers, sur son muet cercueil Disputez-vous l'honneur de déposer son glaive!

Vous ne l'entendrez plus, l'orateur redouté Dont l'injure jamais ne souilla l'éloquence; Celui qui, de nos rois respectant la puissance, En fidèle sujet parla de liberté: Le ciel, lui décernant la sainte récompense, A commencé trop tôt son immortalité!

Son bras libérateur dans la tombe est esclave; Son front pur s'est glacé sous le laurier vainqueur, Et le signe sacré, cette étoile du brave, Ne sent plus palpiter son cœur.

Hier, quand de ses jours la source fut tarie, La France, en le voyant sur sa couche étendu, Implorait un accent de cette voix chérie ... Hélas! au cri plaintif jeté par la patrie C'est la première fois qu'il n'a pas répondu!"

General Foy's funeral took place on 30 November. The body was carried from his house to the church of Notre-Dame de Lorette; and thirty thousand persons followed it, in spite of a pouring rain which fell unceasingly from noon until four o'clock in the afternoon, and hundreds of thousands of spectators lined the roadway. The livery of the Duc d'Orléans could be distinguished among the mourning carriages which formed the procession. The day after the funeral the following song, directed against the prince who had just given a public expression of his appreciation of the talent and character of the noble general and illustrious patriot, could be heard in every street of Paris:--

AIR--*Tous les bourgeois de Châtres*

"Bon Dieu! quelle cohue! Quel attroupement noir! Il tient toute la rue Aussi loin qu'on peut voir. Est-ce pompe funèbre ou pompe triomphale?

Est-il mort quelque gros richard? Car j'aperçois là-bas le char D'une Altesse Royale.

Est-ce un songe civique? Est-ce un de ses héros Qu'ainsi la république Mène au champ du repos? Un déluge nouveau fond sur la capitale; On ferait rentrer un canard! Dehors pourquoi voit-on le char D'une Altesse Royale?

Appuyé sur sa canne, Un vieil et bon bourgeois Me regarde, ricane, Et me dit à mi-voix: Un carbonaro mort cause tout ce scandale; Tout frère a son billet de part; C'est pourquoi nous voyons le char D'une Altesse Royale.

'Le défunt qu'on révère, C'est Foy l'homme de bien, C'est Foy l'homme de guerre, C'est Foy le citoyen. Jamais à sa vertu, vertu ne fut égale! Moi, je n'en crois rien pour ma part; Mais, ici, j'aime à voir le char D'une Altesse Royale.

'Ce Foy, d'après nature, Ce député fameux, Fut un soldat parjure, Un Français factieux. Aux vertus de Berton, la sienne fut égale; Ce n'est pas l'effet du hasard, Si nous voyons ici le char D'une Altesse Royale.

'Sortis de leurs repaires, Au tricolor signal, Les amis et les frères Suivent leur général. De la France c'est là l'élite libérale; Qu'ils sont bien près du corbillard! Qu'ils sont bien tous autour du char D'une Altesse Royale!

'Philippe de ton père Ne te souvient-il pas? Dans la même carrière Tu marches sur ses pas. Tu crois mener, tu suis la horde libérale; Elle rit sous ce corbillard, En voyant derrière son char Ton Altesse Royale.'"

Although this petty insult was anonymous, the quarter whence it came was guessed, especially as a hundred thousand copies were printed and distributed gratis. Only Government-endowed poets could produce such doggerel; only works that cannot be sold are printed by the hundred thousand. Let us drop this wretched side of the affair. There was a great

and noble and magnificent side to it when it was noised abroad that General Foy had died without being able to bequeath his wife anything save his renowned name: a subscription was started which, in three months' time, produced a million [francs].

In the course of one year a Government and a people had each shown that rare article, a fine sense of gratitude: the American Government had voted a million to la Fayette, and the French people had raised a million for the widow and children of General Foy.

Towards the beginning of the year, the death had taken place of a man who had contributed as much to the emancipation of France by his pen, as General Foy had by his speeches. About ten o'clock on the morning of 11 April, Paul-Louis Courier de Méré was found, assassinated within three-quarters of a league of his country residence, in the wood of Larçay. He had been killed by a gun or pistol shot, which had entered his right thigh low down; the weapon had been loaded with three small balls, one of which remained in the body, and the other two had gone through and out again. The wad was found by the side of the shot inside the body, showing that the victim had been killed at close quarters; his clothes, too, were singed round the wounded part. Three people were arrested, Symphorien and Pierre Dubois, carters, who both pleaded, and proved, an alibi and were discharged; and Louis Frémont, whom the jury acquitted. So Paul-Louis Courier, the famous savant, the precursor of M. de Cormenin, a pre-eminently intellectual man, was murdered without his assassinator being found out. The Liberal party lost in Courier one of their hardiest champions; he did for the pamphlet what Béranger did for the chanson.

But the death that produced the profoundest and most stirring sensation was that of the Emperor Alexander, which was to influence not only the affairs of France, but the fate of the whole world. When I was a little child, I narrowly escaped being run over at Villers-Cotterets by a small

kibitz, driven by a coachman who was bending over the three horses he was urging forward at a great pace, by the use of a short whip. This coachman wore a leather cap and a green uniform, he had a budding beard, gold rings in his ears, and his face was spotted with freckles. He was driving two officers dressed almost alike, wearing a star, two or three crosses and two enormous epaulettes. One of these two officers was a species of Kalmouk, hideous in countenance, rough in manner, noisy of voice; he swore in French at the top of his voice, and seemed to be particularly well acquainted with our language, so far as its coarse slang expressions were concerned. The other was a handsome man of thirty-three or thirty-four, who looked as gentle and as polished, as his companion seemed vulgar and ill-bred. His hair was golden blond, and although he looked strong and healthy, a sad sweet smile played about his lips whenever he corrected his foul-mouthed companion.

He was the Emperor Alexander: according to Napoleon, the most beautiful and the most treacherous of Greeks. His companion was the Grand-Duke Constantine, and their driver was the Grand-Duke Michel. A strange trio it was, an almost grotesque vision, that passed before my eyes and impressed itself so vividly on my memory that I can see it pass before me to-day, thirty-seven years after--the low carriage drawn by its three horses, the driver and his two companions. Well, the possessor of the gentle and melancholy face, who lived longest in my memory of those three men, was the first to die. Napoleon had done his utmost at Erfürt to make not merely an ally of this man, but a brother. They had called each other Charlemagne and Constantine, and Napoleon had offered Alexander the Empire of the East on condition he would leave him in peaceful possession of the Empire of the West. For the emperor had been impressed with one dominant idea during his reign--he had comprehended that our natural ally against our natural enemy England, was Russia. And of a truth, I beg my readers to ponder the question well, instead of accepting hackneyed political traditions that have been handed

on ready-made: alliances between nations become firm on account of *difference of interests* and not because of *similarity of principles.* Now, of what consequence was it that England proclaimed similar principles to those of France, if she had the same interests throughout the world? What matters it that Russia has different principles so long as her interests are different from ours? Look back over a century, and see how England has increased in power; and you will find that she has robbed us, her neighbouring country and ally, of all she could lay her hands on. Look back over a century of Russian growth and you will see that she has not touched anything belonging to us. Reckon up the colonies of the one and consider the limits of the other. England, who a century ago possessed only five factories in India--Bombay, Singapore, Madras, Calcutta and Chandernagor; who possessed only Newfoundland, in North America, and that strip of coast-line which extends like a fringe from Arcadia to Florida; who possessed only the Lucaya Isles among the Bahamas, the Barbadoes among the Lesser Antilles and Jamaica in the Gulf of Mexico; whose only station in the equinoctial portion of the Atlantic Ocean was St. Helena, of unhappy memory; to-day, like a gigantic sea-spider, has stretched out her web over the five parts of the globe. In Europe she possesses Ireland, Malta, Heligoland and Gibraltar;--in Asia, the town of Aden, which commands the Red Sea, as Gibraltar the Mediterranean; Ceylon, that great peninsula of India, Nepal, Lahore, the Sind, Baluchistan and Kabul; the Singapore Isles, Poulo-Penang and Sumatra; that is to say, a total of 122,333 square leagues of territory, supporting 723,000,000 of men. Without counting, in Africa, Bathurst, the Isles of Léon, Sierra-Leone, a portion of the coast of Guinea, Fernando-Po, Ascension Isle, and St. Helena, which has already been mentioned; Cape Colony, Natal, Mauritius, Rodriguez, the Seychelles, Socotra; in America, Canada, the whole of the northern continent from the Bank of Newfoundland to the mouth of the Mackenzie River; nearly the whole of the Antilles; Trinidad, part of Guiana, Falkland Isles, Belize, Tuathan and the Bermudas; in the Pacific, half of Australia, Van-Diemen's Land, New

Zealand, Norfolk Island, Hawaii, and the general protectorate of the Polynesian Isles. She foresaw everything and is ready for everything. Perhaps one day the isthmus of Panama will be cut through; if so, she has Belize ready on the spot. Perhaps the isthmus of Suez will also be opened up; if so, she has Aden as sentry on guard. The passage from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean will belong to her, and the passage from the Gulf of Mexico to the immense Pacific Ocean. In her Admiralty safes she will hold the keys of India and of the Pacific, as she already does those of the Mediterranean. But this is not all. Through her title of protectress of the Ionian Isles, she holds the entrance to and exit from the Adriatic and the Ægean Seas; she has placed her foot on the territory of the ancient Epirotes and the modern Albanians. When Ireland refuses to lend her her peasantry and Scotland her Highlanders, when the slave-markets of men kept by German princes shall be closed to her, she will draw her recruits from warlike tribes, she will have her Arnautes, like the Viceroy of Egypt, or like the Pacha of Acre and of Tripoli. She will have a squadron at Corfu which will be able to reach the Dardanelles in a few days; she will have at Cephalonia an army which will be able to reach the summit of the Balkans in a week. Then, when she has destroyed our influence at Constantinople, she will do her utmost to supersede Russian influence in Greece, and she will only need a few warships to destroy the whole of Austria's commercial seaboard. That is what England has been doing; and you can see with what powerful allies she has increased her strength--Canada, India, the Antilles and Mauritius;--you can see how she has complete control of the Mediterranean, which Napoleon called a *French lake* and which was to have no other masters than ourselves; you can see how England has snatched from us piecemeal our protectorate over the Holy Land, Egypt and Tunis, envying us our possession of Algiers, which we bought with blood and treasure and which she managed to cheat us of twenty years ago.

Now let us pass on to Russia, and see what a foreign country it is compared with our own. A hundred years ago, Russia extended from Kiev to the island of St. Lawrence, from the great Ural Mountains to the Gulf of Yenisei, and possibly those are in the right who think that it was with a view to setting a bound to her extension that Behring discovered the Straits which bear his name.

Russia was not to be kept back and has not stopped there--she has broken her ancient limit of Kiev. The Scandinavian serpent which enfolded two-thirds of the globe has expanded: it has opened its jaws to devour Prussia;--in the West, its jaws touch the Vistula on the one side, and on the other the Gulf of Bothnia. In the East, in one of its worm-like expansions, it has leapt across the Behring Straits and has come to a full stop only upon meeting the domains of England. Divided from the other extremity of the world, at the foot of Mt. Saint-Elias and the Blackburn Mountains, as though a barrier mounted up behind it, it bears sway to-day over the whole of that indented coast-line which, by way of an ultimate limit to the surface of the globe, fringes the Arctic Ocean from the Piasina river to the Bear Isles; from Lake Piasina to Holy Cape. Thus, in a century, Russia has acquired Finland, Abo, Viborg, Esthonia, Livonia, Riga, Reval and a part of Lapland from Sweden;--Kurland and Samogitia from Germany;--Lithuania, Volhynia, a part of Galicia, Mohileff, Vitebsk, Polotsk, Minsk, Bialystok, Kamenetz, Tarnopol, Vilna, Grodno, Warsaw, from Poland;--part of Little Tartary, the Crimea, Bessarabia, the coast of the Black Sea, the protectorate of Servia, of Moldavia and of Wallachia, from Turkey;--Georgia, Tiflis, Erivan and a part of Circassia from Persia;--the Aleutian Isles and the north-west part of the northern continent from the St. Lawrence archipelago, from America. From the other side of the Black Sea, she watches Turkey, whom she is ever ready to invade, as soon as France and England permit her. Then if, as seems probable, she some day annexes Sweden, she can close the Straits of Sund on the west and the Dardanelles on the east, and

no one can then enter without her leave the Black Sea or the Baltic, those two great mirrors in which are reflected already the towers of Odessa and of St. Petersburg. Her greatest length extends 3800 leagues, and her greatest width is 1400 leagues. In all that extent of territory she has not one inch of land once ours. She has 70,000,000 inhabitants and not one single soul ever belonged to us.

On 24 June 1807, Lariboissière, general of artillery, had a raft constructed on the Niemen and placed a pavilion upon it. On the 25th, at one in the afternoon, the Emperor Napoleon, with the Grand-Duke de Berg, Murat, Marshals Berthier and Bessières, General Duroc, and Caulaincourt the grand equerry, crossed from the left bank of the river to visit this pavilion, prepared for him. The Emperor Alexander set out at the same time from the right bank, accompanied by the Grand-Duke Constantine, Benigsen, General-in-chief Prince Labanof, General Ouvarov and Count de Liéven, general aide-de-camp. The two boats both reached the raft at the same time, and thus two emperors stepped on the floating island, confronted one another, clasped hands with each other and embraced.

This meeting was the prelude to the peace of Tilsit: and the peace of Tilsit was meant to destroy England. First of all, by the Berlin decree concerning the Continental blockade, England had been placed in the dock before a European tribunal. In the North Seas, Russia, Denmark and Holland, and in the Mediterranean, France and Spain, had closed their ports to her, and had solemnly engaged to hold no commerce with her.

There were therefore only Portugal on the Atlantic Ocean and Sweden on the Baltic open to her.

By a treaty dated 27 October 1807, Napoleon decided that the House of Braganza had ceased to reign, and on 27 September 1808, Alexander determined to go to war against Gustavus IV. But this was not all. Upon

that raft, and in that pavilion, on the Niemen, a much more terrible scheme was arranged.

"It is through India that England must be struck down," Bonaparte had said when he was inducing the Directory to begin the Egyptian campaign. And, from Alexandria, he had despatched a messenger to Tippoo-Sahib, to encourage him to take up arms. But the messenger did not get beyond Aden: the throne of Mysore had fallen and Tippoo-Sahib was dead. From that moment, the conquest of India, which had been one of Bonaparte's dreams, became the rooted purpose of Napoleon.

Why had he made his peace with Alexander? Why had he embraced him on the Niemen? Why had he addressed him as Constantine? Why had he offered him the Empire of the East? In order to gain him as a sure ally, so that, supported on the alliance, he could conquer India. What was to hinder Napoleon from doing what Alexander had done, two thousand two hundred years before his time? It would be ridiculously easy, as you will perceive! Thirty-five thousand Russians could embark on the Volga, descend the river as far as Astrakan, sail down the Caspian Sea and land at Astrabad. Thirty-five thousand French could descend the Danube to the Black Sea; there, they could embark, and at the extreme end of the Sea of Azov land on the banks of the Don; they could ascend the river for nearly a hundred leagues, cross the twelve or fourteen leagues that separated the two rivers, the Don and the Volga, at the point of their nearest approach, then sail down the latter river as far as Astrakan, and at Astrakan embark to join the Russians at Astrabad. Seventy thousand men would meet in the heart of Persia before England was aware of their movements. At Astrabad, they would be exactly a hundred and fifty leagues off the kingdom of Kabul, and it would only take them twelve days to reach India; a dozen days would be sufficient to reach Herat from Astrabad by way of the fertile valley of Herio Rud.

From Herat to Kandahar there were a hundred leagues of splendid road; from Kandahar to Ghizni fifty leagues; from Ghizni to Attock, sixty; and the two armies would be on the Indus, a river with a flow of about a league an hour, with any number of fords, never more than ten to fifteen feet deep, between Attock and Dera-Ismail-Khan. Moreover, it was the route followed by all previous Indian invaders, from the year 1000 to 1729--from Mahmoud de Ghizni to Nadir-Shah. Mahmoud de Ghizni alone had invaded India seven times between the years 1000 and 1021. In his sixth expedition, in three months he had penetrated from his capital at Ghizni, to Chanaud, a town situated a hundred miles south-west of Delhi; in the seventh, he penetrated as far as the centre of Gujarat and razed the temple of Somnath. Then, in 1184, came Mahomet Gouri, who marched upon Delhi by the same route, *viâ* Attock and Lahore, seized the town and substituted his dynasty for that of Mahmoud de Ghizni. Then, in 1396, came Timur the lame, known commonly as Tamerlane. He set forth from Samarcand, crossed the river Amou, leaving Balkh on his right, descended Kabul by the defile of Andesab, followed the river banks until he reached Attock, where he crossed it and invaded the Punjaub, seizing Delhi, which he put to fire and sword, and, the next year, after fourteen months' campaign, returned to Tartary. Then came Baber in 1505, who again crossed the Indus, established himself at Lahore, and from Lahore attacked Delhi, which he took, founding the Mongolian dynasty there. Finally, in 1739, Nadir-Shah descended from Persia upon Kabul, and, following the same route to Lahore, took possession of Delhi, which he pillaged for three days. It would probably be at Delhi that the two combined armies of Russia and France would meet the Anglo-Indian forces. When Napoleon and Alexander had demolished that army, they would march next upon Bombay, rather than on Calcutta, which is only a commercial centre; the destruction of Bombay would be far more damaging to England than that of Calcutta, since it is through Bombay that England communicates with the Red Sea and Europe. If Bombay were taken, the head of the serpent would be

crushed; there would only be Madras left, with its poor fortification, and Calcutta with its fortress, which, without being able to support them, would need fifteen thousand men to defend it.

England's power in India would be annihilated, and Russia would succeed her: Alexander would take as his share, Turkey in Europe, Turkey in Asia, Persia and India; while we should take Holland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, the whole of the African seaboard from Tunis to Cairo, the Red Sea with its Christian colonies and Syria as far as the Persian Gulf.

I need hardly add that Malta, the Ionian Isles and Greece, to the Dardanelles, would also be yielded up to us. And then the Mediterranean would be truly a *French lake*, by means of which we should share the commerce of India with our sister Russia.

Had Alexander but kept his promise, instead of betraying his ally, this dream would have become a reality.

So it will be seen that there was another reason for the war with Russia, besides the refusal of the hand of Princess Olga, which everyone persists in thinking the sole cause. Alexander conquered, he would be compelled by force to do what he had refused to do out of goodwill. But God saw otherwise.

BOOK I — CHAPTER IX

CHAPTER IX

The Emperor Alexander--Letter from Czar Nicolas to Karamsine--History after the style of Suetonius and Saint-Simon--Catherine and Potemkin--Madame Braniska--The cost of the imperial cab-drive--A ball at M. de Caulaincourt's--The man with the pipe--The emperor's boatman and coachman

We will now devote a few words to the emperor who had failed Napoleon in his lofty mission of sharing the world, and to the Grand-Duke Constantine, whom the whole of Europe, in ignorance of the family secret we are about to relate, looked upon as his successor.

Russian history is less known than that of other countries, not because it is not worth being known, but because no one dare write it. One man only, Karamsine, received that mission, but he died before he had accomplished his task, on 3 June 1826, in the palace of the Taurida, where the emperor had lodged him.

Three weeks before his death, the Emperor Nicolas, who had been six months on the throne, wrote him the following letter, which might very well serve as an example to certain heads of Governments, who flatter themselves that their ideas are more liberal than, say they, are those of the Czar of All the Russias:--

"CZARKOSJELO, 25 *May* 1826

"NICOLAI-MIKAÏLOVITCH,--As your failing health makes it necessary for you to leave your native country for a time to seek a warmer climate, it gives me much pleasure to express to you, on this occasion, the earnest hope that you will soon return among us with

renewed strength, still to serve the interests and the honour of your country as you have hitherto done. I have much pleasure in bearing witness, on behalf of the late Emperor, who was aware of your noble and disinterested devotion to his person, on my own behalf and in the name of all Russia, to our grateful recognition of your services both as citizen and author. The Emperor Alexander said to you, 'The Russian people deserves to know its history'; and the history you have written is worthy of the Russian people.

"I now fulfil the intention which my brother had not time to carry out. The accompanying paper will assure you of my goodwill; it is but an act of justice, so far as I am concerned, but I also regard it in the light of a sacred legacy deputed me by the Emperor Alexander.

"I trust your travels will be beneficial to you, and give you ample strength to finish the principal work of your life."

This letter might have been signed by François I., Louis XIV. or Napoleon, but it was simply signed "Nicolas." With it was a ukase, informing the Minister of Finance that His Imperial Majesty had granted a pension of five thousand roubles to M. de Karamsine, to be continued to his wife and to his children; the sons were to enjoy the pension until they were old enough to enter the army, the daughters till they married.

Karamsine died before he could finish his history; but, had it been finished, it would only have informed us of the general facts and great events connected with the Russian Empire, and it would not have given us any details of the kind we are about to relate.

There are two ways of writing history: one, after the fashion of Tacitus, the other after that of Suetonius; one like Voltaire, the other like Saint-Simon. Tacitus is magnificent, but we find Suetonius more amusing. Voltaire is limpidly clear, but Saint-Simon is a far more picturesque writer.

We will now write a few pages of Russian history as Suetonius wrote Roman history and as Saint-Simon wrote French history. The reader, of course, knows Catherine II. by name?--she whom Voltaire called the Semiramis of the North; who gave pensions to our literary men when Louis XV. proscribed them or left them to die of hunger even when he had not proscribed them.

Catherine II. was thirty-three years of age; she was beautiful, benevolent and pious; up to that age she had been considered faithful to her husband, Peter III., when, all at once, she learnt that the emperor intended to repudiate her, in order to marry Countess Vorontsov, and as an excuse for this repudiation he proposed to declare that the birth of Paul-Petrovitch had been illegitimate. She quickly perceived that it was a matter of life and death for her, and of the throne for her son; there was a game to be played, and he who was first in the field would win. The tidings were announced to her at ten one night. By eleven, she had left the castle of Peterhof, where she lived, and, as she did not wish her departure to be known by ordering her carriage to be made ready, she stopped a peasant's cart and mounted beside him, the carter imagining he was merely taking up a country woman. She reached St. Petersburg just as day was beginning to dawn. Directly she arrived, she ordered out the regiments in the garrison there without revealing for what object, got together the few friends upon whom she believed she could rely, and went on parade with them before the assembled soldiers. She rode on horseback up and down the lines, addressed the officers, invoking their chivalry as men of honour and appealing to their loyalty as soldiers; then she seized hold of a sword, drew it from its scabbard, flung the scabbard far from her, and, fearing lest the sword might drop out of her unaccustomed hands, asked for a sword-knot to tie it to her wrist. A young officer of twenty-eight heard his sovereign's request through the din of the shouts of enthusiasm raised by the regiments, broke through the ranks, ran up to her side offering her his sword-knot; then, when

Catherine had accepted his offer with the gracious smile of a woman bent on reigning as empress, a queen in quest of a throne, the young officer turned aside to fall back in his place; but his horse, which was one day to share in his master's good fortune, refused to turn aside; it reared and danced about, and, being used to cavalry manœuvres, persisted in ranging itself by the side of the empress's horse. Catherine, who was as superstitious as all are who stake their fortunes upon the cast of a die, fancied she augured from the horse's persistency that its rider would become one of her most powerful defenders; and she promoted him. A week later, after Peter III., who had been made prisoner by the very person whom he thought to make captive, had resigned into Catherine's hands the crown which he had intended to snatch from her, the empress sent for the young officer from the *place du Sénat*, made him one of her suite and appointed him groom of the chamber in her palace. This young man's name was Potemkin. From that day, without hindering in the least the reign of the twelve Cæsars, as the new régime was dubbed, Potemkin became the favourite of the empress, and her partiality for him continued to increase.

Many, hoping to replace him, sought to undermine his position and ruined themselves. A young Servian, called Lovitz, himself a protégé of Potemkin, imagined he had succeeded. He had been placed near the empress by his patron, and resolved to take advantage of his protector's absence to ruin him. How did he bring it about? That must remain one of the secrets of the closet which the walls of the palace of the Hermitage has not revealed to us. It is only known that Potemkin was sent for to the palace; that, upon entering his apartments, he was told he was utterly disgraced, that he was exiled, and he was threatened with death if he did not obey. He went at once, travel-stained as he was after his journey, to the empress's rooms. A young orderly officer tried to bar his entrance, but Potemkin took him round the hips, lifted him up, flung him across the

chamber, entered the empress's room and, in ten minutes' time, came out with a paper in his hand.

"Here, monsieur," he said to the young officer, who was still considerably knocked about by the treatment he had just received, "this is the brevet of a captaincy that Her Majesty has been graciously pleased to sign for you."

That same day, Lovitz was exiled to the town of Schaklov, which was made into a principality for him.

From time to time Potemkin dreamt of the duchy of Courland and the throne of Poland; but, upon further reflection, he saw that he did not want either, for whether the crown were ducal or regal, he knew he could not be more powerful nor more fortunate than he was in his present position. Did not there pass through his hands every hour, to play with as a cowboy plays with pebbles, more diamonds, rubies and emeralds than any one crown could contain? Had he not couriers at his beck and call to fetch him sturgeon from the Volga, water melons from Astrakan, grapes from the Crimea, and most beautiful flowers from whatever quarter they could be found? Did he not give his sovereign every New Year's Day a plate of cherries that cost him ten thousand roubles?

The Prince de Ligne (grandfather of the prince of that name, with whom we are acquainted), author of the charming memoirs which bear his name, and of the most intellectually refined letters that have probably ever been penned, knew Potemkin, and said of him--

"That man was a compound of colossal, romantic and barbaric ideas."

The Prince de Ligne was right. For thirty years, not a single action, good or bad, was done in Russia save through his instrumentality: angel or demon, he created or destroyed as the caprice took him; he set everything at sixes and sevens, but he inspired life into everything; nothing went on

without him; when he reappeared everything else disappeared and, before his presence, vanished into Limbo.

One day he conceived the notion of building a palace for Catherine; she had just conquered Taurida, and this palace was to be a monument in memory of that conquest. In three months' time, the palace was raised in Catherine's capital, without Catherine knowing anything about it; then, one evening, Potemkin invited the empress to a night-fête which he desired to give in her honour, he said, in the palace that extended along the left bank of the Neva; and there, amidst fine trees, brilliantly lighted up, and shining with marble, she found the fairy palace that seemed to have sprung up at one wave of a wand, filled with statues, magnificently furnished, its lakes abounding in gold and silver and azure fishes.

Everything connected with this man was mysterious, his death as well as his life, his unexpected end just as his undreamt of beginning. He had passed a year in St. Petersburg in fêtes and orgies of all kinds, had succeeded in advancing Russia's boundaries as far as the Caucasus, and was thinking that, this new frontier line now made, he had done enough for his and Catherine's glory. Suddenly, he learnt that old Repnin had taken advantage of his absence to defeat the Turks, and, forcing them to demand peace, had accomplished more in two months than he had in three years. So there was then no more rest for the favourite, but more glory ahead for the general. He was ill, but that did not matter! He would wrestle with his disease and slay it. He set out, crossed Jassy and reached Otchakoff, where he halted for a night's rest; next day, at dawn, he resumed his journey; but, after traversing several versts, the atmosphere inside his carriage stifled him, and he had it stopped: his cloak was spread on the bank of a ditch, and he lay down on it, panting for breath; he died in his niece's arms before a quarter of an hour had elapsed! I knew his niece; I have heard her relate the details of her uncle's death as though it had only just happened. She was seventy when I knew her. Her name was Madame Braniska, and she lived at Odessa. She was very

wealthy, being worth between sixty and a hundred millions, possibly. She possessed some of the finest sapphires, pearls, rubies and diamonds in the world. How had she begun such a collection of precious gems? She would relate--for she dearly loved talking about anything that concerned her uncle--that Potemkin, as we have said, liked nothing better than playing with precious stones which he poured in cascades from hand to hand; those which, escaping from the main stream of the cataract, dropped to the ground, fell to the spoilt child, who made a collection of them. Often, when he composed himself to rest, on an ottoman, a divan or a couch, Potemkin would push his arms under the cushion, and then, when he fell asleep, his hands would relax and a handful of pearls dropped out, which he would forget to pick up when he awoke. His niece knew this, and, either during his sleep or after he awoke, she used to raise the cushion and carry off the treasures. What did it matter to Potemkin? His pockets were full of other precious stones! And, when his pockets were empty, had he not casks full, like the sovereigns of Samarcand, Bagdad and of Bassora, mentioned in the *Thousand and One Nights*?

This Madame Braniska was a singular character, with her sixty to a hundred millions. She often had fits of avarice, interspersed with bursts of generosity--very unusual traits to find combined in one person. For instance, she would send her son, who lived either at Moscow or St. Petersburg, 500,000 francs for a New Year's gift, and add a postscript to the letter in closing it, saying--

"I have a dreadful cold; send me some jujubes, but wait till you see a convenient opportunity; the carriage from Moscow and Odessa is ruinous!"

Catherine nearly died when she heard of Potemkin's death; those two great hearts and lives seemed to beat in perfect unison. She fainted away three times on receipt of the fatal news, mourned him for long and ever regretted him.

Paul-Petrovitch, for whom she had saved the crown when she took it away from Peter III., became the father of that rich posterity of which I had seen a specimen in the kibitz driven by the Grand Duke Michael, besides the emperor reigning to-day.

At that period no one for a moment thought he would ever reign. Ranging over her fine and numerous company of descendants, the eyes of Catherine were most constantly fixed on the two eldest, and by their very names--one was called Alexander and the other Constantine--she seemed to have divided the world in advance between them. This idea had, indeed, been so firmly rooted in her mind, that she had them painted, while they were both infants, one cutting the Gordian knot, the other carrying the Roman standard. She carried the idea even farther, and had them educated in conformity with the same two great ideas. Constantine, whom she destined for the Empire of the East, had only Greek nurses and tutors, whilst Alexander, destined to rule the Western Empire, was surrounded by English, Germans and French. Nothing could have been more diametrically different than the methods employed in the education of the august pupils. Whilst Alexander, aged twelve, said to Graft, his professor in experimental physics, who was telling him that light was a continual emanation from the sun, "That cannot be true, or the sun would grow smaller every day," Constantine said to his special tutor, Saken, who was endeavouring to get him to learn to read, "No, I do not want to learn to read; you are everlastingly reading, and it only makes you more and more stupid."

We shall see later how mistaken the empress's forecasts were with regard to Constantine; but first we will devote a little attention to the Emperor Alexander.

He was much beloved both by the people and the nobles; loved on account of his own character, and perhaps even more so because of the fear with which Constantine was regarded. There are hosts of anecdotes

told in his praise, doing honour to his kindliness, his courage and his ability. Once, when he was walking on foot, as was his custom, seeing threatenings of rain, he hailed a drovsky to take him to the imperial palace; on arrival, the emperor searched in his pockets and saw he had no money.

"Wait," he said to the driver; "I will have your fare sent out to you."

"Oh yes, I know that tale," growled the man.

"What are you saying?" demanded the emperor.

"I am saying that I can't rely on your promises."

"Why not?" asked Alexander.

"Oh, I know what I am talking about," said the driver.

"Well, let me hear all about it."

"I say that there are too many persons whom I take up to houses with double doors, who go inside without paying me their fares, too many debtors whom I never see again."

"What! even at the emperor's palace?"

"Oh, there are more there than anywhere else; you don't know what short memories great nobles have."

"But you should complain, and denounce the thieves, and have them taken up," said Alexander.

"I have a nobleman taken up! Your excellency surely knows that we poor devils have no power to do anything of the kind. If it were one of ourselves, it would be another matter and easy enough," added the driver, pointing to his long beard, "for they know how to get hold of us; but all you great nobles have your chins too smoothly shaven for that.... Good-night, there is nothing more to be said, unless your excellency will

please search your pockets once more, in case there is a trifle with which to pay me."

"No," said the emperor, "it would be useless ... but I have an idea."

"What is it?"

"You see this cloak--it is worth more than your fare, is it not?"

"Certainly! And if you excellency wishes to give it me without expecting the change ...?"

"No! keep it as a pledge and do not give it up till I send someone for it with your fare."

"All right, well and good; you are something like a reasonable gentleman, you are," replied the driver.

Five minutes later, the driver received a note for a hundred roubles, in exchange for the pledged cloak. The emperor had paid off the debts of those who came to see him as well as his own; but the driver made out he was still out of pocket.

During the time in which Napoleon and Alexander were on friendly terms, when he inclined towards him and smiled at the line,

"L'amitié d'un grand homme est un bienfait des dieux!"

the Emperor Alexander was one night at a ball, given by M. de Caulaincourt, the French Ambassador, and at midnight the host was informed that the house was on fire. The remembrance of the terrible accidents that had happened in a fire at the Prince of Schwartzenberg's ball was still in everybody's mind, so Caulaincourt's first fear when he received news of the fire was that there would be a panic and the same disastrous results would happen at his house. He therefore decided to make sure first himself how serious the danger was, so he placed an

aide-de-camp at every door with directions that no one should be allowed to go out, and he made his way up to the emperor.

"Sire, the house is on fire," he said in a whisper. "I am going myself to see how things are; it is important that no one should be told of the danger until we can ascertain the amount and nature of the peril. My aides-de-camp have received orders to prevent any person from going out, except your Majesty and their Imperial Highnesses the Grand-Dukes and Grand-Duchesses. If your Majesty therefore desires to withdraw, the way is clear.... But I may, perhaps, be permitted to suggest that no one will be so ready to take fright at the fire if they see your Majesty among them."

"Very good," said the emperor; "go, I will stay here."

M. de Caulaincourt went out and discovered that, as he had anticipated, the danger was not so grave as he had at first been given to understand. He went back to the ballroom, and found the emperor dancing a polonaise. They exchanged significant glances, and the emperor danced to the finish. When the dance was at an end, he asked Caulaincourt how matters stood.

"It is all right, sire," the ambassador replied; "the fire has been extinguished." And that was all.

It was not until the next day that the guests who had attended that magnificent fête learnt that, for a quarter of an hour, they had, as M. de Salvandy expressed it, been "dancing upon a volcano."

We have mentioned that the Emperor Alexander liked walking alone about the streets of St. Petersburg; he also indulged in the same habit when he travelled about. He was once journeying through Little Russia, when he reached a large village, and whilst the grooms were changing horses he jumped out of his carriage and told the postillions that he meant to walk on on foot for a while, therefore they need not hurry after him.

Then, alone, clad simply in a military cloak, and divested of all his insignia, he began his walk. When he got to the end of the village, he found there were two roads and did not know which he ought to take, so he went up to a man who was dressed in a military cloak very similar to his own. The man was sitting smoking a pipe at his front door.

"My friend," inquired the emperor, "which of those two roads ought I to take to get to---?"

At this question, the man with the pipe eyed the interrogator from head to foot and, astounded that such an ordinary looking traveller should dare to speak with that familiarity to a man of his importance (especially in Russia, where differences in rank place a great gulf between superiors and inferiors), he went on puffing at his pipe, and snapped out--

"The road to the right."

The emperor understood, and respected the reason for his haughty indignation.

"Forgive me, monsieur," he said, touching his cap, as he went up to the man with the pipe, "may I ask one more question ...?"

"What is it?"

"May I ask your rank in the army?"

"Guess it."

"Well ... perhaps Monsieur is a lieutenant?"

"Higher."

"A captain?"

"Higher still."

"Major?"

"Go on."

"Commandant of a battalion?"

"Yes, and I didn't gain it save by hard work!..."

The emperor bowed.

"And now," said the man with the pipe, persuaded that he was talking to an inferior, "who are you, my good man?"

"Guess," replied the emperor, in his turn.

"Lieutenant?"

"Higher."

"Captain?"

"Higher still."

"Major?"

"Go on."

"Commandant of a battalion?"

"Try again."

The questioner drew his pipe out of his mouth.

"Colonel?"

"You haven't got it yet."

The man stood up and assumed a more respectful attitude.

"Your excellency is a lieutenant-general, perhaps?"

"You are getting nearer."

"Then your Highness must be a field-marshal?"

"Have one more guess, Commandant."

"His Imperial Majesty!" exclaimed the stupefied questioner, letting his pipe fall and breaking it in pieces.

"Exactly so," Alexander replied, with a smile.

"Ah! sire," cried the officer, clasping his hands together, "I entreat your forgiveness!"

"Oh! what the deuce is there to forgive?" said Alexander. "I asked you to tell me the way and you told me. Thank you."

And the emperor, waving his hand to the poor stupefied commandant, took the road on his right and was soon caught up by his carriage.

On another occasion also, when he was travelling (for the life of Alexander the son of Paul was spent like that of Alexander the son of Philip, in perpetual journeyings), while crossing a lake in the department of Archangel, the emperor was overtaken by a violent gale. Alexander was of a melancholy temperament, and the melancholy grew upon him, so he would oftener than not travel quite alone. He was thus alone in a boat with only the boatman, and the waves of the lake, lashed by the tempest, rose high and threatened to swamp them.

"My friend," said the emperor to the boatman, who was fast losing his nerve under the weight of the responsibility that rested on him, "about eighteen hundred years ago Cæsar was placed in just such a position as we are, and he said with pride to his boatman, 'Do not be afraid, you are carrying Cæsar and his good luck!' I am not Cæsar; I believe more in God and have less faith in my luck than the conqueror of Pompey, but just listen to me: forget that I am the emperor, look upon me simply as a man like yourself, and try to save both of us."

At these words, which the Russian boatman no doubt understood much better than the pilot Opportunus understood Cæsar's injunctions, the brave fellow renewed his struggle, and by strenuous efforts managed to land the boat safely on the shore.

Unluckily, Alexander was not so fortunate in his coachman as he was with his boatman. When he was once travelling in the provinces bordering the Don, he was violently thrown out of his drovsky and his leg was injured. Being a slave to that discipline which he enforced on others, and which he made more efficacious by his own example, he insisted on continuing his journey in spite of his injuries, in order to arrive at his destination on the promised day. But fatigue and want of prompt attention caused blood-poisoning from the wound. Erysipelas set in in the leg, recurred again and again, confining the emperor to bed for weeks, and leaving him lame for months. He had a violent attack of the same complaint during the winter of 1824. He was living at Czarkosjelo, his favourite retreat, to which he became more and more attached, as it enabled him to give way to the deep melancholy which preyed upon his spirits. He had been out walking until late, forgetting the cold, so absorbed was he in his melancholy reflections, and when he reached home he was frozen; he ordered his meal to be sent up to his room, and that same night he was attacked by erysipelas, accompanied by a higher temperature than in any of his previous illnesses. The fever was so sharp that he became delirious in a few hours. They took the emperor in a closed sledge to St. Petersburg, and as soon as they got him there, they put him in the hands of the cleverest physicians. All these, except his own special surgeon, Dr. Wylie, were unanimously of opinion that his leg must be amputated. But Wylie took upon himself the sole responsibility of attending to the august patient, and once more managed to save his life. The emperor returned to Czarkosjelo almost before he had recovered from his illness; for all his other residences had become distasteful to him. There he was alone with the phantom of his solitary

grandeur--a phantom that necessarily terrified him. He only gave audience at special hours to those ministers who did his business for him; his life was more like a Trappist mourning over his sins than that of a great emperor with countless lives in his care.

Alexander rose at six in winter and at five in summer, dressed himself, went into his study, where he would find a fine cambric handkerchief folded and laid at the left of his desk, and a packet of ten freshly-cut quill pens at the right side of it. There the emperor would set himself to work, never using the same pen twice over if he were interrupted in his labours, though his pens were only used to sign his name; then, when he had finished his morning's budget and signed everything, he would go out into the park, where, no matter what rumours of conspiracy were abroad (and for two years I there had been no lack of these), he would always walk unattended, with no other guard than the palace sentinels.

About five o'clock he would return to the palace, dine alone, and retire to bed in his private rooms to the melancholy strains of music selected by himself, lulled to sleep in the same sad frame of mind in which he had passed his waking hours.

The empress accepted this physical and mental separation with a philosophy that was characteristic of her. Her gentle influence could be felt surrounding the emperor, without ever being perceived, and she seemed to watch over her beloved husband like an angel from heaven.

The winter and spring of 1824 passed in this manner; but, when summer came, the physicians unanimously declared that a voyage was necessary for the restoration of the emperor's health, advising the Crimea as the best climate to hasten his convalescence. And, as though he had a prevision that he was reaching the end of his life, Alexander made no plans for the coming year. He consented with profound indifference to everything that was decided for him. The empress was more alarmed by this condition of morbid acquiescence, than if he had been in a constant state of

irritability; she begged and obtained leave to accompany him; and, after a public service soliciting a blessing on his journey, attended by the whole of the imperial family, Alexander left St. Petersburg, driven by his faithful coachman Ivan, and followed by his surgeon Wylie, and by several orderly officers under the command of General Diebitch.

He left on 13 September at four in the morning, and the empress started on the 15th. Only his dead body was destined to return to the capital four months later.

BOOK I — CHAPTER X

CHAPTER X

Alexander leaves St. Petersburg--His presentiments of his death--The two stars seen at Taganrog--The emperor's illness--His last moments--How they learnt of his death in St. Petersburg--The Grand-Duke Constantine--His character and tastes--Why he renounced his right to the imperial throne--Jeannette Groudzenska

The departure of the emperor naturally meant an increase of work before he left, so that he was not able to write and bid his mother, the dowager-empress, adieu until four o'clock on the afternoon of 12 September. At four o'clock it suddenly became very dark, a great cloud overshadowing the light. The emperor called his valet.

"Fœdor," he said, "bring me lights."

The valet brought four candles; but it grew light again before the emperor had done writing, and the valet immediately entered to put them out.

"Sire," he asked, "shall I take away the lights?"

"Why so?" asked the emperor.

"Because we look on it as an ill omen to write by artificial light when it is daylight."

"What conclusion do you draw from that?"

"I, sire?... I do not infer anything from it."

"But I do. I understand. You think that people passing by, seeing the light inside, will imagine there has been a death in in the house."

"Exactly so, sire."

"Ah, well, take away the candles."

The emperor did not seem to take any notice of his valet's observations, but the incident remained in his mind.

As we have already noted, he left the city of St. Petersburg at four in the morning of 13 September, just as the sun began to rise.

He stopped his carriage, and stood looking back at the city of the Czar Peter, plunged in deep sadness, as though warned by some inward voice that he was looking upon it for the last time. The emperor had spent the previous night in prayer, both in the convent of Saint-Alexandre Nevsky and in the cathedral of Kasan. In the monastery he had an interview, lasting nearly an hour, with the monks and the metropolitan Seraphin. The latter related a story to the emperor of a monk of his convent who had voluntarily submitted himself to a life of the most scrupulous austerity by shutting himself up in a hollow place, scooped out of the thick walls of the convent, where he meant to pass all his remaining days. In spite of the lateness of the hour, the emperor asked to be taken to this monk's cell, and talked with him for nearly twenty minutes.

Before leaving St. Petersburg, Alexander wished to see his beloved Czarkosjelo once more. He mounted on horseback at the palace door and rode over all his favourite haunts, as though to bid them farewell. When Fœdor asked Alexander when he expected to return to the imperial palace, he pointed with his finger to an image of Christ and said--

"He alone knows!"

The emperor reached Taganrog towards the close of September. On 5 October the empress, who could only journey by short stages on account of her state of health, also arrived there. The emperor advanced a little ahead of the empress, and together they made a solemn entry into the town.

Why had the emperor taken a liking for Taganrog? It seemed inexplicable except on the grounds of that fatal destiny which compels men towards the place in which it is foreordained they are to die.

Taganrog is situated in the finest climate of the Crimea, in the midst of a fertile country and in a pleasant place at the entrance to the Sea of Azov, close to the mouths of the Don and the Volga; but the town itself contains nothing but a heap of tumbledown houses, of which about a sixth are built of brick or stone, whilst the remainder are really nothing but wooden huts smeared over with a mixture of clay and mud. The streets are certainly wide, but they are unpaved, and the soil is so powdery that, after the least shower of rain, one sinks in mud up to one's knees. Then, when the heat of the sun has dried up this damp marsh, the cattle and horses that pass by raise such clouds of dust that it is impossible in full daylight to distinguish a man from a beast of burden ten paces away. This dust penetrates everything; it gets through closed blinds, tightly fastened shutters and the most impenetrable curtains; it makes its way through clothing, no matter how thick it be, and fills the water with a kind of crust that can only be precipitated by boiling it with salts of tartar. The emperor alighted at the governor's house, but he went out first thing in the morning and did not return until dinner-time at two o'clock. At four, he took another long excursion, not returning until nightfall, neglecting all the precautions that the natives of those parts themselves take against the dangerous malarial fevers common along the entire coast-line; at night, he slept on a camp bedstead, his head resting on a leather pillow. Presentiments of his approaching end never left him. The very evening of his arrival at Taganrog, just as his valet was about to leave him for the night, he said to him--

"Fœdor, the candles that I ordered you to take out of my study at St. Petersburg constantly recur to my mind; before very long they will be burning for me."

During one night in the month of October several of the inhabitants of Taganrog saw, at two in the morning, above the house where the emperor was living, two stars which at first were a wide distance apart from one another, then approached each other and then again separated. This phenomenon was repeated three times. Then one of the stars gradually grew into a luminous ball of considerable dimensions, obliterating the other, and soon afterwards disappeared below the horizon and was no longer seen. In its fall, the bigger star left the smaller one behind in its place; but it, too, paled by degrees, and soon also disappeared. The superstitious interpreted the larger and more brilliant star to be the Emperor Alexander, and the other the empress; they augured from the portent that the emperor was soon to die, and that the empress was only to survive her husband for a few months.

Besides his daily excursions, the emperor would make others that lasted for days together, either in the country round the Don, or at Tcherkask or at Donetz. He was prepared to start for Astrakan, when Count Voronzov, Governor of Odessa, arrived to tell the emperor that discontent was increasing throughout the whole of the Crimea and would cause considerable trouble, if the emperor did not quell the insubordination, and calm the disquiet by his personal presence.

There was a distance of some three hundred leagues to be traversed; but what are three hundred leagues in Russia? Alexander promised the empress he would return within a month, and gave orders for his departure. He was impatient and irritable throughout the journey--an attitude of mind so at variance with his usual gentle melancholy that it surprised all around him; he complained that the horses did not go fast enough; of the badness of the roads, of the cold in the morning, the heat at noonday, the frost at night. Dr. Wylie advised the traveller to take precautions against the changes of temperature which he seemed to feel so much, but here the emperor's wayward mood showed itself: he rejected both cloaks and capes, apparently courting the very dangers his

friends advised him to guard against. Finally, one evening he caught cold, and a persistent cough developed into an intermittent fever, which, aggravated by the patient's obstinacy, had, by the time they reached Oridov, become a serious fever, which the doctor recognised as an attack of the same kind that had raged all autumn through from Taganrog to Sebastopol. They immediately turned back towards Taganrog, the emperor himself giving the order to retrace their journey. Whilst on the way back, the doctor urged upon his patient the necessity for taking prompt measures, for he knew the gravity of the nature of his illness. But the emperor objected.

"Leave me alone," he said. "Surely I know myself best what I need--I want rest, solitude and quiet.... Look after my nerves, doctor; it is they that are in such a deplorable state."

"Sire," replied Wylie, "kings are much more subject to nervous disorders than ordinary individuals."

"True," said Alexander in reply, "specially nowadays.... Ah! doctor, doctor," he continued, shaking his head, "I have ample reason for being unwell!"

In spite of the doctor's objections, Alexander would ride on horseback part of the way, until he felt compelled to return to his carriage, and he was so exhausted by the time he set foot in the governor's house at Taganrog that he fainted away.

Although the empress was herself dying of heart disease, she forgot her own sufferings, and rallied when she saw her husband's condition. When he was a little better, Alexander wrote to reassure his imperial mother, telling her that although he was ill, she need not be anxious; that he was able to take food and there was nothing serious to fear. This was on 18 November. On the 24th, the fever set in with increased vigour, and the erysipelas in the leg disappeared.

"See!" cried the emperor, when he saw what had occurred,--"this is the end ... I shall die as my sister died!"

But he still refused to take any medicines. As Dr. Wylie stood by his side that night, he exclaimed suddenly, as he turned towards the doctor--

"What a deed! What a deplorable act!"

What reminiscence was it that drew such a sorrowful exclamation from him? It can hardly be doubted that he was referring to the death of Paul, who was smothered in a room above his head and whose last groans he heard, without daring to go to his rescue.

On the 27th, the emperor at last gave himself into his doctor's hands, who at once applied leeches; this application gave him a little relief, but the fever soon returned worse than ever. They tried sinapisms, but could not reduce the temperature, and the patient realised then that it was time he prepared for his end. A confessor was brought to him at five in the morning.

"Father," Alexander said to him, as he held out his hand, "deal with me as an ordinary being and not as an emperor."

The priest drew close to his bedside, received the imperial confession and administered the sacraments to the noble invalid. Towards two o'clock the emperor's pains increased terribly.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, overcome by his sufferings. "My God! must kings suffer more when they come to die than other men?..."

During the night he became unconscious, and remained in a state of complete lethargy the whole of the next day. On the 29th he recovered consciousness, and faint hopes were raised. The empress watched by his bed, and noticed that he slept a little before dawn. He did not wake until nine the next morning, just as the sun shone out from behind some clouds

as brilliantly as on the finest summer day. As Alexander opened his eyes, he saw that he was flooded with sunlight.

"What beautiful weather!" he exclaimed, with that fervid joy at sight of the sun so often noticed in the dying.

Then, turning to the empress and kissing her hand, he said--

"Madam, you must be worn out with fatigue."

Then he relapsed into the same condition of torpor from which he had momentarily emerged. All hope of his recovery was given up on the 30th. Nevertheless, towards two o'clock in the morning, General Diébitch mentioned an old man, named Alexandrovitch, who had, he said, saved several Tartars from the same fever that had attacked the emperor. They sent for this old man at Dr. Wylie's instigation, and he came at eight. He looked at the emperor, shook his head and said--

"It is too late; besides, those I have cured did not suffer from that complaint."

And he left, taking with him the empress's last ray of hope. However, the emperor reopened his eyes towards half-past ten that morning, and all waited anxiously for him to speak. But he did not utter a word; he only took the empress's hand, kissed it and laid it on his heart. The empress remained bent over him in the position her husband's hand caused her to take, and at ten minutes to eleven the emperor died. The empress's face was so close to his that she felt him draw his last breath.

She uttered a terrible cry and fell on her knees in prayer; not even the doctor dared to approach the body, for she had made a sign to all around not to disturb her. Then, some minutes later, she rose in a calmer state of mind, closed the emperor's eyes, which had remained open, tied a handkerchief round his head to prevent his jaws from dropping, kissed his hands already as cold as ice, and, again falling on her knees, she

remained in prayer by the bedside until the doctors were obliged to ask her to withdraw into another room, while they made a post-mortem examination.

Whilst this sad operation proceeded, the widowed empress wrote to the dowager-empress:--

"Our angel is in heaven, while I still linger on earth.... Alas! who would ever have thought that I, weak and ill as I am, should have survived him?... Mother, I entreat you not to desert me, for I am absolutely alone in this world of sorrow!

"The face of our beloved dead has resumed its expression of gentle kindliness; the smile upon it assures me that he is happy, and that his eyes see better things than here below.... My only comfort in this irreparable loss is that I shall not long survive him!..."

And, indeed, the empress died six months later.

The letter was sent off by courier to St. Petersburg, where the emperor's illness was already known. He had himself written, on 17 November, to say that he had had to return to Taganrog on account of illness. On the 24th, the Empress Elisabeth had written to the Grand-Duchess Helena asking her to inform the Empress Marie that the emperor was going on well. On the 27th, however, General Diebitch had sent news that the emperor was suffering from an attack of yellow fever; and on 29 November the Empress Elisabeth again wrote to the dowager-empress to tell her of a temporary improvement in the emperor's condition. Although this improvement was so slight, the dowager-empress and the Grand-Dukes Nicolas and Michel gave orders for a *Te Deum* to be sung on 9 December in the great metropolitan cathedral of Kasan. The people flocked there joyfully, for the good news had been exaggerated for their sake. Towards the close of the service the Grand-Duke Nicolas was advised that a messenger from Taganrog was waiting for him in the

sacristy; he was the bearer of a despatch that had to be delivered only in person. The grand-duke rose and went into the sacristy, where he found the messenger, and received from his hands the letter we have already read. He did not even need to read the letter: its contents were revealed to him by the black seal.

The Grand-Duke Nicolas sent for the metropolitan and announced to him the melancholy tidings, charging him to break the news as gently as possible to the dowager-empress, as he felt he had not the courage to fulfil the cruel mission himself. He then returned and took his place by her who, in ignorance of the sad truth, was praying for the life of her dead son. The grand-duke had scarcely resumed his position by her side before the metropolitan re-entered the choir. He was a fine-looking old man, with a long white beard and hair that fell almost to his waist. At a sign from him, all the voices that were chanting hymns of thankful praise to Heaven ceased, and a death-like silence followed. Then, with the eyes of all upon him, he walked slowly and solemnly towards the altar, took down the massive silver crucifix and draped it with a black veil; then he advanced to the dowager-empress and gave her the black draped crucifix to kiss.

"My son is dead!" cried the empress; and she fell on her knees, even as, eighteen centuries before, at the foot of her Son's Cross, another Mother, the Queen of Heaven, whose name she bore, had fallen.

And in that way Russia learnt she had lost her emperor.

We promised we would relate the history of the strange self-sacrifice by which a man gave up an empire--a history all the more strange in that the empire was an absolute monarchy, and that he would then have succeeded to fifty-three millions of subjects, and to a territory which already covered a seventh part of the world, without reckoning future possibilities of expansion. This history is as follows:--

The reader knows what an Ukranian bear Constantine was, for ever growling, grumbling or roaring, whose countenance was no more like a human being's than the face of Kalmouk is like that of a man; he was as rough as his brother Alexander was courteous, as ugly as his brother Nicolas was handsome; a true son of Paul when he was in a bad temper. We have learnt his reply as a lad to his own tutor, who tried to make him learn to read--

"I do not want to learn to read; you are always reading, and you become more and more stupid every day."

It will be readily believed that a mind built in that fashion had no inclinations in the direction of learning. But in proportion as the young prince grew to detest his mental exercises, his love of military pursuits increased. Here he took after his father, Paul, who rose at five in the morning after his wedding-night, to control the manœuvres of a platoon of soldiers on guard near by. His military predilection led Constantine to spend all his time in soldierly exercises, on horseback, perfecting himself in the use of the lance, manœuvring his men, all of which accomplishments seemed to him far more useful than geometry, astronomy or botany. They only succeeded in making him learn French by means of telling him that the best books on military tactics were written in that language. Great was his delight when Paul had a rupture with France and when Souvarov was sent into Italy. The grand-duke was placed under command of an old marshal, a chief who exactly suited Constantine, since he was one of the old Russian stock, more savage, more brutal, more uncivilised, if that be possible, than his young pupil. Constantine took part in his victories on the Mincio, and in his defeats among the Alps; he watched him dig the grave in which he wished to be buried alive. The consequence of association with such an uncouth companion was to foster the young prince's own peculiarities to such an extent, that people more than once queried whether Paul, in being forced

to leave the empire to Alexander, had made a special point of bequeathing his mad temperament to Constantine.

After the French campaign and the Treaty of Vienna, Constantine was made Viceroy of Poland. It was just the post for him. Here, placed at the head of a warlike nation, whose whole history is one long struggle, his military tastes grew with redoubled energy; unfortunately, he substituted lawless encounters for the bloody struggles in which he had just taken part. Summer or winter--whether living in the palace of Bruhl or residing in the palace of Belvédère--he was up and equipped in his general's uniform by three in the morning, without the assistance in his toilet of any valet. He would then seat himself before a table covered with regimental lists and military orders, in a room wherein every single panel on the walls was painted with different regimental costumes; he read the reports that had been drawn up the day before, either by Colonel Axamilovisky or by Suboividsky, the Prefect of Police, signifying his approval or disapproval of them in a side note. With the exception of letter-writing to some members of his family, these were the only occasions he handled a pen. This work generally took him until nine in the morning, when he partook of the hasty breakfast of a soldier. He then went down to the parade ground to inspect a couple of regiments of infantry or a squadron of cavalry. The band saluted him as he approached, and the review immediately began. The platoons marched past the viceroy, a little way off, with mathematical precision--a sight that always filled him with childish joy, and moved him as much as though the men were marching to a real battle. He would stand on foot watching them pass by, attired in the green uniform of the Light Infantry, his cap, which was decorated with cocks' feathers, posed on his head in such a manner that one of the corners touched his left epaulette, whilst the other pointed heavenwards at an alarming angle. Below shone, like two carbuncles, eyes that seemed more like a jackal's than those of a human being, set below a narrow forehead, which was furrowed with

deep lines, indicating constant and anxious preoccupation; and his thick long eyebrows were crooked from habitual frowning. In his moments of extreme happiness, the strange vivaciousness of the czarovitch's expression, coupled with the snub nose that looked like a skeleton's, and his protruding lower lip, gave a very savage appearance to his head. His neck, which he could push out and withdraw at will, came in and out of his collar just like a tortoise's from below its shell. As he listened to the music and saw the men he had trained and heard the measured tramp of their feet, his whole being expanded with delight, until he looked feverish with excitement: the flush would come into his cheeks, his arms would stiffen against his body down to his elbows, his rigid, tightly clasped fists would nervously open and close, while his restless feet beat time, and his guttural voice every now and then, between his harshly uttered commands, would give vent to hoarse, raucous, inhuman cries, expressive, alternately, of satisfaction or anger, according as matters pleased him or he saw something that offended his sense of discipline. For, indeed, his anger was a terrible sight, and his good humour was that of a rough savage.

If he were pleased, he would double up in fits of laughter, rubbing his hands together noisily and hilariously, stamping on the ground first with one foot and then with the other: if he caught sight of a child at the moment, he would catch hold of it, turn it over and over like a monkey with a doll, make the child kiss him, pinch its cheeks, pull its nose, and then putting it down, he would send it away with the first piece of gold or silver in its hands that he could find in his pocket.

When he was angry, he roared aloud, striking the soldier who had failed in his work, himself pushing the man towards the prison, shouting or rather yelling imprecations after him till the man was out of sight. His severity indeed extended to all--to animals as well as to men. One day he had a monkey hung because it was too noisy: he lashed a horse again and again and again with his riding-stick because it stumbled while he had

trustingly let the reins fall on its neck for a little while; and he had a dog shot one morning because it had kept him awake during the night with its howling. Between these fits of anger and moments of exultation he was subject to hours of depression. He fell into moods of deep melancholy which ended in complete prostration. Weak as a woman, he would lie on his couch or roll about on the floor, a prey to nervous attacks.

At these times, not even the most favoured person dared go near him. The last valet to leave the room would open wide the window and the door, and upon the threshold would appear a fair pale woman, clothed almost always in a white dress clasped with a blue girdle, her expression as sad as a ghost's, and, like a ghost, smiling through her melancholy. The vision had a magical influence upon Constantine; his spirits grew brighter, he first sighed and then sobbed, cried out, and, after bitter and abundant tears, he rested his head on the woman's lap and would fall asleep to wake up cured.

This woman was Poland's guardian angel, Jeannette Groudzenska. Once, when quite a child, she was praying in the Metropolitan Church of Warsaw, before an image of the Virgin, when a crown of immortelles that had been placed at the foot of the picture fell on her head, resting upon it, until she removed it and replaced it on its nail. On her return home, Jeannette related this incident to her father, who told it to an old Ukranian Cossack thought to be a seen The old Cossack replied that the falling of the holy crown on the maiden's head meant that God had intended an earthly crown for her, had she not herself renounced it by returning it to the Virgin, who would keep her a heavenly crown instead. Both father and daughter had forgotten all about this prediction, or, if not forgotten entirely, they only thought of it as a dream, when chance, or rather, shall we say, Providence, who was watching over the interests of fifty-three millions of men, brought Constantine and Jeannette face to face.

Then it came about that that hot-blooded savage, that roaring bear, became as timid as a young girl; he who broke down all opposition, who disposed of the lives of fathers and the honour of their children, came bashfully to the old father to ask for the hand of Jeannette, imploring him not to refuse him the being without whose presence he could never be happy again. The old man recollected the Cossack's prediction, and, seeing in the viceroy's request the fulfilment of Almighty designs, the viceroy obtained his consent and that of the daughter. Then the emperor's sanction had to be obtained. Alexander had a constant dread of what would become of the empire in Constantine's hands. More than anyone else did he feel the responsibility of having had the charge of souls committed to him from Heaven. He therefore tried to utilise this love affair for the benefit of the community at large, though without much hope that he would succeed. He granted his consent on condition that Constantine would abdicate his succession, and awaited the brother's answer as anxiously as his brother waited for his. Constantine received the imperial despatch, opened it, read it, gave a shout of delight and renounced his rights. Yes, that strange, inexplicable man renounced his right to the throne, he, an Olympian Jove, before whose frown a whole people trembled. He gave up his twofold right to both an Eastern and a Western sovereignty in exchange for the heart of a young girl--an empire containing two great capitals and territory that began at the shores of the Baltic and ended at the Rocky Mountains, an empire washed by seven seas.

Jeannette Groudzenska received from the Emperor Alexander in exchange, the title of Princess of Lovics.

Nevertheless, when the news of the death of the Emperor Alexander reached St. Petersburg, the Grand-Duke Nicolas ignored the fact of the renunciation, took oath of allegiance to the Grand-Duke Constantine and despatched a messenger to him to invite him to come and take possession of the throne. But at the same time that this letter was being carried from

St. Petersburg to Warsaw, the Grand-Duke Michel was on his way from Warsaw to St. Petersburg with the following letter from Constantine to his brother:--

"MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,--It was with the most profound grief that I learnt yesterday evening the news of the death of our adored sovereign and my benefactor, the Emperor Alexander. I hasten to express to you my feelings of sorrow at this cruel misfortune, and at the same time I beg to inform you that I am sending a letter by the same hands to Her Imperial Majesty, our royal mother, in which I declare that, in accordance with the edict I obtained dated February 1822, sanctioning my renunciation of the throne, it is still my unalterable resolution to cede to you all my rights of succession to the throne of the Emperor of All the Russias. I therefore beg our beloved mother and those who are concerned in this matter, to announce that my wishes in this respect are still unchanged, in order that matters may be settled as arranged.

"Having made this declaration, I look upon it as my sacred duty very humbly to beseech your Imperial Majesty to let me be the first to swear faithful allegiance and submission to you, and to allow me to assert that I do not wish for any fresh dignity or any new title; I wish simply and solely to maintain my title of Czarovitch, which my revered father condescended to confer upon me in recognition of my services. Henceforth my only happiness will be to tender your Imperial Majesty tokens of my profoundest respect and of my unbounded devotion; I can offer in pledge thereof more than thirty years of faithful service, and the unswerving zeal that I have displayed towards my imperial father and brother. Animated by these sentiments, I will not cease to serve your Imperial Majesty and your successors as long as life shall be granted me, in my present office and functions.--I am, with the most profound respect, CONSTANTINE"

The day after the Grand-Duke Nicolas had despatched his courier to the czarovitch, the Council of State had informed him that they had been commissioned to keep a document for him, that had been handed to their care on 15 October 1823, sealed with the seal of the Emperor Alexander and accompanied by an autograph letter from His Majesty, who had charged them to keep the document until further orders, and in case of death to open it at an extraordinary session.

Now, as the emperor had died, the Council of State had opened the package, and within a double wrapping they found the Grand-Duke Constantine's renunciation of the Empire of All the Russias. This renunciation was couched in the following terms:--

"SIRE,--I am emboldened by the many proofs of your Imperial Majesty's kindness towards me to venture to crave your further indulgence and to lay my humble petitions at your feet. As I do not think myself fitted by my mental endowments and qualifications, nor gifted with sufficient capability, should I ever be called upon to fulfil the high position my birth would entitle me to assume, I earnestly implore your Imperial Majesty to transfer my rights to my immediate successor, and thus to place the empire for ever upon a stable foundation. So far as I am concerned, my renunciation will give an additional guarantee and added strength to the solemn oath I took, at the time of my divorce from my first wife. The existing condition of things establishes me more firmly in the opinion, day by day, that I am right in taking this step, and it will prove the sincerity of my sentiments to the empire and to the whole world.

"May your Imperial Majesty be moved to listen favourably to my entreaties, to influence our noble mother to look upon matters in the same light and to sanction my wishes with your imperial consent!

"In the sphere of a private life I will ever strive to set a good example to your faithful subjects and to all who are animated by a feeling of

affection towards our beloved country.--I remain, with the most profound respect, CONSTANTINE"

To this letter the emperor had made the following reply:--

"MY VERY DEAR BROTHER,--I have just read your letter with all the attention it deserves. I am not surprised at its contents, since I have always understood and appreciated the lofty sentiments of your heart; it has afforded me one proof more of your sincere attachment to the State, and of your far-seeing care for the preservation of its best interests. I have communicated the contents of your letter to our beloved mother, as you desired me; she has read it with the same feelings as those I have expressed and gratefully recognises the noble motives that have prompted you. After consideration of the reasons you have laid before us, the only course we feel free to take is to leave you full liberty to follow your fixed determination and to ask Almighty God to bless your single-hearted zeal, and to cause it to produce a happy issue.--I am ever your very affectionate brother, ALEXANDER"

Nicolas, however, waited for the czarovitch's reply, and not until 25 December did he issue a manifesto accepting the throne that had devolved upon him by his elder brother's renunciation. He then fixed the following day, the 26th, for the taking of the oath of allegiance to himself and to his eldest son, the Grand-Duke Alexander.

And that is the strange story of these two brothers and the refusal of one of the most splendid crowns the world has to offer, and how Constantine remained simply the Czarovitch and Nicolas became the Emperor of All the Russias.

BOOK II

BOOK II — CHAPTER I

CHAPTER I

Rousseau and Romieu--Conversation with the porter--The eight hours' candle--The *Deux Magots*--At what hour one should wind up one's watch--M. le sous-préfet enjoys a joke--Henry Monnier--A paragraph of information--On suppers--On cigars

While these great events were happening in high political spheres, our humble fortunes were on the wane. The hundred louis that my mother had brought with her had come to an end; we were aghast to find we had spent nearly 4000 francs within a year and a half--nearly 11 1800 francs, that is to say, more than we ought to have done, t; It was therefore imperative that I should fulfil my promises and add to my salary by working out of my office hours.

De Leuven and I had stuck valiantly and persistently at collaborating together, but nothing had come of it--a result that made us bitterly inveigh aloud against the injustice of managers, and the want of taste of directorates, although, under my breath, I was more just in my criticism of our efforts, and frankly admitted to myself that were I a manager I would not have accepted my own work. So we made up our minds to make certain sacrifices, and ask Rousseau to join us, in order that he might add those indescribable finishing touches to our works which would make all the difference in the world. These sacrifices consisted in our procuring several bottles of good old Bordeaux, some flasks of rum and some loaf-sugar. Rousseau belonged to the famous school of Favart, Radet, Collé, Désaugiers, Armand Gouffé and Company, who never worked save to the sound of the popping of corks, with the vision of seething fumes of punch-bowls before their eyes. Rousseau had a reputation which, later, he was most unwillingly obliged to share with his

illustrious collaborator Romieu. At a certain period I should not have dared to speak thus of the famous prefect of the Dordogne, for fear of injuring his political career. It will be remembered what distress was caused by the news (which happily proved to be false) of his having been devoured by bugs, and how his partisans hastened to fling back the ill-natured jest into the face of the wretched papers that had spread the report. It is, alas! so difficult for an intellectual man to be forgiven his wit, and for a funny man to pass for a serious one, that Romieu had scarcely begun to recover from this duplex reputation, unluckily but too well deserved, when, after ten years at the *sous-préfecture* and *préfecture*, a similar fate overtook him to that of the poor Roman cobbler who taught a raven to exclaim, "*Vive César Auguste!*" the Cæsar Augustus of France fell, and all Romieu's pains and labours were lost, *opera et impensa periit.* Romieu retired into private life, and the fall above referred to, which, contrary to the laws of gravity, operated from the base upwards, gave us full liberty with respect to the author of the *Enfant trouvé* and the *Ère des Césars.*

In 1825, then, Romieu was collaborating with Rousseau; but, as in the case of Adolphe and myself, they got absolutely nothing out of it beyond a crowd of adventures each more delightfully amusing than its predecessor, which defrayed their expenses at the *café du Roi* and the *café des Variétés.*

Let us make it clear, for there might be some ambiguity in the matter, and it might be thought that something also came out of our collaboration.

No, nothing at all came of ours: Adolphe had always been as jolly as a Trappist monk, while I, although by nature extremely light-hearted, was only able to laugh at the farces of others, without ever being able, in all the farces that were made, to be more than a simple spectator. I profoundly admired Rousseau's and Romieu's cleverness in these lines. So there were few nights when Rousseau especially (who could not carry

his wine as well as Romieu, but who, it should be acknowledged, went in for excellent wines), abandoned to himself by his treacherous Pylades, had to be led home by some patrol or other, and taken to the police-station for making a nocturnal uproar. But Rousseau was like those children who, as a precaution against their being lost, are taught their name and address. Rousseau had deeply engraved upon his memory the name of a certain police-officer of his acquaintance, and it was so firmly embedded there that neither wine, nor brandy, nor rum nor punch was powerful enough to wash it out. Rousseau staggering, Rousseau stuttering, Rousseau tight, Rousseau drunk, Rousseau dead drunk, Rousseau forgetful of the name and address of his mother, the name and address of Romieu, his own name and his own address, could always distinctly articulate the name and address of that particular police-officer!

And as no one could refuse a man as drunk as he was the reasonable request to be taken to a police-officer, Rousseau was taken to his friend, who delivered him a formal lecture, but always wound up by setting him free.

Once, however, the lecture was more keen than usual, and Rousseau listened to it looking very penitent. Then, as the police-officer upbraided him for disturbing his slumbers, thus waking him night after night, Rousseau responded--

"You are quite right, and I promise you I will henceforth have myself taken before someone else once every three times."

He kept his word. But all police-officers were not so long-suffering as good M.--. The first one before whom Rousseau appeared sent him to the Saint-Martin guard-room and kept him there for a couple of days. After this experience he decided to go back to his old habit.

Rousseau and Romieu were very fond of playing pranks on porters and grocers. Rousseau would put his head in at a porter's grille and call out--

"Good-day, my friend."

"Good-day, monsieur."

"May I ask what bird that is you have in your window?"

"It is a blackcap, monsieur."

"Ah! indeed!... Why do you keep a blackcap?"

"Because it sings so nicely, monsieur."

"Really?"

"Stop and listen...."

And the porter would put his hands on his hips and wag his head up and down with a smile on his face as he listened to the singing of his blackcap.

"Ah! you are right!... You are married?"

"Yes, monsieur,--been married three times."

"And where is your woman?"

"My wife, Monsieur means?"

"Yes, of course, your wife."

"She is at the lodger's, on the fifth floor."

"Indeed! indeed! And what is she doing at the lodger's on the fifth floor?"

"Charing."

"Is the lodger on the fifth floor young or old?"

"Between the two."

"Good.... And your children?"

"I haven't any."

"You haven't any?"

"No."

"Then what have you been about during your three marriages?"

"Excuse me ... does Monsieur want someone?"

"No."

"Monsieur wants something?"

"No."

"Well, for the past quarter of an hour Monsieur has been asking me question after question."

"Yes."

"What did you mean by these questions?"

"Nothing at all."

"What! nothing at all?... But surely Monsieur had some reason?"

"None."

"Monsieur had no reason?"

"No."

"Well, then, I should much like to know why Monsieur did me the honour ...?"

"Why, I was passing by ... I saw the words over your lodge '*Speak to the porter*,' so I spoke to you."

Romieu would enter a grocer's shop.

"Good-morning, monsieur."

"Monsieur, your very humble servant."

"Have you candles eight to the pound?"

"Certainly, monsieur, plenty of them; it is an article much in demand, for there are more small purses than large ones."

"Your observation, monsieur, savours of higher matters than groceries."

Romieu and the grocer bowed to each other.

"You flatter me, monsieur."

"Monsieur said that he wanted ...?"

"One candle of eight to the pound."

"Only one?"

"Yes, at first; later, I will see."

The grocer took a candle out of a packet.

"Here it is, monsieur."

"Will you cut it in half? I detest fingering candles!"

"Quite so, monsieur; they have such a strong smell.... Here is your candle in two pieces."

"Ah! now will you be good enough to cut each of those halves into four pieces?"

"Into four?"

"Yes; I need eight pieces of candle for my purpose."

"Here are your eight pieces, monsieur."

"Pardon me, will you oblige me by preparing the wicks for me?"

"The whole eight?"

"Seven rather, since one naturally has its wick ready."

"Quite so."

"That is all right ... there, there, very good ... there, thank you. Now then ... place them on the counter at three inches' distance from one another.... Ah!..."

"But what on earth is that for?"

"You will see.... Now, would you have the goodness to lend me a lucifer match?"

"Certainly ... take one."

"Thanks."

And Romieu would solemnly light the eight candle-ends.

"But what is that for, monsieur?"

"I am creating a farce."

"A farce?"

"Yes."

"And now ...?"

"And now the farce is done, I am going"; and Romieu would nod to the grocer and make off.

"What! are you going without paying for the candle?" shrieked the grocer. "At least pay for the candle."

Romieu would turn round--

"If I paid for the candle, where would be the farce?"

And he would go on his way quite heedless of the grocer's objurgations.

Occasionally, Romieu's ambitions would soar higher than teasing grocers, and he would play irreverent pranks in higher circles of commerce.

One evening, he was passing along the rue de Seine, at the corner of the rue de Bussy, at half-past twelve midnight, when an assistant was preparing to close the shop of *les Deux Magots.* Generally, the establishment closed at eleven, so it was unusually late.

Romieu rushed inside the shop.

"Where is the proprietor of the establishment?"

"M. P---?"

"Yes."

"He has gone to bed."

"Has he been gone long?"

"About an hour."

"But he sleeps in the house?"

"Certainly."

"Take me to him."

"But, monsieur...."

"Without delay."

"But...."

"Instantly."

"Is your communication then of so pressing a nature?"

"It is so important that I shudder lest I be too late."

"Since Monsieur assures me...."

"Come, take me to him, take me to him quickly!"

The assistant did not wait to close the shop, but took Romieu through into an anteroom, where M. P---- was snoring like a bass-viol.

"M. P----! M. P----!..." shouted the shopboy.

"Well, what is it? Go to the devil with you! What do you want?"

"It is not I...."

"What do you mean by saying it is not you?"

"No, it is a gentleman who wishes a few words with you."

"At this time of night?"

"He says it is very urgent."

"Where is the gentleman?"

"He is at the door. Come in, monsieur, come in."

Romieu entered on tiptoe, hat in hand, with a smiling countenance.

"Pardon, monsieur, a thousand pardons for disturbing you."

"Oh, do not mention it, monsieur; it is nothing. What is your business?"

"I wish to speak with your partner."

"With my partner?"

"Yes."

"But I have no partner."

"You haven't?"

"No."

"Then why put on your sign, '*Aux Deux Magots*'? It deceives the public!"

But sometimes it happened that the hoaxer was recognised, and then he was caught in his own trap.

One day Rousseau went into a watchmaker's.

"Monsieur, I wish to see some good watches."

"Monsieur, here is the very article you desire."

"Whose make is it?"

"Leroy's."

"Who is Leroy?"

"One of the most famous of my craft."

"Then you can guarantee it?"

"I can."

"How many times a week does it need winding?"

"Once."

"Morning or evening?"

"Whichever you prefer; though it is really better to wind it in the morning."

"Why so?"

"Because one may be drunk in the evening, Monsieur Rousseau, and break the mainspring."

Rousseau was caught this time; he left, promising the watchmaker his custom--a promise he never fulfilled, bearing in mind the watchmaker's retort.

It will be seen that when Romieu became first a sub-prefect and then a prefect he could not continue this kind of pleasantry; nevertheless, I understand that the old Adam in him would crop out from time to time, for it is very difficult to efface natural propensities, which, according to the poet of Auteuil, will persist in returning full tilt.

So it is related that one night the sub-prefect was returning home at eleven o'clock, after supper;--when Romieu was in Paris and took supper out he never returned home until the following morning; but every creature knows, alas! that Paris is not the provinces!--and he caught sight of three or four street lads belonging to the district, busy throwing stones at the complimentary street lamp that was always lit in front of the *sous-préfecture*; however, as it was not Paris, but only a provincial town, the young guttersnipes were country lubbers, and had already thrown four or five stones without being able to touch the spot. The sub-prefect saw them without being seen and shrugged his shoulders. Finally, being totally unable to contain himself at the sight of such clumsiness, he came up to them, took his place in the midst of the astonished urchins, picked up the first stone he saw, threw it--and behold, lo!--the lamp ceased to be a lamp. "That is how it should be done, messieurs," he said, and he entered his house, muttering--

"Oh! the young folk of to-day are a degenerate lot!"

Sometimes, too, M. le préfet, in his brave braided coat of office, would condescend to be gluttonous,--for who does not have his bad moments?

even the wisest sin seven times a day, so surely the intellectual man may make a beast of himself once a year.

Henri Monnier, the witty caricaturist, charming creator of *proverbes* and friend of all, when passing through Périgueux, went to call on his old comrade Romieu and invited himself to dinner that day. M. le préfet gave a formal dinner party, the guests being mostly departmental officials, the stiffest and most punctilious he could find. It took a great deal to overawe Henri Monnier; he chattered away, told all sorts of tales just as freely as if he had been in his own house, or in yours or in mine; in other words, he was delightful. But he noticed that, although he persistently addressed Romieu in familiar language, Romieu was equally persistent in being formal with him.

This was entirely contrary to their habits and customs. Henri Monnier made quite certain that he was not labouring under any misapprehension; then, when he was sure he was right, he shouted from one end of the table to the other, "Look here, my dear Romieu, why ever do you address me as *you* while I use the familiar *thou*? The company here will take you for my valet."

Paris really missed Romieu when he left it, although it still possessed Rousseau; as the authorities were bent on making Romieu a prefect, Paris would have liked him to be prefect of Paris, but apparently that was not possible. How could Romieu have left Rousseau behind him in Paris? Ah! Rousseau never forgave him for doing that! He wrote a very pretty song about it, which I will give my readers, if I can find it.

When Romieu was appointed sub-prefect, Rousseau jumped for joy; it would, he argued, be a grave omission on the part of the Government to make Romieu a sub-prefect without giving Rousseau some title or other; and as Rousseau had not asked for even a sub-prefecture after the Revolution, it was but reasonable to refrain from blaming the

Government, and, less proud than Cæsar, he was quite willing to play second fiddle. He went in search of Romieu.

"Well done, my dear friend, I congratulate you."

"Oh! you have heard?"

"The deuce I have!"

"Yes, they have made me a sub-prefect."

"Well?"

"Well, what?"

"I hope you are thinking of me."

"Thinking of you? In what way?"

"You will require a secretary, I should think."

"Yes, so I shall."

"You have not got one yet?"

"No."

"Very well, that is my berth, then. Twelve hundred francs, board, lodging and your society. I could ask for nothing better."

"Indeed?" said Romieu.

"Come, now!"

"Return the day after to-morrow, and I will tell you if the thing be possible."

"Possible! What the devil should prevent it ...?"

Rousseau took his departure, and returned two days later. He found Romieu looking very serious, even anxious.

"Well?" he asked.

"Well, my dear friend, I am in despair."

"Why?"

"Impossible!"

"Impossible to take me with you?"

"Yes ... you see...."

"No, I don't see."

"Before I could take you with me I had to make some inquiries."

"About me?"

"Yes, about you, and I learnt...."

"You learnt ...?"

"I learnt that you drank."

Rousseau left; but this time he did not return again. Poor Rousseau! Three months before his death, he related this story to my son and me, with tears in his eyes.

"Romieu will come to a bad end," he said in tones as tragic as those of Calchas; "he is an ungrateful being."

May Heaven preserve Romieu from Rousseau's prediction!

Romieu stayed in the provinces for three years without coming back to Paris, and during those three years his absence led to great changes in the capital, as the following distich by an unknown author appears to state:--

"Lorsque Romieu revint du Monomotapa Paris ne soupait plus, et Paris ressoupa."

I said great changes had taken place in Paris, I should have said fatal changes. The cessation of supper parties has brought about more troublesome consequences in a civilised world than might be supposed. I attribute our present state of intellectual degeneration to the cessation of supper parties and the innovation of the cigar. God forbid I should state that our sons' mental abilities are not equal to our own; I, at least, have a son who would not forgive me if I made such a statement. But they are of a different type of mind. Time alone can settle which is the better of the two.

We men of forty years and upwards still preserve something of the aristocratic spirit of the eighteenth century, tempered with the chivalrous spirit of the Empire.

Women had great influence over minds of that period, and supper parties were a real social factor.

By eleven o'clock at night all the cares of the day are cast aside, and one knows there are still from six to eight hours to spend at one's ease between the night ends and day comes. When one sits at a well-filled table, face to face with a pretty girl, amid the pleasurable excitement of lights and flowers, the mind lets itself be carried away into the realm of dreams, though wide awake, and at such a time it attains its highest flights of brilliancy and exaltation. It is not only that one is more brilliant at supper-time than at any other meal, and that one has more wit than at any other repast, but one's very nature seems to be different.

I am sure that the greater number of the witty sayings of the eighteenth century were said at supper-time. Let us, therefore, have more of these supper parties, and we shall not lack what made them so brilliant.

Now let us turn to the cigar. Formerly, after *déjeuner*, men and women would proceed to the billiard-room or to the garden; after dinner, they would adjourn to the drawing-room; and there the conversation would continue on the same lines, whether desultory or more general. Nowadays, men have scarcely risen from table before they say to one another, "Come, let us have a cigar."

Then they go out, and walk up and down the pavements smoking. There they meet women also, but not at all capable of the same type of wit as those whom they have just left in the drawing-room. Men's minds are raised to the level of the women with whom they associate; one cannot demean oneself before the most lovely half of creation. And this generalisation is proved true every day.

One does not meet the same people in the public promenades two days running, but, though the people change, the type of conversation is pretty much the same always. Imperceptibly the tone of mind becomes lower. If you add to this the influence of the narcotic contained in tobacco, you can judge what the state of society will be in half a century if the taste for the cigar goes on increasing incessantly. We shall have about as much intellectual activity in France in 1950 as there is in Holland at the present time.

The reader will see that we have travelled far from Rousseau and Romieu. We have only Rousseau now to deal with, and let us, therefore, return to him.

BOOK II — CHAPTER II

CHAPTER II

The lantern--*La Chasse et l'Amour*--Rousseau's part in it--The couplet about the hare--The *couplet de facture*--How there may be hares *and* hares--Reception at l'Ambigu--My first receipts as an author--Who Porcher was--Why no one might say anything against Mélesville

De Leuven and I went to hunt up Rousseau, who was then living in the rue du Petit-Carreau with a woman. We found him in a mad state of mind. The night before, he had been supping, and supping very well, too, at Philippe's--I may as well mention here that I can recommend Philippe as the only man left at whose place one can still have a good supper. Rousseau had left with Romieu at about one o'clock in the morning, just tipsy. He had not taken two steps before the fresh air had its usual effect, and he became drunk; after walking about a hundred paces he was dead drunk. Romieu made heroic efforts to lead him as far as he could; but, when he had been dragged down to the pavement twice, he decided to place him in the safest position possible and then to leave him. Consequently, at thirty paces from his door, recognising the impossibility of dragging him farther, Romieu laid him comfortably down outside a fruiterer's shop-door, on a heap of cabbage leaves and dead carrot tops which he found there, propping his head up against a wall. Then, by the aid of his knuckles and boots, he knocked up a grocer hard by, where he bought a lantern, which he lighted and placed by Rousseau's side. Then he bid adieu to his unlucky friend, addressing him in the following terms, half in satisfaction of a duty fulfilled and half in supplication to the Powers above:--

"And now, sleep peacefully, son of Epicurus. No one will trample upon you!"

Rousseau spent the night quite quietly, thanks to the lamp which kept watch over him, and he woke up finding two or three sous in his hand. Some kind souls had given him alms, taking him for a poor wretched outcast. But, as he was in his own neighbourhood, when daylight broke, he was recognised by both grocer and fruiterer, and was exceedingly humiliated by the fact. We comforted him by the offer of a good breakfast at the *café des Variétés*, and, being Sunday, and therefore a holiday, we afterwards took him off to Adolphe's rooms.

Adolphe had a very charming apartment at that time, almost as pretty as Soulié's. The house that M. Arnault had built in the rue de la Bruyère was a very nice one, and the de Leuven family had followed the Arnaults from the rue Pigalle to the rue de la Bruyère. We sat down and had some tea, Rousseau declaring he was dying of thirst, and then we each read in turn to our guest the whole of our literary attempts, in order that he might judge for himself which he thought worthiest of his exalted protection. By the time we had come to the second scene, Rousseau pretended that he could listen better if he lay down on Adolphe's bed, and consequently he mounted it; at the fourth scene he was snoring--which testified that, no matter how soft the bed of herbs lent him by the fruiterer in the rue du Petit-Carreau, one never sleeps properly when one stays out all night. We respected Rousseau's sleep, and waited patiently till he awoke again. When he awoke, his head felt heavy and he could not put two ideas together, so he asked to be allowed to take our MSS. away with him, and promised to read them carefully at home and let us know the result. We confided our treasures to him,--two melodramas and three comic operas,--and we arranged to dine with him at Adolphe's rooms on the following Thursday. Madame de Leuven herself undertook to see that the dinner should be good and well served, for she was conscious of the importance of the occasion, and Rousseau was invited by letter as well as verbally. At the bottom of the letter, where' one puts on ball invitations

"Dancing," we put, "There will be two bottles of champagne"; and Rousseau, of course, turned up.

Neither melodramas nor vaudevilles had pleased him. The melodramas were borrowed from novels too well known, from which plenty of melodramas had already been taken. The vaudevilles were founded on ideas which were dull from beginning to end. Stronger men than we might well have been cast down at such a verdict. But Adolphe had an idea which supported our courage and soothed our self-respect.

"He has not read them," he whispered to me.

"Quite likely," I replied.

This semi-conviction somewhat restored our spirits. At dessert, I told several stories, and among them a hunting tale.

"What do you mean," exclaimed Rousseau, "by telling such capital stories as that and yet amusing yourself by cribbing melodramas from Florian and tales from M. Bouilly? Why, in the story you have just related, there is a comedietta complete in itself, *la Chasse et l'Amour.*"

"Do you think so?" we both exclaimed.

(At that period of our friendship we addressed Rousseau in formal parlance.)

"The deuce I do."

"But suppose we were to write this comedietta ...?"

"Let us do it!" we repeated in chorus.

"Wait a moment; not so fast," said Rousseau. "There is still another bottle of champagne; let us drink it."

"Yes," said Adolphe, "and we must have a third to toast our new venture. We will begin work upon it immediately."

"Amen!" cried Rousseau; and he raised his glass. "To the success of *la Chasse et l'Amour*!" he cried.

We took good care to do full justice to the toast, which was renewed until not one drop of the golden liquor was left in the bottle.

"The third bottle!" said Rousseau, as he drained the last drops of the second into his glass.

"Let us set to work on the draft.... The third bottle shall be brought up."

"All right, let us start!" cried Rousseau.

We rang for the servant, who removed the plates, dishes and cloth, leaving only the three glasses; then pens, ink and paper were put on the table, a pen was stuck into my hand, and the third bottle was brought up. It was emptied in a quarter of an hour's time, and by the end of an hour the plan was drawn up. Do not ask me to describe the play, I have no wish to remember it. We divided the twenty-one scenes which, I believe, composed the work, into three divisions of seven each. My seven were those of the beginning, Rousseau took the seven dealing with the denouement and de Leuven the middle seven. Then we arranged to meet again at dinner in a week's time to read the play, each undertaking to complete his part in a week. This was how plays of the old school were composed. Scribe has changed all that, after the fashion of Molière's doctor, who had located the liver on the left and the heart on the right. That which had been undertaken before Scribe's time in a spirit of caprice and flippancy was turned by him into a serious business. My seven scenes were written by the following night. At the appointed day we all met; both Adolphe and I had done our parts, but Rousseau had not written a word of his. He declared that he was so accustomed to writing in company that his ideas would not flow when he was alone, and he could not do a thing. We told Rousseau that that need certainly not stop him, for we would keep him company.

It was arranged that the evening of that day should be given up to revising Adolphe's and my portions, and that the following day the sittings should begin, during which Rousseau should compose his part. My part was read, and was received with great applause--one couplet especially astonishing Rousseau. The comic rôle was filled by a Parisian sportsman, bespectacled, a sportsman of the plain of Saint-Denis, in fact; and he sings the following lines in explanation of his prowess:--

"La terreur de la perdrix Et l'effroi de la bécasse, Pour mon adresse à la chasse, On me cite dans Paris. Dangereux comme la bombe, Sous mes coups rien qui ne tombe, Le cerf comme la colombe, A ma seule vue, enfin, Tout le gibier a la fièvre; Car, pour mettre à has un lièvre, Je sais un fameux lapin!"

Adolphe read his part, and received honourable mention for his workmanship in the *couplet de facture.*[1] No one nowadays has any knowledge of the *couplet de facture*, save the Nestors of art, who have pleasant memories of the *his* and *ter* [repeated encores] which almost always welcomed the *couplet de facture.* Here are Adolphe's couplets--to every man his due:--

AIR DU VAUDEVILLE DES *BLOUSES*

"Un seul instant examinez le monde, Vous ne venez que chasseurs ici-bas. Autour de moi quand on chasse à la ronde, Pourquoi donc seul ne chasserais-je pas?

Dans nos salons, un fat parfumé d'ambre De vingt beautés chasse à la fois les cœurs, Un intrigant rampant dans l'antichambre Chasse un cordon, un regard, des faveurs. Sans consulter son miroir ni son âge, Une coquette, à soixante-dix ans, En minaudant, chasse encore l'hommage Que l'on adresse à ses petits-enfants. Un lourd journal que la haine dévore, Toujours en vain chasse des souscripteurs; Et l'Opéra, sans en trouver encore, Depuis longtemps chasse des spectateurs. Un jeune auteur, amant

de Melpomène, Chasse la gloire et parvient à son but: Un autre croit, sans prendre autant de peine, Qu'il lui suffit de chasser l'Institut. Pendant vingt ans, les drapeaux de la France Sur l'univers flottèrent en vainqueurs, Et l'étranger sait par expérience, Si nos soldats sont tous de bons chasseurs: Un seul instant examinez le monde, Vous ne verrez que chasseurs ici-bas. Autour de moi quand on chasse à la ronde, Pourquoi donc seul ne chasserais-je pas?"

As we have said, only Rousseau's part now remained to be done. We set to work the following evening, but, because of the making up of the mail-bag, we could not begin until nine o'clock, and we did not finish before one in the morning. As I lived in the faubourg Saint-Denis, it fell to me to conduct Rousseau to the rue Poissonnière. But when Rousseau left our hands he was nearly always in a sound state of mind and body, so I had no occasion to go to the expense of purchasing lanterns to keep watch over him.

When the play was finished, we had to consider to what theatre we would present our *chef-d'œuvre.* I had no preference in the matter; so long as the play was acted at all, and taken up promptly, I cared little at what house I was presented. Adolphe and Rousseau were in favour of the Gymnase, and, as I had nothing to say against that house, it was agreed. Rousseau asked for a reading, and, as he had had his pieces played there before, they could not refuse him a hearing. He therefore obtained a reading, though Poirson, who was the mainspring of the Gymnase, kept him waiting three weeks. There was nothing to be done but to wait--we had been waiting for the past two years!

The great day arrived at last. We had arranged that the names of only two of the authors should appear in the matter. I generously yielded the post of honour to de Leuven, for I did not wish my name to be known until I had done some really important work. All depends in this world on a good beginning, and to make myself known by *la Chasse et l'Amour*,

remarkable though that work was, did not seem to my ambitious pride a sufficiently worthy début. For, although my hopes had been dwindling during the past two years, my pride was still to the fore. It was therefore decided that I should not appear either in the matter of the reading or on the play-bills, but that my name, Dumas, should be published when the play was printed.

The great day arrived at last. We breakfasted together at the café du Roi; then, at half-past ten, we separated: Rousseau and Adolphe went to the Gymnase, and I went to my office.

Oh! I must confess I passed through a terrible strain from eleven till three o'clock. At three, the door opened, and through the crack I caught a glimpse of two sorrowful faces. Rousseau came in first, followed by de Leuven. *La Chasse et l'Amour* had been declined unanimously. There hadn't been a single dissentient voice. Poirson seemed astounded that anyone should have dreamed of reading such a piece of work at a theatre that bore the lofty title Théâtre de Madame. He was dreadfully scandalised by the passage which ended with these four lines:--

"A ma seule vue, enfin, Tout le gibier a la fièvre; Car, pour mettre à has un lièvre, Je suis un fameux lapin!"

Rousseau pointed out to him that there had not always been, even in prohibited seasons, such a horror of game, since, in the *Héritière*, Scribe had made his colonel say, whilst holding up an old hare that he drew from out his game-bag:--

"Voyez ces favoris épais Sous lesquels se cachent ses lèvres; C'est le Nestor de ces forêts, C'est le patriarche des lièvres! D'avoir pu le tuer vivant, Je me glorifîrai sans cesse, Car, si je tardais d'un instant, Il allait mourir de vieillesse!"

But Poirson retorted that there were hares *and* hares; that the comparison which M. Scribe made of his, to a patriarch and to Nestor, elevated it in

the eyes of all cultured people, whilst the horrible play of words we had allowed ourselves by opposing the word *lièvre* to *lapin* was in the worst possible taste, and would not even be tolerated by a *théâtre de boulevard.* I innocently asked if the Gymnase was not a boulevard theatre; and now it was Rousseau's turn to pay me out: he was very angry with me, as he looked upon my passage as the cause of our rejection.

"You must learn, my dear friend, that there are boulevards *and* boulevards, just as there are hares *and* hares."

I was immensely surprised; I had never made any distinction between hares, other than in dividing them into hares tender and hares tough; or, in the matter of boulevards, beyond in summer preferring those that were shadiest to those that were sunniest, and in winter those that were sunny to those in the shade. I was mistaken: hares and boulevards had degrees of rank.

We parted, after arranging a meeting for that night. Lassagne noticed that I was cast down, and was most sympathetic towards me. When Ernest's back was turned, he said--

"Never mind, my dear friend, we will write a play together."

"Do you really mean it?" I cried, leaping for joy.

"Hush!" he said; "don't go dancing like that in the passages and bellowing in the office."

"Oh, don't be anxious!"

"I read your ode to General Foy; it is crude, but it contains several excellent lines, and two or three good metaphors. I will help you to succeed."

"Oh, thank you, thank you!"

"But we may perhaps be obliged to call in a third person, for neither you nor I could attend the rehearsals; besides, it must not be known that I have had anything to do with it."

"Add whoever you like. But when can we begin?"

"Well, try to think of a subject, and I will do the same; we will then select whichever seems the likeliest."

Then Ernest came back, and Lassagne put his finger on his lips. I nodded, and the matter was settled. That night, as arranged, Adolphe, Rousseau and I met.

Can anything possibly be more melancholy than a meeting of authors whose works have been refused? Unless one is a Corneille or a M. Viennet, there is always the haunting doubt that the manager may be correct, and the author self-deceived. Rather than settle this momentous question outright, we adopted a *via media*, and that was to read it before some other theatre. But to which should we take it? Poirson had contemptuously condemned us to the boulevard theatres, so Rousseau offered to read it at the Ambigu. The manager, Warez, was a friend of his, so there was a chance he could get a hearing at once, which would certainly not be the case elsewhere. We therefore sanctioned the proposal, and the reading, which Rousseau, asked on the following day, was accorded for the ensuing Saturday.

We awaited that day in great anxiety, I especially; for the result, miserable though it might be, was almost a matter of life or death to me. My mother and I were terrified to see how nearly we had reached the end of our resources. Although our neighbour Després was dead and we had taken his rooms as he advised, since they were a hundred francs cheaper than ours, and although we exercised the greatest possible economy in our expenses, our resources were lessening, little by little, but quite fast

enough to give us serious uneasiness as we contemplated the time when we should be reduced to living on my income only.

The eventful Saturday arrived.

I went to my office, the others to the reading.

At one o'clock the door of my office opened, but behind it stood two faces whose expression left me no more room for doubt than I had had the first time.

"Accepted?" I cried.

"With acclamation, my dear boy," said Rousseau.

"And what about the hare passage?"

"Encored!"

Oh! instability of human judgment! that which had revolted M. Poirson sent M. Warez into ecstasies.

It seemed, then, that there were indeed hares *and* hares, boulevards *and* boulevards. I ascertained what the rights of the author of a vaudeville written for the Ambigu would amount to. They consisted of twelve francs for author's rights and six seats in the theatre. That meant four francs each per night and two seats. These two places were valued at forty sous. The total I should make out of my dramatic début would be six francs a day. Six francs a day, be it understood, equalled my salary and half as much again. Only, when would our first representation be given? They had promised Rousseau it should be as soon as possible, and, as a matter of fact, he was summoned to read it to the actors in a week's time. That was indeed a red-letter day. When he came back after the reading, Rousseau drew me aside.

"Listen," he said; "we have become intimate friends during our ups and downs of disappointment and delight--if you are hard up for a little money...."

"Hard up for money? I should think I am, indeed!"

"All right; if you are in need, I will tell you of a decent fellow who will lend you some."

"On what security?"

"On your tickets."

"On what tickets?"

"Why, on your theatre tickets."

"On my two seats a day?"

"Yes, that is what I mean. I have sold him both my tickets and my rights ... he has paid me two hundred and fifty francs outright. So, I said to myself, I mustn't forget my friends. I puffed you up well; I told him you were a young fellow just beginning your career, but that you showed considerable promise. I left him under the impression that you I were going to surpass Scribe and Casimir Delavigne altogether, and he is expecting you this evening at the café de l'Ambigu."

"What is your man's name?"

"Porcher."

"Good! I will go."

Rousseau had already gone a little way when he came back again.

"By the bye, talk to him about whatever you like, but don't run down Mélesville to him."

"Why ever do you suppose I should say anything against Mélesville? I think nothing but good of him."

"Oh, you callow lad! Don't you know that in the literary arena it is of those one thinks the best that one says the worst things?"

"No, I did not know.... But why must one not speak ill of Mélesville to Porcher?"

"Some day when I have time I will tell you."

And Rousseau nodded amicably to me, and, with a wave of his hand, went off jingling his 250 francs, leaving me to puzzle as to why I might not run down Mélesville to Porcher.

I did not wait till the usual closing hour, but ran home gleefully with the good news to my mother. I did not, however, mention the offer Rousseau had made me. That evening, after making up my second mail-bag, I went to the café de l'Ambigu and asked for M. Porcher. He was pointed out to me playing a game of dominoes. I went up to him, and he probably knew who I was, for he got up.

"I am the young man Rousseau spoke about," I said to him.

"I am at your service, monsieur. Are you in a hurry, or will you allow me to finish my game of dominoes?"

"By all means finish it, monsieur--I am in no hurry; I will take a walk on the boulevard."

I went outside the café to wait, and Porcher came out five minutes later.

"So you have had a play accepted at the Ambigu?" he began.

"Yes, and it has been put in rehearsal to-day."

"I know. And you want money advanced on your tickets?"

"Listen!" I said; "this is how I am placed." And I told him in a few words the whole story of my life.

"How much do you want on your tickets? You know they are only worth two francs per day?"

"Oh yes, I know that only too well!"

"I cannot therefore give you much."

"I know that also."

"For the piece may not be a success."

"Well, what can you give me?"

"How much?... Let us see!"

I rallied all my courage, for I thought myself that the request was exorbitant.

"Can you give me fifty francs?"

"Oh yes," said Porcher.

"When?"

"Immediately--I haven't the amount with me, but I will get it from the café."

"And I will come in and give you a receipt."

"No need; I shall put your name down on my register, as I do M. Mélesville's and other authors'; but it is an understood thing, is it not, that you will always do business with me?"

"I agree, on my sacred honour."

Porcher went in, got fifty francs from the desk and handed them to me. I have experienced few sensations as delightful as the touch of the first

money I earned by my pen: hitherto, what I had earned had been but for my orthography.

"Look here," he said, "be sensible, work hard, and I will introduce you to Mélesville."

I looked at Porcher: this was the second time he had pronounced the name in connection with which Rousseau had cautioned me particularly.

"Why should I make Mélesville's acquaintance?" I ventured to ask timidly.

"Why, to work along with him, to be sure. If you worked with Mélesville, your future would be assured."

I looked at Porcher.

"Listen, monsieur," I said; "lam awfully afraid that what I am going to say to you may displease you."

"Oh! oh!" Porcher began. "You are not going to say anything against M. Mélesville to me, are you?"

"Heaven forbid, monsieur; no! I have only seen M. Mélesville once or twice, I believe, at the most: he is a man of about thirty-five, is he not?"

"Yes."

"Dark and thin?"

"Yes."

"Always laughing?"

"Yes."

"With a splendid set of teeth?"

"That is he."

"Well, M. Mélesville is a man of infinite genius."

"He is indeed!"

"But I have an ambition."

"What is it?"

"To succeed by my own efforts in a year or two's time."

"At what house?"

"At the Théâtre-Français."

"Ah! ah!--that would be a bad job."

"At the Théâtre-Français?"

"Yes."

"For whom?"

"For me."

"Why?"

"Ah! you have no idea of the difficulties they make over their tickets at that deuced theatre. Never mind! Authors' rights are good, and if you manage to get in there, why! you will do very well ... only, I warn you, it won't be an easy matter."

"I know that well enough; but I know M. Talma slightly."

"Oh! all right, then; that is equivalent to the Roman saying, I know the pope.' Good, excellent, magnificent! Go ahead ... but don't forget that your first transactions were with Porcher."

"I will remember."

"Have a good memory; people with good memories are generally good-hearted."

"Monsieur, I think you are a living proof of your own statement."

"Why so?"

"Because you have mentioned the name of Mélesville three times."

"Mélesville! Why, monsieur, I would kill myself for his sake."

"I will not be so inquisitive as to inquire the reason of this devotion."

"Oh, it is easily explained. I was a hairdresser and used to cut M. Mélesville's hair; he was in Fortune's good books, but that didn't matter! he wrote plays. Ten or twelve years ago that was, and then authors did not sell their tickets, they gave them away."

"Monsieur Porcher, believe me, if I were richer I would give you mine with the greatest pleasure."

"You do not understand: tickets, in those times, were given away, not sold. M. Mélesville, then, gave me his tickets; I went to see his plays with friends, and I applauded. He produced so many plays, and gave me so many tickets, that an idea came into my head; namely, instead of taking them and giving them away for nothing, to buy them from him, and sell them, so I proposed the business to him. 'You are a simpleton, Porcher,' he said to me. 'What the deuce could you make out of that?' 'Let me try.' 'Oh, try if you like, my dear fellow.' I tried it, monsieur, and it succeeded. From that time, I have carried on my little business, and if I ever acquire a fortune, it will be to M. Mélesville I shall owe it. Come home with me, and I will show you his portrait along with those of my wife and children."

I have been several times to Porcher's home since then,--probably a hundred times to ask his help, once only to give him assistance,--and

every time I have been there I have looked at Mélesville's portrait, raised by the gratitude of that worthy man to the level of those of his wife and children. Once, Porcher had something or other to ask of Cavé, when Cavé was Director of the Beaux-Arts. I took Porcher to Cavé's house, and I said to the latter--

"Look here, I am bringing you a man who has done more for literature during the past five-and-twenty years than you and your predecessors and successors have done, or will do, in a century."

And I only said what was true. It never enters the head of any literary struggler to apply to the Minister of the Interior or to the Director of the Beaux-Arts in his pecuniary difficulties. But it does occur to him to apply to Porcher, and he will be aided. He will find a cheerful face and open bank at Porcher's--two things he will certainly not find at the Home Office. Théaulon, Soulié and Balzac among the dead, and all authors now alive, will bear me out.

During the past five-and-twenty years Porcher has probably lent to literary men 500,000 francs. I am as grateful on my own account to Porcher, as Porcher was to Mélesville, and when I visit him nowadays I feel both proud and delighted to see my own portrait, in bust, pastel and medallion, hanging up beside the portraits of his own children. But I am the most grateful of all for those first fifty francs he gave me, which I carried to my mother, and which revived in her heart the heavenly flower of hope that had begun to fade! And ask Madame Porcher, who has known all the finest minds in France, to let you see some of the charming letters she has received. She certainly ought to publish a selection from them. They would not yield in interest to those of Madame de Sévigné, although they would be of a somewhat different nature. We will select one at haphazard, sent her by an author of our acquaintance; it is not one of mine, though the signature is extraordinarily like mine. He had asked for the modest loan of a hundred francs, and had received the reply that

he must wait for a few days, after which the transaction could in all probability be carried out. This is the letter:--

"'Wait a few days,'madame! Why, that is the same as telling a man whose head is to be cut off to dance a jig--or make a pun; why, in a few days I shall be a millionaire! I shall have got five hundred francs! If I apply to you, if I bother you, it is because I am reduced to such a state of wretchedness that I could even give points to Job--the most unfortunate hero of times past. If you do not send the hundred francs by my slave, I shall squander my last remaining sous in procuring a clarionette and a poodle-dog, and I shall come and perform with them in front of your door, with the inscription writ large on my stomach: 'Have pity on a literary man whom Madame Porcher has deserted.' Would you have me come and ask you for the hundred francs on my head, or cry, 'Vive la république,' or marry Mademoiselle Moralès?--Would you rather I went to l'Odéon, or unearthed talent *à Cachardy*, or wore *chapeaux gibus*? I will do exactly what you command me, if only you will send me the hundred francs. Send it me ten times over rather than not at all! With deepest and reiterated devotion, X---

"P. S.--It does not matter to me whether the hundred francs are in silver, in gold or in notes--send whichever is convenient to you."

[Footnote 1: "A couplet written for effect and especially notable for the wealth of its rhymes."--LITTRÉ.]

BOOK II — CHAPTER III

CHAPTER III

The success of my first play--My three stories--M. Marie and his orthography--Madame Setier--A bad speculation--The *Pâtre*, by Montvoisin--The *Oreiller*--Madame Desbordes-Valmore--How she became a poetess--Madame Amable Tastu--The *Dernier jour de l'année--Zéphire*

La Chasse et l'Amour was played at a special performance on 22 September 1825. It was an immense success. Dubourjal took the principal part; I entirely forget who were the other actors. I should certainly have forgotten the title of the play as well as the names of the actors, if I had not wished to indicate the starting-point of the hundred dramas I shall probably compose, as I shall presently indicate the starting-point of the six hundred volumes I have written. This success inspired Porcher with sufficient confidence to lend me a hundred crowns in addition to what I had already had, and on the strength of my future tickets. Now you shall hear what became of the hundred crowns. Whilst *la Chasse et l'Amour* was in rehearsal, and whilst I was looking about me for a subject to start work upon with Lassagne, I had written a little book of tales that I wished to publish. It was the period of great successes in small matters; I have previously made the same remark with reference to Soumet's *Pauvre Fille* and M. Guirand's *Savoyards*, and I repeat it. It was the same with regard to two or three stories just published by Madame de Duras and Madame de Salm, though not with regard to mine. I did not thoroughly understand the nature of these successes, or, more correctly, of the sensation they produced. I did not realise the part played by the social position of illustrious authors, and I did not see why I should not have the same reputation and the same success with respect to my stories that Mesdames de Duras and de Salm (*Ourika*, etc.) had had with theirs. I

had written three tales, which formed a small volume, and I offered this little volume to six publishers who refused it at the first glance, and, to give them their due, without the least hesitation. These three tales were called *Laurette*, *Blanche de Beaulieu* and--but I have totally forgotten the title of the third. But of *Blanche de Beaulieu* I have since made the *Rose rouge*; and from the third, the title of which I have forgotten, I constructed the *Cocher de Cabriolet.* After encountering refusal after refusal at the publishers, and being convinced that the appearance of my book would produce quite as great a sensation in the literary world as *Ourika*, I made up my mind to print the volume at my own expense.

There lived somewhere, at that time, a man who put forth a most peculiar claim. He claimed to upset all the rules of orthography, and to substitute for them an orthography without any rule. According to his notion, each word ought to be written as it was pronounced, and he did not trouble his head whether it were derived from Greek or Celtic, Latin, Arabic or Spanish. Thus he would write the adverb *aucunement*, of which we have just made use, *oqunemen.*

It was difficult enough to read, but he considered it much easier to write. His name was M. Marle. M. Marle hunted far and wide for recruits for his orthography; he realised that he could not bring about any revolution unless, Attila-like, he could muster a force of a million or so of followers.

Now, having doubtless made up his mind that men of letters, and vaudevillists in particular, would be the most likely of all to disregard correct orthography, he made special efforts to raise recruits among us, and, worthy man, he published a journal written in the strange tongue we have above referred to. He published the journal at a printing-office owned by Setier, who lived in the cour des Fontaines. When I made M. Marie's acquaintance, I also made that of M. and Madame Setier. Madame Setier was a remarkable woman. She was English, or, at any rate, she knew the language perfectly. She offered to translate some

English plays for me, which she made out I could easily get taken up on the French stage. As the cour des Fontaines was close to my office, to which, as I have said, I was obliged to go back every evening, and also close to the passage Véro-Dodat where my friend Thibaut lived, to whom I went every day, I frequently called in at the establishment in the cour des Fontaines.

When my three stories were finished, I gave them to Madame Setier to read. Madame Setier, being a woman, had an indulgent nature; she thought my stories charming, and got her husband to print them at half his usual prices. A thousand copies of the tales--I thought we couldn't print too many--would cost 600 francs, and M. Setier agreed to print them for 300. He would stand the remaining 300 francs. After he had repaid himself the 300 francs, we were to divide the profits in equal shares between us. That was why I asked Porcher to lend me 300 francs upon my next tickets as author. I took my 300 francs to M. Setier, handed him my MS. and, two days later, I experienced the delight of correcting my first proofs. Who would have thought that what at that time gave me great joy would, in after life, become a weariness to the flesh?

At the end of a month, during which *la Chasse et l'Amour* had a triumphant run, bringing me in 180 francs in author's royalties and in the sale of my tickets, my volume of stories appeared under my name, with the title *Nouvelles contemporaines.*

Four copies of it were sold, and an article on it was written in the *Figaro.* The article was by Étienne Arago. When this chapter appears, I hope he will have returned to France. In any case, should it come under his notice, in his exile, great will be his surprise, no doubt, to find that I recollect, after a lapse of twenty-five years, an article which he will have forgotten. The four copies sold brought in ten francs to M. Setier's till. Thus, M. Setier was out of pocket to the tune of 290 francs for having printed the *Nouvelles contemporaines*, and I 300 francs for having written them. It

was an unlucky speculation for both of us. I then remembered the advice given me by a very shrewd publisher, M. Bossange--

"Make a name for yourself, and then I will publish your works."

That was just the very difficulty! *To make a name for oneself!* It is the condition laid down for every man who sets forth to carve his own career. When it is first put to him, he asks himself, in despair, how the condition is ever to be fulfilled; and, nevertheless, he fulfils it.

I do not believe in the existence of ignored talent, or in genius that remains unknown. There must have been reasons why Gilbert and Hégésippe Moreau died in the hospitals. There must have been reasons why Escousse and Lebras committed suicide. It is a hard thing to say, but neither of these two poor foolish fellows, if they had lived, would have earned by the end of twenty years' work the reputation that Béranger's epitaph gave them.

So I set to work very earnestly to make a name sufficient to sell my books, in order that I should no longer have to pay half the cost of printing them. And, moreover, that name, short and humble though it was, had already begun to be known in the land. Vatout had read my *Ode au général Foy* and my *Nouvelles contemporaines* (for it will be realised that the sale of only four copies had given a wide field to my generosity in the matter of presentation copies), and one day he sent me three or four lithographs, asking me to take one, and compose some lines to go under it. This requires explanation. Vatout published the *Galerie du Palais-Royal.* It was a sumptuously printed work and appeared under the patronage of the Duc d'Orléans. It was a lithographic reproduction of all the pictures in the gallery of the Palais-Royal, with notices, information or lines composed in their honour by all the literary men of the day. It would therefore seem that I was included among these literary personages, since Vatout asked me for some lines. My reasoning thus was more in the nature of sophistry than a dilemma; but, as I had no one

with whom to discuss the matter, it presented itself to me as a dilemma and became an encouragement to me. Oh! there was nothing I needed then more than encouragement from all sides. I selected a print depicting a Roman shepherd lad, after a picture by Montvoisin. The boy was lying down asleep in the shade of a clump of vines. I do not reproduce the verses I made on this subject for their merit, but rather as an interesting study of my progress in poetical diction:--

"Il est une heure plus brûlante Où le char du soleil, au zénith arrêté, Suspend sa course dévorante, Et verse des torrents de flamme et de clarté. Alors, un ciel d'airain pèse au loin sur la terre, Les monts sont désertés, la plaine est solitaire, L'oiseau n'a plus de voix pour chanter ses amours, Et, sur la rive desséchée, La fleur implore en vain, immobile et penchée, Le ruisseau tari dans son cours.

Il est une place au bocage Où, s'arrondissant en berceaux, Le lierre et la vigne sauvage Se prolongent en verts arceaux. C'est là qu'étendu sous l'ombrage, Un berger du prochain village Trouve un sommeil réparateur; Et près de lui son chien fidèle Veille, attentive sentinelle, Sur les troupeaux et le pasteur.

Tu dors! jeune fils des montagnes, Et mon œil, aux débris épars autour de toi, Reconnaît ces vastes campagnes, Où florissait le peuple roi! Tu dors! et, des mortels ignorant le délire, Nul souvenir de gloire à ton cœur ne vient dire Que tes membres lasses ont trouvé le repos Sur la poussière d'un empire Et sur la cendre des héros.

Ces grands noms, qu'aux siècles qui naissent Lèguent les siècles expirants, Et qui toujours nous apparaissent Debout sur les débris des ans, De nos cœurs sublimes idoles, Sont pour toi de vaines paroles, Dont les sons ne t'ont rien appris; Et, si ta bouche les répète, C'est comme l'écho qui rejette Des accents qu'il n'a pas compris.

Conserve donc cette ignorance, Gage d'un paisible avenir, Et qu'une molle indifférence T'épargne même un souvenir. Que de tes jours le flot limpide Coule comme un ruisseau timide Qui murmure parmi des fleurs, Et, loin des palais de la terre, Voit dans son onde solitaire Le ciel réfléchir ses couleurs.

Si du fleuve orageux des âges Tu voulais remonter les bords, Que verrais-tu, sur ces rivages? Du sang, des débris et des morts; Les lâches clameurs de l'envie La vertu toujours poursuivie, Aux yeux des rois indifférents; Et, profanant les jours antiques, Sur la cendre des républiques, Des autels dressés aux tyrans.

Que dirais-tu, lorsque l'histoire Viendrait dérouler à tes yeux Ses fastes sanglants, où la gloire Recueille les erreurs des cieux? Ici, les fils de Cornélie, Que tour à tour la tyrannie Écrase, en passant, sous son char; Là, trahi du dieu des batailles, Caton déchirant ses entrailles Pour fuir le pardon de César!

Près de ces illustres victimes, Que pleure encor la liberté, Tu verrais, puissants de leurs crimes, Les grands fonder l'impunité: Lorsque sa rage est assouvie, Un Sylla terminant sa vie, Tranquille au toit de ses aïeux; Un Tibère que l'on encense, Et qu'à sa mort un peuple immens Ose placer au rang des dieux.

Alors, à cette heure voilée, Où l'ombre remplace le jour, Quand les échos de la vallée Redisent de doux chants d'amour, Seul peut-être, au pied des collines, D'où Rome sort de ses ruines, Viendrais-tu sans chiens, sans troupeaux, Et, regrettant ton ignorance, Fuirais-tu les jeux et la danse, Pour soupirer sur des tombeaux!"

Meanwhile, M. Marle had been obliged to give up his journal, and Adolphe and I proposed to turn his two or three hundred subscribers to account by making of these good folk a nucleus for a monthly publication. After a great deal of discussion as to whether the publication

had better be in prose or verse, we decided it should be both in verse and prose and should be styled *Psyché.* This was an admirable way for me to publish all I had previously written both in prose and verse without having to pay half the expense. Neither prose nor poetry inserted in *Psyché* would bring us in anything, but at the same time it would not cost us anything. We published, at this period, some delightful verses by Madame Desbordes-Valmore and by Madame Amable Tastu. Here are those by Madame Desbordes-Valmore:--

"Cher petit oreiller, doux et chaud sous ma tête, Plein de plume choisie, et blanc, et fait pour moi, Quand on a peur du vent, des loups, de la tempête, Cher petit oreiller, que l'on dort bien sur toi!

Beaucoup, beaucoup d'enfants pauvres et nus, sans mère, Sans maison, n'ont jamais d'oreiller pour dormir; Ils ont toujours sommeil.... O destinée amère! Cela, douce maman, cela me fait gémir....

Et, quand j'ai prié Dieu pour tous ces petits anges Qui n'ont point d'oreiller, moi, j'embrasse le mien, Et, seul en mon doux nid, qu'à tes pieds tu m'arranges, Je te bénis, ma mère, et je touche le tien!

Je ne m'éveillerai qu'à la lueur première De l'aube au rideau bleu; c'est si beau de la voir! Je vais faire, tout has, ma plus tendre prière; Donne encore un baiser, douce maman; bonsoir!

PRIÈRE

"Dieu des enfants! le cœur d'une petite fille, Plein de prière, écoute, est ici dans tes mains. Hélas! on m'a parlé d'orphelins sans famille; Dans l'avenir, mon Dieu, ne fais plus d'orphelins!

Laisse descendre, au soir, un ange qui pardonne, Pour répondre à des voix que l'on entend gémir; Mets, sous l'enfant perdu que sa mère abandonne, Un petit oreiller qui le fera dormir!"

Madame Desbordes-Valmore was born at Douai.

"I was my mother's last born, and her only fair child," she wrote to me once, "and I was christened with special honours on account of the colour of my hair, which was much admired in my mother's case. She was as beautiful as a Madonna, and everybody hoped I should be like her in everything; but I only resembled her slightly, and if I have ever been loved, it has certainly been for other attractions than great beauty. My father was a heraldic painter; he also painted arms on carriages and church decorations. His house was close to the cemetery of the lowly parish of Notre-Dame de Douai. I thought the dear old house very big when I quitted it at the age of seven; but I have since seen it, and it is one of the smallest and meanest in the town. All the same, I love it better than any other place in the whole world, for I have never really had such peace and happiness as there. Then, suddenly, came great and overwhelming misery, when my father could get no more carriages to paint or coats of arms to design.... I was four when France was going through the period of its greatest troubles. My father's great-uncles, who had been previously exiled to Holland, at the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, offered their immense inheritance to us if we would renounce the Catholic faith for Protestantism. These two uncles were centenarians and lived in Amsterdam, unmarried, where they had established a publishing-house. I possess some books printed by them in my poor little library. A family council was called. My mother wept sorely; my father was in a state of vacillation and kissed us. Finally, the inheritance was declined from fear of selling our souls, and we remained in our miserable state of poverty, which grew worse and worse as the months passed by, leaving an impression of unhappiness on me which has never been obliterated. My mother was brave and daring, and she made up her mind to go to America to look for a wealthy relative there, in the hope of re-establishing the fortunes of her family. Her four children shuddered at the prospect of the voyage, so she only took me with her. I was willing enough to go with her, but the sacrifice cost me all my lightness of heart, for I worshipped my father as one worships God Himself. That long

journey, the seaports, the great ocean filled me with terror, and I sheltered against my mother's garments as my only harbour of refuge. When we reached America, my mother found her cousin a widow, driven from her estate by the negroes. The colony had risen in revolt, and the yellow fever was raging in all its horror. Awakened thus rudely from her cherished dream, she could not bear up under the fresh blow that had overtaken us. It killed her, and she died at the age of forty-one. I nearly died by her side when they took me in my mourning dress from the rapidly depopulating isle and shipped me from vessel to vessel, until I was restored again to my relatives, who were now poorer than ever. Then it was that the theatre offered us a harbour of refuge. I was taught to sing; I tried hard to recover my cheerfulness of disposition but it was of no use; I managed better in melancholy or passion-fraught parts. That is practically the whole of my life-story. I was taken on at the Théâtre Feydeau, and everybody predicted a brilliant future before me. I was made a member before I was sixteen, without either hoping or asking for it; but at that time my insignificant part only brought me in eighty francs per month, and the poverty with which I struggled passes description. I was obliged to sacrifice the future for the sake of the present, and for my father's sake I returned to the provinces. At twenty, a great sorrow compelled me to give up singing. The very sound of my voice would set me weeping; but the music still rang in my unhappy head, and the measured rhythms unwittingly forced my thoughts to keep pace with them. I felt compelled to commit my fevered ideas to paper, and when it was done I was told I had written an elegy. M. Alibert, who looked after my very frail health, recommended me to write as a curative, for he knew nought else that would be of any avail. I followed his advice without any knowledge or study of my subject. And this gave me much extra trouble, because I could never find the right words to express my thoughts. My first volume was published in 1822. You asked, dear friend, how I came to be a poet. I can only answer you by telling you how I came to write."

Madame Tastu had had a less troublous and unhappy life, and one discerns it in the calm pulsations of her lines. She had quite simply accepted, her position as a woman, and given her life to her mother, to her husband, to her children.

She had lived her life in the light of these three loves, desiring nothing beyond them, regretting nothing, pouring forth poetry from her heart when it became too full to contain itself, as water overflows from a too full vessel. The following example will give some idea of her gentle, melancholy style:--

"Déjà la rapide journée Fait place aux heures du sommeil, Et du dernier fils de l'année S'est enfui le dernier soleil. Près du foyer, seule, inactive, Livrée aux souvenirs puissants, Ma pensée erre, fugitive, Des jours passés aux jours présents. Ma vue, au hasard arrêtée, Longtemps de la flamme agitée Suit les caprices éclatants, Ou s'attache à l'acier mobile Qui compte sur l'émail fragile Les pas silencieux du Temps. Encore un pas, encore une heure, Et l'année aura, sans retour, Atteint sa dernière demeure, L'aiguille aura fini son tour! Pourquoi de mon regard avide La poursuivre ainsi tristement, Quand je ne puis, d'un seul moment, Retarder sa marche rapide? Du temps qui vient de s'écouler Si quelques jours pouvaient renaître, Il n'en est pas un seul, peut-être, Que ma voix daignât rappeler ... Mais des ans la fuite m'étonne; Leurs adieux oppressent mon cœur. Je dis: 'C'est encore une fleur Que l'âge enlève à ma couronne, Et livre au torrent destructeur; C'est une ombre ajoutée à l'ombre Qui déjà s'étend sur mes jours, Un printemps retranché du nombre De ceux dont je verrai le cours!' Écoutons ... le timbre sonore Lentement frémit douze fois; Il se tait ... je l'écoute encore, Et l'année expire à sa voix. C'en est fait! en vain je l'appelle! Adieu!... Salut, sa sœur nouvelle! Salut!... quels dons chargent ta main? Quel bien nous apporte ton aile? Quels beaux jours dorment dans ton sein? Que dis-je! à mon âme tremblante Ne révèle pas tes secrets! D'espoir, de jeunesse et d'attraits, Aujourd'hui tu parais brillante; Et ta course, insensible et lente, Peut-être amène les regrets.

Ainsi chaque soleil se lève Témoin de nos vœux insensés, Et, chaque jour, son cours s'achève En emportant, comme un vain rêve, Nos vœux déçus et dispersés ... Mais l'espérance fantastique, Répandant sa clarté magique Dans la nuit du sombre avenir, Nous guide, d'année en d'année, Jusqu'à l'aurore fortunée Du jour qui ne doit point finir!"

There was still another poet at this time, a most charming poet, whose very name is now, perhaps, forgotten save by myself, and I registered a vow never to forget him. He was called Denne-Baron. We published a poem by him called *Zéphire*, that Prudhon's picture had inspired him to write.

Here it is. Tell me if you have ever read smoother lines:--

"Il est un demi-dieu, charmant, léger, volage; Il devance l'aurore, et, d'ombrage en ombrage, Il fuit devant le char du jour; Sur son dos éclatant, où frémissent deux ailes, S'il portait un carquois et des flèches cruelles, Vos yeux le prendraient pour l'Amour.

C'est lui qu'on voit, le soir, quand les heures voilées Entr'ouvrent du couchant les portes étoilées, Glisser dans l'air à petit bruit; C'est lui qui donne encore une voix aux Naïades, Des soupirs à Syrinx, des concerts aux Dryades Et de doux parfums à la nuit.

Zéphire est son doux nom; sa légère origine, Pure comme l'éther, trompa l'œil de Lucine, Et n'eut pour témoins que les airs; D'un souffle du printemps, d'un soupir de l'aurore, Dans son liquide azur, le ciel le vit éclore Comme un alcyon sur les mers.

Ce n'est point un enfant, mais il sort de l'enfance; Entre deux myrtes verts, tantôt il se balance; Tantôt il joue au bord des eaux, Ou glisse sur un lac, ou promène sur l'onde Les filets d'Arachné, la feuille vagabonde, Et le nid léger des oiseaux.

Souvent sur les hauteurs du Cynthe ou d'Érymanthe, Sous les abris voûtés d'une source écumante Il lutine Diane au bain; Ou, quand, aux bras de Mars, Vénus s'est endormie, Sur leur couche effeuillant un rosier d'Idalie, Il les cache aux yeux de Vulcain.

Parfois, aux antres creux,--palais bizarre et sombre De la sauvage Écho, du sommeil et de l'ombre,-- Du Lion il fuit les ardeurs; Parfois, dans un vieux chêne, aux forêts de Cybèle, Dans le calme des nuits il berce Philomèle, Son nid, ses chants et ses malheurs.

O puisses-tu, Zéphire, auprès de ton poëte, Pour seul prix de mes vers, au fond de ma retraite Caresser un jour mes vieux ans! Et, si le sort le veut, puisse un jour ton haleine Sur les bords fortunés de mon petit domaine Bercer mes épis jaunissants!"

BOOK II — CHAPTER IV

CHAPTER IV

Talma's illness--How he would have acted *Tasso*--His nephews--He receives a visit from M. de Quélen--Why his children renounced his faith--His death--*La Noce et l'Enterrement*--Oudard lectures me on my fondness for theatre-going--The capital reply that put the Palais-Royal in a gay humour--I still keep the confidence of Lassagne and de la Ponce--I obtain a success anonymously at the Porte-Saint-Martin

In the midst of these first literary labours, into which we had flung ourselves with all the ardour of youth, terrible news for the cause of art spread throughout Paris. Talma was attacked with a fatal disease. He had just reached the zenith of his talent, perhaps, in his last creation of the *Démence de Charles VI.* The reader will recollect the call Adolphe and I paid him, and how, as he was feeling better, he was hoping to return to the theatre to play *Tibère*, and his pointing to his lean cheeks which would serve him admirably in taking upon himself the rôle of the aged emperor. But Talma was struck with a mortal disease. Charles VI. was to be his last appearance--an appearance finer than any of the creations of his youth or of his mature years--and Michelot was destined to take the part of Tiberius. We were not the only people, for that matter, to have similar recollections. Towards the close of Talma's life he made a short stay at Enghien, where Firmin went to see him. Firmin was just going to act *Tasso*, which had been allotted to Talma, but which he had been obliged to renounce. Talma was very fond of Firmin; his enthusiasm enchanted him, and he had often given him advice.

"Well, my dear friend," he said to him, "so you are going to play *Tasso?*"

"To my infinite regret," was Firmin's reply. "I would much rather have seen you play it; it would have been a study for me and I should have learnt a lesson from it."

"It is but a poor play," said Talma, "although there is a fine scene in the fifth act, where, in the hope of restoring reason to the poor madman, people tell him of the honours that are being prepared for him and of the crown awaiting him. And, as you are aware, Firmin, at the word *couronne* he seems to realise what is being said to him. 'A crown for me!' he exclaims. 'If that be so, Alphonse will no longer refuse me his sister!... Where is this crown? Where is it?' Then, when they show it him, he looks at it and says sorrowfully, 'It is not a golden crown, only a laurel wreath ... the brother will never give his consent!' Listen, Firmin," said Talma; "this is how I should play it...."

And, sitting half up in his bed, he went through the scene in such telling accents, and with such pathetic and dejected expression, filled throughout with both despair and insanity, that Firmin, who knew nothing but what he had just seen, felt inclined to throw up the part.

Towards the beginning of October, the improvement which had somewhat restored hope disappeared, and the disease made such rapid progress that Talma himself expressed a desire to see those whom he loved best, whose occupations placed them at a distance from him. Among these was his nephew, Amédée Talma, a surgeon-dentist at Brussels. He arrived on 9 October, and never left his uncle till the end. After the sick man had been prepared for this visitor, Amédée Talma entered the room and went up to his uncle's bedside. Talma held out his hand, drew him close and kissed him. It was dark, but the young man saw by the dampness of his uncle's cheek that he was weeping. The sick man, however, soon recovered himself, and, after a moment's pause, he said--

"You must not stay here more than two or three days. Your business will not admit of longer absence. I sent for you because you have known for a

long time the disease I am suffering from, and my doctors wish to learn what you can tell them about it before they were called in."

A fresh consultation was therefore held on the 12th, at which the young doctor was present. Only two or three out of the eleven medical men present thought there was any hope. Still, the new remedies suggested allayed the attacks of vomiting, and these ceased altogether towards the end. When the doctors came to his bedside, Talma said to them--

"Well, is it all up? I will do anything you desire ... but I doubt if you can pull me through, and I have reconciled myself to the inevitable. But the thing that troubles me most and what I want you to care for most is my eyesight: I am afraid I am going to lose my sight."

Another of Talma's nephews, named Charles Jeannin, arrived from Brussels on the 16th. The greatest precautions were necessary in breaking the news of this fresh visitor to Talma. Nothing that went on round him escaped his notice. MM. Dupuytren, Biett and Begin were standing by the fireplace talking in low voices, when Talma caught a word or two of their conversation.

"What are you talking about?" he asked.

M. Dupuytren did not answer him, but went up to Amédée Talma. "I was asking these gentlemen," he said to the young man, "whether Talma had been told of the archbishop's visits."

As a matter of fact, the archbishop called almost daily, but they had not allowed him to see the patient.

"The archbishop?" repeated Talma. "What are you saying about the archbishop?"

Amédée hastened to reply--

"M. Dupuytren was telling these gentlemen, uncle, that the Archbishop of Paris has called every day to ask after you."

"Oh! what good a fellow the archbishop is!" Talma exclaimed. "I am much touched by his remembering me.... I used to meet him at the house of the Princesse de Wagram: he is a very excellent man."

"Yes," Amédée reiterated,--"yes, he has called nearly every day."

"Here?" Talma asked.

"Here; I have spoken to him myself twice; I have even promised him that, when you are better, you will see him."

"Oh! no, no," said Talma quickly; "but when I am better he shall be the first on whom I will call. I remember once he was good enough to send an ecclesiastic to me to tell me that he had nothing to do with the insult put on my children in the matter of the distribution of prizes and that the whole blame should fall on the headmaster of the school."

I will give the story of what had happened: the event wounded Talma to the quick, for he adored his two children.

The Archbishop of Paris was asked to preside at a prize distribution at the College Morin. Now it seems that the authorities did not dare to ask the ecclesiastic to reward the two sons of the great actor, so the names of the two lads were omitted, and it was not until after M. de Quélen's departure that the prizes they had earned were handed to them privately. Talma instantly caused his two children to renounce the Catholic faith, and from that time they belonged to the Reformed religion.

The doctors withdrew, and, as they were leaving, M. Dupuytren said to Amédée--

"I am going to the château: if I meet the archbishop what shall I say to him?"

"Why, monsieur," the young man replied, "I do not think you can do better than tell him what we have just heard and my uncle's answer to what I said; if, later, my uncle asks for him, I shall have much pleasure in sending for him at once."

But, instead of following out these instructions, M. Dupuytren, who did not meet the archbishop, took upon himself to write to him and tell him he could go and see Talma. The archbishop made haste to attend to the request, which he had no idea came only from M. Dupuytren; but, as on previous occasions, he was received by Amédée Talma. On 18 October M. Charles Jeannin was obliged to leave his uncle and return to keep an engagement in Brussels for the 20th. On 19 October, at six in the morning, seeing Amédée by his bedside, Talma said--

"What, my dear boy, have you not gone yet?"

"There was only one vacant seat in the diligence, uncle, and I gave it up to Charles, who was urgently wanted in Brussels."

"When do you go?"

"To-morrow morning."

"At what time?"

"Six o'clock ... if I can get a seat."

Talma gently shook his head.

"You are deceiving me," he said; "you have not been able to save me, and you wish to stay with me to the end.... If I had been a peasant from Brunoy, I could have been cured; but they have bungled over me.... However, my death will enable them to learn how they ought to treat someone else. So much for doctoring! Now go and fetch MM. Nicod and Jacquet."

These were his lawyers. The gardener was called and sent on this errand. Talma recognised him.

"Ah! is that you, Louette?" he said.

Then, turning to his nephew, he added--

"I have not paid him for the last two months; you must tell Madame it is most essential.... But, by the bye, where is Caroline?"

"She is asleep."

"Which means she is crying."

Madame Talma heard, and she came up to the bedside.

"What time is it?" Talma continued, not seeing her.

"Six o'clock, uncle."

"It is always six o'clock with you."

He tried to set going the repeater of his watch.

"I cannot any longer hear my watch," he said.

"Would you like a timepiece?"

"Yes; go and fetch me the one out of my bedroom."

His nephew went, and Madame Talma was exposed to view.

"Ah! there you are, Caroline," he said; "we must now put matters right for you."

His nephew brought the clock and put it on the night table.

"I am very unsightly, am I not, my good Amédée?" Talma remarked. "My beard is so long...."

"You shall have it trimmed to-day."

"Give me a looking-glass."

He took it and looked at himself.

"I tell you, Amédée, I am losing my sight; for pity's sake, have something done for my eyes. Oh! I shall lose them--I cannot see at all to-day."

The lawyers arrived and, with them, M. Davilliers. But Talma tried in vain to discuss business matters--he was past all that; he could only speak in whispers, although he believed he was speaking very loudly, and his speech grew more and more indistinct. MM. Arnault and de Jouy were announced. Talma signed for them to be brought to him. M. Arnault embraced Talma, to whom he was tenderly attached, and, as he did so, the word "Adieu" escaped from his lips.

"Are you going away, then?" asked Talma.

"Yes," Amédée answered hastily, "these gentlemen are going to Brussels."

Both men embraced him and, to hide their sobs, rushed quickly from the room; as Talma saw them go out he said--

"Quite right, be quick and go, then I shall hope to see you again soon; the sooner you go, the sooner you will come back."

When MM. de Jouy and Arnault had gone away, his two children were brought him, and Talma held out his hands to them, to be kissed. A few minutes later, he uttered three words--

"Voltaire!... like Voltaire!..."

Then, immediately afterwards, he murmured--

"The cruellest thing of all is to lose one's sight."

The next moment, some piece of furniture cracked very loudly, and Talma turned his head in the direction of the sound. A lady who had just arrived took advantage of this movement to say--

"Talma, it is I, Mademoiselle Menocq."

The dying man made a slight token of acknowledgment and pressed her hand. It struck half-past eleven. Talma took his handkerchief in both hands, lifted it up slowly to his mouth, wiped his lips and then put it behind his head, still holding it in both hands. After the lapse of a few seconds, his hands released their hold and fell down by his sides. His nephew took hold of the hand nearest him, and felt that his pressure was returned feebly. At eleven thirty-five, without any convulsion or muscular contraction of the face, one sigh escaped his lips--it was his last breath.

When Garrick died, four peers of England claimed it as an honour to bear the four corners of his pall, and to follow their English Roscius to his resting-place among the tombs of kings.

One hundred thousand persons followed Talma's funeral procession, but not a single representative from those in high places in the State were among the number. . . . . Lassagne had told me to think of a subject for a vaudeville. I had done so, and believed I had found one. It was in the *Arabian Nights*, one of the episodes in the travels of Sinbad the sailor, I believe. I say "I believe," for I am not quite sure, and the matter is not really worth the trouble of ransacking my desk to find out. Sinbad, the indefatigable traveller, reaches a country where they bury wives with their husbands, and husbands with their wives. He imprudently marries; his wife dies, and he has a narrow escape of being buried with her. A mere trifle. But the episode suggested a vague plan, which I took to Lassagne.

Lassagne read it, and, if that were possible he was more kindly disposed towards me even than at the first, when he saw how determined I was to succeed. With the exception of a few corrections, which he undertook to make, he decided that the scheme would serve. He therefore communicated with a clever young fellow named Vulpian, a friend of his, who was also later to become one of mine. Vulpian is one more name to be marked with a cross in these recollections; for he is dead. We met together two or three times and shared the task. This time I had to do with collaborators who were more punctilious in keeping their promises than poor Rousseau had been. At the first meeting, each of us had his part ready. We joined the three pieces together and made them into something like a harmonious whole. Lassagne undertook to put the polishing touches to the work, which took him three or four days. When this was done, the three authors, pronouncing it to be perfect, decided it should be read under the title of *la Noce et l'Enterrement* at the Vaudeville, where Lassagne and Vulpian knew Désaugiers. Unluckily, Désaugiers, who was already affected with the disease that eventually killed him, was at home undergoing a second or third operation, and could not be present at the reading. The upshot of his absence was that *la Noce et l'Enterrement* received almost as abrupt a refusal at the Vaudeville as *la Chasse et l'Amour* had at the Gymnase. It seemed I was not to be favoured with good luck while I shared my work with others. I felt terribly discouraged. But I felt worse still the day after the reading, when Lassagne put in an appearance with an expression of gloom on his face. It was so rarely he was depressed that I rose from my seat feeling sure something was wrong.

"What is the matter now?" I asked.

"Matter enough, my poor friend; for somehow or other it has leaked out, although your name was not breathed at the reading, that I have written a play with you; and, in consequence, Oudard has just sent for me."

"Well?"

"Well, he made out I had given you a taste for literature; he says this taste will ruin your future career and he has made me pass my word of honour not only to cease helping you in any other play, but also to cast aside the one already finished."

"And did you promise?" I asked.

"I felt obliged to do so for your sake, Dumas. You haven't General Foy any longer to uphold your interests here. I don't know who has done you a bad turn by speaking to M. de Broval, but they do not at all look upon your literary propensities with friendly eyes."

I do not think my heart ever felt heavier. The two or three hundred francs which *la Chasse et l'Amour* had brought in had so sensibly lightened our circumstances, that I had been looking forward to the time when I should be drawing not merely twenty to twenty-five francs more per month, but earning four times that amount by literary work. Moreover, a portion of what *la Noce et l'Enterrement* was to bring me in was hypothecated to Porcher, who had lent me 300 francs. What Lassagne had just told me pretty well overthrew all my castles in Spain. It seemed to me most cruel to forbid me working for the drama out of office hours, and to insist that my mother, my son and I should be compelled to live on 125 francs per month. This feeling was so strong that it fired me with courage to go straight to Oudard. I entered his office with tears in my eyes but my voice under control.

"Is it true, monsieur," I asked, "that you have forbidden Lassagne to work with me?"

"Yes," was his reply. "Why do you ask me that?"

"Because I should not have thought you would have had the courage to do so."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, it seems to me a man needs courage to condemn three persons to live on a hundred and twenty-five francs a month."

"And it seems to me you ought to think yourself very fortunate to have the hundred and twenty-five francs per month, instead of despising them."

"I do not despise them, monsieur; on the contrary, I am very grateful to those who give them to me; only, I repeat that the sum is not sufficient and that I think I ought to be allowed the right to add to it so long as it does not interfere with attention to my office work."

"It may not interfere with your office work now, but it very soon will."

"That will be the time, then, for you to be anxious."

"It is really no affair of mine," said M. Oudard. "I simply and solely convey the views of the chief director."

"Of M. de Broval?"

"Yes, of M. de Broval."

"I thought M. de Broval pretended to foster literature."

"Literature? Perhaps he does ... but do you call *la Chasse et l'Amour* and *la Noce et l'Enterrement* literature?"

"Most surely not, monsieur. But my name was not put on the bills at the Ambigu, where *la Chasse et l'Amour* was played, and it will not be put on the bills of the theatre, whatever it may be, which may accept *la Noce et l'Enterrement."*

"Still, if you are ashamed to own those productions, why make them?"

"First, monsieur, because at present I do not feel myself able to do better, and because, such as they are, they bring comfort to our poverty ... yes, monsieur, to our poverty--I do not shrink from the truth. One day, you somehow learnt that I had sat up several nights to copy some stage plays which brought in four francs an act, and that, under the same conditions, I copied out M. Théaulon's comedy, the *Indiscret*,--well, you complimented me then on my pluck."

"Quite true."

"How then, may I ask, am I more guilty in making my own plays than in copying out those of others? You must, of course, be aware that Adolphe also writes plays?"

"Which Adolphe?"

"Adolphe de Leuven."

"What then?"

"Why, I heard you speak to M. de Broval the other day in support of Adolphe's request for a post in the offices of the Duc d'Orléans."

"M. Adolphe de Leuven was highly recommended to me."

"And I, monsieur, was not I also highly recommended to you? True, de Leuven was highly recommended to you by Benjamin Constant, General Gérard and Madame de Valence, whilst I was only recommended to you by General Foy."

"And what does that mean?"

"It means that Adolphe de Leuven's patrons are alive while my supporter is dead."

"M. Dumas!..."

"Oh! do not be put out. I see I have hit the right nail on the head."

"Then you absolutely insist on continuing your writing?"

"Yes, monsieur; I desire to do so both from inclination, and from necessity."

"Very well, produce literature like Casimir Delavigne's and instead of blaming you, we will give you encouragement."

"Monsieur," I replied, "I am not M. Casimir Delavigne's age, who has been poet laureate since 1811; neither have I received the education M. Casimir Delavigne had at one of the best colleges in Paris. No, I am only twenty-two; I am busy educating myself every day, probably at the cost of my health, for all I learn--and I assure you I am studying many subjects--I learn when other people are fast asleep or amusing themselves. So I cannot, just at this moment, produce work like M. Casimir Delavigne's. But, M. Oudard, I would ask you, in conclusion, to listen carefully to what I am about to say, strange though it may sound to your ears: if I did not believe I could do different work in days to come than M. Casimir Delavigne's, well, monsieur, I should meet you and M. de Broval more than half-way in your wishes, and at this very instant I would give you my sacred promise, I would take a solemn oath, never to touch literature again."

Oudard looked at me with expressionless eyes; for my pride took his breath away. I bowed to him and went out. Five minutes later, he went to M. Deviolaine to tell him of my insane carryings on. M. Deviolaine inquired if it were really in his presence, if it were really to him, that I had said such monstrous things.

"Yes, it was in my presence and to me," said Oudard.

"I will tell his mother about it," said M. Deviolaine; "and if he continues possessed with this madness, send him to me. I will take him into my office and see that he doesn't go altogether stark staring mad."

And, indeed, my mother was told that very same night. When I returned from making up the portfolio, I found her in tears. M. Deviolaine had sent for her, and told her of all that had passed between M. Oudard and me that morning. Next day, the crime of which I had been guilty was public property throughout the offices. The sixty-three clerks of His Royal Highness never lost an opportunity of saying to each other as they met, "Have you heard what Dumas said to M. Oudard yesterday?"

And the clerk to whom the question was addressed would reply with either a Yes or a No. If he replied in the negative, the story was related with corrections, embellishments and exaggerations, that did the greatest credit to the imagination of my colleagues. During the whole day and for several days to follow, homeric laughter could be heard throughout the corridors of the Maison de la rue Saint-Honoré No. 216. There was one solitary book-keeping clerk who had only been engaged the previous day, and whom no one as yet knew, who did not laugh.

"Why," said the others to him, "you aren't laughing."

"No."

"Why don't you laugh?"

"Because it doesn't seem to me a laughing matter."

"What! Don't you think it a huge joke that Dumas said he would do better things than Casimir Delavigne?"

"In the first place, he did not say he would do better, he said he would do something different."

"It is all the same."

"No, it is quite different."

"But do you know Dumas?"

"Yes, and because I know him I tell you he will do something; I don't know what it will be, but I tell you that that something will astonish everybody, save myself."

This employé, who had just joined the office, in the book-keeping department, was my old German and Italian master, Amédeé de la Ponce.

So there were two people out of the seventy-two persons, heads and employés, who composed His Royal Highness's official staff, who did not despair of me! Lassagne and he.

From this time began the warfare of which Lassagne had warned me when I first entered the office. But, no matter what the war was going to be like, or how long it was going to last, I made up my mind to fight to the end.

A week later, a ray of comfort came to me. Vulpian came to tell Lassagne and me that our play had been accepted by the theatre of the Porte-Saint-Martin for Serres' début.

So it will be seen I was gently drawing nearer to the Théâtre-Français, but I had learnt Italian enough to understand the 1 proverb, "*Che va piano va sano.*"

The author's rights were also higher. The theatre of the Porte-Saint-Martin paid eighteen francs for a vaudeville, and allowed twelve francs' worth of tickets.

So this meant for me eight francs per night instead of six;--exactly double, this time, what my office work brought me in.

La Noce et l'Enterrement was played on 21 November 1826. My mother and I saw my play from the orchestra. As my name did not transpire, and as I was totally unknown, I experienced no inconvenience from allowing myself the satisfaction of being present. The play succeeded admirably; but, even as the Roman emperors, in their days of triumph, were

reminded by a slave that they were mortal, so, lest my success should intoxicate me, Providence placed a neighbour on my left who remarked, as he rose at the fall of the curtain--

"Come, come, it isn't such stuff as this that will uphold the theatre."

My neighbour was right, and he knew what he was talking about all the more in that he was a fellow-writer.

The play was acted some forty times, and, as Porcher generously left me half my rights, claiming only the remaining half to liquidate previous advances, the four francs per night that I received from the tickets helped us to get over the winter of 1826 to 1827.

BOOK II — CHAPTER V

CHAPTER V

Soulié at the mechanical saw-mill--His platonic love of gold--I desire to write a drama with him--I translate *Fiesque*--Death of Auguste Lafarge--My pay is increased and my position lowered--Félix Deviolaine, condemned by the medical faculty, is saved by illness--*Louis XI. à Péronne*--Talma's theatrical wardrobe--The *loi de justice et d'amour*--The disbanding of the National Guard

From that moment I made up my mind firmly; like Ferdinand Cortez, I had burnt my boats, and I had either to succeed or to hang myself. Unfortunately, I was not staking for myself alone; my poor mother was also equally involved in the game.

Although Soulié had been less fortunate than we had been, in not yet having had anything of his acted, I had divined what strength of imagination lay in his work, and I had decided to attempt a work of some importance in collaboration with him. At heart, I really agreed with M. Oudard's estimate of my first two productions, and I had shown it by not wishing my name to appear in connection with either of them, while, by some instinct that did not lead me far astray, I had signed the *Ode sur la mort du général Foy*, the *Nouvelles contemporaines* and *Pâtre romain.* But I quite decided not to sign my name to any theatrical work until I could do something that would make a great sensation. Soulié had moved; he lodged near La Gare. By some means or other, he had become head of a saw-mill, in which upwards of a hundred workpeople were employed. In comparison with us, Soulié was wealthy. He had a small allowance from his father, plus his salary as manager of this industrial establishment; so he could jingle a little gold in his pockets, which was quite out of the question in our case. Soulié had a real passion for gold,

and he liked to look at it and to handle it. Towards the close of his life, he was earning between forty and fifty thousand francs per annum; and, when he had contracts to pay by the end of the month, he would often keep the two or three thousand francs thus hypothecated, in his drawer, from the 15th to the 20th. Then, in order to procure the joy which the sight of gold gave him, he would change his five-francs piece or his bank-notes for napoleons, asking that the newest and most glittering coins should be sent him, even at the expense of four or five sous per napoleon,--for Soulié had not the good fortune to live in the happy period of the depreciation of gold,--then, when the end of the month came, it cost him such anguish to part from his gold, that, although the sum owing lay there in his drawer, he seldom settled his account when it was due, preferring to pay twenty, thirty, fifty or a hundred francs extra, in order to feast his eyes upon the rich metal for a few days longer. And yet nobody could be more generous or liberal-handed or lavish than Soulié. He loved gold; but do not misunderstand us, it was not after the fashion of a miser that he loved it, but as the representative of luxury, as the surest means to procure all the pleasures of life: he loved gold for the power it bestows. So he had a very special predilection for the romance of *Monte-Cristo.* I hope I may be forgiven if I dwell at too great length on Soulié; he was one of the most interesting personalities I ever met, and I say of him, as Michelet once said of me, "he was one of the forces of nature." I could picture Soulié poaching in the forests of America, a pirate in the Indian Seas or in the Arctic Ocean, an explorer along the shores of Lake Tchad or Senegal, far better than as a romance-writer or a dramatist.

He was consummate, too, in the midst of his hundred workmen at the saw-mill, as he directed them by a nod of the head, by a wave of the hand, giving his orders in a tone of voice at once gentle and firm, kindly yet full of power. He had just finished his imitation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet.* There were some fine lines in that piece of work, well conceived, some great thoughts vigorously handled; but, in the main, it

was a mediocre production. He had started it two years too late, and had not attempted anything fresh at a time when to be original was one of the conditions of success.

I told Soulié frankly that I had come to ask him to write a drama with me; but, as neither of us felt at all strong enough to attempt anything in the way of original creation, we decided to take a subject from Walter Scott. Walter Scott was all the rage; his *Kenilworth Castle* had just been played with great success at the Porte-Saint-Martin, and a version of *Quentin Durward* was to be acted at the Théâtre-Français. Talma was allotted the part of Louis XI., and he had intended it to follow his Tiberius. What a glorious thing it would have been for the drama for Talma to have personated a character from Walter Scott! We settled upon *Old Mortality.* There were two characters in *Old Mortality*--John Balfour of Burley and Bothwell--that completely fascinated Soulié.

When our subject was chosen, we set to work with great zest; but in vain did we put our heads together, the plan did not go well. To put it baldly, we each of us had too much individuality, and we were continually knocking against each other's angles. At the end of two or three months of fruitless labour, after five or six useless meetings, we had made no headway at all, and were scarcely farther advanced than at our first meeting. But I had gained enormously by my struggle with this rough champion; I felt all kinds of new forces springing up in me, and, like a blind man whose sight has been restored, each day, little by little, my range of vision seemed to widen.

Meantime, I was practising how to handle dramatic poetry by translating Schiller's *Fiesque* into verse. I undertook the task in order to teach myself, and not in hope of payment; and, although it was not to bring me in a penny, and we stood in the greatest need of work that would pay me, I had the courage to finish it from end to end.

About this time, my poor mother, who was always in fear of my losing my place, and who, I must confess, was quite justified in her fears, had a fresh instance of deceived hopes to bring before my notice. My compatriot, Auguste Lafarge, the stylish lawyer's clerk who had momentarily revolutionised the whole town of Villers-Cotterets, and who had been obliged to sell his business to pay his debts, because he could not find a rich wife to save the situation, had flung himself into literature for want of other means of livelihood, and had just died after two or three years' struggle against horrible poverty. It was in vain I said to my mother that Lafarge never had the making of a dramatic poet in him; in vain I told her he had never struggled, but, on the contrary, had given in without a fight; in vain I urged that Lafarge never possessed a fraction of my energy and perseverance; the material fact was that he had suffered hunger and misery and had died in consequence of his privations.

Another fact that ought to have set her fears to rest only gave her fresh anxiety. Betz had been promoted. The reader will recollect that Betz was the nice lad who had been my second in the duel with M. B. He had been made chief clerk at a salary of 2400 francs, and his post as order clerk at 2000 francs was given to Ernest, who, in his turn, left his place of 1800 francs vacant. As I had attended to my office work with a regularity that not even my worst enemy could have found fault with, and as, although they may have been unjust towards me, they were not really ill-intentioned, they could hardly refuse to give me Ernest's place, which I asked of Oudard as though it were my due. My request was acceded to, but they changed me from the Secretarial Department to the Relieving Offices. The *Bureau des secours* was really a branch of the Secretariat, but it was looked upon as a subordinate department. I should most of all have regretted leaving Lassagne, but a change had been made some time before in the arrangement of the offices, and a room had been given him to himself, in consideration of his position as deputy head-clerk. So it came about that I was quite as near him in the Relief Office as I had been

under the new arrangements at the Secretariat. I gained two things by this change: first, an increase of salary; secondly, a greater freedom of action; since, having to obtain information concerning the unfortunate people who asked for help, I spent whole days in going about from one end of Paris to the other. I should have been well pleased, as compensation for the two advantages thus gained, to have given up my portfolio making, but there was no way out of this.

In spite of my increase of salary, and the greater freedom I gained, my mother looked upon this change in my position as in the nature of a disgrace. She was not deceived; and, if she had been, M. Deviolaine would have taken care to put her right on this head.

In addition to this, a very real calamity was threatening to strike at that household with which we were closely connected. For some time past, Félix Deviolaine, who looked the very picture of health, had been troubled with a cough, and was losing flesh. He grew uneasy at the weakness he felt to be growing on him, and one day he sought me out and begged me to take him to Thibaut, whose medical skill he had often heard me praise. I hastened to do him this service, and took him to Thibaut, begging him to examine Félix very carefully. Thibaut made him strip to the waist, tapped his chest, listened to his breathing both with his ear and with the stethoscope; and, after ten minutes' examination, told him plainly that he was suffering from a serious lung complaint, although he was in no danger. But to me he whispered--

"The lad is doomed."

I cannot describe the grief and dismay this curtly expressed declaration caused me. Félix had never been particularly friendly towards me; he was of a somewhat jealous disposition, and had rather repelled than drawn me in to share the enjoyments which, thanks to his father's social position, he could have obtained for me, especially with regard to shooting, which I loved above all else. But, nevertheless, his was one of the tender

friendships of my early days, and if this prophecy were fulfilled it would be the first leaf that death would tear from the golden branch of my childish recollections.

I did not want to announce this sad news to M. Deviolaine, so I sought out Oudard and told him what had transpired. Oudard utterly declined to believe it; for Félix had seemed, until now, the most unlikely subject to die of pulmonary consumption; but I sent for Thibaut himself, and Thibaut repeated to him the fatal verdict he had told me. Without telling the whole truth to M. Deviolaine, Oudard gave him to understand that Félix required great care, and, as Félix did not wish to have any other doctor than Thibaut, it was arranged that Thibaut should pay him daily visits. It was then that I made the special study of pulmonary consumption which I later turned to account in my romance, *Amaury.* I have already stated that, just as Thibaut's prediction was on the point of being realised, and all hopes were given up--even in his mother's heart, that last sanctuary of hope--Félix Deviolaine was miraculously saved by articular rheumatism, which drew off the inflammation, and did what no other remedies had been able to effect.

Whilst these events were happening, the representation of the drama of *Louis XI. à Péronne*, in which Talma was to have acted, took place at the Théâtre-Français. It was a great event for all of us young writers who were aspiring to produce some novel creation; Taylor had urged its production, had seen that the costumes were accurate and the staging perfect. The play owed its success partly to the astonishment it evoked, and partly to its intrinsic worth. I did not see it at the first presentation, because I was unable to procure a ticket and was too poor to afford to buy one at the doors; but Soulié joined us afterwards at the café des Variétés and told us all about it. He was most enthusiastic over it. This inspired us with courage, and we tried to take up our *Puritains d'Écosse* once more.

Talma's dramatic succession at the Théâtre-Français had been divided: Michelot took Tiberius and Louis XI.; Firmin took Tasso; Joanny was prepared to undertake the whole of the illustrious dead actor's repertory; Lafond had become both *the one* and *the other*[1]; everybody regarded Talma as an obstacle, and now that this obstacle was removed, each strove to acquire for himself the reputation of the man who had eclipsed all other reputations. In order not to lose any chance of success, they divided his costumes among themselves, as they divided his rôles. A public sale of Talma's wardrobe was announced for 27 April. Here are some of the prices that the different costumes fetched. The actors who hoped to buy his talent with his clothes, did not pay dear for them.

Francs Charles VI. et sa perruque ... 205 Ladislas ... 230 Le Cid ... 62 Mithridate ... 100 Richard III ... 120 Les deux Néron ... 412 La couronne de Néron. 132 Othello, une fois joué à l'Opéra 131 Léonidas ... 200 Clovis ... 97 Joad ... 120 Nicomède ... 60 Le Maire du palais ... 115 Philoctète ... 40 Typpo-Saëb ... 96 Leicester ... 321 Meynau ... 45 Falkland ... 42 Danville ... 130 Le Misanthrope ... 400 Bayard ... 51 Le grand maître des Templiers 40 Jean de Bourgogne ... 79 Manlius ... 80 Sylla, avec la perruque. 160 Hamlet, avec le poignard. 236 L'Oreste d'*Andromaque*. 100 L'Oreste de *Clytemnestre*. 80 Total, fr. 3,884

Two items may be noted in the above: one, *Les deux Néron*, and the other, *Othello, une fois joué à l'Opéra.* These two descriptions show how conscientiously Talma hunted up particulars about his costumes. Once he discovered in Suetonius that Nero had entered the Senate in a blue mantle embroidered with gold stars; he instantly had a costume made after the same pattern, and came on to the stage in just such a blue mantle with gold stars as Nero had worn on entering the Senate. But, next day, some critic, who had not bothered his head to read Suetonius, and who took this costume to be a freak of the actor, said in one of the papers that Talma looked like Night in the prologue to *Amphitryon.* This was quite enough to prevent Talma from wearing the star-spangled robe. On

another occasion, before playing *Othello* at the Opéra for a benefit, he reflected that as the Moor had become a Venetian general he must necessarily have discarded his Oriental costume and adopted the Venetian dress. So he wore a very exact copy of a Venetian costume of the fifteenth century. But, in casting aside the turban, the girdle and the baggy ornamental pantaloons, half the picturesque effect had fled and not even all Talma's genius was able to make up for it, so, disappointed himself, and thinking that the change of costume had had a damaging effect on his play, he went back to the traditional costume for the remainder of the performances and never used the other again. The costume for the Misanthrope, found in Talma's wardrobe, indicated the lifelong desire he had cherished to play the part of Alceste, but it was a wish he had never dared to satisfy. The person who bought it was not afflicted with like modesty.

Whilst these events were occurring, that were of such secondary importance to France, but so vitally interesting to ourselves, the Government was slyly attempting to re-establish the Censorship that it had abolished. In the king's speech to the Chamber, he had said--

"I should have preferred, had it been possible, not to pay any attention to the press; but, since the habit of publishing political articles has developed, it has produced fresh abuses which require more efficacious and extensive means of repression. It is time to put a stop to painful scandals, and to preserve the liberty of the press itself from the danger of its own excesses; a project will be submitted to you with this object in view."

This paragraph was nothing more nor less than a threat, which translated itself into a Bill presented to the Chamber under the title of *Projet de loi sur la police de la presse.* The reading of this Act was interrupted by the Opposition a score of times and ended in a scene of terrible agitation. Casimir Périer jumped up from his seat, exclaiming--

"You might just as well bring forward a Bill consisting of the single clause, 'Printing is suppressed in France to the benefit of Belgium'!"

M. de Chateaubriand called this law a *law of Vandalism.* And to the outcry in the capital, the whole of France responded, sending joint and separate petitions to implore the Chamber to reject the Bill as destructive of all public liberties, disastrous to commerce and an attack on the sacred rights of property. In the midst of that terrible manifestation which, in 1827, predicted the armed opposition of 1830, the *Moniteur* had either the cleverness or the perfidiousness--one never can quite fathom the *Moniteur's* real sentiments--to insert in an article in favour of the law the phrase characterising it as a *law of justice and of love.* Oh! what an opportunity this gave for the weapon of sarcasm, always powerful in France! It fastened upon this phrase and used it as a weapon with which, on every possible occasion, to prick the heart of M. de Peyronnet. Everybody exclaimed against this Act, even the Academy itself. It was M. de Lacretelle who ventured to take the hazardous and difficult step of attempting to awake the Forty Immortals in their chairs. He read a rousing discourse to them on 4 January, on the disadvantages of the projected law, and the fetters it would put upon thought; he repudiated this fresh Censorship, which was to make printers judges of authors, and demanded that the Academy should make use of its prerogative and petition the king to accede to the entreaties of the Forty by withdrawing the Bill. After an hour's discussion, it was decided almost unanimously that this petition should be presented to the king, and MM. de Chateaubriand, Lacretelle and Villemain were deputed to draw it up. On 21 January, the following notice appeared in the *Moniteur*:--

"ART. I. The appointment of Sieur Villemain, *maître des requêtes* to the Council of State, is revoked..."

Then, lower down:--

"By order of the King, M. Michaud of the French Academy will no longer be one of His Majesty's readers.

"By command of His Excellency the Minister of the Interior, dated to-day, M. de Lacretelle has been dismissed from the post of Dramatic Censor."

This persecution was received by a burst of indignation against the Government and with demonstrative sympathy towards the victims of Ministerial cruelty. Finally, the chorus of opposition rose to such a threatening pitch that the Government grew frightened and withdrew on 18 April the Act that it had introduced on 29 November. A furore of delight then broke out in Paris: houses poured forth their inhabitants into the streets, and every face glowed with joy; hands were held out in greeting, and journeymen printers ran through the boulevards shouting, "Vive le roi!" waving white flags; and a general illumination took place all over Paris that night. But the mortified Government sent out troops, shots were fired and wounds received, and the withdrawal of the famous *loi de justice et d'amour* should be accredited not to the king's intelligence, but to his fear.

When Charles X.--poor, blind, deaf monarch--believing that the enthusiasm aroused by his accession to the throne would last for ever, commanded a review of the National Guard to be held on 29 April, on the Champ de Mars, he heard, to his vast surprise, mingled with those cries of "Vive le roi!" with which sovereigns are intoxicated, and thrill on their thrones, the bitter and raucous cries of "A bas les ministres!" and "A bas les Jésuits!" These cries came particularly from the ranks of the second, third, fifth, seventh and eighth legions, those, namely, belonging to the financial aristocracy and the lower middle classes. Astounded by such a reception, Charles X. drew up for an instant; then, spurring his horse to the front ranks of the legion that had uttered the bitterest of these invectives, he exclaimed--

"Messieurs, I have come here to receive homage and not lectures."

Alas! the kings of 1827, like those of 1848, should have known that homage blinds and lectures enlighten.

By six o'clock next morning every post of the National Guard was relieved by troops of the line, and by seven o'clock, instead of a leading article in the *Moniteur* on the review, there appeared the order to disband. From that moment there was a breach between the Elder Branch, and the middle class. The former possessed its king, elected by divine right, to reign over it and to die with it. But from that hour far-seeing eyes could discern the approaching clouds that were bringing on their wings the tempest of 1830.

[Footnote 1: See vol. ii. p. 442.]

BOOK II — CHAPTER VI

CHAPTER VI

English actors in Paris--Literary importations--*Trente Ans*, or *la Vie d'un Joueur*--The *Hamlet* of Kemble and Miss Smithson--A bas-relief of Mademoiselle de Fauveau--Visit to Frédéric Soulié--He declines to write *Christine* with me--A night attack--I come across Adèle d'Alvin once more--I spend the night *au violon*

Somewhere about 1822 or '23, I believe, a company of English actors attempted to give a series of representations in the theatre of the Porte-Saint-Martin, but they were received with so much opposition and hooting, and so many apples and oranges had been flung at the unfortunate actors from the pit, that they were compelled to abandon the field of battle under the heavy firing of projectiles. And that was how the national spirit expressed itself in 1822. But then, in 1822, it was considered degrading for any theatre where the productions of MM. Caignez and Pixérécourt were performed (not to mention those of Corneille and Molière) to lend its boards to such a barbarian as Shakespeare, and to the train of *œuvres immondes* which followed in his wake.

Only five years had gone by since that period, and now the second Théâtre-Français greatly astonished everybody by advertising that a company of English actors was going to act the chief plays of Shakespeare. So quickly did ideas mature in the burning sun of the nineteenth century that only five years were necessary to bring about such an enlightenment of public opinion as this. However, the example of courtesy had been set us by our neighbours across the Channel. Mademoiselle Georges had just succeeded--thanks, no doubt, to the political reminiscences that surrounded her--in obtaining what Talma

never obtained, in spite of his Anglo-French descent, namely, a public non-subsidised performance of a French play.

On 28 June 1827, Mademoiselle Georges gave a most successful representation of *Sémiramis*, under the patronage of the Duke of Devonshire. The receipts amounted to eight hundred pounds sterling (20,000 francs). A few days later, again with similar success, she played *Mérope.* This twofold triumph suggested to the director of the Odéon the idea of inviting a company of English actors over, and a series of performances, announced for the beginning of September, was looked forward to eagerly. In fact, opinion had changed from complete disdain of English literature to enthusiastic admiration of it. M. Guizot, who did not then know a word of English--and who has known it but too well since--had re-translated Shakespeare with the help of Letourneur. Walter Scott, Cooper and Byron were in everybody's hands. M. Lemercier had made a tragedy out of *Richard III.*; M. Liadière had produced another on *Jane Shore. Kenilworth Castle* had been played at the Porte-Saint-Martin; *Louis XI. à Péronne* at the Théâtre-Français; *Macbeth* at the Opéra. People talked of Frédéric Soulié's *Juliette* and of Alfred de Vigny's *Othello.* Assuredly, the wind had veered round to the west and pointed to a literary revolution. Nor was this all: a play was produced at the Porte-Saint-Martin, with a denouement borrowed from Werner's *Vingt-Quatre Février*, which had brought about a revolution both by its style and its execution.

We should like to say a few words with reference to *Trente Ans*, or *la Vie d'un Joueur*, by MM. Victor Ducange and Goubaux. Besides the dramatic importance of this work, it brought to light two eminent artistes, Frédérick and Madame Dorval. It is rarely one finds two actors so highly endowed, the one as good as the other. He, as a matter of fact, was the wretched tragedian who, three years before, had played one of the brothers Macchabée at the Odéon! She was the little girl, forgotten as soon as she had played the thankless part of Malvina, in the *Vampire!*

Popular drama had its Talma, and boulevard tragedy its Mademoiselle Mars. Everybody has become familiar with *Trente Ans*; everybody has seen it played by the two artistes I have just named. But not everybody witnessed the fever of excitement that mastered both actors and spectators during those first representations.

So the English artistes found Parisian playgoers warmly enthusiastic, eagerly demanding new emotions to take the place of those they had just experienced. Such moments as these are experienced at various times and seasons when everything is quiet outside the realms of imagination. As physical life is in no danger, minds sigh after imaginary dangers; human sympathy must exercise itself on something. Twelve years of calm caused everyone to cry out for emotion; ten years of laughter called aloud for tears. With a national spirit restless and adventurous by nature, we must ever express ourselves dramatically, whether on the stage or in real life.

In 1827 the theatre had things all its own way. On 7 September the English actors gave their first performance. Abbott opened the proceedings with a short speech in very carefully pronounced French, and they played *The Rivals* by poor Sheridan, who had just been buried amidst financial difficulties; then Allingham's *Caprice of Fortune.* The comic actors of the company carried off the honours of the first night, and, although one noticed a comic actor called Liston, and a sweetheart played by Miss Smithson, we felt quite certain that the much longed for company had not been brought across the Channel just for this exhibition of its powers. I had made up my mind to attend these English performances with some assiduity, and as Porcher had nearly got back the advances he had lent me, I asked him for two hundred francs, a hundred and fifty of which went towards our housekeeping expenses, and fifty were intended to initiate me into the beauties revealed in the English drama. I already nearly knew Shakespeare by heart at this period; but plays, according to the Germans, are meant to be seen and not read. So I

resisted the temptation of going to the first representation, and waited to see the English company in Shakespeare.

They announced *Hamlet.* There was no fear of my missing it this time. Fortunately, it was Ernest's week to make up the portfolio. I left the office at four o'clock and went to take my position in the queue, rather better informed, this time, than I had been on my first visit to Paris. I knew *Hamlet* so well that I did not need to buy the words; I could follow the actors, translating the words as soon as they were uttered. I must admit that the impression made upon me far exceeded my expectations: Kemble was wonderful as Hamlet, and Miss Smithson made a divine Ophelia. The stage scene, the screen scene and that of the two portraits, the mad scene and that in the graveyard electrified me. Only then did I realise what the drama could be, and from the ruins of my past feeble attempts, which the shock of this revelation brought about, I saw what was needed to create a new world.

"And darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters"; as the Bible puts it.

This was the first time that I had seen real passions on the stage, inspiring men and women of real flesh and blood. Now I understood Talma's moans over each fresh part he created; I understood that everlasting aspiration for a literature that could give him the chance of depicting a hero who should be a living being; I understood his despair at dying before he had given expression to that side of his genius which perished unknown within him and with him. The present generation will not understand what I am saying; for its childish studies have made it as familiar with Walter Scott as with Lesage, with Shakespeare as with Molière. Our century, which has become pre-eminently a century of appreciation, smiles incredulously when it hears that a comedian could be hissed because he was an Englishman, or a play hooted because it was by Shakespeare.

These representations continued with increasing popularity. After *Hamlet* came *Romeo and Juliet*, then *Othello*; then, finally, one after the other, all the masterpieces of the English stage. To Kemble and Miss Smithson belonged all the honours of these representations. It is impossible to describe the scene of Ophelia's madness, the balcony scene in *Juliet*, the poisoning scene in the vault among the dead, Othello's jealousy and the death of Desdemona, as played by those two great artistes. Abbott, also, showed himself a graceful comedian in the parts he played. His Mercutio, among the rest, was a real masterpiece of delightful acting.

And now let us notice how strange it is that events which are to influence a man's life seem to link themselves together. On the 10th, the English actors gave the last of their series of representations, leaving me palpitating with fresh impressions, and my mind flooded with fresh light. On the 4th, six days before, the Salon Exhibition had just opened. At this Salon, Mademoiselle de Fauveau exhibited two small bas-reliefs, round which all artists congregated.

One of these bas-reliefs represented a scene from the *Abbé*; the other, the assassination of Monaldeschi. I came up to look at these bas-reliefs with the crowd, and I probably appreciated more than most of the gazers the power and delicacy of the work thus cleverly handled by a woman's fingers. I had read the *Abbé*, so I knew all about one of these bas-reliefs; but I was so ignorant on some portions of history that I not only did not know the incident the other piece of sculpture depicted, but I was also ignorant who were either Monaldeschi or Christine; and I left the Musée without venturing to ask anyone to tell me. As it was Sunday, and as I had not seen Soulié for several days, I decided to go and spend part of the evening with him at la Gare.

At nine o'clock--after telling my mother that I should probably not be home until very late--I sweetened a cup of tea in front of a capital fire (for wood is plentiful in a saw-mill) and began a discussion with Soulié

concerning the alterations his *Juliette* would need to undergo since the English acting had come under notice. All at once, I recollected the bas-relief of the death of Monaldeschi, and, not daring to ask Soulié for particulars for fear he would make fun of me because of my ignorance, I asked him if he possessed a *Biographie universelle.* He had one, and I read the two articles on *Monaldeschi* and on *Christine.* Then, after a few moments' reflection, in the depths of which I seemed to see all sorts of tragic characters moving amid the glitter of swords, I said to Soulié, as though he had been following my thoughts--

"Do you know, there is a terrible drama in all that?"

"In what?"

"In the assassination of Monaldeschi by Christine."

"I should just think so."

"Shall we do it together?"

"No," Soulié replied emphatically; "I do not mean to work any more with others."

"Why?"

"Because David has promised me the Cross, through the influence of M. Portalis, when I write my first important work alone."

I looked at Soulié in utter amazement. I do not think that even he himself quite realised the nature of his brusque outbursts.

"Therefore," he added, "I intend to use that subject for a tragedy myself."

"Oh!" I said, laying the volumes down.

"That need not prevent you writing your own drama, you understand, if you mean to stick to the idea."

"On the same subject as you?"

"There are more theatres than one in Paris; and a dozen ways of treating a subject."

"But which of us will read it at the Théâtre-Français?"

"Whichever shall finish first."

"Would it not annoy you?"

"What the devil do you think it would do to me?"

"You are not very amiable to-night."

"I am not in a good temper."

"What is the matter with you?"

"This is the matter. If only I had seen the English actors before I had constructed my *Juliette* I should either not have done it at all, or done it differently."

"Will you take my advice?"

"In what way?"

"As the sincere advice of a friend.... Leave your *Juliette* on one side as I have left my *Fiesque*, and dream of something else."

"Bah! when it is finished!"

I saw Soulié had made up his mind to go on with it, and I dropped the subject. Then, as I could not afford to buy the *Biographie universelle*, I asked Soulié if I might copy out the two articles, and he let me do so. It was evident my writing on the same subject did not inspire him with much terror. We separated at midnight; and, as I went along the boulevard, I dreamt already of my future *Christine.* It was a dark, rainy night, and the boulevard was almost deserted. When I reached the gate of

Saint-Denis, just as I was leaving the boulevard to re-enter the street, I heard cries thirty steps ahead of me; then, in the midst of the darkness, I could see what looked like a group of people struggling violently on the boulevard, and I ran in the direction of the cries. Two fellows were attacking a man and woman. The man attacked was trying to defend himself with a cane, the woman had been thrown down and the thief was trying to snatch a chain that hung round her neck. I leapt on the thief, and the next moment he was on the ground in his turn, and I was kneeling on him. When the second thief saw this, he left off attacking the man and ran away. It would seem that, unwittingly, I had been squeezing the throat of my thief unmercifully; for suddenly, to my great surprise, he yelled out--

"Help, help, help!"

This shout, together with those already uttered by the man and woman assaulted, brought several soldiers from the military station of Bonne-Nouvelle. I had not loosened my hold of the thief, and the soldiers dragged him out of my hands. Then only was I able to respond to the thanks of those whom I had rescued. The woman's voice struck me strangely. It was Adèle d'Alvin, whom I had not seen since I left Villers-Cotterets, and the man was her husband. There had been a special performance at the Porte-Saint-Martin at which *la Noce et l'Enterrement* had been played, and knowing I had had a hand in that masterpiece, they had wanted to see it. The performance had not finished until late, as is usual in the case of special representations, and Adèle was hungry. When they came out, they went to the theatre café for supper, and this had delayed them. Just as they reached Charlard's chemist's shop they were attacked by the two ruffians of whom I had rid them, and of whom one had been arrested by the defenders of the country. Unluckily, these defenders of the country were not as intelligent as they were brave. They could not distinguish between robbers and robbed, between thieves and honest folk, and they took us all to the guard-room, informing us we must

stop there till the morning. At daybreak they sent for a police-officer, who separated the wheat from the tares.

We tried to explain ourselves, and asked that they should examine carefully our persons, our countenances, our appearances, and compare them with those of the man whom I had arrested, and that they should not keep us till next day before rendering us the justice that was our due. But to all this the defenders of the country replied imperturbably that *by night all cats look grey*; and, consequently, one might easily be deceived, whereas, on the morrow, there would be *daylight* on the matter.

The decision was neither logical nor eloquent; but we were the weaker party. They made us, assaulted and assaulter alike, go into that part of the guard-house that is called the *violon*, and there was no help for it but to await the good pleasure of M. *le chef du poste.*

We all leant up one against another, as people do in a carriage, and tried to sleep. As Adèle and her husband had taken one corner of the camp bed for themselves, there was one left for me. I gazed sadly at the woman for a long time; she was associated with the earliest recollections of my life, and now, apparently perfectly happy, she was falling asleep on the shoulder of another, to whom she spoke in accents of familiar intercourse. She had two children: motherhood had consoled her for her lost love. They both fell asleep; but neither the thief nor I slept at all. Soon my eyes tore themselves away from watching Adèle and her husband; my thoughts retraced their steps and I resumed my dream where it had been interrupted. I saw, in my mind's eye, the bas-relief of Mademoiselle de Fauveau as it hung fastened against the wall, and, in the guard-room of the boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle, by the side of that woman and her husband, face to face with the thief who was to get three years' imprisonment at the next assizes, my imagination conjured up the first scenes of *Christine.* At eight next morning the police-officer entered, took down our depositions and addresses and then set us at liberty; whilst

our friend the thief was immediately hustled off to the police station. I returned home to find my poor mother terribly upset. She, like myself, had never closed her eyes all night. I saw Adèle again once or twice during her stay in Paris; but, since that time, my imagination, if not my heart, has been the slave of a mistress who has supplanted all my past mistresses, and even done injury to those of later years. That mistress, or rather that master, was Art.

BOOK II — CHAPTER VII

CHAPTER VII

Future landmarks--Compliments to the Duc de Bordeaux--*Vates* --Cauchois-Lemaire's Orléaniste brochure--The lakeof Enghien--Colonel Bro's parrot--Doctor Ferrus--Morrisel--A tip-top funeral cortège --Hunting in full cry--An autopsy--Explanation of the death of the parrot

It is most instructive to every philosophic mind to review a past period of time, and to recall that once it was looked forward to as a future. It can then be seen how gradually changes came about; landmarks are recognised, and it is realised that there is nothing sudden or inexplicable in the evolution of things; that which in the present we look upon as all-powerful chance, when investigated in the light of the past, is seen to be Providence. Thus, Charles X., the last representative of a dying aristocracy, was destined to fall; thus Louis-Philippe, the representative of the people at its strongest moment, was destined to ascend the throne; and, from 1827 and 1828, everything was being prepared so that people were ready for the great catastrophe of 1830. And yet no one can clearly read the signs of an immediate future.

All the country's hopes seemed centred in the "phenomenal child" (*l'enfant du miracle*), as they called the Duc de Bordeaux, and, on I January, M. de Barbé-Marbois, first president of the *cours des Comptes*, addressed to him the following delightful little speech, entirely suited to the young prince's years and intelligence:--

"Monseigneur, you will to-day receive the customary gifts: mine shall be a short story. Once upon a time, the prince whose name you bear, who was then as young as you are, returned to the Court of Navarre after being away. While he was still seated on his horse, he was surrounded by children of the countryside, who, delighted to see him back again, kept

repeating, '*Caye nostre Henry!*' which means 'Here is our Henri!' just as though the young prince belonged to them. Queen Jeanne, his mother--an excellent princess--who had seen and heard everything from the palace balcony, well pleased by the welcome they gave the young prince, said to him, 'Those children, my son, have just given you a lesson, the sweetest you can ever receive; by calling you "*our Henry*," they are teaching you that princes belong to their country just as much as to their own family.' The prince remembered the lesson, and that is why for more than two centuries the French have continued to call him 'our Henry' and will always so speak of him."

M. le Duc de Bordeaux listened attentively, then replied--

"*I will not forget.*"

Already the previous year it had been said to him, "And you, monseigneur, who are yet very young and upon whose head rests the future happiness of France, always remember that this fine kingdom also needs a good king--a king who loves truth and wishes it to be spoken to him; a king who despises flattery and who will banish from his presence those who deceive him. You will remember, monseigneur, that this advice has been given you by an aged white-haired man?"

M. le Duc de Bordeaux had replied--

"*Yes.*"

"Your *Yes*, monseigneur," added the first president, "shall be registered in our annals, where you will find it when you reach your majority,"

Alas; all these counsels were to be wasted. The white-haired veteran who had learnt so much by reflection on the past, could not foresee the future. God only endows poets with the gift of clairvoyance. It was a poet, monseigneur, who addressed these words to you--

"Salut, petit cousin germain! D'un lieu d'exil, j'ose t'écrire. La fortune te tend la main; Ta naissance la fait sourire.

Mon premier jour aussi fut beau, Point de Français qui n'en convienne: Les rois m'adoraient au berceau ... Et, cependant, je suis à Vienne!"

It was a poet, sire, who addressed these words to you:--

"O rois, veillez, veillez! tâchez d'avoir régné. Ne nous reprenez pas ce qu'on avait gagné; Ne faites point, des coups d'une bride rebelle, Cabrer la liberté, qui vous porte avec elle; Soyez de votre temps, écoutez ce qu'on dit, Et tâchez d'être grands, car le peuple grandit! Écoutez, écoutez! à l'horizon immense, Ce bruit qui parfois tombe et soudain recommence, Ce murmure confus, ce sourd frémissement Qui roule et qui s'accroît de moment en moment! C'est le peuple qui vient! c'est la haute marée Qui monte, incessamment par son astre attirée! Chaque siècle, à son tour, qu'il soit d'or ou de fer, Dévoré comme un cap sur qui monte la mer, Avec ses lois, ses mœurs, les monuments qu'il fonde, Vains obstacles qui font à peine écumer l'onde, Avec tout ce qu'on vit et qu'on ne verra plus, Disparaît sous ce flot qui n'a pas de reflux! Le sol toujours s'en va, le flot toujours s'élève; Malheur à qui, le soir, s'attarde sur la grève, Et ne demande pas au pêcheur qui s'enfuit D'où vient qu'à l'horizon l'on entend ce grand bruit! Rois, hâtez-vous! rentrez dans le siècle où nous sommes; Quittez l'ancien rivage!--A cette mer des hommes Faites place, ou voyez si vous voulez périr Sur le siècle passé, que son flot doit couvrir!"

Again it was a poet who uttered these words:--

"Mais bientôt, aux regards de ce nouveau ministre, La nuit vint révéler au avenir sinistre; Des signes éclatants, au fond des cieux écrits, De ces partis vainqueurs glacèrent les esprits; Et la France espéra!--L'immortelle déesse Qui prête son épée aux martyrs de la Grèce, Sur le fronton aigu du sénat plébéien, Parut, en agitant son bonnet phrygien! Panthéon, la croix d'or s'éclipsa de ton dôme! Sous les marbres sacrés de la place Vendôme,

La terre tressaillit, et l'oiseau souverain S'agita radieux sur sa base d'airain!..

It was a poet, too, who uttered the following threat:--

"Il est amer et triste, à l'heure où le cœur prie, Et dans l'effusion des plus secrets moments, D'entendre à ses côtés les pleurs de la patrie, Des clameurs de colère et des gémissements.

Il est dur que toujours un destin nous entraîne Aux civiques combats qu'on croyait achevés; De voir aux passions s'ouvrir encore l'arène, Et s'enfuir la concorde et le bonheur rêvés.

Rien qu'à ce seul penser, tout ce qu'en moi j'apaise! Est prêt à s'irriter; la haine me reprend; Et, pour qui vent guérir toute haine est mauvaise, Et, pourtant, je ne puis rester indifférent.

Oh! meurent les soupçons! oh! Dieu nous garde encore De ces duels armés entre un peuple et son roi! Sous le soleil d'août, dont la chaleur dévore, Le sang bouillonne vite, et nul n'est sûr de soi."

True, as we have stated, the action of the Government really helped the public cause. Trial after trial was brought against the press unceasingly, but liberty always comes out triumphant from these encounters, no matter what happens, and, by succeeding, kills those who try to suppress it. Monarchies are not overturned, they undermine themselves and begin to totter; then, some day, the people seeing them shake, shout with a loud voice and down they fall.

The case of the *Spectateur religieux* was taken from court to court, and finally brought before the Court of Orléans. M. de Senancourt, who had been sentenced by the *police correctionelle* to nine months' imprisonment and five hundred francs fine for his résumé of *Traditions morales et religieuses*, was acquitted on appeal.

Finally, Cauchois-Lemaire was condemned to fifteen months' imprisonment and to a fine of two thousand francs, for having urged a change of government and a change in the order of succession to the throne in his *Lettre à Son Altesse royale M. le Duc d'Orléans, sur la crise actuelle.* This letter contained the following incriminating passages. The author laid bare before the prince the situation of France and added:--

"But you will perhaps say to me, 'What can I do? As a peer of the realm, France knows that I submit to an ostracism which forbids me to take any part in public affairs.' That, monseigneur, is just the point at issue. Because you are suspended from your privileges, are you therefore suspended from common law? Is the country circumscribed in the Higher Chamber? Does parliamentary inertia condemn everybody to political lethargy? And, because people do not happen to belong to the aristocracy, are they therefore of no account? 'Dangerous questions,' some will exclaim. 'Unsuitable and at any rate irrelevant,' others will say. Such questions, I would reply, are both natural and useful under a constitutional form of government."

After that paragraph came the following:--

"Instead of going to Gand, he went to England, thus saving himself from association with the system that marked the epoch of 1815 and from following in the wake of 1815."

Then, passing on from politics to advice, he added:--

"And in order not to depart from his custom of offering advice, the writer of this letter urges you to exchange your ducal arms for the civic crown. Come, prince, pick up courage; there still remains in our monarchy a fine opening at your disposal, a position such as la Fayette might occupy in a Republic, that of the first citizen of France. Your princedom is but a paltry sinecure beside that moral kingdom!"

Then, on the following page:--

"The French people is like a big baby in need of teaching. Let us pray it fall not into wicked hands."

Again:--

"An eager patriotism cannot hold out against a great and noble example, an eminent position and immense wealth--three qualifications all united in your Highness's person. With these you have but to stoop to pick up the jewel lying at your feet, which many are striving for, but cannot obtain for want of the qualifications you have been endowed with by the grace of God."

Then:--

"Furthermore, a prince who saw the State in peril would not be content to fold his arms lest the chariot, lacking direction, should overturn. We, on our part, have done all in our power; it is for you to try, and to seize hold of the wheel ere it go over the precipice."

And finally:--

"Whilst we are declining," said the writer of that letter, "the Duc de Bordeaux, the Duc de Chartres and even the Duc de Reichstadt are growing up...."

Of the three princes specified by Cauchois-Lemaire as growing up at that period, only one survives.

The Duc de Reichstadt disappeared in 1832, as a shadow vanishes with the body that has thrown it. The Duc de Chartres was violently withdrawn from society in 1842, because, by his popularity, he was a substantial obstacle in the way of plans that were developing towards their accomplishment in 1848. Finally, the Duc de Bordeaux, whom Béranger had greeted in the name of his small cousin-german, the Duc de Reichstadt, was to join that duke in his exile two years before his death. What a melancholy yet eloquent spectacle for the populace was that of all

those children, born with crowns on their heads or within their grasp, who were to cling weeping to the door-posts when the storm of revolution came to tear them away, one after the other, from the royal hostel which passes by the name of the palace of the Tuileries!

I gradually became acquainted with all the men of the Opposition party, who were beginning the work of undermining the monarchy at the commencement of the nineteenth century--the uncompleted task of the end of the eighteenth century. I met Carrel at M. de Leuven's house, where he often came, as he wrote for the *Courrier*, of which paper M. de Leuven was one of the chief editors. I met Manuel, Benjamin Constant and Béranger at Colonel Bro's; but Béranger was the only one of the three with whom I had time to become intimately acquainted or who had himself leisure to gauge me: the other two were to die, one before I became known, and the other when I was but little known. Bro was much attached to me. I have previously recorded how, thanks to him, I had seen Géricault upon his dying bed. He had one son, at that time a charming boy named Olivier, who became one of our bravest officers in the new army, as his father had been one of the bravest in the old *grande armée.* It was his life that was so miraculously saved by General Lamoricière when a Bedouin's yataghan was already at his throat. I have not seen him since 1829, and I am going to relate a story that will bring back recollections of childhood to him wherever he may be.

Colonel Bro used to procure Adolphe and me all the enjoyments he possibly could, and among them the sport of shooting. By some means or other, I know not how, he owned, at that time, the Lake of Enghien. In 1827 and '28 the Lake of Enghien was not a pretty little smooth, trim, well-kept lake as it is now; it had then no public gardens on its banks filled with roses, dahlias and jessamine; no Gothic châteaux, Italian villas and Swiss châlets all round it; nor, indeed, upon its surface had it a flotilla of swans, as now, begging for cakes from the people who hired boats at three francs fifty centimes the hour, furrowing the surface of its

waters, which were as clear as the water in a basin, and as smooth as the glass of a mirror. No, the Lake of Enghien was, at that period, a simple, natural lake, too muddy to be called a lake, and not muddy enough to be called a pond. It was covered with reeds and water-lilies, amongst which diver birds played, water-hens cackled and wild ducks dabbled, in quite sufficient quantities to give sport to a score of guns.

So Colonel Bro had arranged for a day's shooting at Adolphe's and my entreaty and had fixed a Sunday, as on that day Adolphe and I were free from our desks and could take part. The rendezvous was to be at Colonel Bro's house at seven o'clock. We left the rue des Martyrs in three carriages and were at Enghien by nine. Here a breakfast, worthy of a Saxon thane, awaited the guests. At ten o'clock we began our sport; by five we again found a good meal served, and by eleven at night we were all back in our various homes. I was always ready before other people if it were a question of shooting, so I turned up at Colonel Bro's house by half-past six in the morning. I was shown into a little boudoir, where I found myself tête-à-tête with an immense blue-and-red Carolina parroquet. The parroquet was on its stand and I sat down on a sofa. Now I have always felt the greatest respect for men with large noses and animals with big beaks; not because I think them pretty, but because I believe Nature has her reasons when she produces a monstrosity. And on these grounds, Colonel Bro's parrot was fully entitled to my most profound respect. So I addressed a few polite words to it, as I sat down, as I have said, on a couch opposite its perch. The parroquet looked me over for a minute with that melancholy expression peculiar to parroquets; then, with that precaution which never deserts them, it slowly climbed down each branch of its perch, by the help of its claws and beak; then, finally, down the main pole of the perch itself, until it reached the ground. Then it came across to me, waddling, stopping, looking round it on all sides, and uttering a cry at every step it took, until it had reached the toe of my boot, when it began to try to climb my leg. Touched by this

mark of confidence on the bird's part, I stretched out my hand to spare it the trouble of the climb; but, whether it was under a misapprehension as to the friendliness of my intentions, or whether it disguised a premeditated attack behind a benevolent exterior, it had scarcely caught sight of my hand within reach when it seized my fore-finger and gave me a double bite above the first joint right through to the bone. The pain was all the more violent because it was unexpected. I uttered a shriek, and, by a convulsive movement, my leg stiffened with the elasticity of a steel spring, and I kicked the parrot spinning with the end of my hunting-boot, in the centre of its breast, sending it flat against the wall. It fell to the floor, and lay there without a movement. Was its death caused by the kick or by the blow that followed? Was it caused by my boot or by contact with the wall? I never found out, and I made no attempt to ascertain, for I heard footsteps in the next room. I seized hold of the bird, which was still motionless, I raised the cover of the couch, I pushed it with my foot underneath into the dark depths, I let fall the cover again and I sat down as though nothing extraordinary had happened. Next, I bound up my finger I with my handkerchief, and then Colonel Bro entered. We exchanged greetings and, as I kept my hand in my pocket, nothing was noticed.

Everyone came, and we set out without a single cry or movement, or sign of existence from the parroquet buried under the couch.

When we reached Enghien, one of our party seemed to have his hand bandaged up like mine, and fellow-feeling opened up a current of sympathy between us. I asked him how he had met with his accident. A door had been violently shut by the wind just as he had his hand between it and the doorpost, and his fingers had been caught. As for myself, I simply told him I had cut myself with the flint of my gun; for in those days I still used a flint-gun for shooting. This sportsman who was maimed in the same hand as I was turned out to be the celebrated Doctor Ferrus. Directly he heard my name he asked me if I was the son of

General Alexandre Dumas, and, on my replying in the affirmative, he related the story of the lifting of the four muskets with four fingers, that I gave on his authority in the early portion of these Memoirs.

We had with us, too, among the shooters, a friend of Telleville Arnault--a man who was certainly one of the bravest, wittiest and most original people who ever breathed--Colonel Morrisel. He wore spectacles and looked anything but a colonel. He had just fought an unsuccessful duel which made more sensation than if it had come off successfully.

In those days, there was a café called the café *Français* in the rue Lafitte, which was the rallying-place of fashionable young men. The head waiter was a great billiard player named Changeur, and one night he was playing with a very young man, who found it necessary to take lessons at three francs the game, when M. le Baron de B---, accompanied by one of his friends, entered the establishment. M. le Baron de B was somewhat of a tricky character, and notorious, besides, because of two or three lucky or unlucky duels (according to the degree of philanthropy with which the reader may be endowed, and whether he think it fortunate or unfortunate to wound or kill his neighbour); he came up to the billiard-table and, without even addressing the young man, he said--

"Changeur, get us some coffee, and let us have the billiard-table."

"Excuse me, Monsieur le Baron," said Changeur, in amazement, pointing to the young man, "but I am engaged in a game."

"Well, then, you will stop the game, that's all."

"Monsieur," said the young man timidly and politely, "we have only a few points more to make; in ten minutes the billiard-table will be at your service."

"I am not asking for it in ten minutes, but at once.... Come, Changeur, come, my lad, give me your cue."

Morrisel, who was already old, grey, thin, feeble, mean-looking and poverty-stricken in appearance, was taking a cup of coffee in a corner.

"Changeur," he said, without rising, and in dulcet tones, that contrasted oddly with the words he uttered,--"Changeur, my lad, I forbid you to give up the billiard-table."

"But, monsieur," replied Changeur, in great embarrassment, "if indeed M. le Baron de B--- wishes me to give him my cue...."

"If you give your cue to M. le Baron, Changeur, I shall take it out of the hands of M. le Baron and break it across your head!"

M. le Baron de B--- saw clearly enough that Changeur was merely being used as a spark to kindle the flame. The thrust had, in fact, been aimed at him and he returned the stroke in the direction whence it came.

"It seems to me, monsieur," he said, "you are very anxious to pick a quarrel with me."

"I am charmed, monsieur, that you see things so plainly!"

"And what is your excuse for picking a quarrel with me?"

"Why, because you have abused your position with respect to that young fellow, and all misuse of power, no matter what it is, appears to me odious."

"Do you know who I am, monsieur?" said the Baron de B---, striding towards Morrisel with a threatening air.

"Yes, monsieur," replied the latter, calmly lifting his spectacles; "you are M. le Baron de B---. You killed M.--- in one duel and wounded M.--- in another. I know that much about you."

"And yet you insist I shall not have the billiard-table given up to me?"

"I insist more pertinaciously than ever!"

"Very well, monsieur; but you understand that I look upon your remarks as an insult."

"I offer no objection, monsieur."

"Therefore, we shall meet to-morrow morning at six o'clock, if you please, in the bois de Vincennes, or in the bois de Boulogne."

"Monsieur, I am twenty-five years your senior, and I need more sleep; besides, I am a player, and I generally play all night long, therefore I do not go to bed before five and I rarely rise before noon. Then, when I get up, I have my toilet to make--a habit I have maintained too long to break through now. When my toilet is finished, my servant gets ready my *déjeuner.* After I have had lunch, I come here for my coffee, as you perceive; I am extremely methodical. Now, all this takes me till two o'clock. Therefore, to-morrow, if that will be convenient to you, I shall be at your disposal by half-past two, but not until half-past two."

"At half-past two so be it, monsieur; here is my card."

Morrisel examined it with attention, bowed in acknowledgment, put it in his pocket, drew forth two cards bearing his address, presented one to M. le Baron de B--- and wrapped the other in a five-hundred franc note. Then he called to Changeur, M. le Baron de B--- watching what he was doing.

"Changeur," he said, "here is a five-hundred franc note."

"Does Monsieur wish to settle his account?" asked Changeur.

"No, no, my lad."

"What am I to do, then, with this five-hundred franc note?"

"First of all take Monsieur's measurements."

Changeur looked at the Baron de B---, frightened out of his wits.

"Do you hear?" said Morrisel, "and when you have taken his measure you can go with it to the undertaker's."

"To the undertaker ...?"

"Yes, Changeur; and there you can order in my name--in the name of Colonel Morrisel, you quite understand?--a first-rate funeral equipage for M. le Baron de B---. You understand, it is to be of the very best!--I know it will come to more; but the five hundred francs will do on account;--you understand, Changeur? it is to be a thoroughly good funeral."

M. le Baron de B--- tried to take it as a joke.

"Monsieur," he said, "I should have thought you could have left my family to make these arrangements."

"Not so, M. le Baron; your family is ruined--so people say--and the thing would be shabbily done. Think of carrying M. le Baron de B--- to the cemetery in a second-rate hearse, or with a third-rate pall! Fie! I have killed twenty-two men in duels during my life, M. le Baron, and I have always borne the cost of their burials. Rely upon me, you shall be handsomely buried. When strangers see your cortège pass by, I mean them to ask, 'Dear me! whose is that magnificent funeral?' Then, as it passes along the boulevard, Changeur will reply, 'It is that of M. le Baron de B---, the famous duellist, you know. He rudely forced a quarrel on a young fellow who could not defend himself; Colonel Morrisel happened to be present, took up cudgels for the young man and, upon my word, if he didn't kill the Baron de B--- at the first thrust! It will be an excellent example for all impertinent people and duellists ...' Au revoir, M. le Baron de B---, that is to say, until to-morrow. You know my address, send me the names of your seconds; yours is the choice of arms."

Then, turning towards the waiter: "And now, Changeur, my lad, you understand, a first-class turn out--the very best that can be had! Nothing shall be too good for M. le Baron de B---!"

And he readjusted his spectacles, took up his umbrella and went out.

The quarrel had made a great commotion, and next day, from noon onwards, the café *Français* was crowded with inquisitive people, anxious to know what had passed and, still more, what was going to happen. At one o'clock Morrisel arrived as usual, his spectacles on his nose, his umbrella in his hand. Everybody made way for him. Morrisel bowed with his accustomed politeness, went to his usual place and called for Changeur, who ran to him and hastened to serve him.

"My coffee, Changeur," said Morrisel; and he phlegmatically melted his sugar into the last atom, and then M. le Baron de B--- entered the café.

He advanced towards Morrisel, who raised his glasses, and returned his adversary's salute with a smile on his lips.

"Monsieur le Comte," said the baron, "when I insulted you yesterday, I was not sober; to-day, I offer you my apologies, will you please accept them? I have made reparation, and I can therefore address you thus without damage to my honour."

"That is your own concern, M. le Baron," returned Morrisel.

Then he turned to Changeur: "Changeur, go and tell the undertaker that M. le Baron's funeral is indefinitely postponed."

"It is unnecessary," said Changeur; "I took the liberty of waiting. Here is your note, Colonel."

"Then go and ask your master for my bill, my lad."

Changeur went to the desk and returned with an elaborately made out bill.

"Ah!" said Morrisel, lowering his glasses, "nine hundred francs. Stop, Changeur, here is another five-hundred franc note; the change is for the waiter."

Then, having finished his coffee with his accustomed nonchalance, he lowered his spectacles, took up his umbrella and departed amidst the applause of the customers and onlookers. If I remember rightly, Godefroy Cavaignac wrote a charming story on this anecdote.

Morrisel was also a card-player and would play as high as anybody wished. One night at a party at either Madame Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angely's or at Madame Davilliers', I forget which, we heard a little discussion being carried on at a card-table on which there were not quite twenty-five louis. We went closer and asked what it was about. Morrisel held the cards; he had passed seven times, and he had won six hundred thousand francs (I purposely express the figures in letters) from M. Hainguerlot. M. Hainguerlot took the cards and wagered to win back the 600,000 francs in a single game. Morrisel was willing to wager 500,000 francs *en partie liée*, running the risk of retaining only 100,000 francs of the celebrated banker's, for he looked upon himself (and rightly so, too) as a very good player, for when, finally, he rose from the table on making *Charlemagne*, he had made for himself the sum of 30,000 livres income by this throw, which was not a bad sum for a retired colonel. When the question was argued out, each had made a concession. M. Hainguerlot agreed to a stake of 500,000 francs, and Morrisel renounced his *partie liée*. Two witnesses were appointed for each side, as in the case of a duel. Morrisel lost. He got up with the same coolness as though it was only a question of a half-napoleon. True, he had still won 100,000 francs.

In summer, Morrisel sometimes lived at Madame Hamelin's country house at Val, near Saint-Len-Taverny. One day, at the beginning of the shooting season, he ventured out on the lands of the commune of Frépillon, where, encountering the gamekeeper, he was vigorously threatened with legal proceedings in case of a second offence. Morrisel was invited to dinner on the following Sunday at the château of Madame Regnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angely, situated on the other side of the

forbidden territory. When Sunday arrived, so that it should not be said he had skulked across the forbidden land unperceived, Morrisel took with him the beadle, a wind instrument and four chanters, formed a square of six with himself in the centre, and crossed the Frépillon territory, shooting to the accompaniment of Gregorian chants. By the time he reached Madame Régnault de Saint-Jean-d'Angely, he was followed by the whole village, whose curiosity was greatly excited by this unprecedented method of going a hunting.

Poor Morrisel died from the effects of a painful disease. In spite of surgical assistance, in spite of nitrate of silver, in spite of Civiale, Pasquier and Dupuytren, it came about that, being a plentiful drinker, he could not get rid of a single drop of the liquor he had drunk when it was absorbed into his system. They prolonged his life by using means to make him perspire. Finally, one day, as he did not thoroughly understand what the doctors told him about his disease, he asked if, before he himself died, they could not procure him from any hospital the body of a person who had died of the disease of which he himself was to die. The doctors told him it was possible, and set to work to find one. Three or four days later, they told him they had found one. Morrisel bought it at the usual price--six francs, I believe--had the body brought close to his bedside, placed it on a table and begged one of the doctors to make a post-mortem examination. When the autopsy was finished, Morrisel had the satisfaction of knowing the exact nature of the malady from which he was suffering, and from henceforth was content to die quietly--an act, it should be recorded, which he accomplished with wonderful courage.

But to return to the parrot of the rue des Martyrs. A fortnight later, on returning to Colonel Bro's for another shooting trip like the former, I was astounded to find it on its perch again. But after a few minutes' gaze its stillness struck me as unusual. I went up to it: it was stuffed!

"Oh!" I said to the colonel, "your poor Jacquot is dead, is it?"

"Ah yes, it is," replied the colonel. "They told me a curious incident in connection with it--a story I had never believed previously, namely, that certain animals hide themselves to die, and that is why their bodies are never recovered...."

"Well?"

"Well, just think of it! that unlucky parroquet went and hid itself to die right underneath the sofa cover; we thought it was lost at first; we searched all over for it, and finally we found it there, the day after our shooting party."

"Did it ever bite people?" I timidly asked General Bro.

"*It?* Never!" was the colonel's reply.

I thought of showing the colonel my finger, which was still badly marked; but I reflected that it was much better to leave the colonel in ignorance as to his parroquet's defects of character and under the illusion that it had died, as indicated, a noble death. Now that many years have passed by since that event, and probably not a single feather of the unfortunate Jacquot remains, I humbly confess my crime, and ask for forgiveness from all whom it may concern.

BOOK II — CHAPTER VIII

CHAPTER VIII

Barthélemy and Méry--M. Éliça Gallay--Méry the draught-player and anatomist--*L'Épître à Sidi Mahmoud*--The Ponthieu library--Soulé--*The Villéliade*--Barthélemy the printer--Méry the improvisator--The *Vœux de la nouvelle année*--The pastiche of *Lucrèce*

At the beginning of the preceding chapter we spoke of poets who were prophets; now let us say a little about poets who fought for their craft. And among these, the most undaunted and persevering were without doubt MM. Barthélemy and Méry, who did the roughest kind of work as sappers, and helped in the toughest assaults in the first line of fighters. Both were Marseillais, but they were hardly acquainted with one another in 1825. M. Méry had never left Marseilles and M. Barthélemy, having left it as a child, had scarcely ever been there again.

M. Barthélemy (whom, if we may, we will call simply Barthélemy for brevity) was educated at the college of Juilly and received there an excellent education in Greek and Latin; he had already composed at Marseilles, after the style of Mathurin Régnier, a satire which had been much talked of, though never printed, when he published an ode to Charles X. at the time of the coronation. It was lost sight of beneath the successes of more famous poetic rivals of the period, even before it became known, and Barthélemy saw his ode pass away unnoticed, although it contained some striking stanzas, among them this one addressed to Camoëns:--

"Et toi, chantre fameux des conquérants de l'Inde, Fier de ton indigence et des lauriers du Pinde, Tu nageais sur les flots de l'abîme irrité, Et du double trépas vainqueur digne d'envie, D'une main tu sauvais ta vie, De l'autre tu sauvais ton immortalité!"

Barthélemy had inherited a certain patrimony from his father, and he lived quietly in the hôtel *Grand-Balcon* 11 rue Traversière. Méry had also made his début at the age of eighteen, and paid for it by eight months' imprisonment. His début took the form of a pamphlet against M. Éliça Gallay.

When, after twenty-five years have flown by, one stops to look back over one's past life, one is surprised to find how many men and events are completely forgotten that in their time occasioned much stir in the world, remembrance of them being obliterated as soon as equilibrium was restored. M. Éliça Gallay was Inspector of the University.

One day he arrived at Marseilles and gave his usual discourse at the royal college. In this speech was the phrase which follows; we give the sense of it if not exactly the actual words:--

"Messieurs, we are obliged to have two scales of weights and measures. When a pupil is loyal and religious anything can be forgiven him; but if he be a Liberal the greatest severity must be exercised towards him."

The use of these two scales of *weight* and *measurement* was much commented upon in the newspapers at the time, and it disgusted Méry to such an extent that he wrote a pamphlet, of a somewhat scathing nature, it would seem, against M. Éliça Gallay; and this pamphlet, as we have said, cost our author eight months' imprisonment. Méry had no means of livelihood in Marseilles, he hated a commercial life, he could write poetry with the greatest facility and he was an adept in the art of draughts-playing. He would not dream of a commercial life, he could not count on poetry, so he resolved to make use of the game which, played as he played it, became an art. Méry left for Paris with the intention of making a living as a draught-player. He was then twenty-one, and he lodged at Madame Caldairon's, 11 rue des Petits-Augustins, with Achille Vaulabelle, author of the *Deux Restaurations*, and began an existence divided between the study of geology under Cuvier and perfecting

himself at draughts by playing with the best amateurs at the café *Manoury.* So he played draughts at the café *Manoury* and studied geology at the Jardin des Plantes. By playing ten sous a game--never more--Méry managed for a year to make an income of ten francs per day. On the other hand, he never missed his lesson in comparative anatomy, and Cuvier had not a more assiduous pupil than he; showing him great friendliness, and predicting that he would make a name in geology. In other ways, too, matters shaped themselves wonderfully to the advantage of the future of our friend from Marseilles. Madame Caldairon, who worshipped him, wanted him to marry a young dressmaker who was very much in the fashion at that time, and whose business, one of the most flourishing in Paris, brought in from twenty-five to thirty thousand francs a year. The marriage was arranged, and Méry was gleefully looking forward to a rosy future, when his young fiancée caught a chill one cold February night in 1826, when she and Méry were obliged to walk across the pont des Arts, as they could not get a cab anywhere, either in the rue Jacob or on the Embankment. The chill developed into pneumonia, she died in three days and Méry was a widower before he had become a husband. He believed himself to be condemned to eternal lamentation; but draughts and geology are powerful consolations, and, without forgetting the poor dear girl, Méry yet found his mind free enough one day to say to Barthélemy--

"My dear fellow, a man who could write satires at the present time would have a fine chance of an opening in politics and in poetry."

"Have you an idea?" asked Barthélemy.

"Yes, certainly."

"What is it?"

"An epistle to Sidi Mahmoud."

You have forgotten who Sidi Mahmoud was, have you not? Well then, I will refresh your memory.

He was the envoy sent by our friend the Bey of Tunis--who was then on not quite such amicable terms with us as he is to-day--to congratulate Charles X. on his accession to the throne. Sidi Mahmoud was received in state on 5 May at the Foreign Office, by M. le Baron de Damas, surrounded by peers, deputies and general officers. When the usher announced the ambassador, everybody rose with the exception of M. de Damas, who, representing the King of France, remained seated and covered. M. de Damas saluted the ambassador with a wave of his hand, and signed to him to be seated. The ambassador then delivered his letters and sat down, and it was left to an Arabian interpreter to translate them. Paris, having nothing special at that moment with which to occupy its attention, gave itself wholly and entirely to Sidi Mahmoud: his thirty years, his fine dark face, his white dolman embroidered in sky-blue silk and fastened with gold hooks, the two shawls that formed his turban and the cashmir robe flung over his shoulder. Méry was perfectly right; Barthélemy saw at once, as he had, that the plan was excellent. Unfortunately he had to go to London.

"Compose your epistle alone," he said to Méry, "and on my return we will talk again about the satire."

Barthélemy left for London, and Méry composed his epistle. When the epistle was composed, the worst part of his task was not over, for the question now was how to get it published.

Méry took his epistle to Ponthieu, who declared that nobody was reading poetry then! Méry naturally retorted by pointing to the twenty editions of Casimir Delavigne, to the fifteen editions of Béranger, to the twelve editions of Lamartine, to the ten editions of Victor Hugo; at each name Méry uttered, Ponthieu said--

"Oh! M. Casimir Delavigne, that is a different matter! Oh! M. Béranger, that is a different matter! Oh! M. Victor Hugo, that is a different matter! Oh! M. Lamartine, that is a different matter!"

Or, to translate it into the language of a publisher--

"My dear sir, all those gentlemen of whom you remind me are celebrated and possess talent, while you have neither of these qualifications."

Méry beat a retreat, his epistle in his hand, feeling defeated, repulsed, routed.

He had heard of another printer named Bérand; but, unfortunately, this man held views, he was a supporter of the Government. Méry decided to show him his ode as a piece of poetry written in M. de Villèle's honour. The printer's business instincts would do the rest.

Méry had made no mistake. The printer read the epistle to Sidi Mahmoud, quite approved of it and offered to print it on condition he should repay his own costs out of the proceeds of the first copies sold. They printed two thousand copies, and the two thousand disappeared in less than a week.

Meanwhile, Barthélemy had returned from London. On reaching Paris, he heard of the success of the epistle, and, taking time by the forelock, he composed another epistle entitled *Adieux à Sidi Mahmoud*, which was almost as popular as the first. Méry and Barthélemy had at that time an intimate friend who was one of the leading powers on the *Nain jaune*. His name was Soulé, and he had just been sentenced to two months' imprisonment for an article on St. Domingo. Soulé had no inclination to spend his two months in prison, and, as he and Barthélemy happened to be very much alike in looks, sufficiently so for him to be able to use Barthélemy's passport, it was lent him; he set out for London, from London took passage to the United States, and he is to-day the foremost lawyer in New Orleans, where he is making an income of a hundred

thousand francs per annum. Meanwhile, Méry was writing alone his epistle to M. de Villèle. These publications being in opposition to the Government, and full of satirical humour and the spirit of the hour, caught the public taste, and met with great success. Two more poets had now inscribed their names amongst those of the votaries of the poetic muse. And, as they were running on similar lines, they decided to combine and publish their works under the joint title of *Villéliade.* In the end it ran through fifteen editions. But when the *Villéliade* was finished there still remained, as in the case of the *Épître à Sidi Mahmoud*, the great question as to what publisher would be bold enough to publish it. Publishers had three dangers to fear: fine, imprisonment or withdrawal of their licenses. The monarchy of 1826 did not treat such conduct as a trifling matter any more than does the Republic of 1852. Méry and Barthélemy went round to every publisher of their acquaintance offering their poem; one and all made as though they would accept it at first, but handed the MS. back after reading a verse or two, shook their heads and said--

"Let who will publish your poem, it certainly shall not be I!"

The two collaborators picked up their manuscript and went forth to make a fresh attempt on another publisher, with the same result. When they had exhausted the list of well-known publishing firms, they began to approach printers with whom they had had dealings. Printers were in the same situation as publishers, and were afraid of fine, imprisonment and the withdrawal of their licenses, just in the same way: they refused.

It is sad work to be left with five or six thousand lines of poetry on one's hands. And such lines! Lines which, a month later, the whole of France was to know by heart. Méry proposed to make a last attempt with a totally unknown printer. It was a desperate remedy, but desperate remedies sometimes save a patient's life. They opened the *almanack de la librairie*, to find the name of a printer which, from the succession of

letters in his name, its signification, or its sound, might give some hope either to the eyes or the ears of the two poets. There was a printer called Auguste Barthélemy, who lived at No. 10 rue des Grands-Augustins. The name struck the two authors as auguring good luck to them. They took up their MS. and went to M. Barthélemy's. They found a tall young man, with an intelligent face, a firm but pleasing expression and an honest, kindly air about him. They laid their difficulties before him.

"Your work, then, is antagonistic to the Government?" he asked.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Is it very strong?"

"Too strong, it would seem."

"And there is risk in printing it?"

"So we are told."

"All right I will print your work and run the risk...."

The two poets both held out their hands to M. Barthélemy, who reciprocated their greeting.

Ten days later the *Villéliade*, for which he had advanced the cost of printing, paper, binding, etc., made its appearance, and, as we have said, ran through fifteen editions! This printer, who favoured the Opposition in the time of the Bourbons and also under Louis-Philippe, was our good and brave friend Auguste Barthélemy, since representative for Eure-et-Loir, both to the *Constituante* and to the *Législative.* He was obliged to flee the country after 2 December, and he stayed five months in Brussels; now, having returned to France and having refused to take oath as *conseiller général* he lives in his château of Lévéville, a league from Chartres. Let us hasten to state that it was not out of his savings as a printer that he bought this château; no, alas! his commercial loyalty, of

which we have just had an instance, cost him, on the contrary, something like a hundred and fifty to two hundred thousand francs! That is the history of the *Villéliade.* I have only to add that in the notes to the Sixth Song of the *Énéide* Barthélemy stated that the poem was written by Méry alone.

I did not know Barthélemy well; I scarcely met him more than once or twice in my life; but I knew Méry very well. He has been, he is and he always will be, probably, one of my closest friends. And I can easily count the number of these friends: I have had but two or three at the most; I might, perhaps, say four. You see, therefore, that, however small my house, even supposing I had a house, it would never be filled.

Nothing was stranger than the physical and moral differences between Méry and Barthélemy. Barthélemy was exceptionally tall, Méry of ordinary stature; Barthélemy was as cold as ice, while Méry was as hot as fire; Barthélemy was self-contained and quiet, Méry loquacious and as open as the day; Barthélemy lacked wit in conversation, while Méry poured forth a perfect cascade of smart sayings, a shower of sparks, a display of fireworks. Méry--and here I give up comparison--knew everything, or almost everything, it is possible for a man to know. He knew Greek like Plato, Rome like Vitruvius, India like Herodotus; he spoke Latin like Cicero, Italian like Dante, English like Lord Palmerston. Passionately fond of music, he was once arguing with Rossini, and he said to the composer of *Moses* and *William Tell*--

"Stay! you need say no more, you know nothing whatever about music!"

"True enough," replied Rossini.

Even the most highly gifted of men have their good and their bad days, their moments of heaviness and of gaiety. Méry was never tired, Méry was never barren. When, by chance, he did not talk, it was not that he was resting, but simply because he was listening; it was never because he

was tired, it was simply that he held his tongue. If you wanted Méry to hold forth, you had just to put a match to his wick and set him on fire, and off he would go. And if you let him have free play and did not interfere with him, no matter whether the conversation were upon ethics, or literature, or politics, or travels, on Socrates or M. Cousin, Homer or M. Viennet, Napoleon or the president, Herodotus or M. Cottu, you would have the most extraordinary improvisation you ever heard. Then--still more incredible!--added to all this, he never said anything slanderous, or bitter, or carping, about a friend! If Méry had but once held the tips of a man's fingers in his clasp, the rest of the body was sacred in his eyes. And, indeed, what is it that makes men wicked? Envy! But what is there for Méry to be envious about? He is as learned as Nodier; as much a poet as all the rest of us put together; he is as idle as Figaro, as witty as--as Méry; a very fine position, it seems to me, in the literary world. As for Méry's aptitude, it became proverbial. I will give two examples of it. One evening, it was 31 December, a group of us were discussing this facile gift, and some literary Saint Thomas, whose name I forget, called it in question. Méry retorted by suggesting that he should be supplied with a certain number of *bouts-rimés*, which he undertook to complete instantly. We set our heads together, and by a supreme effort of imagination we put together the following rhymes:--

"Choufleur, Trouble, Souffleur, Rouble.

Clairon, Dune, Perron, Lune.

Fusil, Coude, Grésil, Boude.

Nacarat, Conque, Baccarat, Quelconque.

Argo, Jongle, Camargo, Ongle."

In less time than it had taken us to find the rhymes Méry composed the following verses:--

VŒUX DE LA NOUVELLE ANNÉE

"A tous nos Curtius je souhaite un choufleur; A nos législateurs, des séances sans trouble; A l'acteur en défaut, un excellent souffleur; Aux Français en Russie, un grand dédain du rouble.

A Buloz, le retour de Mars et de Clairon; Aux marins, le bonheur de vivre sur la dune; A la Sainte-Chapelle, un gothique perron; A l'apôtre Journet, l'amitié de la lune.

Au soldat citoyen, l'abandon du fusil; A l'écrivain public, un coussin pour son coude; A moi, l'hiver sans froid, sans neige et sans grésil; Un soleil qui jamais dans un ciel gris ne boude.

Au Juif errant, un banc de velours nacarat; A l'Arabe au désert, des eaux à pleine conque; Au joueur, un essaim de neuf au baccarat; A l'homme qui s'ennuie, une douleur quelconque.

A Leverrier, un point dans le signe d' Argo; Au tigre du Bengale, un Anglais dans la jongle; Aux danseuses du jour, les pieds de Camargo; A l'auteur qu'on attaque, une griffe pour ongle!"

Another evening, at the house of Madame de Girardin there was a heated discussion on Ponsard's *Lucrèce.* The Academy, spiteful and driven to bay, was, just because of its malice, obliged to simulate some show of good feeling. So, although it was not acquainted with a single word of *Lucrèce*, the Academy puffed it up, praised it, extolled it to the skies. The work became the adopted daughter of all those impotent beings who, having never begot offspring, are reduced to pet the children of others; it was, in short, a work which was going to compete with *Marion Delorme* and *Lucrèce Borgia*, the *Maréchale d'Ancre* and *Chatterton*, *Anthony* and *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle.* So there was mirth at the palais Mazarin.

Whilst waiting for the appearance of the *chef-d'œuvre*, we aired our own views on the subject. I was acquainted with and had heard *Lucrèce.* I

knew that it was an estimable tragedy of the schoolboy type, conscientiously put together by its author, who, perhaps slightly ignorant of the Roman eras, seemed to me to have confused the Rome of the kings with that of the emperors, Sextus Tarquin with Caligula, Tully with Messalina; but, nevertheless, I maintained that the work, devoid though it was of imagination and dramatic power, deserved a hearing because of its style, when Méry said--

"I mean to write a *Lucrèce*, and to get it played before Ponsard's *Lucrèce* itself appears. It is advertised for the 25th of the month; it is now the 14th--it will not be played till the 30th. There is more than time enough to compose two thousand lines, to get them read, distributed, rehearsed and played."

"How long will it take you to complete your tragedy?" I said to Méry.

"Why! four hundred lines an act, five acts in five days---"

"So, to-morrow night you can give us the first Act?"

"To-morrow night, yes."

We arranged to meet again the next evening, not in the least counting on the first Act of Méry's *Lucrèce*. Next day we were all at the appointed place, punctual to the minute. We turned ourselves into an audience to listen to his reading. A glass of water was brought to Méry. He sat down at the table, and we made a circle round about. He drew his manuscript from his pocket, coughed, just moistened his lips with the water and read the following scenes.

He had not finished the Act because he had been interrupted, but as we entered the *salle à manger* he offered to finish what was wanting before the end of the evening.

LUCRÈCE

TRAGÉDIE

SCÈNE PREMIÈRE

La maison de l'aruspice Faustus, c'est-à-dire une vaste treille à mi-côte du mont Quirinal. A gauche, la façade d'une maison en briques rouges; devant la porte, un autel supportant un dieu pénate en argile; au pied du Quirinal, dans un fond lumineux, le Champ de Mars bordé par le Tibre

FAUSTUS, *seul, à l'autel de ses dieux*

Dieu pénate d'argile, ô mon dieu domestique! Un jour, tu seras d'or, sous un riche portique, Tel que Rome en prepare à nos dieux immortels Et le sang des taureaux rougira tes autels. Mais, aujourd'hui, reçois avec un œil propice La prière et le don du pieux aruspice; Ces fruits qu'une vestale a cueillis, ce matin, Dans le verger du temple, au pied de l'Aventin, Et ce lait pur qui vient de la haute colline Où, la nuit, on entend une voix sibylline, Quand le berger craintif suspend aux verts rameaux La flûte qu'un dieu fit avec sept chalumeaux. L'aube sur le Soracte annonce sa lumière; Si j'apporte déjà mon offrande première, C'est qu'une grande voix a retenti dans l'air; C'est que la foudre, à gauche, a grondé sans éclair, Et que, dans cette nuit sombre et mystérieuse, A gémi l'oiseau noir aux branches de l'yeuse. O dieu lare! dis-moi quel forfait odieux Doit punir aujourd'hui la colère des dieux, Afin que le flamine et la blanche vestale Ouvrent du temple saint la porte orientale, Et qu'au maître des dieux, dans les rayons naissants, Montent avec le jour la prière et l'encens.

SCÈNE II

FAUSTUS, BRUTUS, *en tunique de couleur brune, comme un laboureur suburbain*

BRUTUS

Que les dieux te soient doux, vieillard, et que Cybèle Jamais dans tes jardins n'ait un sillon rebelle! La fatigue m'oppresse; à l'étoile du soir, Hier, je vins à la ville ...

FAUSTUS

Ici, tu peux t'asseoir. Modeste est ma maison, étroite est son enceinte. Mais j'y vénère encor l'hospitalité sainte, Et j'apaise toujours la faim de l'indigent, Comme si mon dieu lare était d'or ou d'argent.

BRUTUS

Je le sais.

FAUSTUS

Quelle rive, étranger, t'a vu naître?

BRUTUS

Quand les dieux parleront, je me ferai connaître. Ma mère est de Capène; elle m'accoutuma, Tout enfant, à servir les grands dieux de Numa. Du haut du Quirinal, on voit ma bergerie Sous le bois saint aimé de la nymphe Égérie, Et jamais le loup fauve, autour de ma maison, Ne souilla de ses dents une molle toison.

FAUSTUS

Et quel secret dessein à la ville t'amène?

BRUTUS

La liberté!... Jadis Rome était son domaine, Lorsque les rois pasteurs, sur le coteau voisin, Pauvres, se couronnaient de pampre et de raisin; Lorsque le vieux Évandre arrivait dans la plaine, Pour présider aux jeux, sous un sayon de laine, Et que partout le Tibre admirait sur ses bords Des vertus au dedans et du chaume au dehors ... Mais ces temps sont bien loin! Tout dégénère et tombe Le puissant Romulus doit frémir dans sa

tombe, En écoutant passer sur son marbre divin Des rois ivres d'orgueil, de luxure et de vin!

FAUSTUS

Jeune homme, la sagesse a parlé par ta bouche. Ton regard est serein; ta voix rude me touche. Non, tu n'es pas de ceux qui vont à nous, rampant Sous l'herbe des jardins, comme fait le serpent; Infâmes délateurs qui touchent un salaire En révélant au roi la plainte populaire, Et livrent au bourreau, sous l'arbre du chemin, Tout citoyen encor fier du nom de Romain ...

BRUTUS

Prêtre, écoute ton fils.--Tu te souviens, sans doute, D'un nom sacré, d'un nom que le tyran redoute, D'un nom qui flamboyait sur le front d'un mortel, Comme un feu de Cybèle allumé sur l'autel, De Brutus?

FAUSTUS

Sa mémoire est-elle ensevelie? Ce nom est-il de ceux que le Romain oublie? Il vivra tant qu'un prêtre en tunique de lin Dira l'hymme de Rome au dieu capitolin! Je l'ai connu! J'ai vu s'incliner, comme l'herbe, Ce héros sous le fer de Tarquin le Superbe!.. Il est mort! Morts aussi tous ses nobles parents, Hécatombe de gloire immolée aux tyrans!

BRUTUS

Prêtre, il lui reste un fils.

FAUSTUS

Je le sais: corps sans âme! Noble front que le ciel a privé de sa flamme! Ombre errante qui va demander sa raison Au sang liquide encore au seuil de sa maison!

BRUTUS

C'est un faux bruit: sa main à la vengeance est prête; Minerve a conservé sa raison dans sa tête. Son père lui légua son visage, sa voix, Sa vertu ...

FAUSTUS, *s'écriant*

Dieux, je veux l'embrasser!

BRUTUS

Tu le vois.

FAUSTUS

Oh!... *(Serrant Brutus dans ses bras)* Les dieux quelquefois jettent sur la paupière Un voile, comme ils font aux images de pierre; La vieillesse est aveugle! Oh! je te reconnais! Je rentre dans la vie ... Oui, mon fils, je renais! O dieu lare, pourquoi ton funèbre présage? Oui, voilà bien son pas, son regard, son visage, Son maintien de héros, son geste triomphant! Brutus, mort sous mes yeux, revit en son enfant! Mes pleurs réjouiront ma paupière ridée!... Dis, quel heurteux distin t'a conduit?

BRUTUS

Une idée. Le temps est précieux; le premier rayon d'or Luit sur le fronton blanc de Jupiter Stator. Il faut agir! Apprends que, dans Rome, j'épie Les cyniques projets de cette race impie, Et qu'elle nous prépare un crime de l'enfer, Rêvé par l'Euménide en sa couche de fer. La ville de nos dieux par le crime est gardée; Le sénat dort; Tarquin fait le siège d'Ardée; La justice se voile et marche d'un pas lent; Sextus règne au palais! Sextus!... un insolent! Entouré nuit et jour de ses amis infâmes, Braves comme Ixion pour insulter les femmes! Ne laissant, sous le chaume ou le lambris doré, Dans une alcôve en deuil, qu'un lit déshonoré! Ce matin, éveillé, l'aube luisant à peine, J'ai vu Sextus assis sous la porte Capène. Il parlait, l'imprudent! et ne se doutait pas Du fantôme éternel qui brûle tous ses pas! Donc, j'ai su qu'il attend que Rome tout entière S'éveille, et qu'un

esclave apporte sa litière. Je ne puis en douter: un obscène souci, Avant le grand soleil, doit le conduire ici.

FAUSTUS

Ici?

BRUTUS

Dans ta maison quel dieu jaloux amène, Par ce sentier désert, une dame romaine?

FAUSTUS

Une seule ... elle vient aux heures du matin.

BRUTUS

Quel est son nom?

FAUSTUS

L'hymen l'unit à Collatin.

BRUTUS

Lucrèce!... Dieux, le lys de notre gynécée! Sainte pudeur, défends ta fille menacée!

FAUSTUS

Son époux est absent, et, quand le jour a lui, Elle vient consulter les augures pour lui.

BRUTUS

Oh! qu'aujourd'hui des dieux la puissance immortelle L'écarte!

FAUSTUS

Un bruit de pas!...

BRUTUS

Sainte pudeur! c'est elle!...

Now we certainly wanted our joke, but we did not wish to commit a murder; and to have played this piece at the Théâtre-Français or at the Porte-Saint-Martin, before M. Ponsard's *Lucrèce*, would assuredly have killed the latter. Méry, therefore, pulled himself up half-way through the first Act.

One last word about 1828.

At this period, Méry lived at 29 rue du Harlay, in the same rooms with Carrel. Their evening gatherings generally consisted of Rabbe, Raffenel and Reboul.

Of these five friends, who were well-nigh inseparable, four were carried off cruelly in the prime of their life. Rabbe, by a terrible disease that brought him to his grave as disfigured as though his features had been gnawed by a tiger. Carrel and Reboul were killed in duels, the one at Saint-Mandé, the other at Martinique. Raffenel was blown to pieces on the Acropolis by a Turkish cannon-ball.

BOOK II — CHAPTER IX

CHAPTER IX

I pass from the Secretarial Department to the Record Office--M. Bichet--Wherein I resemble Piron--My spare time--M. Pieyre and M. Parseval de Grandmaison--A scene missing in *Distrait--La Peyrouse*--A success all to myself

It was in the Luxembourg Gardens that I first made the acquaintance of Méry. I was introduced to him there. We drew together like iron and magnet; and, although I really could not say which of us was iron and which magnet, we became inseparable. I was already well forward with my drama *Christine.* I repeated about two or three hundred lines to him, and he encouraged me greatly. I stood in much need of this encouragement.

I had just undergone a change of position. When Oudard saw that I was incorrigible, and found out that I was working at a drama, he moved me from the Secretarial Department to the Record Offices. And this was equivalent to disgracing me. I was put there with a tiny old man of eighty years, called M. Bichet, who since 1788 had always dressed in a pair of satin breeches, variegated stockings, a black cloth coat and a waistcoat of flowered silk. This costume was finished off with ruffles and frills. His face, which was surrounded by a halo of snow-white hair ending in a little queue, was ruddy and honest and kindly in expression. He tried to receive me rudely, but did not manage to succeed. My extreme politeness to him disarmed him. He showed me my place, and loaded my table with all the accumulated arrears of work that lack of a clerk for a month had brought about. I finished the work by the end of three days. I carried it to him in his office, and asked him for something else.

"What! something else already?" he exclaimed.

"Certainly."

"Why?"

"Because I have done what you gave me."

"Completely finished it?"

"Completely."

"Oh! oh! oh!" gasped M. Bichet.

And he picked up my work with the air of a man who says to himself, "It must have been pretty badly scamped!"

M. Bichet was mistaken: my mettle had been roused. Each report, each despatch, each copy drew from him an exclamation of delight.

"Really," he said, "really this is very good! Excellent, monsieur, excellent!... Your writing is the same style as Piron's, monsieur."

"The deuce! That is a fine compliment for me."

"You know Piron's handwriting? He was a copying clerk for five years in this Record Office, monsieur."

"Oh, indeed!... So my handwriting is like his?"

"You have another point in common with him, I hear."

"What is that, monsieur?"

"You write poetry."

"Alas!..."

He came up to me and said roguishly--

"Are the poems you compose the same style of thing as his?"

"No, monsieur."

"Ah! I thought not. Piron was a gay young dog!... I saw him at Madame de Montesson's.... I suppose you never knew Madame de Montesson, did you?"

"Yes, I did, monsieur; my father took me to her house when I was quite a child."

"She was a charming woman, monsieur, a charming woman, and she entertained the best society of Paris."

"Now, monsieur," I asked, "will you please give me some fresh work?"

"What work?"

"Why! any work."

"But there is no more to do!"

"What! nothing else to do?"

"No, since you have finished everything."

"But what, then, am I to do?"

"Whatever you like, monsieur."

"Do you mean I am to do what I like?"

"Yes ... until fresh work comes, when I will put it on your desk, and you can then set to work on it."

"And in my spare moments?..."

"Young man, young man! at your age you ought not to waste a single moment."

"I am quite of your opinion, monsieur, and you will be convinced of my industry if you will let me finish...."

"Ah! ah!"

"I want to know if I may work at my tragedy in my spare time?"

Notice that I said *tragedy* instead of *drama*; I did not wish to frighten M. Bichet.

"Are you composing a tragedy, then?" he said.

"Hum!... I do not know whether I ought to tell you."

"Why not? I see no harm in it. My old friend Pieyre has written a comedy."

"Yes, monsieur, and a very striking one it is: *l'École des Pères.*"

"You know it?"

"I have read it."

"Good.... Then, too, another old friend of mine, Parseval de Grandmaison, writes epic poetry."

"Yes--*Philippe-Auguste*, for instance."

"You have read it?"

"No, I confess I have not."

"Well then, let me say that although the one writes comedies and the other epic poems, they are none the less worthy men for all that."

"On the contrary, monsieur, they are both excellent fellows."

"Have you met them?"

"Never."

"Hum ... Hum...."

And M. Bichet seemed to be thinking over something to himself.

"Good!..." he said, after a moment's silence.

"Then, monsieur, you have nothing more to say to me at present?"

"Nothing."

"Of course I shall be at my desk, and if you want me...."

"Certainly; you can go."

I resumed my seat with delight. Except for losing Lassagne and Ernest, my disgrace resolved itself into a privilege. The office-boy warned me that if I arrived before eleven o'clock, I should not find him there, and if I stayed past four he would lock me in when he went. So, no more portfolios to make up, all my evenings to myself, and a chief who did not prevent me from writing tragedies! And, forthwith, I set to work on *Christine.* I cannot say how long I had been working when the office-boy came to tell me that M. Bichet wanted me in his office. I went in at once. M. Bichet was not alone this time; on his right stood a short old man, and on his left a tall old man. As they stood there, the three judges, before whom I seemed about to be arraigned, looked not unlike Minis, Æacus and Rhadamanthus. I bowed, feeling considerably surprised.

"See, there he is," said M. Bichet. "Upon my word, his handwriting is beautiful, it is exactly like Piron's, and he has done fifteen days' work in three."

"What did you tell me monsieur did besides?" asked the tall old man.

"Why, he writes poetry!"

"Ah! yes, quite so, poetry...."

A light dawned on me.

"Have I the honour of addressing M. Parseval de Grandmaison?" I asked.

"Yes, monsieur," he replied.

Then, turning to the other old gentleman, he said--

"Only think, my dear Pieyre, I am so absent-minded, that the most extraordinary thing happened to me the other day."

"What was it?"

"Just imagine! I forgot my own name."

"Bah!" exclaimed M. Bichet.

"Your own name? Not your own name?" queried M. Pieyre.

"Yes, my name, my very own name! It was at the marriage contract of ... what's his name ... you know, who married the daughter of so and so ...?"

"How can I assist you on such slight information as that?"

"Oh! dear, dear! the daughter of so and so ... who is my colleague at the Academy?... who writes comedies ... who wrote ... I cannot remember what it was.... A play that Mercier had already done; you know well enough?"

"Alexandre Duval?..."

"Yes, yes; it was at the signing of the contract of what's his name ... who married his daughter ... an architect ... who wrote a work on something ... that was burned ... in the eruption of Vesuvius, where somebody or other died...."

"Oh, yes! Marois, who wrote a work on *Pompeii*, where Pliny died?" I hazarded timidly.

"That is exactly it!... Thanks, monsieur."

And he quietly stretched himself back in his arm-chair, after having first made me a gracious bow.

"Well then," said M. Bichet, "come, now finish your story, my dear friend."

"What story?"

"Why, the story you were telling."

"Was I telling a story?"

"Of course," said M. Pieyre; "you were relating, my dear friend, that at the signing of the marriage contract of Marois, who has married the daughter of Alexandre Duval, you had forgotten your name."

"Oh yes, true.... Well then, this was it. Everybody signed: then I said to myself, 'Now comes my turn to sign,' and I prepared to do so. I began to think what my name was and--the deuce! I couldn't remember it any longer! I thought I should be obliged to ask my neighbour what I was called, and how humiliating that would be to me. It was on the ground floor, and the door opened out on the garden. I hurried into the garden, striking my forehead and saying to myself, 'You rascal! you rascal! what is your name?' Yes, indeed, if I had but had to remember my name to save myself from being hanged I should have been hanged, right enough. Meanwhile my turn to sign had come, and people were searching for me. Alexandre Duval caught sight of me in the garden. 'Well, this is fine,' he said; 'there is that devil of a Parseval de Grandmaison overcome by a poetic seizure, just when he ought to be signing.... Here! Parseval de Grandmaison!' 'That is it,' I exclaimed, 'that is it: Parseval de Grandmaison! Parseval de Grandmaison! Parseval de Grandmaison!' and I went up to the table and signed."

"That is just the scene needed in the *Distrait*," I said, smiling.

"Yes, monsieur, you are quite right, it does need it; and if you wrote poetry I should say to you 'Add it.'"

"But," M. Bichet interpolated, "he does write poetry, that was the very reason why you had him called in."

"Ah, true, true!... Well then, young man, come, recite some of your lines to us."

"Something out of your tragedy."

"Ah! you are writing a tragedy?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"What is your subject?" asked M. Parseval de Grandmaison.

"Christine...."

"A good subject! Somebody has written one on the same theme.... Very poor! ah! very poor!"

"Pardon me, messieurs, I would much rather recite you something other than lines out of my tragedy." The lines of my tragedy were dramatic lines, which would probably not be very much to the taste of these gentlemen. "I would far rather," I added, "recite you an ode."

"Oh! oh! an ode!" said M. Parseval de Grandmaison."

"Oh! oh! an ode!" said M. Pieyre.

"Oh! oh! an ode!" said M. Bichet.

"Well, then, now for the ode," said M. Parseval. "What is it on, young man?"

"You may remember that, for some time past, people have been much taken up with la Peyrouse? The papers have even lately been announcing that traces of the shipwreck have been found...."

"Is that so?" asked M. Bichet.

"Yes, it is," said M. Pieyre.

"I knew la Peyrouse well," said M. Parseval de Grandmaison.

"I, too," said M. Pieyre.

"I did not know her," said M. Bichet, "but I knew Piron."

"That is not the same thing," said M. Parseval.

"Let us have your ode, young man," said M. Pieyre.

"This is it, monsieur, since you would like to hear it."

"Come, come, don't be afraid," said old Bichet.

I rallied all my powers, and in fairly confident tones I repeated the following lines, which I think may indicate that I had made some progress:--

LA PEYROUSE

Le ciel est pur, la mer est belle! Un vaisseau, près de fuir le port, Tourmente son ancre rebelle, Fixée au sable, qu'elle mord. Il est impatient d'une onde Plus agitée et plus profonde; Le géant voudrait respirer! Il lui faut pour air les tempêtes; Il lui faut les combats pour fêtes, Et l'Océan pour s'égarer.

Silencieux et solitaire, Un homme est debout sur le pont, Son regard, fixé vers la terre, Trouve un regard qui lui répond. Sur le rivage en vain la foule, Comme un torrent, s'amasse et roule, Il y suit des yeux de l'amour Celle qui, du monde exilée, Doit désormais, triste et voilée, Attendre l'heure du retour.[1]

Son œil se trouble sous ses larmes, Et, pourtant, ce fils des dangers A vu de lointaines alarmes, A vu des mondes étrangers: Deux fois le cercle de la terre, Découvrant pour lui son mystère, Des bords glacés aux bords

brûlants, Sentit, comme un fer qui déchire, La carène de son navire Sillonner ses robustes flancs.

Et la fortune enchanteresse Ne l'entraînait pas sur les flots; L'espoir de la douce paresse Ne berçait pas ses matelots. Dédaigneux des biens des deux mondes, Il ne fatiguait pas les ondes Pour aller ravir, tour à tour, L'or que voit germer le Potose L'émeraude à Golconde éclose, Et les perles de Visapour.

C'est une plus noble espérance Qui soutient ses travaux divers. Sa parole, au nom de la France, Court interroger l'univers. Il faut que l'univers réponde! Dans son immensité féconde, Peut-être cherche-t-il encor Quelque désert âpre et sauvage, Quelque délicieux rivage, Que garde un autre Adamastor.

Il le trouvera! Mais silence! Du canon le bruit a roulé; Au haut du mât, qui se balance, Un pavillon s'est déroulé. Comme un coursier dans la carrière Traîne un nuage de poussière Que double sa rapidité, Le vaisseau s'élance avec grâce, A sa suite laissant pour trace Un large sillon argenté.

Bientôt ses mâtures puissantes Ne sont plus qu'un léger roseau; Ses voiles flottent, blanchissantes, Comme les ailes d'un oiseau. Puis, sur la mouvante surface, C'est un nuage qui s'efface, Un point que devinent les yeux, Qui s'éloigne, s'éloigne encore, Ainsi qu'une ombre s'évapore ... Et la mer se confond aux cieux.

Alors, lentement dans la foule, Meurt le dernier cri du départ; Silencieuse, elle s'écoule En s'interrogeant du regard. Puis l'ombre, à son tour descendue, Occupe seule l'étendue. Rien sur la mer, rien sur le port; Au bruit monotone de l'onde, Pas un bruit humain qui réponde: L'univers fatigué s'endort!

Les ans passent, et leur silence N'est interrompu quelquefois Que par un long cri qui s'élance, Proféré par cent mille voix. On a, sur un lointain rivage, Trouvé les débris d'un naufrage ... Vaisseaux, volez sur cet écueil!

Les vaisseaux ont revu la France Mais les signes de l'espérance Sont changés en signes de deuil!

Hélas!... combien de fois, trompée, La France reprit son espoir! Tantôt, c'est un tronçon d'épée Qu'aux mains d'un sauvage on crut voir; Tantôt, c'est un vieil insulaire Séduit par l'appât du salaire, Qui se souvient, avec effort, Que d'étrangers d'une autre race Jadis il aperçut la trace Dans une île ... là-bas ... au nord.

Que fais-tu loin de ta patrie, Qui t'aimait entre ses enfants, Lorsque, pour ta tête chérie, Elle a des lauriers triomphants? Pour toi, la mer s'est-elle ouverte? Dors-tu sur un lit d'algues vertes? Ou, par un destin plus fatal, Sens-tu tes pesantes journées Rouler sur ton front des années Qu'ignore le pays natal?

Et, pourtant, te dictant ta route, Un roi t'a tracé ton chemin; Mais du ciel le pouvoir, sans doute, A heurté le pouvoir humain. Et, tandis qu'à leur ignorance Du retour sourit l'espérance, Dieu, sur les tables de la loi, A deux différentes tempêtes A déjà voué les deux têtes Du navigateur et du roi!..."

I had followed with the closest attention the effect produced upon my hearers. M. Parseval blinked his eyelids and simply twirled his thumbs one round the other; M. Pieyre opened his eyes very wide and smiled, his mouth also wide open. Old Bichet, as curious as I was as to the impression I was making on his two friends, seeing that this impression was favourable, shook his head delightedly, saying under his breath--

"Just like Piron! Just like Piron!

When I had finished, they burst out into applause, which was followed by all sorts of encouraging advice.

I did not know whether I stood on my head or my heels. Imagine the feelings of Ovid, exiled among the Thracians, when he found a sun more

radiant than that at Rome, and on carpets of flowers more fragrant than those of Pæstum, under trees that lent a cooler shade than those by the Tiber, listened to the applause given his *Tristia* and his *Metamorphoses.* I gave thanks to the gods who, unsolicited, had granted me this moment of peace. We shall see that it was to be of but short duration.

[Footnote 1: Madame de le Peyrouse avait promis à son mari de rester voilée jusqu'à son retour; madame de la Peyrouse a tenu parole, et a gardé son voile jusqu'à la mort.]

BOOK II — CHAPTER X

CHAPTER X

The painter Lethière--Brutus unveiled by M. Ponsard--Madame Hannemann--Gohier--Andrieux--Renaud--Desgenettes--Larrey, Augereau and the Egyptian mummy--Soldiers of the new school--My dramatic education--I enter the offices of the Forestry Department--The cupboard full of empty bottles--Three days away from the office--Am summoned before M. Deviolaine

In the meantime, as I have stated, I had become master of my evenings as I had no longer to see after the portfolio, and I took advantage of my liberty to taste a little of life. My mother recollected an old friend of my father, and we ventured to call upon him. He belonged to the good-natured order of human beings, and gave us a warm welcome. He was the famous artist Lethière, painter of *Brutus Condamnant ses fils*, a heroism that always seemed to me a trifle too Spartan, but which M. Ponsard's *Lucrèce* has since made clearer to me. M. Ponsard was the first to reveal the great conjugal mystery that the sons of Brutus were not the sons of Brutus, but only the fruit of adultery: by beheading them Brutus exhibited revenge, not his devotion to them!

M. Ponsard, it will be noted, deserved not only to belong to the Academy, but also to the Suscriptions and Belles-Lettres. Well, my father's old friend was the painter of the fine picture entitled *Brutus Condamnant ses fils.* He had painted my father's portrait, representing him just as a horse had been shot dead under him by a cannon-ball; my father had also sat to him for the model of his *Philoctète*, in the Chamber of Deputies. We soon made ourselves known to him, and were received with open arms. He embraced both my mother and me, and invited us to look upon his house as our own, particularly on Thursdays, when places

should always be laid for us at his table. We were greatly delighted with the latter offer. I have no desire to hide from my readers that we were in a position to welcome the economy effected by the gain of a dinner not at our own expense! M. Lethière possessed fine talents, a kind heart and a winning manner. There lived with him then, as ruling spirit in his household, a young woman, fair, tall and thin, who nearly always dressed in black; her name was Mademoiselle d'Hervilly, and under that name she became known in painting and literature. She afterwards became Madame Hannemann, and under that name became known in the medical profession. Her nature was cold and very hard, but she possessed plenty of will-power. I believe Madame Hannemann, now a widow, is extremely wealthy. This lady, who was of a very superior character, did the honours of M. Lethière's house and entertained his old friends, several of whom had been old friends of my father. These old friends were: M. Gohier, past President of the Directoire; Andrieux, Desgenettes, an old painter named Renaud and several others.

Desgenettes, who had known my father very intimately in Egypt, at once made friendly overtures to me, and introduced me to Larrey.

I shall have occasion several times to refer to the latter gentleman and his son, who was one of my best friends. The Siege of Anvers in 1832 gloriously enabled him to prove himself a worthy son of his father.

Of all these men, Gohier struck me as the most remarkable. Contrary to the laws of perspective, there are certain persons of ordinary calibre, who having, through stress of eventful circumstance, occupied high positions, loom larger in one's view the further away they recede. Now I could not help but look upon the man who had presided over Barras, Roger-Ducos, Moulin and Sièyes as worth notice; for, for the time being, he had been first of the five kings who had governed France. But I was deceived in my estimate of his greatness: M. Gohier was a solid, worthy man who knew just so much of history as one cannot help learning, who knew

nothing of politics and who possessed no depth of judgment. I cannot do better than compare him with our Boulay (de la Meurthe), whom history will enroll as having been three years Vice-President of the Republic, although he may pretend to have no idea of such a thing, even on 2 December! Gohier cordially detested Bonaparte; but his hatred was neither philosophical nor political, but wholly a personal matter. He could never forgive the future First Consul for the ridiculous part he had made him play on 18 Brumaire, by inviting him to lunch with Joséphine, and in inviting himself to dine at his house, whilst he was changing the whole Government.

I need not draw the portrait of Andrieux: everybody knows that petty, old, shrivelled man, with his petty voice and his petty eyes, the author of petty fables and petty comedies and petty stories, who died at the age of eighty, leaving behind him a petty reputation after having raised petty hopes.

Renaud was an old artist who had once painted a picture that was thought well of, the *Jeunesse d'Achille.* He had grown old in painting the nude. And in his old age he painted nothing but the Graces, naiads and nymphs, turning to the public their ... blue and rosy backs.

Desgenettes was an old libertine of an extremely quick-witted and very cynical turn of mind, half soldier, half doctor, very fond of the real flesh-and-blood goddesses that old Renaud was so fond of copying; he would relate in season and out" the broadest and most immodest of stories, with great glee. There was much of the eighteenth century about him.

Larrey, on the contrary, was austerely puritanic in appearance. He wore his hair quite long, trimmed after the fashion of Merovingian princes: he spoke slowly and seriously. The emperor was said to have spoken of him as the most honest man he ever knew. Apart from the influence of sincere kindliness that he diffused among young people, Larrey presented a

curious study to us all. He had known every celebrated personage of the Empire; and he had cut off most of the arms and legs that needed amputation; he had collected much curious information indicative of character or of the secrets of the soul, by listening to the first words of the wounded and the last words of the dying. He would sometimes relate anecdotes which, without any malicious intention, gave one an idea of the ignorance of those decorated and beplumed warriors, who were in the main lion-hearted, but also, for the most part, of dull intellect, and infinitely less brilliant in any drawing-room than on a battlefield. When Larrey returned from Egypt he brought back a curiosity that is not thought much of nowadays, in the shape of a mummy, but which at that time raised scientific curiosity to the highest pitch. When he met Augereau, he said to him--

"Ah! come now and dine with me to-morrow; I will show you a mummy I have brought back from the Pyramids."

"With pleasure," Augereau replied; and he went next day to dinner.

"Well," he said at dessert, "why have we not seen that mummy yet?"

"Because it is in my study," said Larrey. "Follow me, and you shall see it."

Larrey led the way, Augereau following full of curiosity. When they reached the study, Larrey went to the box, which was leaning up against the wall, opened it, and revealed the mummy. Then Augereau approached and touched it with his finger.

"I declare," he exclaimed contemptuously, "it is dead!"

Larrey was so astonished by this exclamation that he did not even bethink himself to offer apologies to Augereau for having disturbed him to look at so uninteresting an object as a *dead mummy.*

But throughout that period everybody was literary, not in themselves, or from choice, but from tradition. No one had yet forgotten that Bonaparte had signed his own proclamations to the Army of Egypt, and that Napoleon had accosted M. de Fontanes every time he met him with the question--

"Well, Monsieur de Fontanes, have you found me a poet?"

But the day and the appointed hour had come for all those poets who had escaped the notice of M. de Fontanes and Napoleon's munificent offers. They were springing up, blossoming and glowing like hawthorn in the month of May; and their names had already begun to give promise of the immense sensation they were to create in the future. Their names were Lamartine, Hugo, de Vigny, Sainte-Beuve, Méry, Soulié, Barbier, Alfred de Musset, Balzac; these were already filling, at the cost of their heart's blood, that great and unique stream of poetry from which France and Europe and the whole world were to drink during the nineteenth century.

But the movement was taking place not only amidst that *pléiade* which I have just named; a whole host of others was fighting, each helping forward the general cause by separate attacks, to make a breach in the walls of the old school of poetry. Dittmer and Cavé were publishing the *Soirées de Neuilly*; Vitet, the *Barricades* and the *États de Blois*; Mérimée the *Théâtre de Clara Gazul.* And note carefully that all these movements took place away from the stage whereon the real struggle took place, and apart from its manifestations. The real struggle was that in which I, and Victor Hugo (I put myself first for chronological reasons) were to take part. I was preparing for it not only by the continuation of my *Christine*, but still more by studying humanity as a whole, combined with individual characterisations.

I have referred to the immense service the English actors had done me; Macready, Kean, Young had in turn completed the work begun by Kemble and Miss Smithson. I had seen *Hamlet*, *Romeo*, *Shylock*, *Othello*,

Richard III. and *Macbeth.* I had read and devoured not only the whole of Shakespeare, but even the whole of the foreign dramatic output. I had recognised that, in the theatrical world, everything emanated from Shakespeare, just as in the external world everything owes its existence to the sun; that nothing could be compared with him; for, coming before everyone else, he was yet as supreme in tragedy as Corneille, in comedy as Molière, as original as Calderon, as full of thought as Goethe, as passionate as Schiller. I realised that his works contained as many types as the works of all the others put together. I recognised, in short, that, after the Creator Himself, Shakespeare had created more than any other being. As I have stated, when I saw these English artists, actors who forgot that they were on a stage,--the life of the imagination became actual life through the power of Art; their convincing words and gestures seeming to transform them from actors into creatures of God, with their virtues and their vices, their passions and their failings,--from that moment my career was decided. I felt I had received that special call which comes to every man. I felt a confidence in my own powers that I had lacked until then, and I boldly hurled myself upon the unknown future that had hitherto held such terrors for me. But, at the same time, I did not disguise from myself the difficulties in the way of the career to which I had devoted my life; I knew that it would require deeper and more special study than any other profession; that before I could experiment successfully on living nature I must first perseveringly study the works of others. So I did not rest satisfied with a superficial study. One after the other, I took the works of men of genius, like Shakespeare, Molière, Corneille, Calderon, Goethe and Schiller, laid them out as bodies on a dissecting table, and, scalpel in hand, I spent whole nights in probing them to the heart in order to find the sources of life and the secret of the circulation of their blood. And after a while I discovered with what admirable science they galvanised nerve and muscle into life, and by what skill they modelled the differing types of flesh that were destined to cover the one unchangeable human framework of bone. For man does not

invent. God has given the created world into his hands, and left him to apply it to his needs. Progress simply means the daily, monthly and everlasting conquest of man over matter. Each individual as he appears on the scene takes possession of the knowledge of his fathers, works it up in different ways, and then dies after he has added one ray more to the sum of human knowledge which he bequeaths to his sons,--one star in the Milky Way! I was then not only trying to complete my dramatic work but also my dramatic education. But that is an error, one's work may be finished some day, but one's education never!

I had just about concluded my play, after two months' peace and encouragement in my humble post in the Archives Office, when I received notice from the Secretariat that, as my position was almost a sinecure, it had been done away with, and that I must hold myself ready to enter the Forestry Department--under M. Deviolaine. So the storm that had been hanging over my head for long had burst at last. I said good-bye to old father Bichet with tears in my eyes, and to his two friends MM. Pieyre and Parseval de Grandmaison, who promised to follow my career with sympathetic interest wherever I might be. The reader knows M. Deviolaine. During the five years I had been in the Government offices I had been looked upon as a *bête-noir*, so I entered upon my new official work under no very favourable auspices.

The struggle began immediately I took up my new duties. They wanted to herd me together with five or six of my fellow-clerks in one large room, and I revolted against the proceeding. My companions were good enough to explain to me in all innocence that they found it an advantageous way of killing time--that deadly enemy to employés--to sit together, for then they could talk. Now, talk was just what I most dreaded; to them it was a pleasure, to me a torture, for chattering distracted my own ever-increasing imaginative ideas. No, instead of wanting to be in this big office, strewn thick with supernumeraries, clerks and assistants, I had my eye on a sort of recess separated by a simple

partition from the office-boy's cubicle, and in which he kept the ink-bottles that were returned to him empty. I asked if I might take possession of this place. I might as well have asked for the archbishopric of Cambrai, which was just vacant. A fearful clamour went up at this demand, from the office boy to the head of the department *(directeur général).* The office boy asked the clerks in the big room where he could put his empty bottles henceforth; the clerks in the big room asked the assistant head clerk (the one who had never heard of Byron) whether I thought myself too good to work with them; the assistant head clerk asked the chief clerk whether I had come to the Forestry Department to give or to receive orders; the chief clerk asked the head of the department if it were usual for a clerk paid fifteen hundred francs to have an office to himself, as though he were a head clerk at four thousand. The head of the department replied that it was not only absolutely contrary to administrative customs, but that no such precedent would be allowed me, and that my claim was most presumptuous! I was trying to fit myself into the unlucky recess which, for the moment, formed the sum of my ambition, when the head clerk walked haughtily from the office of the head of the department, bearing the verbal command that the rebellious employé, who had dared for one moment to entertain the ambitious hope of leaving the ordinary ranks, should at once return to his place there. He transmitted the order immediately to the assistant head clerk, who passed it on to the ordinary clerks of the large office, who transmitted it to the office boy! There was joy throughout the department: a fellow-clerk was to be humiliated and, if he did not take his humiliation in a humble spirit, he I would lose his situation! The office boy opened the door between his cubicle and mine; he had just come from making a general clearance throughout the office and had brought back all the empty bottles he could manage to unearth.

"But, my dear Féresse," I said, watching him uneasily, "how do you think I can manage here with all those bottles, or, rather, how are all those

bottles going to fit in with me,--unless I live in one of them, after the style of *le Diable boiteux?*"

"That's just it!" leered Féresse, as he deposited fresh bottles by the old ones. "*M. le Directeur général* does not look upon it in that light: he wishes me to keep this room for myself, and does not intend a new-comer to lay down the law."

I walked up to him, the blood mantling my face.

"The new-comer, however insignificant he may be, is still your superior," I said; "so you should speak to him with your head uncovered. Take your cap off, you young cub!"

And, at the same moment, I gave the lad a back-hander that sent his hat flying against the wall, and took my departure. All this happened in the absence of M. Deviolaine; therefore I had not the last word in the matter. M. Deviolaine would not return for two or three days; so I decided to go home to my poor mother, and there await his return. But, before I left the office, I went and told Oudard all that had happened, who said he could not do anything in the matter, and I told M. Pieyre, who said that he could not do much. My mother was in a state of despair: it reminded her too much of my return home from Maître Lefèvre's in 1823. She rushed off to Madame Deviolaine. Madame Deviolaine was an excellent woman but narrow-minded, and she could not understand why a clerk should have any other ambition beyond that of ultimately becoming a first class clerk; why a first class clerk should desire to become anything beyond an assistant chief clerk; why an assistant chief clerk should have any other ambition than that of becoming chief clerk, and so forth. So she did not hold out any promises to my mother; for that matter, the poor woman had not much influence over her husband, as she well knew, and she but rarely tried to exercise what little she did possess. Meanwhile, I had begged Porcher to come to our house. I showed him my almost

completed tragedy, and I asked him whether, in case of adverse circumstances, he would advance me a certain sum.

"Confound it!" Porcher replied--"a tragedy!... If it had been a vaudeville I do not say but that I would!... However, *get it received* and we will see."

"Get it received!" Therein, of course, lay the whole question.

My mother returned at that moment, and Porcher's answer was not of the kind to reassure her. I wrote to M. Deviolaine, and begged that my letter might be given him on his return; then I waited. We spent three days of suspense; but during those three days I stayed in bed and worked incessantly. Why did I stop in bed? That requires an explanation. Whilst I was at the Secretariat, and had to be at the office from ten in the morning until five in the evening, returning there from eight until ten o'clock, I had to traverse the distance between the faubourg Saint-Denis No. 53 to the rue Saint-Honoré No. 216, eight times a day, and I was so tired out that I could rarely work if I sat up. So I went to bed and slept, first putting my work on the table near my bed; I slept for two hours, and then at midnight my mother woke me and went to sleep in her turn. That was the reason I worked in bed. This habit of working in bed attained such hold of me that I kept it up long after I had gained freedom of action, doing all my theatrical work thus. Perhaps this revelation may satisfy those physiologists who dilated upon the kind of rude passion which has been noted in my earliest works, and with which, perhaps not unreasonably, I have been reproached. I contracted another habit, too, at that time, and that was to write my dramas in a backward style of handwriting: this habit I never lost, like the other, and to this day I have one style of handwriting for my dramas and another for my romances. During those three days I made immense progress with *Christine.* On the fourth day, I received a letter from M. Deviolaine, summoning me to his office. I hurried there, and this time my heart did not beat any the faster; I had faced the worst that could happen and I was prepared for anything.

"Ah! there you are, you cursed blockhead!" cried M. Deviolaine, when he saw me.

"Yes, monsieur, here I am."

"So! so, monsieur!"

I made no reply.

"So we are too grand a lord to work with ordinary mortals?" M. Deviolaine continued.

"You are mistaken ... quite the contrary. I am not a sufficiently grand lord to work with the others, that is why I want to work alone."

"And you ask for an office to yourself, on purpose to do nothing in it but to write your dirty plays?"

"I ask for an office to myself so that I can have the right to think while I am working."

"And if I do not let you have an office to yourself?"

"I shall try to earn my living as an author. You know I have no other resource."

"And if I do not immediately send you packing, you may be very sure it is for your mother's sake and not for your own."

"I am fully aware of that, and I am grateful to you on my mother's account."

"Very well, take your office to yourself, then; but I give you warning that...."

"You will give me double the work of any other clerk?"

"Exactly so."

"It will be unjust, that is all; but, since I am not the stronger, I shall submit."

"Unjust! unjust!" shrieked M. Deviolaine. "I would have you know that I have never done an unjust thing in my life."

"It would seem there is a beginning for everything."

"Did you ever see--oh, did you ever see such a young rip!" continued M. Deviolaine, as he paced up and down his office,--"did you ever see! did you ever see!..."

Then, turning to me again, he said--

"Very well, I will not treat you unjustly; no, indeed no, you shall not have more work to do than the others; but you shall have as much, and you shall be watched to see that you get through it! M. Fossier shall receive orders from me to carry out this inspection."

I moved my lips.

"What next! Have you something now to say against M. Fossier?"

"No, only that I think him ugly."

"Well, what then?"

"Why, I would much rather he were good-looking, on his own account first and also on my own."

"But what does it matter to you whether M. Fossier be ugly or beautiful?"

"If I have to meet a face three or four times in a day I should much prefer it to be agreeable rather than disagreeable."

"Well, I never met such a cursed young puppy in all my days! You will soon want me to choose my head clerks to suit your taste!... Get out! Go back to your office, and try to make up for lost time."

"I will do so; but, first, I want to ask a promise from you, monsieur."

"Well, upon my word, if he isn't actually going to impose his own conditions on me!"

"You will accept this one, I am sure."

"Now, what do you wish, Monsieur le poëte?"

"I should like you yourself each day to overlook the work I have done and see how I have done it."

"Well, I promise you that.... And when is the first performance to take place?"

"I can hardly tell you; but I am very sure you will be present at it!"

"Yes, I will be there, in more senses than one; you may be quite easy on that score.... Now, go and behave yourself!"

And he made a threatening gesture, upon which I went out.

M. Deviolaine kept his word to me. He gave me plenty of work to do without overdoing me. But, as he had promised, M. Fossier always came and brought the work to me himself, and if, by ill luck, I was not at my desk, M. Deviolaine was instantly informed of my absence.

BOOK II — CHAPTER XI

CHAPTER XI

Conclusion of *Christine*--A patron, after a fashion--Nodier recommends me to Taylor--The Royal Commissary and the author of *Hécube*--Semi-official reading before Taylor--Official reading before the Committee--I am received with acclamation--The intoxication of success--How history is written--M. Deviolaine's incredulity--Picard's opinions concerning my play--Nodier's opinion--Second reading at the Théâtre-Français and definite acceptance

But none of these hindrances prevented me from finishing *Christine.* I had, however, scarcely written the famous last line--

"Eh bien, j'en ai pitié, mon père ... Qu'on l'achève!"

when I found myself in as embarrassing a situation as any poor girl who has just given birth to a child outside the pale of legitimate matrimony. What was I to do with this bastard child of my creation, born outside the gates of the Institute and the Academy? Was I to stifle her as I had smothered her elders? That would have been hard lines indeed! Besides, this little girl was strong, and quite capable of living; it seemed good, therefore, to acknowledge her; but first it was necessary to find a theatre to receive her, actors to clothe her and a public to adopt her!

Oh! if only Talma were living! But Talma was dead and I did not know anyone at the Théâtre-Français. Perhaps it might be possible for me to manage it through M. Arnault. But he would ask to see the work on behalf of which his services were requested, and he would not have read ten lines before he would fling it as far from him as poor M. Drake had the rattlesnake that bit him at Rouen. I went to look for Oudard. I told him that my play was completed and I boldly asked him for a letter of

introduction to the Théâtre-Français. Oudard refused under pretence that he did not know anyone there. I had the courage to tell him that his introduction as head of the Secretariat of the Duc d'Orléans would be all-powerful.

He replied, after the manner of Madame Méchin, when she did not incline to promote any particular end--

"I will never lend my *influence* in that direction."

I had several times noticed a man with thick eyebrows and a long nose, in the Secretarial Department, who took his tobacco Swiss-fashion. This man periodically brought the ninety theatre tickets to all parts of the house that M. Oudard had the prerogative of giving away every month, at the rate of three per day. I did not know who this man was, but I asked. I was told that he was the prompter.

I lay in wait for this prompter, took him by surprise in the corridor and begged him to tell me what steps were necessary to obtain the honour of a reading before the Committee of the Théâtre-Français. He told me I must first deposit my play with the Examiner; but he warned me that so many other works were already deposited there that I must expect to wait at least a year. As though it were possible for me to wait a year!

"But," I asked, "is there no short cut through all these formalities?"

"Oh dear me, yes!" he replied, "if you know Baron Taylor."

I thanked him.

"There is nothing to thank me for," he said.

And he was right; there wasn't anything to thank him for, for I did not know Baron Taylor in the slightest.

"Do you know Baron Taylor?" I asked Lassagne.

"No," he answered; "but Charles Nodier is his intimate friend."

"What of that?"

"Well, did you not tell me that you once talked with Charles Nodier a whole evening at a representation of the *Vampire?*"

"Certainly."

"Write to Charles Nodier."

"Bah! he will have forgotten all about me."

"He never forgets anything; write to him."

I wrote to Charles Nodier, recalling to his memory the Elzevirs, the rotifer, the vampires, and in the name of his well-known kindliness towards young people I entreated him to introduce me to Baron Taylor. It can be imagined with what impatience I awaited the reply. Baron Taylor himself replied, granting my request and fixing an appointment with me five or six days later. He apologised at the same time for the hour he had fixed; but his numerous engagements left him so little time that seven o'clock in the morning was the only hour at which he could see me. Although I am probably the latest riser in Paris, I was ready at the appointed hour. True, I had kept awake all the night. Taylor then lived at No. 42 rue de Bondy, fourth floor. His suite of rooms consisted of an anteroom filled with books and busts; a dining-room full of pictures and books; a drawing-room full of weapons and books; and a bedroom full of manuscripts and books. I rang at the door of the antechamber, my heart beating at a terrible rate. The good or ill natured mood of a man who knew nothing about me, who had no inducement to be kindly disposed towards me, who had received me out of pure good-nature, was to decide my future life. If my play displeased him, it would stand in the way of anything I could bring him later, and I was very nearly at the end of my courage and strength. I had rung the bell, gently enough, I admit, and no

one had answered it; I rang a second time, as gently as at first; again no one took any notice of me. And yet, putting my ear close, I seemed to hear a noise indicative of something unusual taking place inside: confused sounds and snarls which now sounded like bursts of anger, and now, decreasing in pitch, seemed like a continuous monotonous bass accompaniment. I could not imagine what it could be; I was afraid to disturb Taylor at such a moment and yet it was the very hour he had himself fixed for my coming. I rang louder. I heard a door open, and simultaneously the mysterious noise from inside that had greatly roused my curiosity for the last ten minutes sounded louder than ever. At last the door was opened by an old serving-woman.

"Ah! monsieur," she said, with a flustered manner, "your coming will do M. le Baron an excellent turn. He is waiting anxiously for you; go in."

"What do you mean?"

"Go in, go in ... do not lose a minute."

I went quickly into the sitting-room, where I found Taylor caught in his bath-tub like a tiger in his den, a gentleman near him reading a tragedy called *Hécube.* This gentleman had forced his entrance, no matter what was said to him. He had surprised Taylor as Charlotte Corday had surprised Marat when she stabbed him in his bath; but the agony that the King's Commissary endured was more prolonged than that of the Tribune of the People. The tragedy was two thousand four hundred lines long! When the gentleman caught sight of me, he realised that his victim was to be snatched away from him; he clutched hold of the bath, exclaiming--

"There are only two more acts, monsieur,--there are only two more acts!"

"Two sword-cuts, two stabs with a knife, two thrusts with a dagger! Select from among the arms round about--there are all kinds here--choose the one that will slice the best and kill me straight off!"

"Monsieur," replied the author of *Hécube*, "the Government appointed you *commissaire du roi* on purpose to listen to my play; it is your duty to listen to my play--you shall hear my play!"

"Ah! that is just where the misfortune comes in!" cried Taylor, wringing his hands. "Yes, monsieur, to my sorrow I am *commissaire du roil* ... But you and such people as you will make me hand in my resignation; you and your like will force me to give it up and leave France. I have had an offer to go to Egypt, I will accept it; I will explore the sources of the Nile as far as Nubia, right to the Mountains of the Moon,--and I will go at once and get my passport."

"You can go-to China, if you like," replied the gentleman, "but you shall not go until you have heard my play."

Taylor gave one long moan, like a vanquished athlete, made a sign to me to go into his bedroom and, falling back into his bath-tub, he bowed his head in resignation upon his breast. The gentleman went on. Taylor's precaution of putting a door between him and his reader and me was quite useless; I heard every word of the last two acts of *Hécube.* The Almighty is great and full of compassion--may He bestow peace on that author! At last, when the play was finished, the gentleman got up and, at Taylor's earnest entreaty, consented to depart. I heard the old woman double lock the door after him. The bath-water had made good use of the time spent on the reading to grow cold, and Taylor came back into his bedroom shivering. I would have sacrificed a month's pay for him to have found a warmed bed to creep into. And the reason is not far to seek; for, naturally, a man who is half frozen, after just listening to five acts, is not in a favourable mood to hear five more acts.

"Alas! monsieur," I said to him, "I have happened upon a most unsuitable time, and I fear you will not be in the least disposed to listen to me, at least with the patience I could desire."

"Oh, monsieur, I will not admit that, since I do not yet know your work," Taylor replied; "but you can guess what a trial it is to have to listen to-such stuff as I have just heard, every blessed day of my life."

"Every day?"

"Yes, indeed, and oftener! See, here is my agenda for to-day's Committee. We are to hear an *Épaminondas*."

I heaved a sigh. My poor *Christine* was caught between two cross-fires of classicism.

"M. le Baron," I ventured to say, "would you rather I came another day?"

"Oh! certainly not," said Taylor, "now we are here...."

"Very well," I said, "I will just read you one act, and if that tires you or bores you, you must stop me."

"All right," Taylor murmured; "you are more merciful than your confrères. And that is a good sign.... Go on, go on; I am listening."

Tremblingly I drew my play from my pocket;--it looked a terribly big volume. Taylor cast a glance on the immense bulk with such an alarmed expression that I cried out to him--

"Oh, monsieur, do not be afraid! The manuscript is only written on one side of the paper."

He breathed again. I began. I was so nervous I could not see to read; my voice shook so that I could not hear my own voice. Taylor reassured me; he was unaccustomed to such modesty! I resumed my reading, and I managed somehow to get through my first act.

"Well, monsieur, shall I go on?" I asked in a faint voice, without daring to raise my eyes.

"Certainly, certainly," Taylor replied, "go on. Upon my word, it is excellent!"

Fresh life came to me, and I read my second act with more confidence than the first. When I had finished, Taylor himself told me to go on with the third, then the fourth, then the fifth. I felt an inexpressible desire to embrace him; but I refrained, for fear of the consequences.

When the reading was finished, Taylor leapt from his bed.

"You must come to the Théâtre-Français with me," he said.

"But what must I do there?"

"Why, get your turn to read your play as soon as possible."

"Do you really mean it? Shall I read it to the Committee?"

"Not a day later than next Saturday." And Taylor called out, "Pierre!"

An old man-servant came in.

"Give me all my clothes, Pierre."

Then turning to me, he said, "You will excuse me?"

"Oh, there is nothing to excuse!..." I replied.

On the following Thursday (for Taylor would not wait until the Saturday, but had called a special Committee) the Committee, whether from chance or because Taylor had praised my play extravagantly, was a very large one; there were as many well-dressed men and women present as though a dance were on the way. The ladies decked out in gay hats and flowers, the gentlemen in fashionable dress, the large green carpet, the inquisitive looks which were fixed upon me, every detail down to the glass of water which Granville solemnly placed by my side--which struck me as very ludicrous--all this combined to inspire me with profound emotion.

Christine was then quite different from what it is to-day: it was a simple play, romantic in style, but founded on classical traditions. It was confined to five acts; the action took place entirely at Fontainebleau, and it conformed with the unity of time, place and action laid down by Aristotle. Stranger still! it did not contain the character of Paula, which is now the best creation in the play, and the real dramatic mainspring of the whole work. Monaldeschi betrayed Christine's ambition, but not her love. And yet I have rarely known any work to have such a successful first reading. They made me read the monologue of Sentinelli and the scene with Monaldeschi three times over. I was intoxicated with delight. My play was received with acclamation. Only, three or four of the agenda papers contained the following cautious phrase:--

"*A second, reading, or the manuscript to be submitted to an author in whom the Committee has confidence.*"

The result of the deliberations of the Comédie-Française was that the tragedy of *Christine* was accepted; but, on account of the great innovations which it contained, they would not undertake to perform it until after another reading, or the manuscript had been submitted to another author, to be named by them.

The whole thing had passed before my eyes like a mist. I had seen face to face for the first time the kings and queens of the tragic and comic stage: Mademoiselle Mars, Mademoiselle Leverd, Mademoiselle Bourgoin, Madame Valmonzey, Madame Paradol and Mademoiselle Demerson, an engagingly clever *soubrette*, who played Molière with great freshness, and Marivaux with such finished style as I never saw in anyone else. I knew I was accepted and that was all I wished to know: the conditions I would fulfil, the difficulties I would overcome. Therefore I did not wait until the conclusion of the conference. I thanked Taylor, and I left the theatre as proud and as light-hearted as though my first mistress had said to me, "I love you." I made off for the faubourg Saint-Denis, ogling

everybody I met, as much as to say, "You haven't written *Christine*; you haven't just come away from the Théâtre-Français; you haven't been received with acclamation, you, you, you!" And, in the joyful preoccupation of my thoughts, I did not take care to measure my steps across a gutter but stumbled into the middle of it; I took no notice of carriages, I jostled in and out among the horses. When I reached the faubourg Saint-Denis I had lost my manuscript; but that did not matter! I knew my play by heart. With one leap, I bounded into our rooms, and my mother cried out, for she never saw me back before five o'clock.

"Received with acclamation, mother! received with acclamation!" I shouted. And I began to dance round our rooms, which allowed but little space for such exercise. My mother thought I must have gone mad; I had not told her I was going to the reading for fear of disappointment.

"And what will M. Fossier say?" my poor mother exclaimed.

"Oh!" I replied, suiting my words to the tune of *Malbrouck*, "M. Fossier can say whatever he likes, and if he is not satisfied, I will send him about his business!"

"Take care, my dear lad," my mother replied, shaking her head; "it will be you who will be sent packing and in good earnest, too."

"All right, mother; so much the better! It will give me time to attend my rehearsals."

"And suppose your play is a failure, and you have lost your situation, what will become of us?"

"I will write another play that will succeed."

"But in the meantime we must live."

"Ah yes! it's very unfortunate that one has to live; happily, in seven or eight days we shall receive something on account."

"Yes, but while we are waiting for that, which you have not yet got, my lad, take my advice and return to your desk, so that no one may suspect anything, and do not boast of what has happened to a single person."

"I fancy you are in the right, mother; and although I asked the whole day off from M. Deviolaine, I will return to my desk. It is half-past two. Why, I shall yet have time to despatch my day's work."

And I set forth at a run to the rue Saint-Honoré. The exercise did me good, for I needed fresh air and action; I felt stifled in our tiny rooms. I found a pile of reports ready for me; I set to my task, and by six o'clock everything was finished. But by this time Féresse's anger against me amounted to hatred: I had compelled him to stay till the stroke of six before I had finished the last lines. I had never written so fast or so well. I re-read everything twice for fear I might have interpolated some lines from *Christine* in the reports. But, as usual, they were innocent of poetic effusions. I gave them back to Féresse, who went with them to M. Fossier's office, growling like a bear. I then went home to my dear mother, quite spent and utterly exhausted with the great events of that day. It was 30 April 1828. I spent the evening, the night and the morning of the next day in rewriting my manuscript afresh. By ten o'clock, when I reached the Administration, I found Ferésse at the door of his office. He had been looking out for me since eight o'clock that morning, although he knew well enough that I never came before ten.

"Ah! there you are," he said. "So you have been writing a tragedy, I hear."

"Who told you that?"

"Why, good gracious, it is in the newspaper."

"In the paper?"

"Yes, read it for yourself."

And he handed me a paper which did, indeed, contain the following lines:--

"The Théâtre-Français to-day accepted with acclamation and unanimity a five-act tragedy in verse, by a young man who has not yet produced anything. This young man is in the administrative offices of M. le Duc d'Orléans, who made his path easy for him and who strongly recommended him to the Reading Committee."

You see how accurately the daily press gauged the situation! it has not lost the tradition even to-day. Nevertheless, although inaccurate enough in detail, the news was fundamentally true; and it circulated from corridor to corridor and from storey to storey. It flew from office to office, by means of people coming in and going out, just as though Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans had given birth to twins. I was congratulated by all my colleagues, some with sincerity, others mockingly; only the chief of my office hid himself from view. But, since he kept me going with four times my usual amount of work, it was quite evident he had seen the paper. M. Deviolaine came in at two o'clock and at five minutes past two he sent for me. I walked into his office with my head in the air and my hands perched jauntily on my hips.

"Ah! there you are, you young blade!" he said.

"Yes, here I am."

"So you asked me for a holiday yesterday in order to play pranks!"

"Have I neglected my work?"

"That is not the question."

"Excuse me, M. Deviolaine, on the contrary it is the only question."

"But don't you see that they have been making game of you?"

"Who has?"

"The Comedians."

"Nevertheless, they have accepted my play."

"Yes, but they will not put it on the stage."

"Ah! we shall see!"

"And if they do produce your play...."

"Yes?"

"You will still need the approbation of the public."

"Why should you imagine it will not please the public since it has pleased the Comedians?"

"Come now, do you want to make me believe that you, who only had an education that cost three francs a month, will be successful when such people as M. Viennet and M. Lemercier and M. Lebrun fall flat?... Go along with you!"

"But instead of judging me beforehand, wouldn't it be fairer to wait?"

"Oh yes, wait ten years, twenty years! I sincerely hope I shall be buried before your play is acted, and then I shall never see it."

At this juncture, Ferésse slily opened the door.

"Excuse me, M. Deviolaine," he said, "but there is a *Comedian* here (he carefully emphasised the word) asking for M. Dumas."

"A Comedian! What Comedian?" M. Deviolaine asked.

"M. Firmin, from the Comédie-Française."

"Yes," I replied quietly; "he takes the part of Monaldeschi."

"Firmin plays in your piece?"

"Yes, he takes Monaldeschi.... Oh, it is admirably cast: Firmin plays Monaldeschi, Mademoiselle Mars Christine...."

"Mademoiselle Mars plays in your piece?"

"Certainly."

"It is not true."

"Would you like her to tell it you herself?"

"Do you imagine I am going to take the trouble to assure myself you are lying?"

"No; she will come here."

"Mademoiselle Mars will come here?"

"I am sure she will have the kindness to do that for me."

"Mademoiselle Mars?"

"Yes, you see that Firmin...."

"Stop! Go your own way! for upon my word you are enough to turn my brain!... Mademoiselle Mars ... Mademoiselle Mars put herself out for you? Think of it!... Mademoiselle Mars!" and he raised his hands to heaven in despair that such a mad idea should ever enter the head of any member of his family.

I took advantage of this theatrical display to escape. Firmin was, indeed, waiting for me. He had made use of his time in looking round the office, and he had ascertained that the windows of my office looked exactly across to those of the Comédie-Française--a circumstance that offered great facilities for my future communications. He came so that no time should be lost, to offer to take me to Picard's house, who was going to read my manuscript. Picard enjoyed the absolute confidence of the Comédie-Française and the Comédie-Française would rely implicitly on

his decision. I felt an intense aversion towards Picard, who, according to my views, had retarded the development of real comedy as much as Scribe had advanced the cause of the vaudeville. It was out of the question that Picard could understand *Christine* from the point of view either of style or of construction. I therefore fought as long as I could against having to submit to Picard's arbitrament. But Firmin knew Picard very well and said that he had such a partiality for young people, and that his advice was so good that, rather than vex Firmin at the outset of my career, I was persuaded to go. It was arranged that, at half-past four that evening, Firmin should call for me and take me to see Picard. At half-past four we set off. *Christine* had been neatly re-copied. It may be guessed that since I had taken such pains over the plays of Théaulon, I took extra care of my own! The manuscript was rolled and tied up with a pretty new piece of ribbon that my mother had given me.

Where did Picard live? Upon my word, I could not say and I will not lose any time in trying to find his address. Wherever he lived, we arrived at his house. His appearance corresponded exactly with the idea that I had formed of him: he was a little, deformed man with long hands, small bright eyes, and a nose as sharp as a weasel's. He received us with that polite, bantering manner peculiar to him, which many people take for intellectual good-fellowship. We conversed for ten minutes and he pretended entire ignorance of the news he had been possessed of since morning; he laid bare the object of our visit and he asked us to leave the manuscript with him, and to return a week later. He gave us his humble advice upon this important matter, pleading for our leniency beforehand if his judgment were more inclined to the shorter classic forms of comedy, rather than to the *long Romantic productions (des grandes machines romantiques).* This exordium foreboded no good. We saw Picard a week later; he was expecting us, and we found him seated in the same arm-chair, with the same smile on his lips. He bade us be seated and politely inquired after our health; finally, he stretched his long

fingers over his desk and rolled up my manuscript carefully, wrapped it and tied it up. Then, with a winning smile, he said to me--

"My dear monsieur, have you any means of subsistence?"

"Monsieur," I replied, "I am a clerk at fifteen hundred francs a year in the offices of M. le Duc d'Orléans."

"Well, then, my advice to you, my dear lad, is to return to your desk--to return to your desk!"

After such a declaration, the conversation was, of necessity, brief. Firmin and I rose, bowed and departed. Or, rather, I departed; Firmin stayed behind a moment after me: he probably wished a further explanation. Through the half-opened door I could see Picard shrugging his shoulders with such violence that his head seemed in danger of coming off his body. The modern Molière looked extremely repulsive thus, his expression above all being remarkably malicious. Had Picard really given us a conscientious opinion? Firmin was convinced he had, but I doubted it always. It was impossible that an intellectual man, no matter how narrow his views might be, should not discern--I will not go so far as to say a remarkable work in *Christine,* but remarkable works belonging to the school of *Christine.*

Next day, I went to see Taylor, carrying with me my manuscript containing Picard's annotations. These annotations consisted of crosses, bracketing and marks of exclamation, which might well be called marks of stupefaction. Certain lines especially seemed to have astounded the author of the *Petite Ville* and the *Deux Philibert.* These had been honoured by three exclamation marks.

CHRISTINE

"Vous êtes Français, vous; mais ces Italiens, L'idiome mielleux qui détrempe leurs âmes Semblerait fait exprès pour un peuple de femmes;

D'énergiques accents ont peine à s'y mêler. Un homme est là; l'on croit qu'en homme il va parler; Il parle, on se retourne, et, par un brusque échange, A la place d'un homme, on trouve une louange."-!!!

It was to the last line that the three wretched notes of exclamation had been affixed, which were intended to express many things. For the most part, Picard's criticisms were laconically brief. After the following lines came one huge note of interrogation:--

"Sur le chemin des rois, l'oubli couvre ma trace; Mon nom, comme un vain bruit, s'affaiblit dans l'espace: Ce n'est plus qu'un écho par l'écho répété, Et j'assiste vivante à la postérité. Je crus que plus longtemps--mon erreur fut profonde!-- Mon abdication bruirait dans le monde ... Pour le remplir encore un but m'est indiqué; Je veux reconquérir cet empire abdiqué. Comme je la donnai, je reprends ma couronne, Et l'on dira que j'ai le caprice du trône!"--?

a point of interrogation which seemed to say, "Perhaps the author understands this passage. I, certainly, do not."

After the last line--

"Eh bien, j'en ai pitié, mon père ... Qu'on l'achève!"

was written the word "IMPOSSIBLE."

Was it the piece which was *impossible* or only that line? Picard had had the delicacy to leave me the benefit of the doubt. I related my adventure to Taylor and showed him Picard's notes.

"All right," he said; "leave the play with me and return to-morrow morning."

I left the play with him, feeling very subdued in spirits. I was beginning to learn to my cost that the joys connected with the theatre are the opposite of those in nature, and belong only to early days--after that brief

period one's real troubles immediately begin. I took good care to keep my engagement and was with Taylor by eight next morning. He showed me my manuscript, across which Nodier had written in his own handwriting--

"Upon my soul and conscience, I declare *Christine* is one of the most remarkable works I have read for the last twenty years."

"You realise," said Taylor to me, "I shall need that to back me up. You must keep yourself in readiness to re-read your play on Saturday."

"Monsieur le Baron," I said to him, "I am in an office, and there they are all the more strict with me because I go in for literary work, which bureaucratic eyes look upon as an unpardonable crime. Could I read it on Sunday, rather than Saturday?"

"It is contrary to all custom, but I will see what I can do."

Three days later, I received my notice for the following Sunday. The assembly was even larger than the first time and the play was even more enthusiastically applauded, if that be possible, than it had been on the previous reading. It was put to the vote and accepted unanimously, subject to some alterations which I was to arrange after consultation with M. Samson. Fortunately, M. Samson and I did not see eye to eye; I say fortunately, since the disagreement led to my recasting the whole play, which gained, by this re-handling, the prologue, the two acts at Stockholm, the epilogue at Rome and the entire part of Paula. When we come to the proper place, we will relate how these transformations came about; they left the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid (of which a splendid edition had just been published by M. Villenave) a very long way behind. I must say a few words about M. de Villenave, who was one of the best informed and most original men of his day; and I must say a little about his wife, his son, his daughter and his home, all of which personages and things had a great influence on this first part of my life.

BOOK II — CHAPTER XII

CHAPTER XII

Cordelier-Delanoue--A sitting of the Athénée--M. Villenave--His family--The one hundred and thirty-two Nantais--Cathelineau--The hunt *aux bleus*--Forest--A chapter of history--Sauveur--The Royalist Committee--Souchu--The miraculous tomb--Carrier

During the period of the first representations of the English actors (which coincided with my evening attendance at the offices of the Secretariat) I made the acquaintance of a young fellow named Cordelier-Delanoue. It came about very naturally. We were publishing *Psyché* at that time and Delanoue had sent us a poem which he called *Hamlet*; this we inserted in our journal, he came to thank us and Adolphe and I became friendly with him, I especially. Delanoue was the son of one of the generals of the Revolution, who had formerly known my father; this circumstance had drawn us together and our dramatic and political sympathies did the rest. One night Delanoue came to see me at the office and suggested taking me to the Athénée while the courier from the Palais-Royal went to Neuilly and back. I was ignorant about many things, so it will not be any cause for astonishment, I hope, if I admit that I had never heard of the Athénée. M. Villenave was giving a literary soirée there that evening. I did not know who M. Villenave was; and my ignorance in this respect was a little more excusable than my not knowing what the Athénée was. However, I accepted. At that time, I had not the horror of making fresh acquaintances which beset me later. I was promised something connected with literature and literary people, and a promise such as this would have urged me on to cross the razor edge which serves as a bridge between the Mohammadan Paradise and this earth. I could cross such an edge now, prone though I am to giddiness, but it would be in order to fly from the very thing I then went to seek. So far as I can recollect, the meetings of

the Athénée were held in a lower hall of the Palais-Royal, which had its entrance from the rue de Valois. They discussed all sorts of topics that would have been insufferable in drawing-rooms, but which at the Athénée were simply tedious. The people who discussed these tedious subjects had the right to a certain number of tickets to distribute among the members of their families, their friends and their acquaintances. They could have discussed these subjects quite well alone, but, for some inexplicable reason, they preferred to have an audience. On this particular evening the hall was full. M. Villenave was very popular in society, and, besides, these meetings had a certain celebrity. If I were condemned to be hung, I could not to save my life say what they talked of that night. It was probably some treatise on a second-rate deceased author, who served as an excuse to the writer to deliver a few raps to the living. M. Villenave conducted the meeting: he addressed it standing, by the aid of a couple of candelabras and a glass of *eau sucrée* near him. He was a fine-looking old man of, perhaps, at that time, some sixty-six or sixty-eight years of age. He had splendid white hair, daintily curled about his temples; black eyes that flashed with quite Southern fire; he was very tall but stooped a little from much bending over a desk; there was something distinguished-looking and graceful in his movements and manners. I had stopped modestly by the door for two reasons: first, because I was yet too unknown to imagine I had the right to put the speaker himself or anybody else out for my sake; secondly, as I had to return to my office by half-past nine, it was more convenient to be near the door than elsewhere, in order to escape incognito, as I had entered. Delanoue, who was more familiar with the company than I, left me to go and joke with them, during the short intervals when the sitting broke up to give M. Villenave time to take breath.

The usual hour for the courier having come, I was quietly escaping to return and receive him at my office, when Delanoue ran after me and caught me up under the peristyle. He had been deputed by the Villenave

family to invite me to go and take tea with them at their house, after the meeting. I owed this favour to the kind things my friend Delanoue had said about me. I then had to inquire where the Villenaves lived. No. 82 rue de Vaugirard. Oh! but 53 faubourg Saint-Denis was a fair distance from my home. Fortunately, during my five years' residence in Paris, I had learnt to know its streets pretty thoroughly, so I did not feel obliged, as on my first visit, to hire a conveyance to take me from the place du Palais-Royal to the rue des Vieux-Augustins. The invitation conveyed by Delanoue had been so courteously and warmly pressed that the least I could do was to accept it. I ran off to the office, attended to the courier and returned. During the half-hour of my absence the sitting had been concluded, and I returned to find M. Villenave in a small drawing-room that opened out of the large hall, receiving the congratulations of his friends. Delanoue introduced me to M. Villenave and to his family. The Villenave family consisted first of Madame Villenave, a very gracious little old lady, very intellectual and an experienced society entertainer, but very fond of grumbling in her home-life, for she suffered, like Anne of Austria, from a cancer which ultimately killed her; Théodore Villenave, a tall, energetic young fellow, an author, at that time, of various fugitive poems, and translator of *Wallenstein*, which was destined to make a great commotion behind the scenes of the Odéon for three or four years before it was put on the stage, where it had a fairly successful reception; Madame Mélanie Waldor, the wife of a captain in the infantry on service and in garrison, who only put in short and rare appearances at Paris, where those who knew him spoke of him as a brave and loyal soldier. Madame Waldor composed fugitive verses, like her brother, which she published in the daily paper; like her brother, too, she afterwards wrote a play which had a successful run under the title of the *École des Jeunes Filles.* Last came Élisa Waldor, who at that period was only a charming little child with the head of a chérubin surrounded by lovely golden curly hair; she afterwards grew into a tall, beautiful woman, and was twice married--and happily each time, I trust.[1]

The family returned home on foot, in patriarchal fashion, accompanied by five or six friends, who, like myself, were on their way to the rue de Vaugirard, to take tea and nibble cake together there. As I was the stranger, I was allotted the position of honour--namely, to give my arm to Madame Waldor. As the distance was very long, it was a good opportunity of becoming acquainted. But, as we had never seen each other or spoken together before, the long walk would have been embarrassing to us both, had not Delanoue joined us and made a third in the conversation between the place du Palais-Royal and the rue de Vaugirard. He thereby rendered us both a great service, for which both of us were profoundly grateful to him.

What a strange thing these chance meetings are! How astonished I should have been had anyone told me that this family, whose very existence I had not known a couple of hours before, and who were complete strangers to me, would become for the next two or three years almost as close to me as my own, and that I should traverse the road that then seemed to me so long between the rue du faubourg-Saint-Denis and the rue de Vaugirard twice every day in future!

But I was in haste to reach our destination, to have a talk with M. Villenave. I do not remember how it was, or on what occasion, but a pamphlet he had written fell into my hands--a little work he had published in 1794, entitled *Relation des noyades de cent trente-deux Nantais* (Story of the drowning of a hundred and thirty-two people of Nantes). Directly I saw M. Villenave I remembered this pamphlet, and as soon as I thought of the pamphlet I resolved to lead the conversation to Carrier, and Nantes and the hundred and thirty-two Nantais. It was not a difficult matter to set M. Villenave talking; only, his conversation was very much like a sermon. When he talked, one had to let him go on, not interrupt him, and listen to him with reverent attention. He had, indeed, happened to be at Nantes in 1793, at the same time as Jean-Baptiste Carrier, of bloody memory. God forbid we should make the faintest

excuses for that terrible proconsul and the horrors he perpetrated! But it must be admitted that the Vendeans had themselves set him an abominable example. Wars conducted by priests are apt to be barbarous wars, and it is known--or rather, it is not known, that at the beginning the insurrection was entirely in the hands of priests; the nobles did not involve themselves in it until later, and, when they did take part in it, the method of butchery became rather more humane: it changed to shooting. The first person to play a part in that bloody squabble was a sacristan named Cathelineau. Machiavelli says that, "When it was decided to. assassinate Julian de Medicis in the church of Sainte-Marie-des-Fleurs, they chose ecclesiastics to do the work of assassination, because they were less likely to be impressed by the sanctity of the place."

It is a strange but indisputable fact that when men of peace and love and charity turn into executioners, they become the most refined in cruelty of all; witness the *in-pace* (dungeons) of convents, witness the cells of the Inquisition, witness the massacres of Alby, witness the auto-da-fés of Madrid, witness Joan of Arc, witness Urbain Grandier.

This Cathelineau was what the country people between Angers and Saint-Laurent would term a sturdy lad (*gars*). Only three months elapsed between the day of his first shot and the day when he was killed, but these three months sufficed to make his name renowned in history. He was neither tall, nor had he refined manners; he was but five feet four inches high; but he had well-set shoulders and the hips were splendidly poised, and he possessed the fine cool prudent courage of the men of the West. We have mentioned that he was a sacristan, but he was many other things beside; he was mason, carrier, linen-merchant, a married man and the father of twelve or fourteen children. He had hardly gained a hearing before he set up a superior council comprised chiefly of priests: they troubled themselves but little over the nobles. The head of this council was the famous Bernier, curé d'Angers. Cathelineau was the man for him; the simple peasant discovered a quicker method of starting an

insurrection than the pope with his bulls or the priests with their sermons. He advised the curés to shroud the crucifixes in black crèpe and to carry them thus in their processions. At the sight of their Christ in mourning, the peasants could no longer contain themselves; women tore their hair, men beat their breasts and all swore to kill the Republicans, root and branch, since they had grieved the Saviour. It should be added that nothing could be less knightly and less patriotic than the proclamations of these brave folk:--

"Down with conscription! Down with the militia! Let us dwell in our own countryside. People tell us the enemy may descend on us and threaten our homes. Well and good, let them first trespass on our soil, we shall be ready to meet them there!"

And those who talked thus were well aware that the enemy would have devastated, pillaged and burned all France and demolished Paris before it ventured between their hedges and among their furze bushes and in their sunken pathways.

It was equivalent to saying, "What does it matter to us what may happen to Alsace and Lorraine, Champagne and Burgundy, the Dauphiné and Provence?... What does it matter to us if they extinguish Paris, the light of the world?... Time enough to seize our guns when we see the Cossack leap his horse over our hedges!"

Now the most picturesque of writers would find great difficulty in giving a patriotic turn to such assertions as these. Personally, I much prefer the volunteers who ran in front of the Prussians as far as Valmy, to these peasants who waited quietly behind their hedgerows; and all the more so since I am not at all convinced that they were not really waiting for them on purpose to ally themselves to them. Why should they not compound with the Prussians? they entered into plenty of negotiations with the English! The war, then, began between patriots and royalists, between citizens and peasants. There were constitutional towns, manufacturing

ones,--as, for example, Chollet, where very beautiful handkerchiefs are made,--which contained numbers of workpeople who did not wish for Prussians in France or for friends of the Prussians. One day they heard that the people of Bressuire had risen in revolt; they armed themselves with pikes and rushed off to attack them. So the town of Chollet was especially marked out for hatred by the peasants.

On 4 March, they attacked it in their turn. A commanding officer belonging to the National Guard trusted himself among a group of royalists; he went among them to endeavour to reconcile the two parties; soon, cries of pain issued from this group, the members of which had closed round him and were slashing at his legs with his own sword.

On the 10th, came the turn of Machecoul; here, there was less to do than at Chollet. Machecoul was a small town, exposed on every side and easy to capture. They first learnt the danger they were in on a Sunday; the tocsin was rung and all the peasantry of the surrounding country made for the town. Two hundred patriots rallied and bravely advanced against the assailants--two hundred against two thousand!--the mass opened, surrounded the little band and made but one mouthful of it. Machecoul had a constitutional curé, and the priests who had not taken the oath to the constitution bore a grudge against those who had: they protested that the latter "spoilt the profession"; they seized the poor man as he came to say mass, and they killed him; but there was a preconcerted plan among them to kill him by inches by blows on the face. The torture lasted a long time: life is sometimes very tenacious, especially in the hands of skilful executioners, who do not incline to chase it too quickly out of the body. But everything has an end: the curé died a martyr, and, when he was dead, they consulted an old huntsman, a clever bugle blower, and organised a hunt, searching from house to house to track down their quarry. When they unearthed a patriot they blew the *vue*, at the sound of which every man, woman and child ran out (in this kind of warfare, women and children are even worse than men). When the patriot was

beaten down, the *hallali* was bugled, then came the *curée*, which lasted a long time: it was carried out, usually, by women, with the help of scissors and nails, and by children, with the aid of stones. Machecoul lies on an eminence between two departments; it was judged to be a good place for establishing a court of justice; and they massacred there for forty-two days, from 10 March to 22 April.

The reader knows how the insurrection spread from the Lower Vendée to the Higher. It was brought about by an affair at Saint-Florent: an émigré had sent his servant, a Vendean named Forest into Vendée to preach resistance, and opposition to the military system. They tried to stop him, but he would not be denied a hearing; he openly preached revolt in the streets. A gendarme came to him; he drew a pistol from his pocket, fired at the gendarme and killed him. That pistol-shot woke those who were yet slumbering, And, mark well, when this unlucky shot was fired, the tocsin was already ringing in six hundred parishes; then it was carried by the wind in all directions; nothing could be heard but the ringing of bells, as though flocks of invisible birds were flying over their brazen tongues. The vibration of those deadly knells, which were answering one another from village to village, grew in volume, clashing in the air, charging the atmosphere like a thunderstorm, with electric currents of hatred and of revenge.

Meantime, what was Cathelineau, the prime mover of all this, busy about? We will hear Michelet's version:--

"He had heard of the fight at Saint-Florent and the firing of guns clearly enough; nor could he be unaware by the 12th of the frightful massacre of the 10th, which had compromised the Vendean coast in the revolt past all drawing back. Even if he had not heard anything, the tocsin would have roused him hard enough: the whole country seemed in an uproar, the very earth trembled. He began to think things were growing serious, and whether from the foresight of the father of a family which he was shortly

to leave, or whether from military prudence, in the matter of laying in stores of food, he began to heat his ovens and to make bread. First came his nephew, with the story of the affray at Saint-Florent. Cathelineau continued to knead his dough. Then the neighbours began dropping in--a tailor, a weaver, a shoemaker, a hatter.

"'Well, neighbour, what shall we do?'

"Quite twenty-seven of them had assembled there, bent on following his counsel implicitly. He pointed out first that a crisis had come: the leaven had done its work, the fermentation was sufficiently advanced; it was time to stop kneading, wipe his hands and shoulder his gun. Twenty-seven went forth; at the end of the village they numbered five hundred. It was the whole of the population, all worthy men, sturdy, strong, steadfastly brave and honest, the very pick of the Vendean armies, intrepid leaders almost always to be found in the front ranks, facing the Republican cannon."

By the time they reached Chollet, they were fifteen thousand. They had seized a piece of cannon at Jallais, which they christened the *Missionnaire*; and a second, at some other place, which was dubbed *Marie-Jeanne*. All along the route priests joined their ranks, exhorting, preaching, singing mass to them. They started on the 12th, as we have seen; after the 14th, a large band joined forces with them, headed by a man who was to share the command with Cathelineau, and, later, to succeed him. This was Stofflet, another rough but brave peasant, a gamekeeper on M. Maulevrier's estate, whose grandson, poor lad, the last descendant of the race, was killed out hunting, at the age of sixteen. When the Vendean army reached Chollet it sent in a flag of truce--a strange envoy he was, too, and he gives us a good idea of the times, the place and the circumstances: his head and his feet were bare; he carried in his hand a crucifix crowned with thorns, bound round with a huge

rosary; his eyes were lifted to heaven, as those of a mystic or martyr, and he cried out between his sobs--

"Surrender, my dear friends, or you will all be put to fire and sword!"

This summons was made in the name of *commanding officer* Stofflet and *almoner* Barbotin.

The whole of the garrison of Chollet comprised three hundred patriots armed with muskets, and five hundred armed with pikes; they attempted to offer resistance to fifteen thousand men; but, of course, resistance was utterly impossible; M. de Beauveau, the head of the Republicans, fell in the first attack. The patriots retired into a part of the castle which commanded the square, and from whence they could fire upon the Vendeans as they entered the square; this was all the easier as there was a Calvary in the square before which every peasant knelt and prayed, heedless of the firing, not returning to the fight until his prayers were finished and the sign of the cross made. These good folk--let us lay stress on the word and call them brave folk--for they did not understand the enormity of the crimes they were committing, since their priests had ordered them!--did not plunder, but they killed not merely during battle, which was a necessity, but even afterwards, and they killed cruelly, as we shall see.

We will again refer to Michelet for an account of how they killed; if I related it to you in my own words you would say I was romancing. He, it is known, did not lie; he was, indeed, driven from his chair because he told the truth not only about the past but also about the future. Michelet says:--

"Directly a prisoner was confessed, the peasants no longer hesitated to kill him, as his spiritual salvation was made secure; several escaped death by refusing confession, and by saying that they were not yet in a state of grace; one of them was spared because he was a Protestant and could not

confess. They were afraid to send him into damnation. History has dealt very severely with the unfortunate patriots who slaughtered the Vendeans; many of them displayed heroic courage and died like martyrs. Those who were cut into pieces could be counted by hundreds. I will give one instance, among many, of a boy of sixteen who, over the dead body of his father, shouted '*Vive la nation!*' until he was pierced through by a score of bayonettes. The most celebrated of these martyrs was Sauveur, a municipal officer of Roche-Bernard, rather let us say of Roche-Sauveur, for it should preserve his name. This town, which is a thoroughfare between Nantes and Vannes, was attacked on the 16th by an immense gathering of nearly six thousand peasants; there were hardly any armed men in the town and it was compelled to surrender. The maddened crowd began at once by butchering twenty-two persons on the square, on the pretext of a gun going off suddenly in the air; they rushed upon the town hall and discovered the *procureur syndic*, Sauveur, a fearless magistrate who had stuck to his post. He was seized and dragged off; they put him into a dungeon whence, next day, he was taken out to be barbarously massacred. They sampled all kinds of weapons on him, principally pistols: they fired at him with small shot, trying to make him cry, '*Vive le roi!*' but he would only shout, '*Vive la république!*' Infuriated, they fired at his mouth with gunpowder and dragged him before the Calvary to beg for mercy; he lifted his eyes to heaven in adoration, but still he cried, '*Vive la nation!*' Next they shot his left eye out and kicked him on a few paces; mangled and bleeding, he stood with hands clasped looking upward.

"'Commend thy spirit to God!' yelled his assassins.

"They shot him down; he fell, but rose again, clasping tightly his magisterial medal and still kissing it. Again he was fired upon; he fell on one knee, dragged himself to the edge of a trench with stoical calmness, without a single groan or cry of anger or of despair! His fortitude drove the frenzied mob to madness, for his only words were--

"'Finish me off, my friends,' and '*Vive la République!* Do not keep me lingering on, friends; '*Vive la nation!*'

"He made his confession of faith to the end, and they silenced him with blows from the butt ends of their rifles!"

What do you think of that, you Royalist gentlemen? Surely the 2nd and 3rd of September could not show you anything better than that? Wait a bit, this is not all; and what we are about to tell, be it clearly understood, is not written for the purpose of reviving hatred, but to make people detest civil warfare. If I once again borrow Michelet's words, it is not only because they are more eloquent than mine, but so that there may be two of us to cry "Shame!" Listen, and you will see how true are his words:--

"One essential difference that we have noticed between the violence of the revolutionist and that of the fanatic, urged on by the fury of priests is, that the former, in killing, desire nothing but to be rid of their enemy; the latter, inspired with the feelings of ferocity of the times of the Inquisition, have less desire to kill than to cause suffering, to make the poor finite victim expiate in infinite misery, in protracted agony, by way of avenging God! To read the gentle idyllic accounts of Royalist writers, one might think that these insurgents were saints; that, in the main, they only exacted vengeance and entered upon reprisals when forced thereto by the cruelties of the Republicans. Let them tell us what were the reprisals which caused the people of Pontivy, on the 12th or 13th of March, led by a refractory curé, to murder seventeen of the National Guard in the public square! Were they reprisals which were exercised at Machecoul, for six weeks, under the organised authority of the Royalist Committee? One Souchu, a tax-gatherer, who presided, filled and emptied the town prisons four times. The mob had, as we have seen, at first killed from sheer sport out of brutal delight. Souchu put a stop to that, and took care that the executions should be long drawn-out and painful. As

executioners, he specially preferred children, because their clumsy hands caused more protracted suffering. Seasoned men such as sailors and soldiers could not witness these deeds without indignation, and wanted to prevent them, so the Royalist Committee did its murders by night: they did not shoot any longer, but slaughtered their victims and then hastily covered up the dying with earth. According to authentic reports made at the Convention, 542 persons perished in one month and by what ghastly deaths! When they could find practically no more men to slay they proceeded to women. Many were Republicans and not sufficiently complaisant to the priests who had a spite against them. A frightful miracle took place: in one of the churches there was a tomb of some noted saint or other; they consulted it; a priest said mass over the tomb and laid hands on it. Behold, the stone moved.

"'I can feel it rising up!' exclaimed the priest.

"And why did it rise up? To demand a sacrifice pleasing to God, namely, that women should no longer be spared but slaughtered! Happily, indeed, the Republicans, the National Guard from Nantes, arrived.

"'Alas!' the townspeople said to them, coming to them weeping and wringing their hands, 'you come too late! You can but save the walls, the town itself is exterminated!...'

"And they pointed to the place where men had been buried alive. Horrified, they beheld a shrivelled hand which in the fearful anguish of suffocation had seized hold of and twisted the withered grasses...."

Is it any good to speak about Carrier after all this? What would it serve to tell of his *bateaux à Soupapes*;[2] of his *bagnades républicaines*; of his *mariages révolutionnaires* [men and women bound hands and feet together and thrown into the Loire]; of his *déportations verticales.*[3] It would only be to set crime against crime, which would prove nothing beyond the wickedness of man. Besides, Carrier has atoned for his

crimes. I am well aware that though this may have been enough to satisfy the requirements of justice as far as the man himself was concerned, it has not been sufficient to satisfy history. It was in vain for Carrier to struggle with all his might and main against the accusation, which came upon him like a shock; in vain for him to exclaim, with sombre eyes, outstretched arms and strident voice, to his old colleagues, now become his judges--

"I do not understand you! You must be mad! Why blame me to-day for doing what you gave me orders to do yesterday? In accusing me, the Convention accuses itself.... My condemnation, look to it, is your condemnation also; you will find yourselves caught in the same proscription with me: if I am guilty, so is every man here ... every one, every one, every one! down to the very bell on the president's table!"

But all his cries were useless. And herein lies the horror of revolutions; they reach a pitch at which the same terror that drove them into action drives them into reaction, and in which the guillotine, sated with drinking the blood of the accused, is callously and indifferently willing to drink the blood of judges and executioners! This reaction, which set in two days later, saved the lives of André Chénier and M. Villenave, together with a hundred and thirty-one of the Nantais, his companions.

[Footnote 1: Alas! since these lines were penned death has intervened in the life and happiness of this poor lady, for I read in the papers one day at Brussels, in words as cold as the steel of the Middle Ages which used to be placed in the hands of a skeleton:--

"Madame Bataillard, daughter of Madame Mélanie Waldor, has just died after a long and painful illness. The funeral will take place to-morrow. Any friends who may not have received an invitation to be present are invited to attend at the cemetery at eleven o'clock."

Unhappily, the notice came too late for me. Amongst all her many friends I certainly held her in the most affectionate remembrance, and I was denied the consolation either of seeing her before she died or of following her to her grave. The merry child, the beautiful young girl, the serious and intelligent wife, who should have died long after us, since we saw her grow up, has gone before us, and we still wait here!]

[Footnote 2: TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.--Carrier compelled his victims to embark on boats, which were then scuttled.]

[Footnote 3: TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.--See note 2.]

BOOK II — CHAPTER XIII

CHAPTER XIII

M. Villenave's house--The master's despotic rule--The savant's coquetry--Description of the sanctuary of the man of science--I am admitted, thanks to an autograph of *Buonaparte*--The crevice in the wall--The eight thousand folios--The pastel by Latour--Voyages of discovery for an Elzevir or a *Faust*--The fall of the portrait and the death of the original

I meant to talk of M. Villenave, and behold I have been talking about Cathelineau, Stofflet, Sauveur and Carrier. What a strange thing imagination is! the wayward inhabitant of one's house, thought to be a slave therein, but in reality its queen!

I left off saying that we were going to take tea at M. Villenave's house.

Every bird makes its own nest, whether of twigs or of different kinds of feathers; and each man makes his own home--when he possesses one at all--indicative of his character, his temperament and his idiosyncrasy. And so M. Villenave's house had its own characteristics, reflecting the taste of its occupant. It was built of stones which had once been white, but which time had coloured grey, and which were fast turning into black. It did not open out on the road; it was a severe and gloomy-looking house which did not lend itself to any such frivolous doings; a wall, ten feet high, faced the street, like a kind of outwork, ornamented at the top by a formidable fringe of jagged glass. This wall had in it two gates, a large one and a small one. Unless carriages wanted to enter, the large one was always kept shut, its hinges rusty, its lock broken; the small door, next to the porter's lodge, opened upon and gave access to the garden--a garden trodden hard into paths without flower-borders, possessing vines without grapes, and leafless trees that

did not afford any shade. If, by any chance, a flower pushed its way up in some corner, it was a wild flower that had mistaken that damp enclosure for waste ground and had sprung up there unawares--a bindweed, a daisy or a buttercup. One day the poor flower would hear a cry of surprise and see a pretty, rosy-cheeked child, with curly golden hair, running to it in breathless haste and with eager feet, her eyes fixed on it, and then furtively grasp it as carefully as though it were a butterfly; when she had picked it, she would run with joyful surprise to her mother, crying--

"See, mamma! a flower!..."

The garden, which may have been fifteen mètres square, was bounded on the side of the house by a pathway of paving-stones, leading to a corridor tiled with square red bricks, a staircase at the end completing the vista. But before you reached this staircase, you first passed four doors. The one on the left belonged to the dining-room, the window of which looked out upon the tidiest part of the garden; on the right, opposite it, was a small room, not much used, where a table and three or four old arm-chairs were left to grow damp. In several places the wall paper was bulging out and falling off, without anybody taking any notice of it, and was becoming pitted with green and white damp spots. Then, on the left again, came the kitchen door, and, on the right, the larder and pantry. This dark and damp ground-floor was like a catacomb, and was only descended into at meal-times. The real dwelling-rooms, where we were entertained, were on the first floor. This floor contained a small and a large drawing-room, and the bedrooms belonging to Madame Villenave and Madame Waldor. We will leave the small drawing-room and the two bedrooms and give our whole attention to the large salon, which, after the attics (let us hasten to mention these here, before we have the right of entering them), was the strangest room in the house. Its shape was a long rectangle, having, at each of its angles, a console table supporting a bust. One of these busts was that of the master of the house. Between the two busts, at the bottom end, on a marble-topped table opposite the fireplace,

was the most important piece of art and archæology in the room: this was the bronze urn that had once contained the heart of Bayard. A little bas-relief encircled the urn depicting the "chevalier *sans peur et sans reproche*" leaning against a tree and kissing his sword handle. Next came four large pictures--three of them portraits and the fourth a landscape. Let us begin with the landscape--honour to whom honour is due--the landscape was by Claude Lorraine. One of the portraits represented Anne Boleyn and was signed by Holbein. I forget by whom the two other paintings were: one was of Madame de Montespan and the other either Madame de Sévigné or de Grignan, I am not sure which. The walls were covered with one of those indefinite papers that leave no impression on the memory; the furniture was upholstered in Utrecht velvet; large couches with thin white arms, like the arms of a hunchback, invited friends of the family to be comfortable; while there were chairs and arm-chairs for more formal visitors. That storey had both its king and its vice-queen: the king was M. Villenave, the vice-queen was Madame Waldor. We purposely say "vice-queen," because immediately M. Villenave entered his salon he became the master of it, the king--more than king, the despot! M. Villenave was inclined to be tyrannical in character, and exercised this tyranny over strangers as well as over his own family. Like those petty princes of Italy whose principles people are obliged to adopt as soon as they have crossed the borders of their limited territories, so with M. Villenave, when you had stepped across the threshold of his salon, he would not allow you to hold a different opinion from his own on any subject. You became part of the being of the man, who had seen everything and studied everything, and, in fact, knew everything. Although this tyrannical spirit was tempered by the courtesy appertaining to the master of the house, it none the less had a depressing effect on the company generally. Although in the presence of M. Villenave the conversation was, as they used to express it, *bien menée*--i.e. skilfully managed--yet it was always less amusing, more fettered and less brilliant than when he was not present. It was just like

the difference between a minuet and the game of puss-in-the-corner. It was exactly the reverse at Nodier's social evenings: Nodier liked people to make themselves as much at home as he was.

This recalls to my mind that I have not mentioned Nodier since I described him as helping me to gain entrance to the Théâtre-Français. Excellent and beloved Nodier!--one of my dearest friends! He shall not lose, you may be sure, by the postponement.

Happily, M. Villenave very rarely appeared in the salon, except on the Athénée nights. He spent the rest of his time on the second floor, only appearing among his family for dinner; then, after a few minutes' chat, after lecturing his son and scolding his wife, he would stretch himself out in an armchair, have his curls attended to by his daughter and return to his own apartments. The quarter of an hour during which the teeth of the comb gently scratched his head was the happiest time of the day to M. Villenave, the only rest he allowed himself from his unending absorption in scribbling.

"But why did he curl his hair?" someone asks.

That was the question I myself put.

Madame Waldor declared that it was purely an excuse for having his head scratched. M. Villenave must have been a parrot in one of the metamorphoses that preceded his life as a human being. Madame Villenave, who had known her husband longer than her daughter had, and who therefore could claim to know him better, averred that it was from vanity. And, indeed, M. Villenave, who was a good-looking old man, must have been splendidly handsome as a young man. His strongly marked features were wonderfully set off in their frame of flowing white hair, which showed up the fiery light of his fine black eyes. In fact, although M. Villenave was a learned man, he was also vain--a combination of virtue and fault rarely found together--but he was only

vain about his head. As for the rest of his appearance, with the exception of his cravat, which was invariably white, he left it to his tailor and his bootmaker, or rather, to his daughter's care, who looked after these matters for her father. Whether his coat were blue or black, his trousers wide or narrow, the toes of his boots round or square, so long as M. Villenave's hair was well dressed, it was all he cared about. We have mentioned that when his daughter had combed and curled his locks, M. Villenave went upstairs to his own rooms--or *home*> as the English say. Good gracious! what a curious place it was, too!

Follow me, reader, if these minute details after the fashion of Balzac amuse you, and if you believe nature takes as much pains over the making of a hyssop as over the making of a cedar-tree. Besides, we may perhaps be able to unearth some curious anecdote from out the medley, concerning a charming pastel by Latour. But we have not got there yet; we shall come to it in the end, just as at last we have come to M. Villenave's sanctum.

We have divided up the ground floor into dining-room, kitchen, pantry; and on the first floor into the small and large salons and the bedrooms; there was nothing like that on the second floor. The second floor had five rooms, five rooms full of nothing else but books and boxes. These five rooms must have contained forty thousand volumes and four thousand boxes, piled up on the floor and on tables. The anteroom alone was a vast library. It had two entrances: that on the right led to M. Villenave's bedroom--a chamber to which we shall return. That on the left opened into a large room, which, in its turn, led into a much smaller one. These two rooms, be it understood, were nothing but two libraries. The four walls of them were tapestried with books upheld on a substratum of boxes. This was odd enough in itself, as will readily be imagined, but it was not the most original thing that caught one's notice. The most ingenious arrangement was a square construction which stood in the middle of the room like an enormous block and formed a second library

within the first, leaving only space for a pathway round the room, bordered with books on left and right, just wide enough to allow a single person to move freely; a second person would have blocked the traffic. Moreover, only M. Villenave's most intimate friends ever presumed to be allowed the privilege of admission to this *sanctum sanctorum.* The substratum of boxes contained autographs. The age of Louis XIV. alone needed five hundred boxes! Herein were contained the result of fifty years of daily labour, concentrated on this one object; hour after hour taken up by this one passion. It was, in a word, the gentle and ardent passion of a born collector, into which he put his mind and happiness and joy and life!

There were to be found a portion of the papers of Louis XVI., discovered in the iron chest; there was the correspondence of Malesherbes, two hundred autographs of Rousseau, and four hundred of Voltaire together with autographs of all the kings of France, from Charlemagne down to our own time; there were drawings by Raphael and Jules Romain, by Leonardo da Vinci, Andrea del Sarto, Lebrun, Lesueur, Greuze, Vanloo, Watteau, Boucher, Vien, David, Girodet, etc.

M. Villenave would not have parted with the contents of those two rooms for a hundred thousand crowns.

I There now only remain the bedroom and the black cabinet behind M. Villenave's alcove, which was reached by a corridor, about which we shall have occasion to say a few words. Only those who saw that bedroom, wherein the bed was the least conspicuous piece of furniture, can conceive any idea of what the bedroom of a bibliomaniac is like. It was in this room that M. Villenave received his friends. After four or five months' intimacy in the household, I had the honour of being received in it. An old servant, called, I believe, Françoise, conducted me to it. I had promised M. Villenave an autograph--not that of Napoleon, of which he possessed five or six, or that of Bonaparte, of which he had three or four--but one of *Buonaparte.*

He had given orders that I was to be shown upstairs as soon as I arrived.

Françoise half opened the door.

"M. Dumas is here," she said.

Generally, when anyone was announced, even were he an intimate friend who had come unexpectedly, M. Villenave would utter a loud cry, scold Françoise and fling up his arms in despair; then, finally, when he had indulged his fit of despair, and moaned and sighed his fill, he would say--

"Very well, Françoise, as he is there, show him in."

Then the intruder would be let in.

My reception was quite otherwise. M. Villenave had hardly caught my name before he exclaimed--

"Show him in! show him in!"

In I went.

"Ah! here you are," he said. "Well, I wager you have not been able to find it!"

"What?"

"That famous autograph you promised me yesterday."

"Yes, indeed ... I have found it."

"And have you brought it?"

"To be sure I have!..."

"Really?"

"Here it is!"

"Quick, let me see it!"

I handed it to him. M. Villenave rushed up to the window.

"Yes, it is genuine," he said; "there is the *u*!... Oh! there is his very own *u*, there is no doubt about it. Let us see: '29 vendémiaire, year IV,' that is it!... Stop, stop!" He went to a box. "See, here is one of *frimaire* in the same year, signed 'Bonaparte, 12 frimaire'; so it must have been between 29 vendémiaire and 12 frimaire that he dropped his *u*; this determines a great historic question!"

While this monologue was being carried on, I had been glancing round the bedchamber thoroughly, and I had noticed that the only piece of furniture that was not encumbered with books was the arm-chair from which he had just risen. After M. Villenave had carefully examined the

autograph, he put it into a white wrapper, wrote on the wrapper, placed it in a box, put the box in its place and flung himself back into his arm-chair, with a sigh of joy.

"Ah! now, sit down," he said.

"I should like nothing better," I replied; "but what do you mean me to sit on?"

"Why, on the couch."

"Oh yes, on the couch!"

"What about it?"

"Well, just look at the couch for yourself."

"Upon my word, you are right; it is full of books. Never mind, pull up an arm-chair."

"With great pleasure. But the arm-chairs ...?"

"The arm-chairs?"

"Are littered just like the couch."

"Ah! I have so many books.... Have you noticed the great crack in the walls of the house?"

"No."

"It is visible enough, nevertheless.... Well, my dear monsieur, it is the books! The books are pulling down the house."

"The books? How?"

"Yes, twelve hundred folios, monsieur, twelve hundred splendid and rare folios; I even believe there are quite unknown ones among them, so rare are they! I put all those in the garret and I was intending to put more

there, for there was room for another twelve hundred; when, suddenly, the house trembled, uttered a groan and cracked."

"Why, you must have thought it was an earthquake?"

"Exactly!... but when we found the damage was limited we sent for an architect. The architect examined the house from the cellar to the second floor and declared that the accident could only have been caused by too heavy a weight. And, consequently, he asked to be allowed to look at the attics. Alas! this was what I dreaded. Oh! if it had only been a question of myself, I would never have given him the key; but one has to sacrifice oneself for the general good.... He visited the attics, discovered the folios, reckoned that the weight must come to eight thousand pounds, and declared that they must be sold or he would not answer for the consequences.... And they were sold, monsieur!"

"At a loss?"

"No.... Alas! I made a profit of five or six thousand francs on them, because, you know, books increase in value from having been in the possession of a bibliophile; but the poor folios were lost to me--hounded from beneath the roof that had sheltered them.... I shall never come across such a collection again. But pray take a chair."

The chairs were in a similar condition to the easy-chairs and couches--not one was unoccupied. I decided to change the conversation.

"Oh!" I said to M. Villenave, approaching towards his recess, at the back of which an open door leading to the corridor permitted me to see what was there. "Oh! monsieur, what a beautiful pastel you have down there!"

"Yes, yes," replied M. Villenave, with that old-fashioned courtly air that I have only met with in two or three old men who were as vain as he. "Yes, that is the portrait of an old friend of mine--I say old, because I am no longer young, and she, if I remember correctly, was five or six years

older than I. We became acquainted in the year 1784; you see that is not yesterday. We have not seen each other again since 1802, but that has not prevented us from writing to one another every week, or from looking forward to the weekly letters with exactly the same pleasure.... Yes, you are right, the pastel is charming, but if you had known the original you would have thought her still more charming!"

And a sweet reflection of youth, like a ray of sunlight, passed over the handsome face of the old man, making it look forty years younger.

Alas! I only entered that sacred tabernacle of the intellect twice: I have described what happened on my first visit, and I will immediately tell what happened at the second. But I ought previously to answer the question as to how M. Villenave managed to collect all these valuable treasures since he had not a large fortune. It was by patience and perseverance, as la Fontaine would say. This collection had been the work of his whole life. Just as Ghiberti began the gates of the Baptistery at Florence when he was a young man and finished them as an old one, so M. Villenave had given up fifty years to this task. He never burnt a single paper or destroyed a letter. I wrote two or three times to M. Villenave to ask for information; well, my unworthy epistles were put into their wrappers, classified and labelled. Why was I thus honoured? Who can tell? Perhaps he thought even I might some day become a great celebrity. It will readily be imagined that, if he preserved such letters as mine, he would religiously preserve other things. Notices of meetings of learned societies, invitations to marriage ceremonies, funeral cards, all were kept, classified and put in their place. I cannot say what M. Villenave's collection did *not* contain; I saw amongst it a collection of half-burnt volumes which had been snatched out of the fire of the Bastille on 14 July.

M. Villenave employed two aides-de-camp, or, rather, bloodhounds: one named Fontaine, himself the author of a book called the *Manuel des*

Autographes; the other an employé in the War Office. Twice a week they went a hunting; they rummaged the shops of the grocers, who, accustomed to these visits, would put aside all the papers that they thought might be rare or curiosities. From amongst these papers the two visitors would make a selection, paying the grocers fifteen sous a pound, M. Villenave paying them at the rate of thirty sous. There also were what might be described as royal hunting-days; on these days M. Villenave hunted in person; every grocer in Paris knew him, and came up to him with his hands full of papers, far more precious to him than roses and lilies.

The reader should have seen M. Villenave when he sallied forth to take his leisure, or, rather, when he went out to accomplish the principal work of his life. He was no vain, becurled dandy on these days, neither did he wear the white cravat or the blue coat with gold buttons; no, he did not wish to look too well-to-do in the presence of the old second-hand booksellers amongst whom he was going to glean; on these days he wore a rather dirty old hat, a black cravat cut away by his beard and an unbrushed coat. Then the indefatigable bibliomaniac proceeded along the quays. Here, with both hands in his trousers' pockets, his big body bent down, his fine intelligent head lit up with desire, he would send his piercing glances right into the depths of the assemblage of wares, looking incessantly for some unknown treasure, a text of *Faust* or an Elzevir. Sometimes the hunter would return home empty-handed; then he would be sullen, and silent at dinner, and would grumble that his daughter was pulling his hair while she was curling it; after this he would pick up his candlestick and go upstairs to his room without wishing anyone good-night. On the other hand, if a hunting-day proved to be productive, and M. Villenave returned with a precious volume or a scarce edition, then he would come in with his face radiant with smiles; he would toss Élisa up and down in his arms; he would joke with his son, kiss his daughter, pay his wife compliments on the dinner; and, when dinner was

over, he would thank his hairdresser, purring like a contented cat. M. Villenave had but one cause for disquiet: where was the fresh acquisition to be put? The books were squeezed into their shelves so tightly that you could not get a paper knife in between. He would walk from one side to another, turning round, tacking, complaining, lifting up his long arms to the heavens in despair, finally deciding to put the book on a couch or on one of the arm-chairs or chairs, saying with a sigh--

"We must find a place for it later."

That place would never be found, and the book would remain on the couch, the arm-chair or the chair, where it had been placed, a fresh obstacle in the way of any visitor who had to find a seat.

I was too well aware of M. Villenave's dislike to be disturbed, to have ventured on a second visit to his sanctum, until, when recasting *Christine* afresh, I wished to consult the autograph writing of the daughter of Gustavus-Adolphus; I wanted to acquaint myself with certain oddities in her character that might possibly, I thought, be reflected in her writing. So I made up my mind to venture to disturb M. Villenave in those intellectual regions wherein he soared far above common humanity. It was in the month of March 1829, about five o'clock in the afternoon, when I rang the bell and the gate was opened. I asked for M. Villenave and was shown in. I had not gone many steps towards the house before Françoise called me back.

"Monsieur!" she said, "monsieur!"

"What is it, Françoise?"

"Does Monsieur want to go up to M. Villenave's rooms?"

"Yes, Françoise."

"I thought Monsieur was visiting the ladies as usual."

"You are wrong, Françoise."

"Then Monsieur will be good enough to spare my poor legs going up two flights of stairs and give M. Villenave this letter for him that has just come."

"Willingly, Françoise."

Françoise gave me the letter, and I took it and went upstairs. I knocked when I reached the door, but there was no answer. I knocked a little louder. Again no answer. I began to feel uncomfortable; the key was in the door, and the presence of that key invariably indicated the presence of M. Villenave in his room. Surely some accident must have happened to him. I knocked a third time, meaning to enter if I was not answered. There was no response, and I entered. M. Villenave was asleep in his arm-chair. The noise I made in entering and, perhaps, the draught that I caused, disturbed some magnetic influences, and M. Villenave uttered a cry, awoke and jumped up.

"Ah! pardon me," I exclaimed. "I beg a thousand pardons! I have disturbed you."

"Who are you? What is your business?" asked M. Villenave quickly.

"Why, upon my word, do you not recognise me?... Alexandre Dumas."

"Oh!" said M. Villenave, with a gasp.

"Really, monsieur," I said, "I am very sorry. I will withdraw."

"No, no; on the contrary, come in," said M. Villenave, as he passed his hand across his forehead; "you will render me a service."

I went in.

"Take a seat," he said, from customary habit.

Eight or ten folios lay tossed about on the floor; I formed a pile of them and sat down on the top.

"Yes," continued M. Villenave, "it was a very singular thing.... I fell asleep, the dusk came on and, in the meantime, my fire went out. You awoke me and found me in the dark, so I could not account for the noise inside my room; it was, no doubt, the draught from the passage that touched my face, but, in waking, I seemed to see something white, like a shroud, dancing before my eyes.... Curious, was it not?" went on M. Villenave, with a shiver, as though he felt cold through and through. "But here you are, so much the better!" And he held out his hand to me.

I responded to his courtesy, transferring to my left hand the letter I had brought him in my right.

"What have you there?" asked M. Villenave.

"Ah! pardon, I was forgetting ... it is a letter which Françoise gave me for you and that is the reason I disturbed you."

"Thanks ... Stop a minute, would you please feel about for a match? I am really quite bewildered still, and if I were superstitious I should believe I had had a presentiment."

He took the match I held out to him and lit it in the red embers on the hearth. Directly the match caught fire, we could distinguish objects in the room by its flickering light, faint though it was.

"Oh! good gracious!" I exclaimed suddenly, "what has happened to your beautiful pastel?"

"As you see, the glass and the frame are broken; I am waiting to send it to the glazier's and picture-framer's ... it was a most incomprehensible thing!"

"What was?"

"The way it fell."

"Did the nail come out, or the ring break?"

"Neither the one nor the other. The day before yesterday I was working all evening; when it reached a quarter to twelve, I was tired, but I still had to correct a proof of a handy little edition of my *Ovid.* I decided to combine rest and work by going to bed and correcting the proofs when I was in bed. So I lay down: I put my candle on the table by the bedside, and the light from it shone on the portrait of my poor friend; my glance followed the candlelight and I said good-night to the picture as usual.... A half-open window let in a little breeze which blew the flame of my candle about so that it seemed to me as though the portrait returned my good-night by bending its head as I had done! You will understand that I looked upon this movement as visionary and foolish; but, whether folly or a vision, my mind persisted in dwelling upon the movement, and the more I pondered over it, the more real the incident seemed; my eyes would stray from my *Ovid*, and fix themselves on that one point, the picture; my wandering thoughts would fly back, in spite of myself, to the days of my youth; and these early days passed before me one by one.... Ah me! I think I have told you that the original of that pastel occupied a good deal of my attention in those early days! So there I was, going at full tilt over old recollections of twenty-five years back; I addressed the copy as though the original could hear me, and my memory answered for her; it seemed as though the lips in the pastel moved; I thought the colours of the painting began to fade, and the expression on the face grew sad and unhappy.... Something like a smile of farewell passed over her lips; a tear came into her eyes ready to moisten the glass. Midnight began to strike; and, in spite of myself, I shivered--why, I could not tell! The wind blew, and, at the last stroke of midnight, while the clock was still vibrating, the half-open window opened wide violently, I heard a sigh like a groan, the eyes of the portrait closed, and the picture fell without either the nail that held it or the cord being broken; and my candle went

out. I tried to light it again, but there was no fire in the grate, there were no matches on the chimneypiece; it was midnight, everybody in the house was asleep; so there was no way of obtaining a light. I shut my window again and I went back to bed.... Although I was not afraid, I felt much moved, I was sad, I had a great desire to weep; I thought I heard something pass through my room like the rustle of a silk dress.... I heard this noise three times so distinctly that I asked, 'Is there anyone there?' Finally, I fell asleep, very late, and the first thing I looked at when I woke again was my poor pastel, which I found in the state in which you now see it."

"That is indeed a strange story!" I said. "And have you received your weekly letter as usual?"

"No, and that is what makes me uneasy; that is why I gave Françoise orders to bring or send up any letters that might come for me the moment they arrive."

"Well," said I, "perhaps the one I have just brought you...."

"That is not her style of folding:--still, never mind, as it comes from Angers...."

Then, turning it over to break the envelope he exclaimed, "Ah! my God! it is sealed in black! Poor soul, some misfortune has befallen her!"

And M. Villenave grew pale as he unsealed the letter; it enclosed a second one.

His eyes filled with tears as he read the first lines of the first letter.

"Look," he said, and he held it out to me, "read it"; and, while he silently and sadly opened the second letter, I took the first and read:--

"MONSIEUR,--It is with personal grief, increased by realising what you too will feel, that I have to inform you that Madame---died on Sunday

last, at the last stroke of midnight. The day before, while she was writing to you, she was seized by an indisposition which we thought at first was only slight, but it grew worse, until she died. I have the sad duty of sending to you the letter she had begun to write to you, unfinished as it is. This letter will assure you that her affection for you remained unchanged to the end.

"I remain, Monsieur, in great grief, as you will readily believe, your very humble and very obedient servant,

"THÉRÈSE MIRAUD"

"So you see," resumed M. Villenave, "it was at the last stroke of midnight that the portrait fell, and it was at the last stroke of midnight that she died."

I felt that his grief needed a solitude peopled only by past recollections and uninterrupted by any poor attempts I could offer at consolation. I picked up my hat, pressed his hand and left.

This incident recalled to me the apparition of my father, on the very night of his death, which woke me up when I was a little child, and I put to myself the question that is so often asked and never answered, "What are the mysterious bonds which bind the dead to the living?" Later, when I lost my mother, whom I loved more than anyone else in the world, and who, on her side, loved me beyond all telling, I remembered these two visions and, kneeling down by the bed on which she had just expired, with my lips on her hand, I implored her, if anything of her had survived, to appear to me just once again; then, when night came, I lay down in a lonely room and waited with a beating heart, hoping to see the beloved vision. I counted in vain nearly all the hours of that night, and not the slightest sound or apparition came to solace my sorrowful watch. After that, I doubted all such experiences, whether my own or others'; for my mother's love for me, and mine for her, were so great that I knew if she

had been able to rise once more from her resting-place to bid me a last farewell she would surely have done it. But perhaps it is only children and old people who are privileged--children because they are nearer the cradle, old people because they are nearer the grave.

BOOK II — CHAPTER XIV

CHAPTER XIV

First representation of Soulié's *Roméo et Juliette*--Anaïs and Lockroy--Why French actresses cannot act Juliet--The studies of the Conservatoire--A second *Christine* at the Théâtre-Français--M. Évariste Dumoulin and Madame Valmonzey--Conspiracy against me--I give up my turn to have my play produced--How I found the subject of *Henri III.*--My opinion of that play

Meantime, we had reached the beginning of June 1828, and I was informed by Soulié that the Odéon had accepted his *Roméo*, were rehearsing it and were nearly ready to perform it. We had not seen each other since the night when we had agreed each to write our own version of *Christine.* But he had not forgotten me, and I received two gallery stall tickets for the first night. As my mother had often heard me talk of Soulié, and as she knew that Soulié was one of my friends, it was by way of preparing her for the first representation of my work that I took her to see the first representation of Soulié's. Poor mother! It was a great treat to her to go out with me. Alas! I had neglected her sadly for months past. We become so accustomed to those guardian angels, our mothers, that we never dream, as we leave them to pursue all the foolish fancies of youth, that a moment will come--a terrible and unanticipated moment--when they, in their turn, will leave us! Then only do we recollect, with tears in our eyes and remorse at our hearts, those many thoughtless and cruel absences and we exclaim, "Good God! why did I so often leave her for this and that, now to be separated from her by you for ever?"

We made our way to the Odéon. A first representation was a great affair in those days--especially when the play to be acted for the first time was by a man belonging to the new school. Nevertheless, this play of Soulié

was not epoch-making: had it been produced before the visit of the English company to Paris, it would have been looked upon as extremely advanced, but, coming after their representations, it was by no means up to date. There was no fear, indeed, of its being an out-and-out failure, but there was no chance, either, of its being a grand success. Observe, too, that it was to be played on the same stage, and, probably, with the same *mise-en-scène* that had accompanied Kemble's and Miss Smithson's acting of Shakespeare's *chef d'œuvre.* Anaïs and Lockroy were entrusted with the principal parts. It was almost Lockroy's first appearance. He was handsome, young, romantic and daring--an actor of whom great things were expected, especially in this particular kind of rôle. But it was otherwise with regard to Anaïs. In comedy she was admirable and delightful, unfailing in taste, in wit, in delicacy of style and of interpretation; but in drama and tragedy she was entirely inadequate. And she was to appear on those same boards, before that same audience, in the same part of Juliet which Miss Smithson had presented with wonderful skill, and with all the qualities that go to the making of a great tragedienne! Besides, there was not a single woman in Paris in those days who could act Juliet, nor, we may add, have we anyone who could do it now. What is the reason for our lack of that charming type, the woman who combines gaiety of spirit with dramatic and poetic faculties? Why have we never produced, and probably never shall until some far distant future, anyone who will recall to both eyes and memory the personalities of Miss Smithson and Miss Faucett? Why was Mademoiselle Mars unequal to the part of Desdemona, and Madame Dorval herself unequal to Juliet? Because the dramatic education of our actresses is only conducted on the lines of three masters, without doubt of great merit, but whose genius does not include, as Shakespeare's did, that happy mixture of natural, dramatic and poetic expression to be found in most of the works of the English poet. Moreover, at the Conservatoire, pupils are only prepared for a single branch of the art, either tragedy or comedy, never for tragedy and comedy combined. Why, again? Because in the

masters studied--Molière, Corneille and Racine--these two styles are never found intermingled. It is a fatal mistake to exclude comedy from the education of the tragedienne, and tragedy from the training of the comedienne; it makes the tragedienne heavy in comedy, the comedienne affected in tragedy. Our seventeenth and eighteenth century theatres knew nothing beyond the realism of Molière's women, the boorishness of Corneille's women; the rage or the gentleness of the women of Racine; the Agnès and Célimène of Molière; Corneille's Émilie and Rodogune; Racine's Hermione and Aricie. You will search in vain among them all for anything which resembles the nurse, balcony and tomb scenes, all of which centre round the single character of Juliet. To attain to the standard of the English actors it would be necessary either not to be trained at the Conservatoire--which I, for one, should look upon as a distinct advantage--or that the Conservatoire should allow, combined with the study of the French masters, the study of foreign masters or contemporary authors, whose dramatic works contain the threefold elements of nature, dramatic art and poetic feeling. It would be a very simple matter to arrange; it would, I am quite well aware, annoy MM. Samson and Provost; but what would it matter to an intelligent Minister of the Interior to meet opposition of that kind? It would, of course, rouse MM. Viennet, Lebrun and Jouy; but M. Viennet is no longer a member of the Chamber of Deputies, and M. Lebrun is no longer a member of the Chamber of Peers; M. Jouy no longer belongs to the editorial staff of the *Constitutionnel*; so what would their remonstrances matter to a Minister of the Interior who does not care whether he belong to the Academy or not? At first blush it would seem to be very easy indeed to discover a clear-headed Minister of the Interior who thinks lightly of belonging to the Academy; ah, well! we are mistaken. We have been trying to find such a man for the last thirty years! We have seen two revolutions without finding such a minister, and we may have to live through two more revolutions before he appears. I have no desire to see two other revolutions before I die, but I should much like to find the minister.

The upshot of all this is that Anaïs, although a charming comedienne (she was probably trained at the Conservatoire), made an inadequate Juliette; and Lockroy, who had studied his part from Kemble and Macready and, above all, had thought about it himself, did marvels in the part of Romeo. One of these marvellous things was a stroke of genius. When he sees Juliette rise from her tomb and walk, he retreats backward, keeping his eyes fixed on her, for fear lest she whom he takes for a ghost should vanish, and feels in the funeral couch she has just left, refraining from uttering his cry of joy until he has assured himself that the bed is empty. The play obtained the literary success it deserved--a success that culminated in the last act, which was almost entirely borrowed from Shakespeare.

I do not think I ever felt so much moved at any of my own representations as I was at this representation of Soulié; I never suffered more than during these first four acts, when I felt that the piece dragged along lifeless and dull, realising that this dulness and lack of life arose from the *excessive good taste* of the poet, who had thought it necessary to improve on Shakespeare. However, it was quite original enough to satisfy the public, and the public was content; but I am very sure that Soulié himself was not.

Meanwhile, the influence of Picard's criticism on *Christine* was making itself felt at the Comédie-Française. Mademoiselle Mars, who was at first fired with enthusiasm over the part of Christine, cooled in her study of it; for, incomplete as it then was, she felt it beneath her powers; Firmin, inspired comedian though he was, lacked a sense of composition and was beginning to feel uneasy over the part of Monaldeschi; finally, Ligier, who was to have acted the part of Sentinelli, left the Comédie-Française and went to the Odéon. Something still more serious had happened. The Committee of the Théâtre-Français had received a second play entitled *Christine.*

This second *Christine* had been written by a M. Brault, formerly a prefect and a friend of M. Decazes, who supported him with all his might. The principal rôle in this new tragedy, namely, that of Christine, had been deputed to Madame Valmonzey. In case you do not know anything about Madame Valmonzey, I will tell you who she was. Madame Valmonzey was not a good actress, but she was a very good-looking woman, the mistress of M. Évariste Dumoulin, editor of the *Constitutionnel.* It may, perhaps, be asked why I mention this fact. I reply that it is because I must. Heaven forbid I should rake up a scandal needlessly and needlessly speak ill of the dead; but I am writing the history of art and the history of literature and the history of the theatre, and in order that this history may be history the truth must be told.

This was what happened on the receipt of a second *Christine* at the Théâtre-Français and in consequence of the amours of M. Évariste Dumoulin and Madame Valmonzey. M. Évariste Dumoulin let it be known that if they did not perform the play of his friend M. Brault before that of M. Alexandre Dumas he would ruin the Théâtre-Français by means of his journal. This declaration of war greatly frightened the Théâtre-Français; nevertheless, as it was a serious and unprecedented thing that M. Évariste Dumoulin demanded of the Committee, they replied that they were quite ready to play M. Brault's *Christine*, but that, in order to do so, my consent to cede my turn to him would first have to be obtained. M. Brault, moreover, was ill of an incurable disease, from which he died some time after, and it would be a comfort to the poor dying man to see his play acted before he died. This was the way the request was put to me by his son, in a most polite and affable letter, and by the Duc de Decazes in the most friendly terms, making me also offers of help. On their side, the Comedians of the Théâtre-Français guaranteed, after a Committee meeting, to play my piece after they had performed M. Brault's, upon the first request I should make them to do so.

I have always been easily moved by appeals of this kind. But this postponement was a serious matter to my mother and to me, for we were literally looking to the production of this play for the wherewithal to live. The bonuses of which I had told my mother had been distributed, but my share was fifty francs less than those my fellow-clerks received--a warning that I must behave myself better. Furthermore, I was under M. Deviolaine, who had predicted that my piece would never be played, and who pretty well leapt for joy when he saw that his prophecy was likely to be fulfilled. Finally, this promise to play my piece as soon as I should ask for it was illusory, for after the first *Christine* had been performed I could hardly ask the Comedians to play a second until at least a year had passed by. But, as a matter of fact, I could not do anything save yield, for I was surrounded on all sides by solicitations, even among the Villenave family, and besides, my own instinct fell into line with these solicitations. So I gave way and yielded place to M. Brault.

No reward attended my sacrifice. The very next day, the papers announced that the Committee of the Théâtre-Français, having discerned more chances in M. Brault's play than in mine, had decided that M. Brault's piece should be performed, while mine was to be indefinitely postponed. I could have objected publicly, produced the letter of M. Brault's son and revealed the engagement entered into by the Comédie-Française. I did nothing of the kind, and from that day to this, I have never taken any notice of the petty intrigues of the papers; I can boast with pride, and without fear of contradiction, that I have never soiled my hands either to gain my own ends or to injure other people. Of course, neither M. Brault, the poor dying poet, nor his son, nor M. Decazes, had any hand in all these intriguing announcements. I even believe that M. Brault's son had the decency to write and tell the true version of the facts, and to thank me publicly, as he had thanked me privately. But although I treated these hardships with disdain, they had their annoyances. My mother never read the papers, but the Deviolaine

family read them, and everybody in the offices read them, and charitable souls took care to say to my mother--

"Upon my word, your son is getting himself talked about!"

"What about?" my mother would ask, trembling with fright.

And then they hastened to inform her, and saddened her poor heart, for I was her all in all, and she was far more anxious about me than I was about myself.

The rehearsals of M. Brault's *Christine* were pushed on as fast as mine had been delayed--though everybody knows what rapidity means at the Théâtre-Français; M. Brault had ample time in which to die before the representation of his play, which had only an indifferent success. As to Madame Valmonzey, she did not even achieve any success. All the same, my piece was delayed indefinitely.

Soulié had finished his *Christine* and got it accepted at the Odéon, with Mademoiselle Georges and Ligier to play the principal parts. And what was happening to me all this time?...

One of those chances which fate deals out only to those marked out by destiny gave me the subject of *Henri III.* by just such another accident as had led me to *Christine.* The only cupboard I had in my office--the office, it will be remembered, that I ardently coveted--I had to share with Féresse: I put my paper in it, he put his bottles there. One day, whether by inadvertence or to play a trick on me, or to show his superior rights over mine, he took away the key of this cupboard when going an errand. During his absence I used up all the paper lying about in my office, and, as I still had three or four reports to copy out, I went to get some more paper. A volume of Anquetil lay open, on a desk: I mechanically cast my eyes on it, and at page 95 I read the following lines:--

"Although attached to the king, and by rank an enemy of the Duc de Guise, Saint-Mégrin was none the less in love with the duchess, Catherine de Clèves, and it was said that she returned his love. The author of this anecdote gives us to understand that the husband was indifferent on the subject of his wife's actual or supposed infidelity. He opposed the entreaties of his relations that he should avenge himself, and only punished the indiscretion or the crime of the duchess by a joke. One day he entered her room early in the morning, holding a potion in one hand and a dagger in the other; after rudely awaking his wife and reproaching her, he said in tones of fury--

"Decide, madame, whether to die by dagger or poison!'

"In vain did she ask his forgiveness; he compelled her to make her choice. She drank the concoction and flung herself on her knees, recommending her soul to God and expecting nothing short of death. She spent an hour in fear; and then the duke came back with a serene countenance, and told her that what she had taken for poison was an excellent soup. Doubtless this lesson made her more circumspect afterwards."

I gained access to the *Biographie*; the *Biographie* referred me to the *Mémoires de l'Estoile.* I did not know what the *Mémoires de l'Estoile* were; I asked M. Villenave, who lent me them. The *Mémoires de l'Estoile*, volume i. page 35, contain these lines--:

"Saint-Mégrin, a young gentleman of Bordeaux, handsome, wealthy and good-hearted, was one of the curled darlings kept by the king. One night when coming away, at eleven o'clock, from the Louvre, where the king was, in the rue du Louvre, near the rue Saint-Honoré, he was set upon by some twenty to thirty unknown men, with pistols, swords and cutlasses, who left him on the pavement for dead; he died, indeed, the next day, and it was a wonder how he could have lived so long, for he had received thirty-four or thirty-five mortal wounds. The king ordered his dead body

to be carried to Boisy, near the Bastille, where Quélus, his companion, had died, and buried at Saint-Paul with as much pomp and solemnity as his companions Maugiron and Quélus had been buried there before him. No inquiries were made concerning the assassination, His Majesty having been warned that it had been done through the instrumentality of the Duc de Guise, because of the reports of intimacy between the young mignon and the duke's wife, and that the blow had been dealt by one who bore the beard and features of his brother the Duc du Maine. When the King of Navarre heard the news, he said--

"'I am glad to hear that my cousin the Duc de Guise has not suffered himself to be cuckolded by a *mignon de couchette* such as Saint-Mégrin; I wish all the other gilded youths about court who hang round the princesses ogling them and making love to them could receive the same treatment'...."

Farther on, in the *Mémoires de l'Estoile*, came this passage, concerning the death of Bussy d'Amboise:--

"On Wednesday, 19 August, Bussy d'Amboise, first gentle-man-in-waiting of M. le Duc, Governor of Anjou, Abbé de Bourgueil, who assumed very high and mighty airs, because of the partiality of his master, and who had done all kinds of evil deeds and robbed the countries of Anjou and Maine, was slain by the Seigneur de Monsoreau, together with the wicked lieutenant of Saumur, in a house belonging to the said Seigneur de Monsoreau, where, at night, the said lieutenant, who was his love messenger, had brought him to sleep that night with the wife of the said Monsoreau, to whom Bussy had for a long time made love; with whom the said lady had purposely made this false assignation in order to have him surprised by her husband, Monsoreau; when he appeared towards midnight, he was immediately surrounded and attacked by ten or a dozen men who accompanied the Seigneur de Monsoreau, and who rushed upon him in fury to massacre him: this

gentleman, seeing himself so contemptibly betrayed, and that he was alone (as on such expeditions people usually prefer to be), did not, however, cease to defend himself to the last, proving, as he had often said, that *fear had never found room in his heart*;--for so long as an inch of sword remained in his hand, he fought on till only the handle was left him, and then he made use of tables, forms, chairs and stools, with which he disabled three or four of his enemies, until, overpowered by numbers and bereft of all arms and means of defending himself, he was beaten down, close to a window, from which he had tried to fling himself in the hope of escape. Such was the end of Captain Bussy...."

It was from these two paragraphs relating to Bussy and to Saint-Mégrin that I built up my drama. M. Villenave told me that I should find details as to manners in two valuable books entitled the *Confession de Sancy*, and the *Ile des Hermaphrodites*.

In connection with *Henri III.* it is easy to see that the dramatic gift is born with certain people. I was twenty-five years of age, *Henri III.* was my second serious piece of work: let any conscientious critic take it and submit it to the most rigorous examination and he will find plenty to blame in the style, but nothing in the plot. I have written fifty dramas since *Henri III.*, but not one of them is more cleverly constructed.

BOOK II — CHAPTER XV

CHAPTER XV

The reading of *Henri III.* at M. Villenave's and M. Roqueplan's--Another reading at Firmin's--Béranger is present--A few words about his influence and popularity--Effect produced by my drama--Reception by the Comédie-Française--Struggle for the distribution of parts--M. de Broval's ultimatum--Convicted of the crime of poetry I appeal to the Duc d'Orléans--His Royal Highness withholds my salary--M. Laffitte lends me three thousand francs--Condemnation of Béranger

The execution of *Henri III.* was, relatively speaking, rapid; as soon as the plot was completely settled in my mind it scarcely took me two months to finish the work. I recollect that, in the interval between the composition of the plot and the execution of the piece, I went to Villers-Cotterets, to shoot, I believe; on my return, I started before the carriage, and my young friends, Saunier, Labarre and Duez, put me on my way as far as the village of Vauciennes. During our walk I told them the whole of *Henri III.* from beginning to end. *Henri III.* was completed directly the plot was completed. When I am busy working at one of my plays it is a help to me to tell the story; as I tell it I invent, and, at the conclusion of one of these recitals, some fine morning, there the play is, ready finished. But it often happens that this way of composing, namely, by not beginning the composition until I have finished the plot, is very slow. I kept *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* nearly five years thus in my head, and since 1832 I have had the plot of a *Juif errant* in my mind, waiting till I can get a moment's leisure to finish it; it will be one of my best pieces of work. I have only one fear, and that is that I shall die before I can get it done.

When I had finished *Henri III.* I read it to a small circle of friends at Madame Waldor's. The play made a great impression; but the unanimous advice was that I ought to have *Christine* produced first. They said that *Henri III.* was too daring for a first production. I need hardly say that M. Villenave thought all these new movements in literature monstrous aberrations of the human intellect. It was the period when an entirely fresh generation was springing up around us and with us. Several journals had just been begun by men of our age, full of the new ideas then afloat, in opposition to the views of the *Constitutionnel*, the *Courrier français*, the *Journal de Paris* and the *Journal des Débats*, which from that time reserved the whole of its praise for Victor Hugo.

These journals were the *Figaro* and the *Sylphe.* They were edited by Nestor Roqueplan, Alphonse Royer, Louis Desnoyers, Alphonse Karr, Vaillant, Dovalle and a dozen other bold champions of the Romantic school. I invited them all to meet in Nestor Roqueplan's rooms, also asking Lassagne and Firmin to join us. In those days Nestor Roqueplan was not magnificently lodged in his apartments at the Opéra; his salons were not ornamented by Boule, nor were the corner-stones from Coromandel. He had a small room on the fifth floor, with a chimneypiece ornamented with a washhand basin, in lieu of a clock, and duelling pistols instead of candlesticks. Nearly a score of us were packed in this room; we laid out the mattresses from the bed on the floor to form divans; we transformed the bedstead into a sofa. I stood before a table lit by plain candles; the kettle was put on the fire so that each act could be divided by a cup of tea--and I began. This time, I was dealing with men of daring opinions, and their advice was therefore exactly the opposite: they all declared with one accord that I ought to abandon *Christine* to her unhappy lot and to push forward *Henri III.* Firmin was enchanted; he could understand the part of Saint-Mégrin much better than he had been able to enter into that of Monaldeschi. He undertook to ask for a reading for me and to hurry one forward. In the meantime, if I were willing, he

would gather his fellow-actors together at his own house, so that I could read my play to them before the definitive reading at the Théâtre-Français. I felt beside myself with my success; I would have read it fifty times had I been asked to do so. I placed myself in his hands and told him to do whatever he wished. As I was going away, Lassagne caught me by the arm.

"My friend," he said, "you were only half right in the matter of *Christine*; you are altogether right in *Henri III.*"

Firmin fixed the reading for the following Thursday; it was necessary that Béranger should be present at it. You must understand the import of those few words, "It was necessary that Béranger should be present at it!" Béranger was the hero of the hour; of him Benjamin Constant had just said, "Good old Béranger! he thinks he is writing chansons and really he is composing odes!" This *mot* had gone round, it hit the mark so deliciously, and the whole of the Liberal party had pronounced Béranger to be the greatest poet of his age. This partisanship had roused some opposition, but the only effect was to carry enthusiasm to the utmost pitch. Please, let me make it clear that I do not wish to convey the impression that Béranger was overrated, but I think it was rather unjust on the others; and by the others I mean Lamartine and Hugo. They also composed odes, admirables odes, too, and no one went so far as to say that they could not also compose chansons. The explanation was that Lamartine and Hugo were both out-and-out members of the Royalist party, and the Royalist party was far from representing the opinion of the majority. Now, this popular enthusiasm was not on account of Béranger as a poet pure and simple; it was for Béranger as a national poet, for Béranger as the author of the *Vieux Drapeau*, the *Dieu des bonnes gens*, the *Grand'mère.* Here the instincts of the masses were not at fault; they fully realised that Béranger was a fiery socialist, that each of his political chansons was the blow of a pickaxe aimed to undermine the foundations of the throne, and they applauded with hands and with voices the bold

pioneer who dug the trench by which the people were, one day, to gain access to the Tuileries. Therefore, Béranger enjoyed an immense influence; all parties vied with each other as to who should gain Béranger to their side. They offered him the Cross and he refused it; they offered him a pension and he refused it; they offered him membership in the Academy and he refused it; no one became possessed of Béranger, but, on the contrary, Béranger gained the confidence of everybody in general and of Laffitte in particular.

Laffitte's friendship with Béranger and Béranger's influence on Laffitte displayed itself in a singular way in 1830. France owed the reign of Louis-Philippe to these two men; that is to say, the indispensable transition as I deem it from aristocratic royalism to democratic rule--that intermediate stage which has been termed *la royauté bourgeoise.* We shall have some strange details to relate when we reach the proper time and place; for, throughout that great week, we were closely associated with makers and unmakers of kings. But, for the moment, the Béranger that Firmin promised me was not the man of politics, but Béranger the poet, the author of *Lisette*, the *Deux Sœurs de Charité* and *Frétillon.* We were, besides, to have such authorities as MM. Taylor, Michelot and Samson; Mlle. Leverd and Mlle. Mars.

I wished my mother to have the pleasure of being present at this reading, as I felt quite certain of a successful issue, so I persuaded her to accompany me.

Alas! poor mother! I might have had a presentiment that she would not be present at its performance!

The reading created a great impression on everybody. Although, in the nature of things, Béranger could not thoroughly enter into the spirit of dramatic form, he, too, was moved to enthusiasm along with the rest, by the third and fifth acts and did not hesitate to predict that I should have a great success.

From that night dates a friendship between Béranger and me--a friendship which has never failed. This friendship often took a sardonic, almost bitter form of expression, for Béranger is not at all the good-humoured man people imagine, he has too much genius to be genial; but this friendship was always sincere and ready to be put to the proof by deeds and tokens.

The reading, as I have said, had a marked effect upon all present; but especially were the five Comedians impressed by it--Firmin, Michelot, Samson, Mlle. Mars and Mlle. Leverd. It was settled that when the Committee met two days hence, a special reading should be asked for and that, making use of the guarantee which was given me with regard to *Christine*, special favour should be sought on my account so that the piece might be played as soon as possible. The play was read on 17 September 1828 and received with acclamation. After the reading, I was called into the director's office, which was vacant, for the time being. There I found Taylor, Mademoiselle Mars, Michelot and Firmin. Mademoiselle Mars began the subject with her usual frankness, I was going to say with her usual brutal frankness. I was not to allow *Henri III.* to be put aside as I had in the case of *Christine*; everything must be settled at once, while the Committee was in the mood--the distribution of rôles, the signing of the contract; and, taking advantage of the eager enthusiasm of the Committee, steps were immediately to be taken to obtain the *mise en scène* from the Administration. Moreover, my generous patron Taylor was about to quit the theatre to travel in the East; he had kept his promise to the author of *Hécube* and was setting out, not only for Alexandria and Cairo, but even as far as Luxor. Advantage might be taken of his absence to do me a bad turn. I endowed Mlle. Mars, Firmin and Michelot with plenary powers, and they undertook my affairs, constituting themselves my tutelary guardians, and declaring that I was incapable of carrying out the necessary negotiations myself.

When the question of the distribution of rôles was discussed, Mlle. Mars met with great opposition. She wished Armand to undertake the part of Henri III. and Madame Menjaud to be the page. Now, I wanted Louise Despréaux to be the page and Michelot to be Henri III. The discussion was protracted, lasting for a week. This struggle was the beginning of a series of battles between Mlle. Mars and myself which, in spite of our real friendliness, lasted first with regard to one subject and then another, until the death of that estimable actress. But I stood firm. I had profited by the reproaches of Mlle. Mars and I turned the tables against her. Madame Menjaud was a very talented woman, but she was neither young enough nor pretty enough for a page boy, and it was just precisely on this account that Mlle. Mars could not get rid of that egoism which is the defect of even the most eminent of artistes, objecting to the contrast of a young and fresh face by the side of her own, she being at that time fifty-one years of age. I had to be satisfied with retorting that as Louise Despréaux was a pupil of Firmin I was bound to have her. My reason for declining to let Armand play the part of Henri III. was more difficult to divulge. Although Armand was five or six years the senior of Mlle. Mars, he was still good-looking, looked quite young and was the most presentable of the French Comedians, but nobody save Armand himself would ever have dreamt of his taking the part of Henri III.! I was obliged to tell Armand that his acting of the part was too realistic, and that I did not wish him to take it. This answer made Armand my enemy for life, and very nearly caused me to fall out with Mlle. Mars.

Such were my worries at the theatre--there were plenty more for me at the offices.

As in the case of *Christine*, the papers immediately published the news of my reception, and as in the case of *Christine* there was a great commotion about it in the offices. However, nothing was said to me at first. Thanks to the easy means of communication between the Committee and my little office, Firmin called on me several times, and

my subsequent absences after his calls, which had reference to various difficulties that arose about distribution of parts or the *mise en scène*, having been noted, an accusation was concocted against me of a sufficiently grave nature to constitute a charge of insubordination. Consequently, I received one morning, through the agency of Féresse, a request to step upstairs and appear before the director-general. M. de Broval received me with a severe look that boded a storm. I was at once reminded of M. Lefèvre and his discourse on the well organised machine, and the wheel, which, small though it was, prevented the whole from working. Alas! for the last six years I had not grown into a much larger wheel, and I felt as small before M. de Broval as I had done before M. Lefèvre. But there was something stirring in the depths of my being that was growing, and that was a self-confidence which six years of work had given me and the reception of my two plays *Christine* and *Henri III.* So I awaited the tempest with a calmness that surprised and almost disconcerted M. de Broval.

At length, in dulcet tones, he explained to me that literature and official work were incompatible and that, knowing how, in spite of the natural antipathy between them, I had been endeavouring to combine them, he requested me to make my choice between the two.

M. de Broval was a fine talker, for he had been a third-class clerk in the diplomatic service. On great days he wore, as I believe I have mentioned, a coat with a braided collar, and on this coat the medal of Saint-Janvier, which he had received on the marriage of the Duc d'Orléans with the daughter of Ferdinand of Sicily; on ordinary days, he dressed like everybody else. One of his shoulders was higher than the other and he had a big red nose. I was always unlucky with deformed persons. I knew that the time had come when I must stake my last throw; I let M. de Broval proceed with the rounding off of his sentences, and his greatly beloved climaxes, until he had finished, and then I said--

"Monsieur le Baron, as far as I have been able to follow your discourse, I gather you leave me the choice between my place as copying clerk and my vocation as a literary man."

"That is so, Dumas," the baron replied.

"My place was obtained from the Duc d'Orléans by General Foy; it was accorded me by the Duc d'Orléans through his influence; now, before I can believe that the first prince of the blood royal, a man whom everybody declares to be a patron of letters--and who justified this title by receiving into his library M. Casimir Delavigne, dismissed from his office for the crime of making poetry--before, I say, I can credit that such a man could dismiss me from his administration for the same crime as that committed by M. Casimir Delavigne, which, in the case of M. Casimir Delavigne, was a title to favour, I must receive my *exeat*, whether verbal or in writing, either from the lips or the hand of M. le Duc d'Orléans. I will neither resign nor accept dismissal. As for my salary, as M. le Baron has given me to understand that the one hundred and twenty-five francs payment I draw monthly is an exorbitant tax upon His Royal Highness's budget, I am willing to renounce it on the spot."

"Ah! ah!" M. de Broval exclaimed in surprise; "and how do you and your mother propose to live, monsieur?"

"That is my own business, monsieur"; and I bowed and prepared to take my leave.

"Take notice, Monsieur Dumas," said M. de Broval, "from the end of next month you shall not receive any further salary."

"From this present one, monsieur, if you wish it. This will enable you to save one hundred and twenty-five francs on His Highness's account, and I have no doubt that His Highness will be duly grateful to you for this economy."

Whereupon I again bowed and withdrew.

M. de Broval kept his word. When I returned to my office, I was officially informed that in future I could dispose of my time as I thought proper, since from that day *my salary was suspended.* It seems incredible and yet it is a fact. Furthermore, the salaries in the prince's offices were as a general rule so poor they were not enough for us to live on. So each had recourse to some particular industry to ameliorate his constant state of penury: some had married sempstresses who kept little shops; others had shares in livery stables; there were even some who ran thirty-two sous restaurants in the Latin Quarter, who laid down the ducal pens at five o'clock to take up the serviette of a waiter in a cheap eating-house. Ah well! nothing was said to these, they were not reproached with lowering his princely dignity in the eyes of others; no, their industry was extolled and it was looked upon as quite natural and quite ordinary; whilst I, who felt no vocation to marry a shopkeeper; who did not possess any capital to invest in the cab trade; who was accustomed to put a serviette on my knees and not over my arm, was looked upon as a criminal because I sought a way of salvation in literature! They suspended my salary because I had a tragedy and a drama accepted by the Comédie-Française!

Well, I had prepared my plans beforehand, and these plans had fortified me. I had decided that I would lay my case before Béranger, and ask him to obtain for me an interview with Laffitte. It was just possible that Laffitte might do for me what he had done for Théaulon, under similar circumstances. Laffitte might, perhaps, lend me a thousand crowns. I went and told Firmin all my difficulties, and he took me to Béranger. And Béranger took me to Laffitte. I should misrepresent the truth if I said that M. Laffitte jumped at the opportunity of rendering me this service; but I should also misrepresent it if I did not hasten to add that he did render it me. I signed a promissory note for three thousand francs, I deposited a copy of my manuscript of *Henri III.* with the cashier, and I

pledged my word of honour to return the three thousand francs upon the sale of the manuscript. There' was no question of interest.

I left Laffitte's house with my three notes of a thousand francs each in my pocket, I shook hands warmly with Béranger and I ran home to my mother. I found her in despair; she had already heard what had happened. I drew the three notes of a thousand francs from my pocket and put them into her hands. They represented my salary for two years. I explained to her how I had come by the money, but she could not realise it. Nevertheless, my poor mother began to believe that I was not altogether out of my senses for writing plays, since I could borrow a thousand crowns on the bare manuscript of one of these plays--a sum equivalent to two years of my salary. That night, I related at M. Villenave's what had happened. M. Villenave blamed me, but everyone else said I had done right.

A fortnight after Béranger had rendered me this service he was sentenced by the *tribunal de police correctionnelle de la Seine* to pay a fine of ten thousand francs and to nine months' imprisonment, as author of the *Ange gardien*, of the *Gérontocratie* and of the *Sacre de Charles le Simple.* Béranger did not appeal against the judgment and he was a prisoner at the beginning of the year 1829. A month after his entry into prison, M. Viennet visited him.

"Well, my noble songster," began the author of the *Philippide*, "how many chansons have you already composed under lock and key?"

"Not one yet," replied Béranger; "do you suppose chansons are written as easily as epic poems?"

BOOK II — CHAPTER XVI

CHAPTER XVI

The Duc d'Orléans has my salary stopped--A scribbler (*folliculaire*)--*Henri III.* and the Censorship--My mother is seized with paralysis--Cazal--Edmond Halphen--A call on the Duc d'Orléans--First night of *Henri III.*--Effect it produced on M. Deviolaine--M. de Broval's congratulations

It was under these conditions that the year 1829 broke upon me--the year in which was to take place the grand duel between my past and my future. My intimate intercourse with the Villenave family had been the means of opening to me several of the salons of the day, and among these that of the Princess de Salm. Here it was that I met Lady Morgan, Cooper and Humboldt.

Meanwhile, *Henri III.* was causing a great sensation. Nothing was talked of save the revolution which its representation meant. I attended the rehearsals with great assiduity, attracted, so I asserted, by my interest in the work; but, according to Mlle. Mars, the real reason was the interest I took in an exceedingly pretty and charming lady, named Mlle. Virginie Bourbier, who played a trifling part in my drama. Since the month of October I had not put foot inside the office. Now, although I had worked hard for nine months of the year and, consequently, was entitled to three-quarters of my bonus, everyone save myself seemed to have had share in the distribution of funds, and in the munificence of His Royal Highness. It was not a simple oversight, as I might have hoped, although that would have been humiliating enough--no, the fact had been debated, considered and decided, and His Royal Highness had condescended to write beside my name, in his own hand--

"The gratuities of M. Alexandre Dumas are to be withheld, as he is engaged in literary work."

The Administration was divided into two camps over my position. Some had bravely dared to take the side of literature against bureaucracy. Among the number of my partisans was little old Bichet, whose head being turned by M. Pieyre and M. Parseval de Grandmaison maintained that I should do great things ... not so great, of course, as Piron; but still, I should make my name known. The others were Lassagne, Lamy, secretary of Mlle. Adélaïde, the son of the director of the *comptabilité Jamet*, whose admiration for the English actors, and specially for a charming English actress, had brought him over to the Romantic school, and some others, who were too dependent on their positions to dare to manifest their sympathy with me openly. Oudard remained neutral. M. Deviolaine wavered; all this talk there had been about me had shaken his opinion. Was I right, in spite of the whole world, and, in spite of my education at three francs per month, should I succeed where scores of others had failed? He expressed his doubt, from time to time, nearly always winding up his hesitation by the following words:--

"The --- is crazy enough to do it!"

As is usual in theatrical matters, the production was postponed from day to day but at last it was fixed to take place on 11 February. A grave anxiety, however, hovered over everybody and myself in particular, like a black cloud. The Censor had not yet given his final decision upon the play. A wretched creature occupied the office at that time, who lived on scandal, making capital of others' self-esteem or their weakness, beside whom Geoffroi was honesty itself and a conscientious critic. The following lines on the *Folliculaire* by Laville might have been written about him:--

"Un vase de vermeil, une bague de prix, Du vin surtout, voilà ses cadeaux favoris. On assure--je crois que, sur ce fait probable, Pour le

vrai, la chronique a pris le vraisemblable-- Qu'au jour où nos amis viennent du vieux Nestor Nous souhaiter les ans, et bien d'autres encor; Au jour où les filleuls aiment tant leurs marraines; Jour de munificence où, sous le nom d'étrennes, Chacun de son voisin attend quelques tributs, Et d'une honnête aumône accroît ses revenus, Il revend au rabais, ou plutôt à l'enchère, Le superflu des vins et de la bonne chère Dont l'accable le zèle ou l'effroi des acteurs; Et que Follicula, pour qui les directeurs De schalls et de chapeaux renouvellent l'emplette, Se fait, pendant deux mois, marchande à la toilette!"

The entire theatrical world paid tribute to this man. Mademoiselle Mars gave him a pension; he received subsidies from the Théâtre-Français, the Odéon, the Opéra and the Opéra-Comique. They came to him as to the open market: he sold eulogy to one, calumny to others; he sold everything, even his silence.

Mademoiselle Mars, Firmin, the company of the Comédie-Française, and even Taylor himself had urged me to pay this man a call; but I had obstinately refused. So, one morning, someone brought me his paper, which contained the following lines:--

"In the play that has just been accepted by the Comédie-Française, the work of an author who, we are told, possesses great merit, there appear characters who had a disgraceful connection with the subject (the Court of Henri III.), whose new appearance on the stage may possibly serve to prove the author's talent, but whose presence, it cannot be denied, create an impropriety impossible to tolerate. History has preserved the names of these miserable heroes, those infamous personages, who took part in a debauch as dissolute as it was inexcusable; we will venture to call them by their true names, and to signify our detestation of the representatives of these rôles of *mignons*, on account of the scandalous mischief they will do to the masses. If the information we have received upon this subject be correct, the authority which honours the theatre with its

guardian vigilance will not permit an innovation of this nature, for it knows that its first duty is only to authorise those plays concerning the representation of which a son or a daughter can be innocently satisfied when they ask of their parents, 'What does that mean?'"

I had expected this and was prepared to meet it. I had hardly read the above paragraph before I had armed myself with a substantial cane and had reappeared at the offices.

"De la Ponce," I said, in scriptural phrase, "take up your cloak and your hat."

I set off in search of the critic with all the more satisfaction in that I knew there were days when he was no coward: if a duel would serve his purpose he would fight one. I sent in my name.

He had been expecting me, he said, when he heard my name; but he probably did not expect me to come to him in the frame of mind in which I presented myself before him.

Was I going to be lucky or unlucky? I could not tell, but the *folliculaire* was not in one of his brave moods: he beat about the bush, spoke of his influence with the Government, tried to show us his last New Year's presents and ended up, in short, by offering to use his influence on my behalf with M. de Martignac, *who was a friend of his and owed him some money.*

I quote this sentence especially, as an example of the man's impudence.

I told him I had not come to solicit his influence but to request him to withdraw as quickly as possible and in the fullest manner his article in that day's papers. Next day, his paper contained the following apology:--

"We are exceedingly sorry to find our brief article on *Henri III.*, recently accepted by the Comédie-Français, in yesterday's issue contained imputations which were far from our intention. We had not received the

accurate information on the subject which is now in our possession, and we can satisfy our readers concerning the taste, the delicacy and the tact with which the scenes and personages to which we referred are handled. This method of treating romance is too closely akin to classic traditions to admit of objection on our part."

My readers may, perhaps, be surprised that I should have had one moment's uneasiness in connection with such a man, but--I must repeat it to be believed--despicable and despised though this man was, he had his influence. Instead of his expressions of opinion being torn up before his eyes by those to whom they referred, they received due attention in the eyes of critics, and I knew intimately one director of the Beaux-Arts who paid him, for many years, a pension of a thousand francs. For the rest, whether this apology influenced the Commission of Examiners or not, the day after the appearance of the apology the piece was returned less cut about and lacerated and mauled than it would have been to-day! True, M. de Martignac, who had heard much about the play, desired to be its censor, and M. de Martignac, as everyone knew, was so clever a man that, while he was in the Government, even Charles X. showed signs of cleverness.

I was at the theatre, full of delight at this unexpected escape of my play, which was now to be produced the following Saturday, when one of M. Deviolaine's servants came hurriedly to me, looking very scared, to tell me that my mother had fallen ill as she was going down the stairs after visiting M. Deviolaine, and that they could not bring her back to consciousness. M. Deviolaine lived on the fourth floor of the house of one Chaulin, a stationer, at the corner of the rue Saint-Honoré and the rue de Richelieu. I rushed away from the theatre, sending the property-lad to tell M. Florence, the doctor belonging to the theatre, that my mother needed his assistance. In a few seconds I was with my mother: she was seated in a large arm-chair; her eyes were open and she had regained consciousness, but she could hardly speak. The whole of one side of her

body was quite paralysed. She had been to call on Madame Deviolaine; as usual, I had been the subject of conversation; as usual, they had been telling her I was a wilful blockhead, unworthy the clemency the House of Orléans had shown me; that my play would be a failure and would not even produce enough to pay back M. Laffitte his thousand crowns, and that then I should find myself out of a berth and with no future before me. My poor mother had wept copiously, going away in great distress of mind, and as she was about to step downstairs she was seized with faintness, absolutely lost all power and fell down in a heap, her legs on the stairs and her body on the landing. A lodger found her in this position as he came upstairs; he rang M. Deviolaine's door-bell, and they carried her in and put her in a chair. My poor mother had somewhat regained consciousness by the time I reached her. I felt her pulse, and held up her arm, which fell inert; I pinched her to find the extent of her insensibility, and I came to the conclusion that she had just had a stroke of apoplexy, serious enough at any rate to cause paralysis of her left side. I sent for some mustard and put her feet in hot water till the doctor came. Then, as he was a long while in coming, I sent, to an instrument maker, who lived nearly opposite, for a lancet, and decided to bleed her myself in the foot if Florence did not come. But he came, and performed this operation himself; a slight improvement at once manifested itself, and, her tongue feeling freer, she was able to pronounce a few words. Meanwhile my sister had hastened there; fortunately, she was in Paris, having come up to see the first performance of my play. Fortunately, too, there was an empty room in the house--on the third floor, I think--and we took it for a quarter. Madame Deviolaine sent a bed down to it for my mother; we carried mattresses for ourselves from the rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis; we put the mattresses on the floor of my mother's room; and both my sister and I were determined not to leave her alone for a single moment.

Unluckily, Thibaut was away from Paris. Madame de Celles, daughter of General Gérard, was suffering from consumption and had required a

doctor to accompany her to Italy. Madame de Leuven had recommended Thibaut, and he had gone with her. As we only knew Florence slightly, he thoughtfully withdrew of his own accord after he had rendered first aid to our invalid. So I called in another of my friends, named Cazal. He was an extremely clever fellow who, when he found that, in spite of his medical skill, his practice did not increase, invented a new kind of umbrella and parasol, took out a patent for them and made a fortune. Cazal spent the whole night with us by my mother's side; and next day, as the improvement continued, he believed he might look for her recovery if she had no relapse.

How I rejoiced that the idea had come to me of applying to M. Laffitte! how I rejoiced that M. Laffitte had lent me the thousand crowns! We could at least be certain of one thing, that, no matter how things turned out, our mother would want for nothing during her illness. Furthermore, on learning this news, one of my friends, son of a celebrated diamond merchant, Edmond Halphen, not knowing I was as rich as Ali Baba, sent me a small purse containing twenty louis. I returned him the louis, but I kept the purse, in remembrance of that delicate kindness which so few have shown to me, and I recall the act with gratitude, for it touched me deeply. I have, however, sometimes met with the same spontaneous generosity elsewhere, but among my *women* friends, not among my *men* friends.

Deeply troubled as I was,--God alone knew how deeply this blow had struck me!--I was obliged to leave my mother, for a few hours; my drama was so novel, even to those who were rehearsing it, that, unless I was present, their confidence took flight. I returned and found everyone greatly concerned by the misfortune that had overtaken me in such an unexpected manner. Taylor was present to prompt in my place in case I was unable to turn up. The play was ready or all but ready, and there was no doubt it would be performed the following Saturday. When I returned home, I found the whole of the Villenave family awaiting me, from

Théodore to Élisa. They had missed me the night before, I who never missed going to their house a day, and, when the letter arrived that told my kind friends what had happened, they came off to see me at once. No one can have any idea of the strain of the next two or three days--the profound grief at watching my mother's dying condition, and the terrible labour of preparing a first drama for its public ordeal.

The night before the representation, I took a step that I had decided upon for some time previously. I presented myself at the Palais-Royal and asked to see M. le Duc d'Orléans. The request was so unusual and so audacious that, no doubt, the attendants expected I had an audience. They informed the Duc d'Orléans of my presence and of my request to speak to him. The Duc d'Orléans repeated my name over to himself twice and gave orders to admit me. "Ah! ah! is it you, M. Dumas?" he said. "What good wind blows you hither or, rather, blows you back again?"

"Monseigneur," I said to him, "to-morrow they play *Henri III.*"

"Yes," he said, "I know that."

"Well, monseigneur, I have come to ask a favour of you, or rather an act of justice."

"What is it?"

"To give me your presence at my first representation.... A year ago, your Highness was informed that I was an empty-headed, vain fool; for a year I have been working as a humble poet; without giving me a hearing, monseigneur, you have sided with those of your retinue who have been my accusers--perhaps your Highness should have waited, but your Highness thought otherwise and did not wait. To-morrow things will be put to public trial; all I come to beg of you, monseigneur, is that you will be present at the sentence."

The duke looked at me for a moment, and, seeing how calmly I met his scrutiny, he replied--

"I would have granted your request with great pleasure, M. Dumas, for various people have told me that if you were not a model of industry you were an example of perseverance; but, unfortunately, it is impossible."

"Your Highness probably means that a man who aspires to talk with people in high places should know better than to interrogate a prince; but, monseigneur, I have come to you in such exceptional circumstances that I will venture to ask whence arises that impossibility, for I must confess it disappoints me greatly."

"You shall judge for yourself: to-morrow I expect twenty to thirty princes and princesses to dinner."

"Would it not be a novel entertainment, monseigneur, to take these princes and princesses to see *Henri III.?*"

"How could I take them to see it when dinner begins at six and *Henri III.* begins at seven?"

"Let monseigneur advance his dinner one hour and I will delay *Henri III.* for an hour; that would allow monseigneur three hours wherein to assuage the hunger of his august guests."

"Well, that is not a bad idea.... Do you think the Théâtre-Français would consent to the delay?"

"They would be only too delighted to accommodate your Highness."

"But where should I seat them? I only have three boxes."

"I asked the Administration not to dispose of the first circle until I had seen your Highness."

"You presumed, then, to think that I should consent to see your play?"

"I relied upon your sense of justice.... You see, monseigneur, I appeal to Philippe awakened."

"Very well. Go and tell M. Taylor that, if the Comédie-Français consents to put back the representation an hour, I will be present at it, and in order to carry this out I will engage the whole circle."

"I will hasten there immediately, monseigneur."

"Are you satisfied?"

"Enchanted! I trust also that your Highness will not have reason to repent of this kindness."

"I hope so too.... Away with you, and good luck!"

I bowed and left.

Ten minutes later, the theatre had been told; twenty minutes later, the Duc d'Orléans had received an answer in the affirmative. That very evening letters were sent to the guests informing them of the change of hour.

The long-expected day came at last! On that day there was neither rehearsal nor any other meeting: I could remain by my mother's side until the evening. They had given me a certain number of theatre tickets, especially tickets for the pit; the *claque*, *i.e.* hired applause, was not a recognised thing in those days as it is now, and the post of *entrepreneur de succès* was almost a sinecure: it was left to the care of one's friends and to the impartiality of the public. The generosity of the theatre allowed me to sign a pit ticket for each of my old office companions. Porcher and his wife had each a balcony ticket. I had a little box on the stage itself which held two persons. My sister had one of the boxes in the first row, where she entertained Boulanger, de Vigny and Victor Hugo. I did not know either Hugo or de Vigny, and they introduced themselves to me in despair of getting a chance otherwise. I made the acquaintance of

both of them that night. M. Deviolaine had an orchestra ticket. The whole of the remaining seats in the house had been taken for a week past, and the exorbitant price of twenty louis was given for one box.

At a quarter to eight I kissed my mother, who, in the clouded state of her brain, scarcely realised what a battle I was on the eve of fighting. I met M. Deviolaine in the corridor.

"Well, you young rip!..." he said, "so you have got your way at last!"

"What did I tell you?"

"Yes, but we have yet to see what the public thinks of your prose."

"You will see, since you are here."

"I shall see, I shall see," growled M. Deviolaine. "It is highly probable that I shall see...."

I moved away from him, not knowing what he meant by his words, and I reached my box, which, as I have said, was on the stage. I could see the whole house from my box perfectly. Those who were present at that performance will recollect what a splendid sight it was: the first circle was filled with princes smothered under the orders of five or six nations; the whole of the aristocracy crowded into the first and second rows of the boxes; ladies sparkled with diamonds.

The curtain rose. I have never experienced such a sensation as that which a breath of air from the theatre caused me as it passed across my feverish brow. The first act was listened to with patience, although the narrative was long, cold and tiresome. The curtain fell. The words of the Duc de Guise, "Saint Paul! if I can only hunt out the men who assassinated Dugast!" were heartily applauded, and this warmed up both audience and actors.

I ran off to see how my mother was. On my return to the theatre I met M. Deviolaine in the corridor; but, as soon as I appeared, he quickly retired into a small antechamber, on purpose, as I imagined, to avoid me. I did the poor dear man injustice! he had quite other intentions in his thoughts.

The second act began; it was an amusing one; the scene of the pea-shooter concerning which I was much afraid, passed without any signs of objection, and the curtain fell amidst pretty general applause.

The third act was the one to decide the success of the play. In this act comes the scene between the page and the duchess, and the scene between the duchess and the duke--the scene where M. de Guise compels his wife to appoint a meeting with Saint-Mégrin. If the strong situations in that scene found favour with the public, the battle was won. The scene roused cries of horror, but, at the same time, peals of applause; it was the first time any dramatic scenes had been presented with great freedom--I might even call it with brutal frankness.

I went out; I was very anxious to see my poor mother and to embrace her, although she was then hardly in a condition to understand who it was that was embracing her.

How happy I should have been if she had been in the theatre, instead of on her bed! She was sleeping quite peacefully; I kissed her without waking her, and returned to the theatre. Under the porch I again met M. Deviolaine, who was going away.

"What!" I said, "are you not going to stay to the end?"

"How can I stay to the end, you brute?"

"Why can you not stay?..."

"Because I am thoroughly upset! Because I am turned inside out.. an attack of colic."

"Ah!" I exclaimed, laughing; "so that was why I saw you going to the lavatory?"

"Yes, that was the reason, monsieur.... You have already cost me fifty sous! at two sous each time it is ... Why, you will ruin me!"

"Bah! you exaggerate. Whatever could you do at the twenty-fifth time?"

"Nothing, you young puppy! And the last time, if I had not been stopped by the hair of my head, I should have disappeared entirely! Ah! what a business!... Oh dear! I am horribly ill!" and M. Deviolaine laid both hands on his stomach and began running towards the Rue Saint-Honoré.

I went into the theatre; as I had indeed foreseen, from the fourth act to the end it was more than a success, it was an increasing delirium: all hands applauded, even those of the ladies. Madame Malibran, who had only been able to find a seat on the third row, leant right out of her box, holding on to a pillar to keep herself from falling. Then, when Firmin appeared to give the name of the author, the enthusiasm was so universal that even the Duc d'Orléans himself stood up and called out the name of his employé, the success of whose work--if not the most merited, at least the most striking of the epoch--had just caused him to be greeted as a poet.

That very night, when I returned home, I found a letter from M. le Baron de Broval, which I will give word for word:--

"I cannot sleep without first telling you, my dear young friend, how very happy I am at your splendid triumph, without congratulating you and, above all, your estimable mother most heartily, for I know you felt more anxious on her behalf than on your own. My sister and I and all at the office sympathised deeply with you; and now we rejoice at a triumph justly deserved both on account of your very great and persevering talent and your filial devotion. I am very sure that your laurels, and the success in wait for you in the future now laid open before you, will not stand in

the way of your friendships, and I assure you that my feelings towards you are very warm. BARON DE BROVAL"

"10 *February* 1829"

This was the man who, five months before, had compelled me to renounce my salary!

BOOK II — CHAPTER XVII

CHAPTER XVII

The day following my victory--*Henri III.* is interdicted--I obtain an audience with M. de Martignac--He removes the interdiction--*Les hommes-obstacles*--The Duc d'Orléans sends for me into his box--His talk with Charles X. on the subject of my drama--Another scribbler--Visit to Carrel--Gosset's shooting-box and pistols No. 5--An impossible duel

To few men has it been given to see such a rapid change take place in their lives as took place in mine during those four hours of the representation of *Henri III.* I was totally unknown until that night, and, next day, whether for good or for evil, I was the talk of all Paris. From that night dated the hatreds of people whom I had never seen--hatreds roused by the unwelcome fame attached to my name. But friendships also dated from that epoch. What multitudes of people envied me that night, who had no idea that I spent it on a mattress on the floor by the side of my dying mother! Next day, the room was filled with bouquets; I covered my mother's bed with them, and she touched them with the hand that was left unparalysed, pulling them nearer to her or pushing them away, unconscious what all these flowers meant--and, possibly, even unconscious that they were flowers at all. By two o'clock in the afternoon, the day after the performance, my manuscript had sold for six thousand francs. These six thousand francs were paid me in six bank-notes; and I went to show them to M. Deviolaine.

"What are those?" he asked.

"They are the price of my manuscript," I replied. "You see it amounts to M. Laffitte's three thousand francs and three thousand francs besides."

"What!" cried M. Deviolaine; "are there idiots who have bought it of you?"

"You see for yourself."

"Well, they are brainless idiots!"

Then, handing me back the notes, and shrugging his shoulders, he said--

"You do not inquire how I am!"

"I did not dare.... How are you?"

"A little better, happily."

"Were you able to return to the theatre?"

"Yes, I was there for the conclusion."

"Were you there when my name was given out?"

"The deuce I was!"

"And did it not give you a little gratification?"

"A little! Why, you rascal, I wept like a baby!"

"Come now! it cost you a lot to acknowledge that.... Let us shake hands."

"Ah!" said M. Deviolaine, "if only your poor father could have been there!"

"My mother could have been there if people had not made her so unhappy."

"Come, come! you are not going to tell me that it is my fault your mother is in bed, are you? Good gracious me! it tormented me sufficiently during your representation. I could not think of anything else; I believe it was that which gave me the beastly colic.... By the bye, what are they saying in the office?"

I showed him M. de Broval's letter. He read it through twice over.

"Well, I never!..." he said, as he handed it me back, shrugging his shoulders. "Shall you return to the office?"

"I? Dear me no!"

"Well, I think you are right. Shall you go and see M. Fossier?".

"No, indeed."

"He likes you, nevertheless."

"Then why did he not write me a letter of congratulation, too?"

"Well, but he might have expected tickets for his daughter."

"That reminds me. Shall I save you a box for the second performance? You hadn't a good place for the first ... you were close to the door."

"You scoundrel! I was right where I was, near the door.... Do you believe this mad prank you have just played is going to bring you in any more than what you have just shown me?"

"Certainly I do."

"About how much?"

"Fifteen thousand francs."

"What!"

"About fifteen thousand francs."

"And how long will it run to gain that?"

"Perhaps two months."

"So in two months, you will have earned the whole year's salary of three chief clerks, including bonuses?"

"Call in your three chief clerks and tell them to do as much for themselves."

"Get out! I am afraid the very ceiling will fall on our heads while you are saying such monstrous things!"

"To-morrow night, then?"

"Yes, to-morrow night, if I have nothing better to do."

I was quite easy. M. Deviolaine would not have anything better to do, nor would he have accepted a year of his salary to be kept away.

From M. Deviolaine's house I ran to M. Laffitte's. I was proud to be able to pay him what I owed him so promptly. I gave him his thousand crowns, and he returned me my promissory note and my manuscript. But I always remembered the service rendered me, which, coming when my mother was taken ill, was of priceless value. Still, I had not reached the conclusion of my worries. When I returned to my temporary dwelling-place, I found a letter from the Théâtre-Français asking me to go to the office there immediately. I rushed there, and found the Committee in a state of consternation from Taylor downwards. They had received a letter from the Home Minister suspending *Henri III.* This was a far more serious matter than the suspension of my salary. Luckily, Taylor had made up his mind what should be done. He proposed I should urgently demand an audience of M. de Martignac. He himself undertook to take the letter and see that it was conveyed to him. I sat down and wrote at once, asking for an audience for the next day. I received an answer two hours later. M. de Martignac would see me at seven next morning. By seven next morning I was at his house. Oh! what a blessing it is to find a Minister who is both polished and cultivated, like M. de Martignac! *rara avis*, as Juvenal would call it, and, worse still, a bird of passage! We remained together for an hour, not talking of the play, but of all sorts of subjects; in ten minutes, we came to an understanding over the

play, and I carried my manuscript back, saved, this time not from Annihilation, but from Limbo. Oh! poor M. de Martignac! how well he understood Art! How thoroughly well he knew that type of human being who obstructs all progress he meets with on the way, with a view rather of hindering others from advancing than of advancing himself! It was not under M. de Martignac's administration that Art, wherever it turned, encountered the notice, "This road is closed by order of the authorities." And to think that for twenty years the same men blocked the same avenues; that, from being old men, they grew into being decrepit ones, whilst we young men grew old; that, by dint of ill-will and persecution, they managed to drive both Lamartine and Hugo into politics, Soulié and Balzac into their graves; that I stood almost alone, in my struggle against them; that they set their mark on things, like the seal of Solomon which enclosed the genii of the *Thousand and One Nights* in clay vases; and that all this political and literary compression will one day burst in their faces, killing and overturning all around it without injuring itself--wrinkled dwarfs who everlastingly stir up the glowing fires of revolutions! Some things, at least, are very clear; that, for twenty years, these rulers were petty, paltry, contemptible; that they left behind them a sad and shameful memory amongst the Germans, Hungarians, Italians, along the banks of the Nile as well as on the shores of the Bosphorus, at Mogador even as at Montevideo, in the old World as well as the New; that, during the whole of the time which transpired between the day on which M. Sébastiani made his announcement at the Tribune that "Order reigned at Warsaw," and that on which M. Barrot wrote in the *Moniteur* that "The French have entered Rome," they gave the lie not only with respect to every promise made by man--whether these promises came through M. de la Fayette or M. de Lamartine--but still, more, with respect to everything hoped of God, who destined France to be the Pole Star to other nations, who said to the peoples, "You wish to sail towards the unknown world, towards the Promised Land called Liberty; there is your compass. Spread your sails and follow boldly!" Instead of keeping faith

with men and fulfilling God's will, what did you do, you poor slaves of passion, and miserable servants of blindness? You made the sea rough and the winds contrary for every noble vessel that set sail under divine inspiration. You know it is so, I am not telling you anything fresh; you know that whatever is young and noble and pure, that has not been dragged through the mud of the past, and reaches forth to ethereal regions in the future, is against you; you know that those whom you allowed to be murdered by Austrian rods, those whom you left shut up in pontifical dungeons, those whom you suffered to be shot down by Neapolitan cannon, were martyrs. You are aware that, whilst people hail you, you tyrants, as you go to your places of entertainment, we shall have their devotion; you are aware, in short, that we, the torchbearers, are loved, whilst you, the workers of darkness, are detested; you know that should you ever be forgiven your deeds, it will be because of what we have said on your behalf; and hence come your persecutions--powerless, thank God, like all things that come from below and seek to harm what is above.... Yes, what is above, for he who can say "I have just written this page, and you could not write it," is above you!

Let us return to *Henri III.*, which had nothing to do with all this, and which suddenly and unexpectedly found itself raised sky-high. My return was awaited with impatience, for they dared not advertise without the minister's permission. I brought them that permission, and they advertised. M. le Duc d'Orléans announced that he would be present at the second performance. When I reached the theatre that night, I was told that he had already arrived and had asked me to go to his box. I did as I was bidden, between the first and second acts. The densely packed theatre bore witness to the genuine strength of my success. The Duc d'Orléans received me most graciously.

"Now, M. Dumas," he said, "are you not satisfied? You have gained your case against everybody--the public and myself included. Even Broval, Deviolaine and Oudard are enchanted."

I bowed.

"But for all that, do you know," he continued laughingly, "you have very nearly got me into serious trouble?"

"You, monseigneur?"

"Yes, I."

"How is that?"

"The king sent for me yesterday."

"The king?"

"Yes, indeed."

"And what about, monseigneur?"

"About your drama."

"About *Henri III.?*"

"'Are you aware of what I have been informed, *cousin*?' he said, laying emphasis upon the last word. 'I have been told that you have a youth in your offices who has written a play in which both you and I figure--I as Henri III., and you as the Duc de Guise?'"

"Monseigneur, you could of course have replied that the king was mistaken and that the young man was no longer in your employ."

"No; I much preferred to reply otherwise, and not to lie, since I mean to keep you on."

"Then what did your Highness say?..."

"I said, 'Sire, people have misinformed you, and for three reasons:--First, I do not beat my wife; secondly, Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans has not made me a cuckold; thirdly, your Majesty has not a more faithful subject

than myself.' Do you think my reply was equal to anything you would have advised me to make?"

"Indeed, monseigneur, it is infinitely more witty."

"And nearer the truth, monsieur.... Ah! the curtain is rising: go about your business; mine is to listen to you."

I bowed.

"By the bye," said the duke, "Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans desires to see you to-morrow morning, to inquire how your mother is."

I bowed and withdrew.

Oh! what a power is success, with its notoriety and fuss over a name; with its calm and serene supremacy of mind over matter! M. de Broval, M. Deviolaine and M. Oudard were enchanted; the Duc d'Orléans had called me to his box to repeat a witty *mot* he had said to the king; and, finally, Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans would see me on the morrow to ask me news of my mother! Birth, it would seem, only bestows principalities; talent gives the dignity of princehood.

Next day, I paid my visit to the Duchesse d'Orléans, who was as gracious to me as could be; but, alas! why did all this kindness come so late? When I returned, I found in an envelope a newspaper, the name of which I have forgotten;--some friend who was sensitive concerning my reputation had sent it me. It announced the success of *Henri III.,* and added--

"That success, great though it be, is not surprising to those who know how these literary and political jobs are put up by the House of Orléans. The author is an underling in His Royal Highness's *pay.*"

The article was painful as well as untruthful; a lie, because the House of Orléans, as was well known, had not schemed to help me in any way; and

painful, because the writer by the use of the word "pay" *(gages)* had evidently intended to imply that I was only a common servant. I looked at my poor sick mother, who, unaware of what I was reading, was trying to express the first desires of returning consciousness by smiles of tender affection; and at such a moment as this I was compelled, by an individual whom I had never set eyes upon, whose very existence was unknown to me and who had no reason for hating me, to leave her in order to demand an apology for a gross and gratuitous insult! I went to de la Ponce. I begged him to go to the office of the paper and arrange there and then, with the writer of the article, the conditions of a duel for the following morning. Such a long time has elapsed since then and I have so short a memory for injuries, that I have completely forgotten both the name of the paper and the name of the writer with whom I had the quarrel. I regret the latter, for he bore himself so well in the whole affair that I am still of opinion he took upon himself the responsibility for an article that was not his. As I cannot recollect his name, allow me to speak of him as M. X---. De la Ponce returned in about an hour's time. The duel had been accepted for the next day but one, as M. X---, who acknowledged himself the author of the article, had a duel on the day between with Carrel. I went to call on Carrel, whom I had known for a long time, having met him at M. de Leuven's and also with Méry. Like myself, he, too, had been gratuitously insulted; like me, he had demanded satisfaction, and he was to meet my future adversary in a pistol duel at eight o'clock next morning. Carrel complimented me on my success, and promised to do his utmost so that M. X--- would not be able to fight with me the day after. It was a sad fact that scarcely had I begun my dramatic career before, in less than a week, I was compelled to demand satisfaction from two men, not on account of criticisms passed upon my talent, but for injury done to my personal character. A few words de la Ponce dropped led me to believe that pistols would be the weapons chosen, and Carrel confirmed me in this opinion; so, when I met Adolphe, I told him what had happened and begged him to come and practise shooting with me next

day. Although I could not afford to squander money, I still had sufficient to permit myself a turn once a month at Gosset's. I had become a habitué there. We reached the place about ten o'clock.

"Philippe!" I shouted to the lad attendant as I passed in, "pistols No. 5 and twenty-five balls."

Philippe came up.

"You can have twenty-five balls," he said, "but not pistols No. 5, unless you are going to practise alone."

"Why so?"

"Because they were lent this morning to a gentleman who had a duel, and you should see the state in which he brought them back."

And, indeed, the second No. 5 pistol had the trigger-guard broken and the butt end blown off.

"What did that?"

"Why! a bullet," said Philippe.

"Quite so, but what about the gentleman who held it?"

"He had two of his fingers cut."

"Cut?"

"Yes, cut!"

"So he had to pay the price of two of his fingers?"

"And also for the mending of the pistol."

"What was this gentleman's name?"

"I do not recollect his name; he was fighting with M. Carrel."

"Stuff and nonsense!"

"It's true."

"Are you certain?"

"Of course I am. M. Carrel's seconds brought back the pistols."

"See," I said to Adolphe, "this will postpone my duel of to-morrow and no mistake."

And then I related to him that my adversary had arranged to fight a duel with Carrel that very day, and that it was probably he who had had his two fingers injured.

"It is very easy to find out," said Adolphe; "let us go and inquire."

We went to M. X---'s house, and found that it was really he who had been fighting; he had had two fingers blown off--his third and little fingers. I sent up my visiting-card by his man-servant, and we took our departure. We had not gone more than two storeys downstairs when we heard the man running after us. M. X--- begged me to go in. I found him smiling in spite of his wounds, and very courteous in spite of his attack.

"Pray excuse me, monsieur," he said, "for the liberty I took in asking you to come back and see me; I use the privilege of a wounded person."

"Is your injury a serious one, monsieur?" I asked.

"No--I escaped with the loss of two fingers from my right hand; and since I still have three left with which to write and tell you how sorry I am for having made myself unpleasant towards you, I have all I need."

"You still have the use of your left to shake hands with me, monsieur," I said, "and that would be better than tiring your right over anything imaginable."

We shook hands; conversed on indifferent topics; and then, ten minutes later, we took leave of one another. We have never seen each other since, and, as I have said, I have totally forgotten his name. I bear my memory a grudge, for I shall ever remember him with pleasure.

Singular freak of chance! If this man had not had a quarrel with Carrel, and if Carrel had not deprived him of his two fingers, he would have fought with me, and he might have killed me or been killed by me. And for what reason, I ask you?

BOOK III

BOOK III — CHAPTER I

CHAPTER I

The Arsenal--Nodier's house--The master's profile--The congress of bibliophiles--The three candles--Debureau--Mademoiselle Mars and Merlin--Nodier's family--His friends--In which houses I am at my best--The salon of the Arsenal--Nodier as a teller of tales--The ball and the warming-pan

I promised I would return to Nodier, and I will keep my word. After the service Nodier rendered me by opening the doors of the Théâtre-Français to me, I went to thank him. Nodier did better for me on my second visit than he did on the first--he opened the doors of the Arsenal to me. And, lest my readers should be frightened at the word, and think that I mean a collection of arms, a museum of artillery, let me hasten to add that the doors of the Arsenal were the doors of Charles Nodier's house. Everybody knows the large, gloomy-looking building called the Arsenal, in a line with the quai des Célestins, at the back of the rue de Morland, looking over the river. This was where Nodier lived. In these unpretentious Memoirs it would take us too far afield to relate how, once upon a time, when Paris was preparing for war, this heavy building was raised upon a piece of ground called the Champ-au-Plâtre; how, when the heavy-looking building was raised, François I. had the cannon cast there which did much unlucky work at Pavia; how, requiring a plot of ground, he borrowed a farm from his good town of Paris, promising to return it; how, having borrowed this first farm, he borrowed a second from it, and a third; how, in short, on the principle of the axiom "What is good to take is good to keep," he kept the three borrowed farms--we will relate these matters when, at the end of our impressions of Europe, Asia and Africa, we set about putting down our impressions of rambles in Paris. These farms, together with the great building of which we have spoken, were

used to store cannon and powder. One day, in the reign of Henri II., a spark, coming from nobody knew where,--who knows whence terrible fires spring!--set fire to the powder-magazine and exploded it. Paris shook as Naples and Catana shake when Vesuvius or Etna are in a state of eruption; the fish perished in the river; at the unexpected concussion the neighbouring houses swayed and then collapsed one upon another. Melun, a dozen leagues off, shuddered at the noise of the explosion; thirty persons blown into the air by this volcano fell down in fragments, a hundred and fifty were wounded and, unacquainted with the cause of the accident, attributed it to the Protestants, against whom they were not slow to pick a grievance. It will be readily understood that the buildings erected by François I. and the three farms of the city of Paris disappeared in this commotion. Charles IX., who was a great hand at building, and was responsible for the sculpturing in the Louvre and the carving of the fountain of the Innocents, paid a visit to the ruins with his architect. He designed the plan of a new building, began the fresh erection and, as he was both a great artist and a great poet, it is probable that he would have made a good piece of work of it. But Queen Catherine of Medici, having already got rid of one son, was not sorry to be rid of Charles IX., after the fashion of François II., in order to hasten the coming of Henri III. In case this accusation against Catherine de Medici should strike our readers as rather too strong, who may prefer to look upon the death of Charles IX. as the judgment of God (an act which, indeed, might quite possibly go hand in hand with the poisoning of Charles IX. by his mother), we will here reproduce a dialogue recorded by Bassompierre; it is short, but instructive.

"Sire," Bassompierre said to King Louis XIII., who was seated in the embrasure of a window of the old Louvre, fiercely blowing a horn,--"sire, you ought not to blow with all your strength like that; you are weak in the lungs, and the same thing might happen to you as happened to King Charles IX."

"My dear Bassompierre," Louis XIII. replied, "King Charles IX. did not die from blowing his horn too long and too frequently; he died from being so imprudent as to become reconciled to his mother, after he had had the prudence to quarrel with Catherine of Medici."

Let us return to the Arsenal, and to another king who was so imprudent as to quarrel with his wife--or, rather, with the House of Austria to which she belonged--to Henri IV. He it was, in fact, who finished the Arsenal and laid out the beautiful garden, which we can still see in pictures of the period of Louis XIII. He gave it to Sully, wherein to carry on his ministry of finance; and here it was that the parsimonious minister amassed the millions with which Henri III. intended to carry on his war with Flanders, when the poignard of Ravaillac put an end to that strange dream of the seventeenth century, which was to become a reality in the nineteenth, namely, the union of the seven elective republics and of the six hereditary monarchies, under one supreme head, established under the title of the *Congrès de la Paix.*

Ah! my dear Mr. Cobden, you with whom I once spent several dull days and shared some melancholy dinners in Spain, the idea of this Peace Congress did not originate with you; it came from our unfortunate King Henri IV.,-"Let us render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's."

And so all you who visit the Arsenal should know that those beautiful rooms which now form the library were decorated by Sully with Henri IV.'s money.

In 1823, Charles Nodier was appointed librarian of this library, and left the rue de Choiseul, where he lived, to establish himself in his new habitation. But the building that was often the subject of illustrations was not a very magnificent place to live in! On the first landing of a flight of steps with massive balustrades, you came upon a badly fitting door on the left which led to a bricked corridor; the dining-room and the office were paved with bricks like the corridor. Three other rooms completed the

suite--three luxurious rooms, with parquetried floors and panelled walls: one was Madame Nodier's bedroom; the other the salon; and the third the workroom, library and bedchamber of Charles. Charles led two separate existences: his week's existence was that of a worker and bibliophile; his Sunday existence was that of a society man and host. Nodier was an adorable personality; I have never met nor ever known anyone so learned, so much of an artist and yet so kindly in disposition as he, save, perhaps, Méry. And though he possessed plenty of faults he hadn't a vice, and his winning faults sprang from the originality of the man of genius. Nodier was extravagant, careless, dilatory; but his was the delightful idleness of a Figaro. He might, perhaps, have been accused of being rather too worldly; but that, too, sprang from his carelessness, in not taking the trouble to examine into his feelings. It was rather the whole community of martyrs, so to speak, that Nodier loved after this fashion; he had an inner circle of privileged friends whom he loved with all his heart; others, he liked only intellectually. Nodier was *par excellence* a man of learning: he knew everything and a host of things besides; for he exercised the prerogative of men of genius: if he did not know a thing he invented his knowledge of it, and it must be confessed his invention was generally far more likely, far more ingenious and romantic and specious and, I will venture to say, far nearer the truth than the reality itself. It will be readily guessed that, with this gift of invention, Nodier was a veritable mine of paradoxes. But he never tried to force you to accept these paradoxes; he created three-fourths of his paradoxes for his own diversion.

One day, when I had been lunching with a minister, I was asked--

"How did the luncheon pass off?"

"All right," I replied; "but if I hadn't been there myself I should have been horribly bored!"

And so it was with Nodier; for fear of being bored, he made up paradoxes, just as I told stories.

I must return to what I said about Nodier being a little too much inclined to love everybody. My sentence sounds somewhat reproachful, but it must not be taken so. Nodier was the philanthropist of Terence, the man unto whom nothing is alien. Nodier loved, as fire warms, as a torch lightens, as the sun shines; he loved because to love and make friendships were as much the fruition of his nature as grapes are the fruit of the vine. Let me be permitted to coin a *mot* to describe the man who himself coined so many, he was a lover (*aimeur*). I have said he loved and made friendships because, for Nodier, women existed as well as men. As he loved all men of goodwill, so, in his youth (and Nodier was never old), did he love all lovable women. How he managed this he himself would have found it impossible to explain. But, in common with all eminently poetic minds, Nodier always confused the dream with the ideal, and the ideal with the material world; for Nodier, every fancy of his imagination really existed--Thérèse Aubert, la Fée aux miettes, Inès de las Sierras--he lived in the midst of all these creations of his genius, and never sultan had a more magnificent harem.

It is interesting to know how a writer who produced so many books, and such entertaining ones too, as he did, worked. I am going to tell you. We will take the Nodier of the week-days, romance-writer, savant and bibliophile, the writer of the *Dictionnaire des Onomatopées*, *Trilby*, the *Souvenirs de Jeunesse.* In the morning, after two or three hours of easy work, when he had covered a dozen or fourteen pages of paper six inches long by four wide, with a regular, legible handwriting, without a single erasure, he considered his morning task done, and went out. When he was out of doors, Nodier wandered about aimlessly, going up now one street of the boulevards, now another, now along this or that quay. No matter what road he took, three things preoccupied him: the stalls of the second-hand bookshops, booksellers' windows and book-binders' shops;

for Nodier was almost as fond of fine bindings as of rare books, and I believe he really classed Deneuil, Derome, Thouvenin and the three Elzevirs in the same rank in his mind. These adventurous walks of Nodier, which were protracted by discoveries of books or by meetings with his friends, usually began at noon and nearly always ended between three and four o'clock at Crozet's or at Techener's. In these houses, at about that hour, the book-lovers of Paris gathered together: the Marquis de Ganay, the Marquis de Châteaugiron, the Marquis de Chalabre; Bérard, the Elzevir collector, who, in his spare moments, made the Charter of 1830; finally, the bibliophile Jacob, king of bibliographical knowledge when Nodier was not present, viceroy when Nodier came on the scenes. Here they exchanged opinions and discussed *de omni rescibili et quibusdam aliis.* These causeries lasted till five o'clock. At five o'clock, Nodier went home by some other route than that which he had traversed in the morning; thus, if he had come by the quays he would return by the boulevards, and if he had gone along the boulevards, he would return by the quays. At six o'clock, Nodier dined with his family. After dinner, came a cup of coffee sipped like a true Sybarite, in little and big draughts, then the cloth was removed with everything on it, and three candles were placed on the bare table. Three tallow candles, not three wax ones. Nodier preferred tallow to wax--why, no one ever knew: it was one of Nodier's caprices. These three candles, never more, never fewer, were placed triangularly. Then Nodier brought out the work on which he was engaged and his quill pens--he detested steel pens--and he worked until nine or ten o'clock at night. At that hour, he went out a second time; but, this time, he invariably followed the course of the boulevards; and, according to what might be on, he would go to the Porte-Saint-Martin, to the Ambigu or to the Funambules. It will be remembered that it was at the Porte-Saint-Martin that I met him for the first time.

There were three actors whom Nodier adored--Talma, Potier and Debureau. When I made Nodier's acquaintance, Talma had been dead

three years; and Potier had retired two years before; so there only remained to him the irresistible attraction of Debureau. He it was who first extolled the famous Pierrot; in this respect, Janin came after Nodier and was merely his imitator. Nodier saw the *Bœuf enragé* nearly a hundred times. At the first representation of the piece he waited for the ox until the end, and not seeing it, he went out and spoke about it to the boxkeeper.

"Madame," he asked, "will you please inform me why this pantomime that I have just seen is called the *Bœuf enragé?*"

"Monsieur," replied the boxkeeper, "because that is its title."

"Ah!" exclaimed Nodier; and he withdrew satisfied with the explanation.

The six days of the week were spent in exactly the same way: then came Sunday. Every Sunday Nodier went out at nine o'clock in the morning to breakfast with Guilbert de Pixérécourt, for whom at that time he had a profound admiration and the friendliest feelings. He called him the Corneille of the boulevards. Here he met the scientific gatherings of Crozet or of Techener.

We have mentioned that one of these bibliomaniacs was called the Marquis de Chalabre. He died leaving a very valuable library, which he bequeathed to Mademoiselle Mars. Mademoiselle Mars read very little or, to be truthful, she did not read at all. She commissioned Merlin to classify the books left her and to arrange for their sale. Merlin was the most honest man on the face of the earth; and he set about this commission with his usual conscientiousness, and he turned and re-turned the leaves of each volume so carefully that one day he went to Mademoiselle Mars with thirty or forty one-thousand franc notes in his hand, which he laid on a table.

"What is that, Merlin?" asked Mademoiselle Mars.

"I do not know, madame," he replied.

"What do you mean? Why, those are bank-notes!"

"Certainly."

"Where have you found them?"

"In a pocket-book, within the cover of a very rare Bible; and, as the Bible belongs to you, these bank-notes are yours too."

Mademoiselle Mars took the bank-notes, which were of course hers, and she had the greatest difficulty in making Merlin accept a present of the Bible in which he had, as I understand, discovered the bank-notes.

Nodier would return home between three and four o'clock, and, like M. Villenave, would allow his daughter Marie to dress and titivate him. For we have omitted to mention that Nodier's family was composed of his wife, his daughter, his sister Madame de Tercy and his niece. At six o'clock, Nodier's table would be laid. Three or four spare covers would be provided in excess of the number of the family party, and these were for regular habitués. Three or four more covers were put for chance comers. The habitués were Cailleux, the director of the Musée; Baron Taylor, who was soon to leave his place vacant because of his journey to Egypt; Francis Wey, whom Nodier loved as though he were his own child, whose old French aristocratic accent was but little less noticeable than Nodier's own, and Dauzats'. The casual diners were Bixio, the huge Saint-Valery and myself. Saint-Valery was a librarian, like Nodier. He was six feet one inch in height and an extremely well informed man but possessed of no originality or any wit: it was of him that Méry wrote this line--

"Il se baisse, et ramasse un oiseau dans les airs!"

When he was at the library, it was a very rare thing for him to need a ladder to reach down a book, so tall was he. He would stretch up one of

his long arms, standing on tiptoe, and find the book that was required, even if it were close to the ceiling. He was susceptible in the extreme, and could not bear any joking references to his tall figure no matter how harmless they were; he was angry with me for a long while because once, when he was complaining to Madame Nodier of a violent cold in his head, I asked him if he had had cold feet a year ago.

When you were admitted into that charming and desirable inner circle of the Nodier family, you could dine with them as often as you liked. If one, two or three covers were needed beyond the number already laid, they were added; if the table had to be enlarged, it was made longer. But unlucky was the man who happened to be the thirteenth! he was pitilessly placed at a little table to dine by himself, unless a fourteenth guest, still less expected than he, should turn up to relieve him of his penance. I was very soon among the number of the more intimate friends of whom I have just spoken, and my place at the table was settled once for all, between Madame Nodier and Marie Nodier. When I appeared at the door I was greeted with exclamations of joy; they all rushed at me, from Nodier downwards, who stretched out his two great arms to embrace me or shake me by the hand. At the end of a year, from being an accepted fact, my place became recognised as mine by right: it remained vacant for me until after the soup course; then they ventured to fill it, but if I happened to arrive, either ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, or half an hour late, even if I did not arrive until dessert, the interloper got up, or was made to do so, and my place given up to me. Nodier used to make out that I was as good as a fortune to him, because I saved him from doing the talking; but what may have been a pleasure, in this respect, to the idle master of the house, was a source of sorrow to his guests: to relieve the most fascinating talker imaginable from conversing was tantamount to a crime. Nevertheless, when I was charged with being viceroy of the conversation I was on my mettle to fill my position to the best of my abilities. There are certain houses wherein one is

spontaneously brilliant; others where one is dull no matter how one tries to be the reverse. There were three houses where I was at my best, three houses in which my spirits ever rose and scintillated with youthful exuberance; these houses were Nodier's, Madame Guyet-Desfontaines' and Zimmermann's. At all other places I could still be entertaining, but merely in the ordinary way of social intercourse. However, no matter whether Nodier himself was the talker (and when this was the case, grown-up people and small children all held their peace to listen); whether his silence left the conversation to Dauzats, to Bixio or to me, the time flew by unheeded until the close of dinner was reached--a dinner that might have been envied by the most powerful prince of the earth, provided his tastes were intellectually inclined. Dinner over, coffee was handed round, while we were still at table. Nodier was far too much of a Sybarite to rise from the table to take his Mocha standing uncomfortably in a half-warmed salon, when he could take it lolling back in his chair, in a warm dining-room, well scented with the aroma of fruits and liqueurs. During this last act, or rather this epilogue to the dinner, Madame Nodier and Marie rose to go and light up the salon, and I, who took neither coffee nor liqueurs, accompanied them, to help in their task, my tall figure being very useful to them in lighting the lustres and candelabras without the necessity of standing on chairs. I need hardly say that if M. Saint-Valery, who was a foot taller than I, were there, the charge of lighting up fell to him by right.

When, thanks to us, the salon was lit up,--a ceremony that only took place on Sundays, for on week-days the receptions were held in Madame Nodier's room--the light illuminated white panelled walls with Louis XV. mouldings, and furniture of extreme simplicity, comprising a dozen chairs or easy-chairs and a sofa covered with red cashmere, the hangings being of the same colour; a bust of Hugo, a statue of Henri IV. as a child, a portrait of Nodier and a landscape of a view in the Alps, by Régnier. On the left, as you entered, was Marie's piano, in a recess almost like a room

in itself. This recess was large enough, like the spaces between bedsteads in the time of Louis XIV., for the friends of the household to stand round and talk with Marie as she played quadrilles and valses with her clever, agile fingers. But quadrilles and valses did not begin before the given moment: two hours, from eight to ten, were invariably devoted to conversation; then we danced from ten to one in the morning. Five minutes after Madame Nodier, Marie and I had lighted up the salon, Taylor and Cailleux were the first to come in--they were far more at home in the house than was Nodier himself; then came Nodier with his arm through that of Dauzats or Francis Wey or Bixio; for although Nodier was only thirty-eight or forty at that time, he was like a tall climbing plant that covers walls with leaves and flowers, but already needs something to lean on. Behind Nodier entered the rest of the guests, with his little daughter dancing and skipping. Ten minutes later, the usual callers began to drop in--Fontanay and Alfred Johannot, with their two impassive faces, always melancholy in the midst of our laughter and gaiety, as though they were under some vague presentiment of death; Tony Johannot, who never came without a fresh drawing or an engraving to enrich Marie's album or collection; Barye, who looked lonely in the midst of the tumult, for it always seemed as though his mind were far away from his body in quest of something wonderful; Louis Boulanger, with his variable moods, to-day sad, to-morrow gay, ever the same great artist, great poet and faithful friend; Francisque Michel, a seeker of old manuscripts, often so preoccupied with his researches of the day that he would forget he had come in an ancient hat of the period of Louis XIII. and yellow slippers; de Vigny, who, in ignorance of his future transfiguration, still deigned to mix with mortals; de Musset, almost a boy, dreaming over his *Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie*; and, bringing up the rear, Hugo and Lamartine, the two kings of poetry, the peaceful Eteocles and Polynices of Art, one bearing the sceptre of the ode and the other the crown of elegy.

Alas! and alas! what has become of all those who gathered there? Fontanay and Alfred Johannot are dead; de Vigny has made himself invisible; Taylor is given over to his travels; Lamartine, with his provisional government, has let France slip through his fingers; Hugo is a deputy and strives to hold the country together, a task that proved too difficult for his colleague's hands; and the rest of us are all scattered, each following his own laborious career, hampered with spiteful enemies, harassing laws and petty ministerial hatreds; we struggle on, blindfold and weary, towards that new world which Providence is preserving for our sons and our grandsons, which we shall not see, but towards which at least our tombs, like milestones, will point the way.

Let us go back to our salon, into which those of whom I have just been speaking were now entering, hailed with effusive greetings of delight. If Nodier, when he left the dinner-table, went and stretched himself out in his arm-chair by the fireside, it was because he liked, after the fashion of the egoistic Sybarite he was, to enjoy at his ease some chance play of his imagination, during that blissful moment which follows in the wake of coffee; if, on the other hand, making an effort to remain standing, he leant against the chimneypiece, his calves to the fire and his back to the mirror, it meant he was going to tell some of his stories. We were then all on the *qui vive* to smile at the anecdotes which were to drop from those finely modelled, satirical and witty lips; everybody kept silence; and he would pour forth one of the delightful stories of his youth, which sounded like a romance of Longus, or an idyll of Theocritus. He seemed like Walter Scott and Perrault; the savant grappling with the poet, memory battling with imagination. Nodier was not merely amusing to listen to, but in addition he was delightful to watch. His tall, lean body, his long thin arms, his white tapering hands, his long face, full of a serene melancholy, all harmonised and fitted in with his rather languid voice, and with the afore-mentioned aristocratic accent; and, whether Nodier were reciting a love-story, or describing a fight on the plains of la

Vendée, or some drama that happened in the place de la Révolution, a conspiracy of Cadoudal or of Oudet, his hearers would hold their breath to listen, so wonderfully did the story-teller know how to get at the heart of everything he described. Those who came in in the middle bowed silently and sat down in an arm-chair or leant against the wainscotting; the recital always came to an end too soon; why he ever concluded was a mystery, for we knew that Nodier could draw eternally on that purse of Fortunatus which we call imagination. We did not applaud,--do we applaud the murmur of a stream, the song of a bird, the perfume of a flower?--but when the murmur ceased, the song died away, the perfume evaporated, we listened, we waited, we longed for more! Then Nodier would slide back quietly from his position at the fireplace into his big arm-chair; would smile and turn to Lamartine or Hugo with--

"Enough of such prose as that--now let us have poetry, poetry!"

And, without a second bidding, one of the two poets would, from where he was, with hands leant on the back of an armchair, or shoulders propped up against the panelled walls, give birth to the harmonious and eager flow of his poetic fancy; then every head would turn in the fresh direction, every intellect would follow the flight of a thought which soared above them on eagle's wings to play now in the mist of clouds among the lightnings of the tempest, now in the rays of the sun.

On these occasions applause followed; then, when the applause had ceased, Marie would go to her piano and a brilliant rush of notes would burst upon the air. This was the signal for a quadrille; arm-chairs and chairs were put away, card-players took refuge in corners, and those who, instead of dancing, preferred to talk with Marie, would slip into her alcove. Nodier was one of the earliest at the card-tables; for a long time he would only play at *bataille*, at which he claimed to be very expert; but, finally, he was induced to make a concession to the taste of the century and played *écarté*. When the ball had begun, Nodier, who was usually

very unlucky, would call for cards. From the moment he began, Nodier effaced himself, disappeared and was utterly forgotten; he was one of those old-fashioned hosts who obliterated themselves in order to give precedence to their guests, who, when made welcome, become masters of the house themselves. Moreover, after Nodier had disappeared for a time, he would disappear entirely. He went to bed in good time, or, to speak more correctly, he was put to bed early. To Madame Nodier belonged the care of putting this great child to bed; she would therefore leave the salon first in order to get his bed ready. If it were winter, and very cold, and the kitchen fire had perchance gone out, a warming-pan would be seen to thread its way amidst the dancers to the salon fireplace, its wide jaws would open to receive the glowing coals, and then it would be taken away to Nodier's bedroom. Nodier followed the warming-pan, and we saw him no more that night.

Such was Nodier; such was the life of that excellent man.

Once we came upon him in a mood of humiliation and shame and embarrassment. The author of the *Rot de Bohème et ses Sept Châteaux* had just been nominated an Academician. He made very humble apologies to Hugo and to me, and we forgave him.

After having been rejected five times, Hugo was nominated in his turn. He offered me no excuses, which was as well; since I should certainly not have forgiven him!

BOOK III — CHAPTER II

CHAPTER II

Oudard transmits to me the desires of the Duc d'Orléans--I am appointed assistant librarian--How this saved His Highness four hundred francs--Rivalry with Casimir Delavigne--Petition of the Classical School against Romantic productions--Letter of support from Mademoiselle Duchesnois--A fantastic dance--The person who called Racine a *blackguard*--Fine indignation of the *Constitutionnel*--First representation of *Marino Faliero*

It will be remembered that, during the brief conversation which I had the honour of holding with M. le Duc d'Orléans in his private box, he had expressed the desire to keep me near him. I had no motive, now I had gained my liberty of action, for leaving the man who, at any rate, had assured me a living for six years and had allowed me to continue my studies and to become what I was. Moreover, at that time, M. le Duc d'Orléans was a typical representative of that Opposition party to which I belonged by rights as the son of a Republican general. M. le Duc d'Orléans, son of a regicide, member of the Jacobin Club, defender of Marat and indebted to Collot d'Herbois, seemed, indeed, to me, I must admit, if he had not greatly degenerated since 1793, to be far more advanced in 1829 than I was myself. He acted well up to the *mot* he uttered the day I was writing to his dictation: "Monsieur Dumas, bear in mind that, if one is descended from Louis XIV., if only by means of one of his bastards, it is still a sufficient honour to be proud of." I had, of course, called forth this *mot* by my ignorant hesitation. Besides, one could be proud of being descended from Louis XIV., while still blaming the turpitude of Louis XV. and the faults of Louis XVI.; furthermore, where had even our Republican fathers come from?--the Parc-aux-Cerfs and the Petit Trianon. So then the Duc d'Orléans, if not precisely a

Republican prince, as he had been styled in 1792, was at least a citizen prince, as he was called in 1829. In short, it was good for my position, and in harmony with my sympathies, to remain attached to M. le Duc d'Orléans. All these reflections had had sufficient time to ripen in my mind before I received a letter from Oudard asking me to call on him at his office. Formerly, such an invitation would have made me very uneasy; now, it only made me smile, and I presented myself. Raulot bowed nearly to the ground before me; he opened the door and announced--

"M. Alexandre Dumas."

Oudard came to meet me with a laughing face.

"Well, my dear poet," he said, "it seems you have had an undoubted success?"

"Yes."

"First, let me congratulate you heartily.... But who could have foreseen it?"

"Those who suppressed my bonus money and kept back my salary; for I presume that if they had foreseen a failure they would not have had the cruelty to expose my mother and me to die of starvation."

"Did not M. de Broval write to you the night of the representation?" Oudard asked in some confusion.

"Yes, indeed; here is his letter."

I showed him the letter the reader has seen.

"And I am keeping it as a model," I continued, putting it back into my pocket again.

"As a model of what?"

"Of diplomatic lying and of stupid sycophancy."

"Come, that is strong language!"

"True, but one ought to call a spade a spade."

"However that may be, let us drop the subject and speak of your position here."

"That is equivalent to discussing castles in the air."

"I do not refer to your past position, for I am well aware that you would decline to remain in the household under the old conditions; neither do we desire you to do so.... You must have leisure for your work."

"Continue, my lord Mæcenas, speak in the name of Augustus; I am listening."

"No, on the contrary it is for you to speak. What do you desire?"

"I? I desired success and I have had it. I do not want anything else."

"But what can we do that will be agreeable to you?"

"Not a great deal."

"Nevertheless, there must be some position in the house you would like."

"There is none I covet; but there is one post that would suit my convenience."

"Which is that?"

"To be M. Casimir Delavigne's colleague at the library."

Oudard's facial muscles twitched with an expression indicative of, "You are indeed ambitious, my friend."

"Oh! indeed I quite understand the difficulties," I said.

"You see," Oudard continued, "we already have Vatout and Casimir, a librarian and assistant librarian."

"Of course, and that is ample, is it not, when there is no library?"

For, as a matter of fact, the library of the Duc d'Orléans, at that time especially, was very inferior.

"What do you mean by no library?" Oudard exclaimed; for, like the servant of a curé, he could not bear to have his master's house depreciated. "We have three thousand volumes!"

"You are mistaken, my dear Oudard: there are three thousand and four; for I saw the *Mémoires de Dumouriez*, which had just come from London, in the house of M. le Duc d'Orléans, the day before yesterday."

I gave the thrust good-humouredly, and so Oudard took it. He could not ward it off without acknowledging himself hit: he continued--

"Well, well, you are wonderfully clever, my friend; I will convey to monseigneur your desire to become attached to the household as librarian."

I stopped him.

"Stay, let us quite understand one another, Oudard."

"I do not wish for anything better."

"Did you not ask me to come to you?"

"Certainly."

"It was not I who came on my own initiative?"

"No."

"I should not have come if you had not written to me."

"That would have been very remiss on your part."

"Possibly; but, all the same, I did not come. Now you talk of a desire: I have not expressed any; it is not I who desire to remain attached to the household. If they want to keep me, they must make me librarian; as to salary, they need not give me any. You see I am making things exceedingly easy for His Royal Highness."

"Ah! are you always going to be wilful?"

"No, but I remember what M. le Duc d'Orléans condescended to write, by the side of my name, in his own handwriting, a month ago: 'Suppress his bonuses,' etc. etc."

"Come, I will tell you something that will restore the prince in your estimation."

"Ah! my dear Oudard, I am indeed far too insignificant an individual to lay claim to the right of quarrelling with him."

"Well, then, I fancy he would accept the dedication of your drama."

"The dedication of my play, my dear Oudard, belongs to the man who got it acted; my drama *Henri III.* will be dedicated to Taylor."

"You are making a mistake, my dear friend."

"No, I am repaying a debt."

"All right, we will not continue the subject; so, a librarian like Casimir Delavigne...."

"Or like Vatout, if the comparison seems to you to be simpler."

"Are you aware how epigrammatic you have become since your success?"

"No; it is only that I can now say aloud what I formerly thought unspoken."

"Well, I see clearly that you mean to have the last word."

"Of course; try and find a word to which I cannot fit an answer. *Au revoir!*"

"Adieu!"

Two days later, Oudard called me in again; he had discovered a post that would suit me much better than being librarian: namely, to be reader to Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans. I thanked Oudard; but I assured him that I still held to my first idea of being librarian or nothing at all.

We parted rather more coldly than at first. Two days later, I received a third letter; this time, he had found something that would suit me best of all. They would make me *chevalier d'honneur* to Madame Adélaïde! I persisted obstinately that I wanted to be librarian. Finally, I received a fourth invitation, and I paid a fourth visit. They had decided to grant my request, and I was appointed assistant librarian, at a salary of 1200 francs.

As I had announced beforehand that the question of money was not of any consequence, they had taken advantage of it to suggest to monseigneur to pay me 300 francs less as librarian than they had paid me as a clerk. That didn't matter; but listen, and may Harpagon and Grandet hang themselves for not having invented what the people devised who arranged the affairs of M. le Duc d'Orléans and myself. As they had not paid me any salary for six months, they antedated my nomination by six months. Consequently, as I had a salary of 1500 francs as clerk and 1200 francs as librarian, they saved, by paying me for these six months as a librarian, the sum of 150 francs, which, added to my unpaid up bonuses of 1829, saved them 350 francs; and the 350 francs, added to the 50 francs cut off my bonus of 1828, amounted to a net total of 400 francs more into the princely coffers. It will be admitted, will it not? that the

Duc d'Orléans was surrounded by men of large views! Unfortunately, these were the very same men who, later, surrounded the king.

When I was installed at the Library, I became acquainted with Vatout and Casimir Delavigne, who, as Oudard had warned me, did not welcome my advent with much warmth. Casimir Delavigne in particular, who, although he made it up with me afterwards, at first could not forgive me the success I had had with *Henri III.* Indeed, my success with *Henri III.* continued throughout the year, and, as there is a proverb to the effect that two successes, on the stage, never come together, the success of *Henri III.* prevented the success of *Marino Faliero*, which was awaiting its turn, and in which Mademoiselle Mars was to play Héléna. But Mademoiselle Mars was engaged for three long months in *Henri III.*; then came her two months' holiday; so *Marino Faliero* was put off until the coming winter. This did not in the least suit Casimir Delavigne.

I have related how Casimir Delavigne's dramatic affairs were conducted: a family council was called on account of *Marino Faliero*, and it was decided that the Doge of Venice should migrate to the Porte-Saint-Martin; that Madame Dorval, whose reputation had begun to spread, should replace Mademoiselle Mars and that Ligier should be seduced from the Odéon to play Marino Faliero. This migration made a great sensation. Casimir at the Porte-Saint-Martin! It was Coriolanus among the Volscians; all the papers wailed aloud and made moan over this exile of the national bard, and people began to look on me as a usurper who had risen up to drive out a crowned and anointed king from his legitimate throne. The situation was complicated by an event as novel as it was unexpected. A petition to the king appeared, entreating His Majesty to do for Corneille, Molière and Racine--who stood on their marble pedestals in the *foyer* unmoved by this agitation--what His Majesty's august predecessor had done for King Ferdinand VII. when he was expelled by the Cortes:--to re-establish them on their thrones. Alas! no one was ever less ambitious to snatch other people's thrones than I.... I

was willing enough to take a seat or a comfortable arm-chair, ay, an elevated one, well in view, by all means, but a throne! the word and the position were too classic, and I never aspired thereto. It is inconceivable, is it not? that there could be found seven men of letters sufficiently intolerant, silly and ridiculous to appeal to a king to proscribe a method of art, an invisible, indefinable and intangible conception, and boldly to say to him, "Sire, we are the representatives of Art; we alone know what is beautiful; we alone possess knowledge, taste and genius; true, the public hisses at us as soon as we appear; true, our tragedies do not attract anyone when they are acted; the Comedians play our pieces with marked aversion, it is true, since they do not draw the same profits from them, although expenses are the same; but what does all that matter! It is hard for us to die and to be forgotten; we would rather be hooted at than buried. Sire, issue your commands that our plays, and ours alone, be played;--for we are the sole descendants of Corneille, and Molière and Racine, whilst these new-comers are but the bastards of Shakespeare and Goethe and Schiller!"

How very logical! I was a bastard of Shakespeare, of Goethe and of Schiller, because I had just composed *Henri III.*, a play so pre-eminently French, that, if it were open to any reproach, it would be that I had represented the manners of the end of the sixteenth century too faithfully. And as the thing really sounds incredible, we will place before our readers' own eyes the petition of these gentlemen:--

"SIRE,--The glory of letters is not the least brilliant among French glories, and the glory of our theatre is not the least brilliant of our literary glories. So thought your ancestors when they honoured the Théâtre-Français with a special protection; so thought Louis XIV., to whom it owed its first organisation. That regal protector of letters, persuaded that the *chefs d'œuvre* which his reign had produced could not be represented too perfectly, decreed that the best actors who were scattered about in the various companies which the capital then possessed

should be united into one company, to be called the Comedians in Ordinary to the King. He gave rules to this select company, granted them rights and, among others, the exclusive privilege of representing tragedy and high comedy; and he added to these favours that of endowment. His object in doing this, sire, as you are aware, was not solely to reward those actors who had the good fortune to please him, but also to encourage them in the exercise of an art which by its elevation should be in harmony with his royal spirit; also to perpetuate the prosperity of that art, and to establish a model theatre on a solid foundation, for both actors and authors. For a long while, the intentions of Louis XIV. were fulfilled by his successors, in whom there was no falling off, either in good taste or in generosity; the two arts that he loved, and to which the French stage owed its dignity and its superiority, have reigned there in almost undisputed sway. Such was the condition of things at the time of the decease of your august brother; why must it be confessed that it is no longer the same to-day? The death of the actor whose talents vied with those of the most perfect artist of any epoch, has brought about more than one injury to the noble art which he upheld. Whether from depravity of taste or from consciousness of their inability to take his place, certain associates of the Théâtre-Français have pretended that the method of art in which Talma excelled could no longer be beneficially carried on; they are seeking to exclude tragedy from the stage and to substitute for it plays composed in imitation of the most eccentric dramas that foreign literature affords--dramas which no one had ever dared before to reproduce except in our lowest theatres. It is quite conceivable that third-rate actors should pursue these tactics, which are in accordance with their indifferent performances; and that, since they are incapable of rising to the height of tragedy, they should wish to lower art to the level of their talent; but it is almost inconceivable, sire, that this attitude should be encouraged by those who should combat it. They not only violate the privileges granted them in order to advance, on every possible occasion, the particular method of art to which they have become attached; but, in order to satisfy

the exigencies of this method, which seeks less to elevate the soul, entice the heart and occupy the mind, than to dazzle the eyes by material means, by the distraction of vain show and by stage effect, they are exhausting the capital of the theatre, increasing its debt and bringing about its ruin. And, in addition, as tragedy still struggles, and struggles with some success, against its ignoble rival, in spite of all that is done to prevent it, the authorities, not satisfied with refusing to undertake necessary expenses and supply the apparatus needed, are doing their best to discourage tragic representations altogether, and only give subsidies to the principal actors in subjects of which the public disapproves; far worse still, in order to make all tragic acting henceforth impossible, in anticipation of the time when the two leading exponents of tragedy, Mademoiselle Duchesnois and M. Lafond, shall have retired from the stage, they have compelled them to submit to an exile of a year, under cover of a holiday, during which time they promise themselves to complete the absolute ruin of the theatre of Racine, Corneille and Voltaire.

"Sire, are the agents in whom you have placed confidence, to watch over and control the theatre, responding properly to your beneficent designs? Was it intended that the liberty with which they were entrusted was to be used to advance the cause of melodrama to the detriment of tragedy? Ought the funds placed, by your liberality, at their disposal, in order to advance the cause of good taste, to be squandered over their own particular fancies, which tend to make the greatest names in Art subservient to the Melpomene of the boulevards, and to reduce their sublime art to the condition of a vile trade? We are convinced, sire, that the glory of your reign is concerned in the preservation of all sources of French glory, and we therefore consider it our duty to call your attention to the degradation by which the foremost of our theatres is threatened. Sire, the evil is already grave! In a few months' time it will be past redress; in a few months' time the theatre founded by Louis le Grand will

be entirely closed to works which have been the delight of the most polite of courts, the most enlightened of nations; it will have fallen below the level of the meanest of stages, or, rather, the Théâtre-Français will have ceased to exist.

"(Signed) A. V. ARNAULT, N. LEMERCIER, VIENNET, JOUY, ANDRIEUX, JAY, O. LEROY"

This curious epistle was capped by another quite as strange--or, more correctly speaking, it was preceded by it. The letter of Mademoiselle Duchesnois, which we shall produce in its entirety, in the same way that we have produced the petition of these gentlemen, was the rocket which warned the public that a great pyrotechnic display was about to take place.

My readers will recall the visit M. Lafond paid me in my office, to ask me if I had a smart, well-groomed fellow in my play who could say to Queen Christine, "*Sacrebleu!* your Majesty has not the right to assassinate this poor devil!" It will be remembered that I told him I had not. Whereupon M. Lafond had turned daintily upon his heels, remarking that his visit was, therefore, fruitless.

After the reading of *Henri III.*, M. Lafond had said to himself that the part of that extremely well set up courtier, the Duc de Guise, would be his by right; but, alack, he had seen the rôle given to Joanny, who played it strikingly well although he was not irreproachable. It had been just as bad for poor Mademoiselle Duchesnois: she had seen successively the rôle of Christine and that of the Duchesse de Guise pass over her; she had done me the honour of wishing to act them both, and each time, with infinite trouble, I had had to explain to her how impossible it was for her to undertake either rôle; consequently, she was furious. Now, anger is a bad counsellor, so it came about that Mademoiselle Duchesnois wrote the following letter under its sway:--

"MONSIEUR,--I should have preferred to keep out of the quarrel which is engaging the attention of the newspapers concerning the Théâtre-Français; but, inasmuch as the defence of a system which is compromising our social existence is based upon erroneous facts, I have thought it my duty to the public to offer certain explanations which will show the question in its true light. Unquestionably, the first duty of the French Comedians should be to retain the favour of the public, and we cannot be reproached with respect to this, since, during the past three years, we have successively produced, at a very heavy expense, all the works of the new school; in consequence, our shares have fallen from sixteen thousand to seven thousand francs, and we have contracted, in the interim, a debt estimated at a hundred thousand francs. However, the old repertoire and works based on those of the old masters, such as *Tartufe, Phèdre, Zaïre, Germanicus, Sylla, Pierre de Portugal, Marie Stuart, l'École des Vieillards, Blanche, le Roman* while they no longer glorify the stage, still bring some money to our pockets, and help to provide for the terrible expenses of the scenery and properties required for the dramas. In spite of the ruin of our prosperity and the increase of our liabilities, I should have kept silence if the rumour had not spread abroad that we were about to dissolve our Association in order to prepare ourselves for a new management, and to raise a so-called Romantic theatre on our ruins. These reports have gained enough strength to be repeated by several papers, and it has been noticed that the usual supporters of the Commissary Royal have gone out of their way to point out the advantages of such an absurd proposition, instead of denying it. The tragic actors, who, since the arrival of M. Taylor, have been the object of an animadversion for which, until recently, they have not been able to find a cause, were attacked in these same papers with unheard-of bitterness, and with the catchword of the moment, *The public does not want any more tragedies.* There is no denying that tragedy no longer brings in the enormous sums of the prosperous days of Talma and of the first fifteen years of my theatrical career; but, without dwelling upon its

importance and its necessity, it can be seen by the receipts--not those obtained from the Commissary Royal, but the actual receipts entered on the *registre des pauvres* (which I am having looked out, at this very moment, in order to their publication)--that tragedy would again see prosperous days if the Government would grant it the protection that is its due, rather than persecute the actors and authors who are still its supporters. It would be a difficult task to enumerate all the instances of M. Taylor's ill-will: here are one or two which will be enough to convince you. Three young actors who were taken away from the Odéon showed some interest and aptitude for tragedy. M. Taylor tried to drive them away from the Comédie-Française. He succeeded with regard to MM. Ligier and Victor; and, if M. David has been saved to us, it was because a decision of the court overruled the Commissary Royal. M. Beauvallet, a young man who roused high hopes among the friends of dramatic art, has been obliged to take an engagement at a secondary theatre. Nor is this all; my presence and that of M. Lafond were obstacles in the way of carrying out the plans of the Romantic school. So we received, this winter, an intimation, almost tantamount to a command, to leave Paris for a year, without having solicited anything of the kind, as certain wrongly informed journals have announced. It is under these circumstances, monsieur, that distinguished literary men who, by their connection with actors, are much better acquainted with the situation at the Théâtre-Français than are the writers of many articles, have felt it their duty to present a memorial to the King, not in order to exclude the new style of drama (a pleasantry invented by M. Taylor's friends to hold up to *ridicule* a perfectly justifiable proceeding), but to claim a protection for authors who belong to the *Classical* school and for the actors who support them, at least equal to that given to the Romantic school.

"I beg you, monsieur, to have the goodness to announce that I have just cited MM. Taylor and the Vicomte de la Rochefoucauld before the courts to answer for their violation of the rules of our company, by means of

which they have prorogued a committee for the past four years, a third part of which, according to the terms of our statutes, ought to have been renewed annually. I beg you also to be so good as to announce, in my name, that the article contained in the *Journal de Paris* of this morning is incorrect in all its statements and in all its calculations, and that I shall hasten to put the proofs of this statement before the public with the least possible delay. Allow me at the same time to contradict the false statement that any one of those who signed the petition wished to *withdraw* or to *disown* his signature; on the contrary, I know that several of our most distinguished authors are preparing to make public their adhesion to the memorial to the King.--I am, etc., J. DUCHESNOIS"

We said before that under a clever ministry everybody, even the king, has his wits sharpened.

The king made answer to his petitioners as follows:--

"GENTLEMEN,--I cannot do anything in the matter you desire; I only occupy one seat in the theatre, like every other Frenchman."

Now, I shall be asked how it was that M. Arnault reconciled this demand directed against me with his friendliness towards me? How could he receive me intimately at his house and table every Sunday, while he was doing his best to have me driven away from the theatre? Oh! be quite easy on that score! M. Arnault had a more logical mind than that. On the Sunday following the production of *Henri III.*--namely, the very next day--I found Madame Arnault quite alone in the house, and she said to me, in course of conversation--

"Dumas, when you intend dining with us, tell us beforehand; for otherwise you will run the risk of dining *tête-à-tête* with me, as to-day, which is not very entertaining for you."

I took the hint, and I never returned there again.

The success of *Henri III.*, therefore, it will be seen, brought in its train all the advantages and all the drawbacks of great successes. I was the fashionable author for the rest of the winter of 1829; I received invitations innumerable, and M. Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld, Minister of the King's Household, wrote me a letter, giving me free entry to all the royal theatres, being shrewd enough to see that, if he did not give me the privilege, I was just the sort of man to take it. Devéria made a lithograph of me; David d'Angers, a medallion. It will be seen that nothing was wanting to complete my triumph, not even the ridiculous side which always accompanies a rising reputation.

Then a crowd of anecdotes were related about me, each more absurd than the last. It was said that, after the representation of *Henri III.*, when the lights in the house had all been put out, a sabbatical dance took place *round* the bust of Racine (it is set against the wall!), by the light of the dying fires in the green-room, similar to Boulanger's magnificent dance; that the spectral dancers were heard to utter the sacrilegious refrain, "Racine is fallen!" and that even shouts for blood were raised by a young fanatic of the name of Amaury Duval, who demanded the heads of the Academicians--a parricidal cry, since this unfortunate creature was the son of M. Amaury Duval of the Institut, and nephew of M. Alexandre Duval of the Académie française.

Further, a rabid Romantic, to whom God had sent one of the seven plagues of Egypt in punishment for his sins, was accused--and this story might well be true--of saying in a burst of frenzied scratching, "Racine was a regular scoundrel!"

This fanatic was called Gentil.

Stories like these, told by the fireside, were enough, it may well be imagined, to make the hair of all respectable people stand on end, and the *Constitutionnel*, which has always been the literary and political representative of respectable people, was particularly shocked.

It was from this period that every worthy man gave himself up to hatred of all ideas which did not date back a half-century, and of every author who was not at least sixty years of age--a style of writing which lasted from 1830 to 1850--the vigorous style of hatred to which Alceste refers, and which, we think, eats far more readily into the hearts of weak-minded, wicked and jealous people, than into the hearts of men of goodwill.

People waited in daily expectation of a new St. Bartholomew's Eve, and poor M. Auger, who had just killed himself under such sad circumstances, was congratulated on having escaped a general massacre by means of suicide. So great was the consternation that the whole of the Classical party only produced one play--which was a failure. This was *Elisabeth d'Angleterre*, by M. Ancelot. For we do not call Casimir Delavigne's *Marino Faliero*, pompously christened a melodrama in verse, a classical production. The very choice of subject, *Marino Faliero*, and the imitation of Byron's principal scenes, formed a twofold concession to foreign genius and to modern taste.

Casimir Delavigne, as we have remarked elsewhere, was born fifteen years too soon to take part whole-heartedly in the new school; his style seemed ever hampered, and incessantly vacillating between Voltaire and Byron, Chénier and Shakespeare, never succeeding in clothing his ideas in a definite manner. Still, nothing had been neglected to make *Marino Faliero* a success. The papers had made much of the ingratitude of the members of the Comédie-Française and of the transfer of M. Ligier to the Porte-Saint-Martin. It was announced that the music of the overture was by Rossini, and the costumes by M. Delaroche. Now M. Delaroche was the exact analogy in painting of what Casimir Delavigne was in literature; both at that time enjoyed far too great a reputation to last, and were destined to see it pale and decrease and almost expire during their life-time. However, Rossini had composed the music, and Delaroche had designed the costumes.

The play was produced on 30 May, and was very successful; but, strange to relate, the author's most elaborately conceived rôle was not the most applauded one, nor did the actor's chief success fall to the share of Ligier or of Madame Dorval: it fell to Gobert, who played the rôle of Israël Bertuccio.

The work was mounted with great sumptuousness and scrupulous care, especially with regard to the costumes. M. Delaroche, having deemed it desirable, in order to lend a more picturesque effect to his designs, that they should be wafted by the wind, the theatrical costumier devised the ingenious notion of sewing air into the mantles.

I have elsewhere given my opinion of this play.

BOOK III — CHAPTER III

CHAPTER III

Mesmerism--Experiment during a trance--I submit to being mesmerised--My observation upon it--I myself start to mesmerise--Experiment made in a diligence--Another experiment in the house of the *procureur de la République* of Joigny--Little Marie D----
--Her political predictions--I cure her of fear

Between the representation of my play and Casimir Delavigne's, the scientific world was much taken up with an important event which established the power of magnetism, that had been under dispute since Mesmer's day.

One of the cleverest surgeons of the time, Jules Cloquet, had just performed an operation on Madame Pl--- for cancer in the breast, without her feeling the least pain, she having been put into a trance by mesmerism.

One word about mesmerism. Let us leave actualities and turn to abstractions.

Madame Pl---, upon whom this strange experiment had just been made, was between sixty-four and sixty-five years of age; she had been a widow ten years and had suffered for two or three years from glandular swellings on the right breast. Doctor Chap---- was her medical adviser; he had practised magnetism for some time and found himself apt at it. He attempted to apply it to the cure of Madame Pl---, but the disorder had gone too far, and he decided to try if it might be possible to lessen her pain while the operation was being performed. Jules Cloquet was consulted, and it was proposed that he should operate on the sleeping patient. He consented, welcoming the opportunity of seeing for himself a

phenomenon concerning which he was sceptical, and also, at the same time, glad to be able to spare the patient the suffering inevitably connected with one of the most painful of surgical operations. Doctor Chap---- magnetised Madame Pl--- and rendered the whole of her right side completely insensible to pain. The ablation of the breast began by an incision eleven inches long, followed by another nine inches long. By means of these two incisions they could get at several glands under the armpit, which were carefully dissected. During the operation, which lasted ten minutes, the patient gave no signs of sensibility. To use the surgeon's own words--

"It seemed as though he were *operating on a dead body*; save that, when the operation was over and the patient's wound was being bathed with a sponge, she twice cried out, without coming out of her state of trance, 'Be quick and finish, and do not tickle me like that!'"

When the operation was over, Madame Pl--- was brought out of her trance: she did not remember anything, had not felt any pain and showed profound astonishment that the operation was over. The dressing was done in the usual way, and the wound showed every symptom of quick healing. At the end of a week's time Madame Pl--- drove out in a carriage. The suppuration was decreased and the wound was making rapid progress towards healing, when, about the evening of the fifteenth day, the patient complained of feeling great oppression, and swellings began to show in the lower extremities.

All this is nothing but the simple truth: now comes in the marvellous. Madame Pl--- had a daughter who came from the country to nurse her mother. Dr. Chap----, having seen that she had a very clear mind, put her into a magnetic sleep and consulted her about her mother's condition. At the first attempt she made to see, her face grew troubled and tears rose to her eyes.

Then she announced that the peaceful but inevitable death of her mother would take place the next morning. When questioned upon the internal state of her mother's chest, she said that the right lung was quite dead, that it was empty, suppurating on the side nearest the lower portion of the spine and bathed in serous fluid; that the left lung was sound and alone supported life. As for the abdominal viscera, the liver, according to her, was whitish and wrinkled; but the intestines were sound.

These depositions were taken down in the presence of witnesses.

The next day, at the given hour, Madame Pl--- died. The autopsy was made in the presence of deputies from the Académie, and the state of the body was found to conform precisely with the description given by the mesmerised girl.

This was what was reported in the papers, stated in the official return, related to me and confirmed by Jules Cloquet himself, one day when we were talking together--before the discovery of chloroform--of the great mysteries of nature which baffle human intelligence. Later, when I was preparing my book *Joseph Balsamo*, being interested to fathom the often debated question of the power or impotence of magnetism, I decided to make some personal experiments, not relying upon those produced by foreigners interested in accrediting magnetism. So I studied magnetism first hand, and the result of my investigations was as follows:--

I was endowed with great magnetic powers, and this power, as a rule, took effect on two out of every three persons upon whom I experimented. Let me hasten to state that I never practised it except upon young girls or women. This power in connection with physical phenomena is incontestable. A woman who has once submitted to magnetic sleep is the slave of the man who sent her to sleep. Even after she has waked she remembers or forgets what passed during her sleep, according to the will of the magnetiser. She could be made to kill someone during her sleep and, if he willed that she should be totally ignorant of having committed

her crime, she would never know anything about it. The mesmeriser can make his victim feel pain of any kind in any part; he has only to touch the place with the tip of his finger, the end of a stick, or the end of an iron rod. He can cause a sensation of warmth with ice, a sensation of cold with fire; he can cause drunkenness with a glass of water, or even with an empty glass. He can put an arm, a leg or the whole body into a state of catalepsy, and make it hard and rigid as a bar of iron or as soft and supple as a scarf. He can cause insensibility to the prick of a needle, to the blade of a bistoury or the smart of cautery.

I believe all these things come under the domain of physical phenomena. Even the brain can be impelled to such a pitch of excitement as to make an ordinary being a poet, a child of twelve possess the ideas, feelings and manner of expressing them of a person of twenty or twenty-five.

In 1848, I made a tour in Burgundy. My daughter and I were in the same coach with a very charming lady of thirty to thirty-two; we only exchanged a few words; it was eleven o'clock at night; and one of the things she had told me was that she never slept when she was travelling. Ten minutes later, she was not only asleep, but asleep with her head on my shoulder. I waked her up; she was extremely surprised to find she had fallen asleep, and fallen asleep in the position in which she found herself. I renewed the experiment two or three times during the night, and my strength of will was sufficient, without my needing to touch my neighbour, to be successful in every instance.

When the coach stopped at the posting-house and horses were being changed, I woke her abruptly and asked her what time it was; she opened her eyes and tried to pull out her watch.

"Never mind that," I said to her; "tell me the time by your watch without looking at it."

"Three minutes to three o'clock," she replied immediately

We called the postillion, and by the light of his lantern we verified that it was exactly three minutes to three.

These were nearly all the experiments I tried upon that lady; they yielded the results I have just related, and, with the exception of the time being told without looking at the watch, they all appertain to the order of physical phenomena.

At Joigny, I made an official call on M. Lorin, the *procureur de la République*, whom I had never met before. It was just about the time of the publication of *Balsamo*, which had made magnetism quite the rage. I rarely entered a salon at that period without being questioned about this great mystery. At Joigny I replied, as I always did--

"Magnetic power exists; it can be practised, but its scientific basis is not yet known. It is in a similar condition to that of air balloons: we can send them up, but no means of directing them have yet been devised."

Doubts were then expressed by persons present, and especially by women. I asked one of these ladies, Madame B----, if she would allow me to put her to sleep; she refused in such a manner as to convince me that she would not be overweeningly angry if I did it without her leave. Nevertheless, I assumed an attitude of submission to her; but, five minutes later, having got up as though to look at an engraving hanging above her arm-chair, I summoned to my aid all my magnetic power and for five minutes I persistently willed her to go to sleep; at the end of that five minutes she was asleep. Then I began a series of extremely curious experiments on this lady, who was a total stranger to me, in a house which I had never entered before or have since re-entered. Madame B----, in spite of her will, obeyed both my expressed mandates and also my mute wishes. Every ordinary sensation in her was reversed: fire felt like ice, ice like fire. She complained of a bad headache: I bound her forehead with an imaginary bandage which I told her contained snow, and she immediately experienced a delicious sensation of coolness; then, a

moment later, she wiped away from her forehead the water from the imaginary bandage, as though the heat of her head were melting the supposititious snow; but, soon, her handkerchief was not enough for the operation; she borrowed a friend's; finally, the demand for a handkerchief was followed by that for a serviette; then, her dress and the rest of her clothes being damp, she asked to be allowed to go to a room to change everything. I let her feel this sensation of cold till she shivered; then, suddenly, I gave the order for her clothes to dry themselves, and they dried themselves. The whole thing, of course, was in the imagination of the lady mesmerised. She had an extremely fine voice, of a fairly wide range, but which stopped short at the Ionic *si.* I ordered her to sing as high as *re;* she sang, and gave the two last notes perfectly--an impossible feat for her in her ordinary state, and one which she tried in vain when I had wakened her from her magnetic sleep. A woman was working in the next room. I put a paper-knife in the somnambulist's hands and made her think it was a real knife. Then I ordered her to go and stab the workwoman. Thereupon what free will she had left in her revolted; she refused, writhed, hung back on the furniture, but I had only to will and to point in the direction I wished her to take, and she obeyed and went up to the workwoman, utterly stupefied, the knife raised.

Her eyes were open and her face, which was a very lovely one, assumed an admirable stage expression, as beautiful as that of Miss Faucit when she is acting the sleep-walking scene in *Hamlet.* The *procureur de la République* was terrified at the thought of such a power, which could urge a person to a crime, in spite of herself. When I had willed Madame B---- back to calmness, I tried to make her see things at a distance. When Colonel S. M----, who was a friend of mine, had been staying in Joigny with his regiment, she had made his acquaintance, so I asked where the colonel was at that hour, and what he was doing.

She replied that Colonel S. M---- was in garrison at Lyons and at that moment, at the officers' café, where he was standing talking with the

lieutenant-colonel, near the billiard-table. Then, suddenly, she saw the colonel grow pale, totter and sit down on a bench. He had just been seized with rheumatics in his knee. I touched her on the knee and willed that she should feel the same pain herself: she uttered a cry, grew rigid and shed many tears. We were so alarmed by this fictitious grief, which showed every symptom of real trouble, that I woke her up. As soon as she was awakened, she remembered what I wished her to remember, and forgot the things I commanded her to forget.

Then began another series of experiments on the woman when she was awake.

I enclosed her within an imaginary circle, which I drew with a stick, and I left the room, forbidding her to quit the circle. In five minutes' time I came back, and found her seated in the centre of the salon, waiting my permission to regain her liberty. She sat in one corner of the room, and I placed myself at the opposite end; I told her to do her utmost to resist coming over to me, and at the same time I commanded her to come to me. She clung tight to her arm-chair, but, drawn by an irresistible force, she was obliged to release her hold; then she sat down on the floor to resist the attraction, but the precaution was useless: she came, dragging herself along. When she was at my feet, I only had to stretch out my hand to her head and slowly lift my hand; she rose obediently, and in spite of her efforts, she stood before me. She asked for a glass of water; she tasted it, and it was really water; then, before she had put the glass down, or it had left her hands, I told her the water was Kirsch: she knew perfectly well it was not, and yet, at the first draught she swallowed, she cried out that it was burning her mouth. Poor woman! She was a charming young creature, who has since experienced an even profounder mystery--that of death! I wonder whether she remembers or has forgotten what happened when she was on the earth?

I have not yet done with the subject of magnetism; on the contrary, I have another most extraordinary incident of this kind to relate which took place in the presence of twelve to fifteen people. What follows is a simple recital, drawn up in the form of a legal report by two of the witnesses and signed at the time by us all.

During my stay at Auxerre, I was received into the house of M. D----. He had two children, a boy of six and a girl of eleven years of age. Marie was the name of the daughter, and she was a lovely child, like an angel, for her cheeks were pale and her eyes were black and almost austere. She was an exquisitely delicate creature, but, of course, she only possessed the intelligence and qualities usual to a child of her age, and I had, accordingly, paid very little attention to her, beyond remarking to my daughter that she was very pretty. And my daughter, who agreed with me, made a portrait of the child awake. One day we were dining in a room which opened out on the garden. We had reached dessert; the two children had left the table and were playing amidst the shrubs and flowers. We were discussing the everlasting question of magnetism, a subject the constant recurrence of which bored me the more because the usual doubts were expressed which I could only confront with facts; now, as these facts had nearly always taken place in a different locality from that in which the discussion was being held, I was obliged to choose from among those present a subject whom I guessed might be easily hypnotised, and, whether willing or not, to operate on this subject. Now, anyone who has ever practised the hypnotic art knows that the exercise is as fatiguing to the hypnotiser as to the hypnotised. I related several of the incidents I have just recorded in the preceding chapter, but they were received with the utmost incredulity.

"I should not believe in mesmerism," Madame D---- said to me, "unless, for instance (and she tried to think of the most unlikely subject she could find),--unless you could send my daughter Marie into a trance."

"Call Mademoiselle Marie and let her sit down to her usual place at the table; give her a biscuit and some fruit, and while she is eating I will try and put her into a trance."

"There is no danger, is there?"

"Of what?"

"It will not injure my daughter's health?"

"Not in the least."

"Marie!"

They called the child, and she ran up; they put some greengages and a biscuit on her plate and told her to eat them, where she was. Her seat was near me, on my left. While everyone continued talking, as though nothing were going on, I stretched out my hand behind the child's head and was the only one to keep silence, my will being concentrated on making the child go to sleep. In half a minute, she had stopped every movement, and seemed absorbed in the contemplation of a greengage which she was just going to put into her mouth.

"What is the matter, Marie?" asked her mother.

The child did not reply: she was asleep.

The thing had come about so rapidly that I could hardly believe it myself. I made her lean her head against the back of the chair without touching her, just by my power of attraction; her face looked the picture of perfect peace. I made some passes with my hand, up and down in front of her eyes, to make her open them. She opened her eyes, her eyeballs lifted skywards, a light iridescent film appearing beneath them,--the child was in a state of trance. When in this condition the eyelids do not flinch, and objects can be brought quite close to the pupil without causing the slightest movement. My daughter drew her portrait, while she was in this

trance, as a companion to the other. There was such a striking likeness in the second portrait to that of an angel, that she added wings to it, and the drawing looked like a study after Giotto's or Perugino's lovely angel-heads. The child was in a trance: it now remained to find out if she could speak. A simple touch of my hand on hers gave her her voice: a simple invitation to get up and walk about endowed her with movement. But her voice was plaintive and toneless; her movements were more like those of an automaton than of a living creature. Whether her eyes were closed or open, whether she walked forward or backward, she moved with the same ease and sense of safety. I began by isolating her from others, so that she only heard me and only replied to me. The voices of her father and mother ceased to reach her; a simple wish on my part I expressed by a sign, changed her state of isolation and put the child again in touch with whatsoever person I chose to select as her interrogator. I transmitted several questions to her, to which she responded so accurately, so intelligently and so concisely that the idea suddenly came into her uncle's head to say to me--

"Question her upon political subjects."

The child, let me repeat, was eleven years old. All political questions were therefore perfectly unknown to her; she was equally ignorant of politics and of political personages.

I will put down an exact account of the proceedings of that strange cross-examination, without putting the least faith in any of the predictions the child uttered; they were predictions, I confess, which I should be extremely sorry to see fulfilled, and I can only attribute them to the feverish state into which the hypnotic sleep had thrown her brain.

I will devote the following pages to the dialogue and give the exact terms in which it was conducted.

"In what social State are we at the present time, my child?"

"We are a Republic, monsieur."

"Can you explain to me what a Republic is?"

"It is the sharing of rights equally between every class of people of which the nation is composed, without distinction of rank or birth or circumstances."

We all stared at one another, amazed at this beginning; the answers had come without any hesitation and as though she had learnt them beforehand. I turned to her mother.

"Shall we proceed any further, madame?" I asked.

She was almost struck dumb with astonishment.

"Oh! Heavens!" she said, "I am afraid it will exhaust the poor child too much to answer such questions as those; they are far beyond the range of her age and understanding. The way she answers them," added the mother, "terrifies me."

I turned again to the child.

"Does the hypnotic sleep tire you, Marie?"

"Not in the slightest, monsieur."

"You think, then, that you can answer my questions easily?"

"Certainly."

"Yet they are not the usual questions that are addressed to a child of your age."

"God is willing that I should understand them."

We again looked at each other.

"Continue," said the mother.

"Go on," all the rest of the company exclaimed, in eager curiosity.

"Will the present form of government continue?"

"Yes, monsieur; it will last for several years."

"Will Lamartine or Ledru-Rollin be its bulwark?"

"Neither the one nor the other."

"Then we shall have a president?"

"Yes."

"And after this president whom shall we have?"

"Henri V."

"Henri V.?... But you know quite well, my child, that he is in exile!"

"Yes, but he will return to France."

"How will he return to France? By force?"

"No; by the consent of the French people."

"And where will he re-enter France?"

"At Grenoble."

"Will he have to fight to gain an entry?"

"No; he will come by way of Italy; from Italy he will enter Dauphiné, and one morning it will be reported, 'Henri V. is in the citadel of Grenoble.'"

"So there is a citadel at Grenoble?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Can you see it?"

"Yes, on a height."

"And the town?"

"The town is low down, in the valley."

"Is there a river in the town?"

"There are two."

"Are their waters of the same colour?"

"No; one is white and the other is green."

We looked at each other in still greater astonishment than at first. Marie had never been to Grenoble and they did not think she even knew the name of the capital of Dauphiné when she was in her ordinary senses.

"But are you quite sure that the Duc de Bordeaux will be at Grenoble?"

"As sure as though his name were written here"; and she pointed to her forehead.

"What does he look like? Come, give us a description of him."

"He is of medium height, rather stout; he is auburn; his eyes are blue and his hair is fashioned in the same way as that of the angels drawn by Mademoiselle Marie Dumas."

"Well, as he passes before your eyes, do you notice anything peculiar about his gait?"

"He limps."

"And where will he go from Grenoble?"

"To Lyons."

"Will they not oppose his entrance at Lyons?"

"They will try to do so at first, but I can see a number of workpeople going before him, leading him in."

"Are there no shots fired?"

"Oh yes, monsieur, several; but not much harm is done."

"Where are those shots fired?"

"On the road from Lyons to Paris."

"By which suburb will he enter Paris?"

"By Saint-Martin."

"But, my child, what will be the good of Henri V. becoming King of France, since he has no children...." I added hesitatingly, "and they say that he cannot have any?"

"Oh! that is not his fault, monsieur; it is his wife's."

"It comes to the same thing, my dear Marie, since divorce is not permitted."

"Oh yes! but something will happen that is now only known to God and myself."

"What is it?"

"His wife will die of consumption."

"And whom will he marry? Some Russian or German princess, I suppose?"

"No; he will say, 'I have returned by the will of the French people, so I will marry a daughter of the People.'"

We laughed: divination was beginning to intermingle with prophecy.

"And where will he find this daughter of the People, my child?"

"He will say, 'Seek the young girl I saw at No. 42 in the faubourg Saint-Martin, where she had climbed up on a street-post ; she was clad in a white dress and was waving a green bough in her hand.'"

"Well, will they go to the faubourg Saint-Martin?"

"Certainly."

"Will they find the young girl?"

"Yes, at No. 42."

"To what family does she belong?"

"Her father is a joiner."

"Do you know the name of this future queen?"

"Léontine."

"And the prince will marry this young girl?"

"Yes."

"He will have a son by her?"

"He will have two."

"What will the eldest be called--Henri or Charles?"

"Neither. Henri V. will say that these two names have brought too much misfortune to those who have borne them: they will call the boy Léon."

"How long will Henri V. reign?"

"Between ten and eleven years."

"How will he meet his death?"

"He will die of pleurisy, contracted from drinking cold water from a fountain, one day, when he is out hunting in the forest of Saint-Germain."

"But remember, my child, that you are making this prophecy before twelve to fifteen people: one of us here may warn the prince and then, if he is told that he will die if he drinks cold water, he will refrain from drinking it."

"He will be warned, but he will drink it, all the same; for he will say he has eaten many an ice when he was hot, so he can surely drink cold water."

"Who will warn him?"

"Your son, who will be one of his intimate friends."

"What! my son one of the intimate friends of the prince?"

"Yes, you are well aware that your son's opinions differ from yours."

My daughter and I exchanged glances and burst out laughing, for Alexandre and I are eternally squabbling over politics.

"And when Henri V. is dead Léon I. will succeed to the throne?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"What will happen during his reign?"

"I cannot see any further: wake me."

I made haste to awake her, but she did not remember anything when she was awakened; I asked her a few questions about Lamartine, Ledru-Rollin, Grenoble, Henri V. and Léon I., and she burst out laughing. I passed two thumbs across her forehead to will her to remember, and she remembered instantly; I begged her to begin the story over again, and she repeated it faithfully, in exactly the same terms, so that the person who had written down my questions and her answers

while she uttered them was able to correct the first narration by the second.

I have since, upon several occasions, carried out other experiments on this child; there seemed to be no limits to the power which mesmerism had in or, rather, upon her; I could make her dumb, blind, or deaf at will; and, by a word, I could give her back all her faculties and excite them to a degree of perfection which seemed to exceed the limits of mortal knowledge. For instance, if I sent her to the piano--asleep or awake, it mattered little--she would begin a sonata; some person present would hum in a low voice to me an air that the child was desired to play, instead of the sonata; the sonata would instantly cease, and directly I stretched out my hand towards her the child would play the required tune. We tried this experiment a score of times before the most incredulous people, and she never failed.

Marie's father's house was built on the site of an old cemetery; several burial inscriptions could be deciphered even on the stones of the garden wall; and, because of these, when night fell, the poor child dared not stir out, but trembled with fear. The night I left, Madame D---- spoke to me of this terror, and so great was my influence over the child, that she asked me if I could not do anything in the matter. I was so accustomed to working miracles that I replied that nothing could be easier and that we would at once make the experiment. So I called the child, and, putting both my hands on her head, willing that all fear should be taken away from her, I said--

"Marie, your mother has just given me some peaches for my journey; go and fetch me a few vine leaves from the garden to wrap them in."

It was nine o'clock at night, and very dark. The child went out and returned singing; she brought back the vine leaves which she had gathered from the very spot where the tombstones were which caused her such terror by day. From that hour, she showed no hesitation in going

into the garden or to any other part of the house, at any time of the night and even without a light.

I returned to Auxerre three months later; I had not announced my journey to anyone. Two days before my arrival, they wanted little Marie to have a tooth drawn.

"No, mother dear," she said, "wait; M. Dumas will be here the day after to-morrow: he will take hold of my little finger, while they take out my tooth, and then I shall not feel the pain."

I came on the day she said; I held the child's hand in mine during the operation, which was accomplished without her feeling the least pang of pain.

If I am asked for an explanation of the phenomena I have just related I cannot give any. I simply state what has happened. I am not an advocate of magnetism, I only use it when people compel me to do so, and it always fatigues me excessively. I believe a dishonourable person might put magnetism to evil uses, and I doubt whether a well-intentioned person does the least good by the practice of it. Magnetism is a pastime, it has not yet become a science.

BOOK III — CHAPTER IV

CHAPTER IV

Fresh trials of newspaper editors--The *Mouton enragé*--Fontan--Harel's witticism concerning him--The *Fils de l'Homme* before the Police Court--The author pleads his cause in verse--M. Guillebert's prose--Prison charges at Sainte-Pélagie--Embarrassment of the Duc d'Orléans about a historical portrait--The two usurpations

We left the Government busy imprisoning Béranger for nine months, about the close of the year 1828; we now find it in July 1829 prosecuting the *Corsaire* at the Police Court, and sentencing M. Vremiot, its manager, to fifteen days' imprisonment and to a fine of 300 francs, for an article entitled *Sottise des deux parts.* The same month it prosecuted Fontan for an article in the *Album* called the *Mouton enragé*; and Barthélemy for his poem *Fils de l'Homme.* As both these trials made a great sensation, and as it was the general opinion that, by making it unpopular, they took part in the fall of the Government, we will go into the matter more fully.

On 20 June 1829, Fontan, who had had a tragedy called *Perkin Warbeck* acted at the Odéon a year or two before, published in the old *Album*, edited by Magallon, an article entitled the *Mouton enragé.* The Public Minister believed this article was meant as an insult to the person of the king and referred the matter to the Police Court.

The following passages are those particularly specified in the accusation:--

"Picture to your imaginations, a pretty white sheep, combed, curled and washed every morning; with goggle-eyes, long ears, spindle-shanked legs, the lower jaw (or, in other words, the lower lip) heavy and hanging

down; in short, a true Berry sheep. He walks at the head of the flock of which he is pretty nearly the monarch; an immense meadow is his pasture-land and that of his fellow-sheep; some of the acres of this meadow devolved upon him by right. And here grew the tenderest grass, and he waxed fat upon it, which delighted his soul! What a nice thing it is to inherit an estate! Our sheep is called Robin; he responds with gracious salutations to the compliments paid him; and shows his teeth as evidence of his pleasure. In spite of his gentle appearance, he can be disagreeable when roused; he can then bite like any other animal. I have been told that a ewe which was related to him bit him every time she met him, because she considered he did not govern his flock with sufficient despotism. I tell you this under the seal of secrecy,--poor Robin-Mouton is mad! His madness is not apparent; on the contrary, he strives his utmost to conceal it; if he feels a fit approaching, and a longing to satisfy an evil thought, he takes good care to look first to see if anybody is watching him; for Mouton-Robin knows the lot that is destined for animals touched with this malady--he lives in dread of bullets does our Robin-Mouton! And besides, he is conscious of his weakness. If only he were a bull, ah! how he would use his horns! he would soon let you see. How he would insist upon his prerogatives among the sheep-folk of his acquaintance! He might possibly even be brave enough to declare war against a neighbouring flock. But, alas! he comes of a stock that is not very fond of fighting, and however alluring the amenities of conquest may be to him, he arrives at the bitter conclusion that he has but the blood of a sheep running through his veins. This fatal idea makes him desperate.--Never mind, Robin, you have not much to complain of; all you have to do is to lead a luxurious life of idleness. What have you to do from morning to night? Nothing. You eat, you drink, and you sleep: your sheep faithfully carry out your commands and satisfy your smallest caprices; they leap to do your bidding; what more can you desire? Believe what I tell you and do not attempt to quit your state of animal tranquillity; crush these vast ideas of glory, which are too great for that narrow brain of yours;

vegetate in the same way your fathers have vegetated before you; Heaven made you a sheep, die a sheep! I tell you frankly you would be quite a charming quadruped if, *in petto*, you were only sane!"

Fontan was condemned to ten years' imprisonment and a fine of 10,000 francs. The sentence was rather too severe, and it caused a great outcry. It will be admitted that the article was not good enough to deserve this severe treatment. The result was to raise Fontan to the height of a martyr. And Fontan, who was of an energetic and headstrong character, made no attempt to justify himself before his judges.

"Messieurs," he said simply, "whether or not I intended my article to bear the interpretation you put upon it, I have the right of withholding any explanation of the subject; I allow no man to examine the inner sanctuary of my conscience. I wished to write an article about a mad sheep and I did it; that is the only explanation I ought or desire to give you."

I used to know Fontan very well at M. Villenave's house--he was a great friend of Théodore--an unpolished sort of man, who nevertheless did not lack some poetic feeling. He was unclean to the point of cynicism, and less aristocratic than Schaunard in the *Vie de bohème*; instead of having one pipe for continual smoking and a finer one when he went out, he had but one cutty pipe which never left his mouth, which smelt vilely when alight and between his teeth, but which smelt far worse when it was extinguished and in his pocket.

This condemnation made Fontan's name notorious. I believe the revolution of July found him at Poissy. He reappeared amidst a certain measure of popularity, but it was only the transient popularity of persecution.

Harel, who was the manager of the Odéon, quickly conceived the notion of turning this popularity to account by asking Fontan to write a play for him. Fontan complied, and wrote *Jeanne la Folle*, but it was a failure, or,

at any rate, only a partial success. Harel came up to me after the representation and said--

"Unmistakably I have been deceived in Fontan. There is more of the prison about him than of talent!"

This was, unfortunately, true. Poor Fontan died quite young and left nothing remarkable behind him; he published a volume of poetry and saw two or three dramas or tragedies put on the stage.

Barthélemy's sentence was less severe; he had three months' imprisonment and was fined 1000 francs.

We will give the reasons that led to his trial. We have already entertained our readers with the débuts of Barthélemy and Méry. They are aware how these two poets came together and how the *Villéliade*, the *Peyronnéide*, the *Corbiéréide* and a host of other pieces were concocted which kept public attention spell-bound for a couple of years. The most important of these poems was *Napoléon en Égypte*. It took tremendously, and ran into ten editions in less than six months' time.

Méry, who had pined for sunshine, had gone to find warmth and sea breezes, those two opposing elements which are, however, admirably combined at Marseilles. Barthélemy, left alone, conceived the idea of going to Vienna to offer a copy of a poem to the young Duke of Reichstadt, wherein his father figured as the hero. To use Benjamin Constant's words, as the father had been *allowed* to die of political cancer, so the son was by way of being *allowed* to die of a disease of the chest. A charming dancer and a beautiful archduchess were the two strange doctors that Austria deputed to follow the progress of the prince's malady, which, three years later, became simply a matter of history.

Barthélemy's journey was, of course, useless: he was not allowed to approach the prince, and he brought back his poem without having been suffered to offer it to him. But Barthélemy's Odyssey had furnished him

with the subject of a new poem entitled the *Fils de l'Homme,* and this was the poem that was denounced by the law. Barthélemy proclaimed beforehand his intention of defending himself in verse. Of course, such a proclamation as this filled the Police Court where this poetical trial was to be held, from eight o'clock in the morning. Barthélemy kept his word. Here are some of the lines of that singular pleading which is without precedent the annals of justice.

"Messieurs," he began,--

"Voilà donc mon délit! sur un faible poëme La critique en simarre appelle l'anathème; Et ces vers, ennemis de la France et du roi, Témoins accusateurs, se dressent contre moi! Hélas! durant les nuits dont la paix me conseille, Quand je forçais mes yeux à soutenir la veille, Et que seul, aux lueurs de deux mourants flambeaux, De ce pénible écrit j'assemblais les lambeaux, Qui m'eût dit que cette œuvre, en naissant étouffée, D'un greffe criminel déplorable trophée, Appellerait un jour sur ces bancs ennemis Ma muse, vierge encor des arrêts de Thémis? Peut-être ai-je failli; mais, crédule victime, Moi-même, j'ai bien pu m'aveugler sur mon crime, Puisque des magistrats, vieux au métier des lois M'ont jugé non coupable une première fois. Aussi, je l'avoûrai, la foudre inattendue, Du haut du firmament à mes pieds descendue, D'une moindre stupeur eût frappé mon esprit, Que le soir si funeste à mon livre proscrit Où d'un pouvoir jaloux les sombres émissaires Se montraient en écharpe à mes pâles libraires, Et, craignant d'ajourner leur gloire au lendemain, Cherchaient *le Fils de l'homme*, un mandat à la main. Toutefois, je rends grâce au hasard tutélaire Qui, sauvant un ami de mes torts solidaire, Sur moi seul de la loi suspend l'arrêt fatal. Triste plus que moi-même, au rivage natal Il attend aujourd'hui l'heure de la justice. S'il eût été présent, il serait mon complice. Éternels compagnons dans les mêmes travaux, Forts de notre union, frères et non rivaux, Jusqu'ici, dans l'arène à nos forces permise, Nos deux noms enlacés n'eurent qu'une devise, Et jamais l'un de nous, reniant son appui, N'eût voulu d'un laurier qui n'eût été qu'à

lui. Trois ans, on entendit notre voix populaire Harceler les géants assis au ministère; Trois ans, sur les élus du conseil souverain Nos bras ont agité le fouet alexandrin; Et jamais l'ennemi, froissé de nos victoires, N'arrêta nos élans par des réquisitoires. Mais, dès le jour vengeur où, captive longtemps, La foudre du Château gronda sur les titans, Suspendant tout à coup ses longues philippiques, Notre muse plus fière, osant des chants épiques, Évoqua du milieu des sables africains Les soldats hasardeux des temps républicains, Et montra réunis en faisceau militaire, Les drapeaux lumineux du Thabor et du Caire; De nos cœurs citoyens là fut le dernier cri; Notre muse se tut, et, tandis que Méry Allait sous le soleil de la vieille Phocée Ressusciter un corps usé par la pensée, 'J'osai, vers le Danube égarant mon essor, A la cour de Pyrrhus chercher le fils d'Hector.' Je portais avec soin, dans mes humbles tablettes, Ces dons qu'aux pieds des rois déposent les poëtes, Et, poëte, j'allais pour redire à son fils L'histoire d'un soldat, aux plaines de Memphis. Voilà tout le complot d'un long pèlerinage. Un pouvoir soupçonneux repoussa mon hommage, Et, moi, loin d'un argus que rien n'avait fléchi, Je repassai le Rhin, imprudemment franchi."

The above was his defence as regarded facts. When he had defended its theme Barthélemy went on to its form; he complained of the method of interpretation which judges of all times have pushed to extremes, so that they persecute whether under the elder or the younger branch of the Bourbons, whether under M. Cavaignac or under M. Louis-Bonaparte; he said--

"Pourtant, voilà mon crime! Un songe, une élégie Me condamne moi-même à mon apologie! Partout, sur ce vélin, je frissonne de voir Des vers séditieux soulignés d'un trait noir; Le doigt accusateur laisse partout sa trace, Et je suis criminel jusque dans ma préface; Ah! du moins, il fallait, moins prompt à me juger Pour me juger, tout lire et tout interroger; Il fallait, surmontant les ennuis de l'ouvrage, Jusqu'au dernier feuillet forcer votre courage, Et, traversant mon livre un scalpel à la

main, Avancer hardiment jusqu'au bout du chemin. Certes, si comme vous on dépeçait un livre, Combien peu d'écrivains seraient dignes de vivre! Qu'on pourrait aisément trouver de noirs desseins Jusque dans l'Évangile et les ouvrages saints! Ma prose est toujours prête à disculper ma muse; La note me défend quand le texte m'accuse; D'un tissu régulier pourquoi rompre le fil? De quel droit venez-vous, annotateur subtil, Dédaignant mon histoire, attaquer mon poëme, Prendre comme mon tout la moitié de moi-même, Et, fort de ma pensée arrêtée au milieu, Diviser contre moi l'indivisible aveu? Mais j'ose plus encor, fort de mon innocence, Armé du texte seul, j'accepte la défense; Seulement, n'allez pas, envenimant mes vers, D'un sens clair et précis extraire un sens pervers! Gardez-vous de chercher, trop savant interprète, Sous ma lucide phrase une énigme secrète! Ainsi, quand vous lirez: 'qu'à mes yeux éblouis, La gloire a dérobé les fils de saint Louis; Qu'aveuglément soumis aux droits de la puissance, Je ne me doutais pas, dans mon adolescence, Que l'héritier des lys, exilé de Mittau, Régnait chez les Anglais dans un humble château, Et que, depuis vingt ans, sa bonté paternelle! Rédigeait pour son peuple une charte éternelle!' Lisez de bonne foi comme chacun me lit. Pourquoi vous tourmenter à flairer un délit, A tourner ma franchise en coupable ironie, A voir un seul côté de mon double génie? Voulez-vous donc me lire aux lueurs du fanal Dont la sainte *Gazette* escorte son journal, Et, serrant vos deux mains à nuire intéressées, Exprimer du poison en tordant mes pensées?"

Those are certainly the well-turned lines of a very clever versifier if not of a great poet. At Athens, before the Areopagitica where Æschylus pleaded his cause, M. Barthélemy would have been acquitted! But what could he expect? We are not Athenians, and our judges are by no means archons.

The poet proceeded, nevertheless, although it was easy to read, in the frowning faces of the judges, their want of sympathy with the defence of the accused.

Again let us listen to Barthélemy:--

"Jusqu'ici, l'on m'a vu, d'un tranquille visage, Conquérir pour ma cause un facile avantage. J'ai vengé sans effort, dans mon livre semés, Quelques vers, quelques mots par Thémis décimés. Redoublons de courage: un grand effort nous reste; Abordons sans pâlir ce passage funeste, De l'un à l'autre bout chargé de sombres croix! Là, sapant par mes vœux le palais de nos rois, Ébranlant de l'État la base légitime, D'un sang usurpateur j'appelle le régime, J'invoque la Discorde aux bras ensanglantés! Est-il vrai? Suis-je donc si coupable?... Écoutez! 'Il sait donc désormais, il n'a plus à connaître Ce qu'il est, ce qu'il fut et ce qu'il pouvait être. Oh! que tu dois souvent te dire et repasser Dans quel large avenir tu devais te lancer! Combien dans ton berceau fut court ton premier rêve Doublement protégé par le droit et le glaive, Des peuples rassurés espoir consolateur, Petit-fils d'un César, et fils d'un empereur, Légataire du monde, en naissant roi de Rome, Tu n'es plus aujourdhui rien que le *fils de l'homme!* Pourtant, quel fils de roi contre ce nom obscur N'échangerait son titre et son sceptre futur? Mais quoi! content d'un nom qui vaut un diadème, Ne veux-tu rien, un jour, conquérir par toi-même? La nuit, quand douze fois ta pendule a frémi, Qu'aucun bruit ne sort plus du palais endormi, Et que, seul au milieu d'un appartement vide, Tu veilles, obsédé par ta pensée avide, Sans doute que parfois sur ton sort à venir Un démon familier te vient entretenir. Oui, tant que ton aïeul, sur ton adolescence, De sa noble tutelle étendra la puissance, Les jaloux archiducs, comprimant leur orgueil, Du vieillard tout-puissant imiteront l'accueil; Mais qui peut garantir cette paix fraternelle? Peut-être en ce moment la mort lève son aile; Tôt ou tard, au milieu de ses gardes hongrois, Elle mettra la faulx sur le doyen des rois. Alors, il sera temps d'expliquer ce problème D'un sort mystérieux ignoré de toi-même. Fils de Napoléon, petit-fils de François, Entre deux avenirs il faudra faire un choix. Puisses-tu, dominé par le sang de ta mère, Bannir de ta pensée une vaine chimère, Et de l'ambition éteindre le flambeau! Le destin qui te

reste est encore assez beau; Les rois ont grandement consolé ton jeune âge; Le duché de Reichstadt est un riche apanage, Et tu pourras, un jour, colonel allemand, Conduire à la parade un noble régiment! Qu'à ce but désormais ton jeune cœur aspire; Borne là tes désirs, ta gloire et ton empire. Des règnes imprévus ne gardons plus l'espoir, Ce qu'on vit une fois ne doit plus se revoir!'"

Not so, O poet! We shall never see again what we have seen; the phantom child which you have invoked from its premature grave was only to be seen by history as a pale spectre held up to view in a dim poetic distance, as Astyanax or Britannicus; the days that have been we shall know no more. But the future was reserving a still more extraordinary vision for us, which was to confirm the words Dr. Schlegel said to me in 1838: "History has been invented to prove the futility of the examples she sets before us."

Meanwhile Barthélemy was being sentenced to three months' imprisonment and a fine of 1000 francs, in spite of, or perhaps because of, his pleading. But if the prisoner had not done with Justice, neither had Justice done with the prisoner. Barthélemy was hardly inside the prison before he received the following letter from M. Guillebert, Registrar:--

"PARIS, 6 *May* 1830

"MONSIEUR,--I had the honour of asking you in my letter of 22 March last, to settle the fines and expenses which you were sentenced to pay by order of the Royal Court on 7 January last, amounting to:--

Invoice

francs

Fine.. 1,000 00

Ten per cent.. 100 00

Legal expenses and appeal ditto.. 81 45

Total, 1,181 45

"I repeat my request, as I made a mistake in my first application, for 1208 francs 95 centimes. I beg you to discharge these payments by the 10th instant, to avoid the putting into execution of legal methods according to Article 52 of the *Code pénal.*

"I have the honour to remain

"GUILLEBERT, *Registrar"*

And M. Guillebert, who would have been as polite to any prisoner but would, undoubtedly, not have been so punctilious with him if he had not been a poet, had the complaisance to put that 52nd Article of the *Code pénal*, to which he alluded so delicately, in a postscript. This is the article which, I suppose, has remained unaltered under the government of King Louis-Philippe I., and under that of M. Bonaparte:--

Article 52

"Distraining for fines, restitutions, damages and interest, and for costs, can be enforced by means of imprisonment."

To this letter Barthélemy replied, on 9 May 1830, by an epistle entitled *La Bourse ou la Prison.* But in comparison with Fontan and Magallon, Barthélemy had nothing to complain of: he was lodged in a palace. The palace was rent free, but he gives us the tariff for the cost of furnishing it:--

francs

Ordinary bed, two mattresses, sheets, one blanket and bolster 4 50

For every extra blanket. 6 50

One pillow 9 50

One chair. 6 50

One table..... 6 50

Total, 33 50

And it was by these actions that the Government was alienating itself from the people by the scandalous trials of Carbonneau, Pleignies and Tolleron successively; from the army by the executions of Bories, Raoul, Goubin and Pommier; from the high military aristocracy by the assassination of Brune, Ramel, Ney and Mouton-Duverney; from the middle classes by the dissolution of the National Guard; and was alienating a race far more dangerous still, namely poets, journalists and men of letters, by the sentences which struck successively such men as Paul-Louis Courier, Cauchois-Lemaire, Magallon, Béranger, Fontan and Barthélemy.

Now, a Government which has the people, the army, the middle classes and literature opposed to it is in a very bad way, and this Government was therefore in a very bad way on 31 July 1829, on which day it pronounced its sentence on Barthélemy; exactly a year later, to the day, it was defunct.

Finally, an anecdote I am just about to relate will prove that I partially foresaw the trend of coming events. My new position in the library of the Duc d'Orléans (a post which, as I have already pointed out to my readers, was more honorary than lucrative) possessed the great advantage to me of affording me an immense office, where I could carry on my literary and historical researches nearly as well as, and far more comfortably than, in the Bibliothèque royale. So I was more regular in my attendance than either of my two confrères, Vatout and Casimir Delavigne. Accordingly, one day, when the Duc d'Orléans came in, humming a tune from one of the masses--a habit of his when he was in a good temper, which, I must say, he nearly always was--he remarked:

"So! are you by yourself, M. Dumas?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

The Duc d'Orléans took two or three turns round the library, still continuing his singing. Then he went on, a moment later--

"Neither Vatout, nor Casimir, nor Tallencourt?..."

"MM. Vatout and Casimir have not come, monseigneur, and Tallencourt has gone out."

Twice again he perambulated round the library, still humming to himself. He evidently wished to enter into conversation, so I ventured to ask him--

"Does monseigneur want anything I can do in the absence of the other gentlemen?"

"No; I wanted to show Vatout an historic portrait and to ask his opinion."

"Unhappily, as monseigneur needs advice, I am afraid I am no substitute for M. Vatout."

"Come with me, nevertheless," said the duke.

I bowed and followed the prince from the library to the picture gallery.

Upon an easel rested a portrait that had just been brought back from the framer; it was waiting for the name of the original to be painted on the frame. It was a portrait of the emperor, painted by Manzaisse. To find, in 1829, a portrait of the emperor in the palace of the first prince of the blood royal was such a novel species of boldness that I could do nothing but wonder at it.

"What do you think of that portrait?" asked the Duc d'Orléans.

"I am "not very fond of the paintings of M. Mauzaisse, monseigneur."

"Ah, true, I forgot you were a romanticist in painting and in literature. You admire the painting of M. Delacroix?"

"Yes, monseigneur; also of M. Delacroix, M. Scheffer, M. Granet, M. Decamps, M. Boulanger, M. Eugène Devéria--oh! we allow a wide margin!"

"Excellent! I am aware you know all about these gentlemen--but that is not to my present purpose. This is a portrait which I have just had painted for my gallery; and there is nothing wanting, as you see, except the insertion of the name. Ought I to put *Bonaparte?* It would look like affectation only to recognise the First Consul. Ought I to put *Napoléon?* It would seem an affectation to call him emperor; that was the point on which I wished to consult Vatout."

"But," I replied, "it seems a very simple matter to me; put *Napoléon Bonaparte*, monseigneur."

"Yes; but that still implies the emperor.... Napoleon, if my memory serves me correctly, was unjust to your family and you have no love for him, I believe."

"Monseigneur, I must confess that where that great man is concerned I share Madame Turenne's opinion of him, that of admiration."

"He was a great man; but there were two terrible blots on his character--one was a crime, the other a fault--his assassination of the Duc d'Enghien, and his marriage with Marie-Louise."

"Does monseigneur pardon his usurpation?"

"I did not say so."

"Monseigneur knows the *Médecin malgré lui?*"

"Yes, I admire it immensely."

"Well, in the *Médecin malgré lui* Sganarille remarks that there are fagots *and* fagots."

"Meaning, I presume ...?"

"That there are usurpations and usurpations."

"Bah!"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"I do not understand your meaning."

"I mean to say--and you who are so fair-minded, monseigneur, will readily understand me--that there is a usurpation which substitutes one dynasty for another dynasty by the instrumentality of violence, breaking up all the roots of the old dynasty throughout the country, all the interests connected with it, leaving raw open wounds for long enough among the aristocracy and the middle and lower classes, which are slow to heal; and there is the usurpation which purely and simply substitutes one man for another, a green bough for a withered branch, and popularity for unpopularity--that is what I mean, monseigneur, by my two usurpations."

The Duc d'Orléans laughingly lifted up his hand, as though to stop me; but he let me finish, all the same.

"M. Dumas," he said to me, "that is a somewhat subtle question, and one which, if you must have it answered, should be referred to a council and not to a prince of the blood. However, you are right about the portrait; I will put *Napoléon Bonaparte*."

I bowed and withdrew to the library.

The duke remained in the picture gallery lost in thought.

BOOK III — CHAPTER V

CHAPTER V

The things that are the greatest enemies to the success of a play --The honesty of Mademoiselle Mars' as an actress--Her dressing-room --The habitués at her supper-parties--Vatout--Denniée--Becquet --Mornay--Mademoiselle Mars in her own home--Her last days on the stage --Material result of the success of *Henri III.*--My first speculation--The recasting of *Christine*--Where I looked for my inspiration--Two other ideas

At the thirty-fifth representation of *Henri III.* Mademoiselle Mars was obliged to take her holiday. She did her utmost to persuade the Comédie-Française to compensate her for this holiday; she gave them every possible facility, but the Comédie-Française would not listen to anything. The success of *Henri III.* served certain interests but wounded certain *amour-propres.* At the Comédie-Française one suffers from a peculiarity unknown, or very nearly so, in any other theatre. The author whose piece is being acted makes enemies of all the actors who are not taking part in it.

Towards the close of the run of *Henri III.* I noticed Monrose, an excellent comedian whose talents should have raised him above the paltry jealousies of those of lesser genius, come into the green-room, rubbing his hands together and exclaiming gleefully--

"Ah! we have taken five hundred francs less to-night than at the last representation!"

I was present--he had not perceived me at first, and, when he caught sight of me, he pretended not to have seen me, and went away.

Mademoiselle Mars was on the point of renouncing her holiday, so reluctant was she to interrupt the success of the run.

Mademoiselle Mars was an exceedingly straightforward, honest actress, I nearly said an honest *man*, and punctiliously accurate; everyone did his duty when connected with her, because she did hers as carefully as a pupil during her first year at a boarding-school. Once only was she a few minutes late at a rehearsal.

"I beg your pardon for being a quarter of an hour late," she said as she came in; "but I have just lost forty thousand francs.... Let us be quick and begin." And she rehearsed as though nothing had happened.

Once, when she was going on the stage, she had a sort of apoplectic fit; but, instead of interrupting the play, as any other actress would have done, she sent for leeches, and between the first and third acts she took advantage of the second act, in which she did not have to appear, to apply them to her chest. When I entered her dressing-room after the play, she was covered with blood down to her slippers.

Mademoiselle Mars had a very large room--the same that Mademoiselle Rachel now has. At the end of each performance the room was always filled with people. Mademoiselle Mars did not trouble herself in the least about her visitors being present; she would undress and take off her paint and rouge with a modest dexterity quite remarkable: she had in particular a way of changing her chemise while talking, without showing anything of her person beyond her finger tips, that was a *tour de force.* When her toilet was complete, those who wished to accompany her home went with her and found a supper ready. The regular attenders at these suppers were Vatout, Romieu, Denniée, Becquet and myself, among men, and Julienne, her lady-companion--a character--the beautiful Amigo, the fair Madame Mira, and sometimes an old lady named Fusil.

Mornay called every evening to conduct Mademoiselle Mars to the theatre, or saw her safely home.

My readers are acquainted with Romieu; I introduced him in company with his friend Rousseau. So as I have nothing fresh to tell about him, I will pass him over.

But I have hardly as yet described Vatout; Madame Valmore took him off well when she dubbed him a "*butterfly in top-boots.*" Vatout was full of small defects and great qualities. He would superciliously hold out a finger to you if you offered to shake hands with him, and he put on the airs of a grand seigneur without ever succeeding in being mistaken for a grand seigneur. He had a good heart in spite of his uppish manners; and a charming mind behind his awkward appearance. He had a way of saying certain things that did not sit at all well on him. One of his monstrous affectations was to try and resemble the Duc D'Orléans; I have even been assured that, in confidence, he let people draw conclusions about this resemblance. The Duc d'Orléans was very fond of him and, when king, maintained his friendship with him. At the *Cour Citoyenne* they quoted his quips and sang his chansons. There was one in particular about the Mayor of Eu, which became the rage. Will our modest readers allow us to insert it here? for, to our way of thinking, it constituted his worthiest claim to the Académie. Do not let us do injustice to poor Vatout.

LE MAIRE D'EU

AIR--*à faire*

"L'ambition, c'est des bêtises; Ça vous rend triste et soucieux; Mais, dans le vieux manoir des Guises. Qui ne serait ambitieux?... Tourmenté du besoin de faire Quelque chose dans ce beau lieu, J'ai brigué l'honneur d'être maire, Et l'on m'a nommé maire d'Eu!

Notre origine n'est pas claire ... Rollon nous gouverna jadis; Mais César fut-il notre père, Où descendons-nous, de Smerdis? Dans l'embarras de

ma pensée, Un mot peut tout concilier: Nous sommes issus de Persée; Voyez plutôt mon mobilier!

Je ne suis pas fort à mon aise: Ma mairie est un petit coin, Et mon trône une simple chaise Qui me sert en cas de besoin; Mes habits ne sentent pas l'ambre: Mon équipage brille peu; Mais que m'importe! un pot de chambre Suffit bien pour un maire d'Eu!

On vante partout ma police; Ce qu'on fait ne m'échappe pas. A tous je rends bonne justice; J'observe avec soin tous, les cas. On ne peut ni manger ni boire Sans que tout passe sous mes yeux; Mais c'est surtout les jours de foire Qu'on me voit souvent sur les lieux.

Grâce aux roses que l'on recueille Dans mon laborieux emploi, Je préfère mon portefeuille A celui des agents du roi. Je brave les ordres sinistres Qui brise leur pouvoir tout net; Et, plus puissant que les ministres, J'entre, en tout temps, au cabinet.

Je me complais dans mon empire; Il ne me cause aucun souci; Moi, j'aime l'air que l'on y respire; On voit, on sent la mer d'ici! Partout l'aisance et le bien-être; Ma vie est un bouquet de fleurs.. Aussi j'aime beaucoup mieux être Maire d'Eu que maire d'ailleurs!

Beau château bâti par les Guises, Mer d'azur baignant le Tréport, Lieux où Lauzun fit des bêtises, Je suis à vous jusqu'à la mort; Je veux, sous l'écharpe française, Mourir en sénateur romain, Calme et tranquille sur ma chaise Tenant mes papiers à la main!'

Vatout was also the author of the famous *mot* said to an official who, accompanying the king down a by-street which the latter was determined to penetrate, made excuses at each step for the obstructions they encountered. Many hens had laid there, of the type of which Henri IV. had remarked, "Stop, stop, mother! I much prefer to see the hen than the egg!"

"Oh, sire," said the poor fellow,--"oh, sire, had I only known your Majesty intended passing this way, I would have had them all cleared away."

"You would not have had the right to do that, M. le maire," Vatout gravely remarked; "they have their papers!"

Between 1821 and 1822 Vatout wrote a book which was an enormous success. It was about the adventures of la Charte and was entitled *Histoire de la fille d'un Roi.* Later, he wrote *Idée fixe*, which was scarcely read; then, some sort of a novel called the *Conspiration de Cellamare*; finally, various publications about the royal châteaux. In all, nothing very striking; but nevertheless he was consumed with the desire to become an Academician, Scribe urging him to it. He reached his goal, poor fellow; but in the interval between his nomination and his reception, being as faithful to the royal cause during its exile as he had been in the heyday of its powerfulness, he went to pay a visit to the exiles at Claremont, where he was taken ill after dinner, and died twenty-four hours later! He died without having had the joy of sitting once in the Académie! Poor Vatout! No one, I am sure, did him greater justice or regretted him more than I did. I obtained Hugo's vote for him with much difficulty.

The whole of Parisian society knew Denniée, ex-ordonnateur-general, who, man of wit and pleasure-seeker as he was, talked as though his mouth were full of nutshells, and told a host of stories and anecdotes, each more strange and amusing than the last, with such a defective pronunciation that they acquired a convincing air of originality. He worshipped Mademoiselle Mars, who was very fond of him in return. If three days went Dy without Denniée being seen at her house, one asked what had become of him; for nothing but illness or an accident could, it was supposed, account for so long an absence.

Becquet was as well known as Denniée: perhaps he was even better known. He was one of the weekly contributors to the *Journal des Débâts.*

He was exceedingly clever; but, as he got drunk regularly once a day, his intellect gradually became dulled. Two often quoted sayings of his will serve to illustrate the sort of respect and filial affection he had for his father. Once when Becquet the elder took his son to task concerning his unfortunate habit of drunkenness, saying to him.

"See, you wretch, how it is ageing you; you will be taken for my father, and I shall outlive you by ten years!"

"Ah!" Becquet languidly retorted, "why do you always say such disagreeable things to me?"

Becquet possessed another habit, that of contracting debts. He owed money to everybody, and this widespread indebtedness reduced his father to despair.

"Wretch!" he said to him, on another occasion,--this was old Becquet's usual term for his son, sometimes used as an adjective, at others as a substantive,--"Wretch!" he said, "by God and the devil, I cannot conceive how you can live like this."

"Stay, father," Becquet replied, "you have just mentioned the only two powers to whom I do not owe anything."

The day his father died--it is sad to relate that it was a festival-day for Becquet, who made merry in heart and purse--he dined at the *café de Paris* and ordered his menu like a man who is regardless of cost; but, when it came to the wine, he called the waiter; some doubt had probably arisen in his mind, and he wished the opinion of an expert.

"Waiter," he asked, "is the Bordeaux in mourning?"

Two hours later, they carried Becquet home.

One night, I met Becquet in one of those marvellous states of intoxication that he alone could carry off in such lordly style. It was on the 21st of January.

"What!" said I to him, "drunk on this day of all days, Becquet?"

"May I ask if there is, perchance, any day on which a man may not be drunk if he likes?" asked the author of *Mouchoir bleu* in amazement.

"Certainly, I should have thought there was, especially for you who are a Royalist, it being the anniversary of the death of Louis XVI."

Becquet seemed to reflect for an instant over the gravity of my observation; then, placing a hand on my shoulder--

"If they had not cut off the head of good King Louis XVI., do you suppose he would be dead now?"

"It is more than probable."

"Well, then," said Becquet, carelessly snapping his fingers, "how can you say anything to me?"

And off he went with the aplomb of the drunkard, who, from long practice, has learnt to be superior to the general run of drinkers in being always able to walk straight when intoxicated.

It was when dead-drunk, after having left the house of Mademoiselle Mars, that Becquet wrote the famous article for the *Journal des Débats* which concluded with the following words, and which overthrew the monarchy:--

"Malheureuse France! Malheureux roi!" "Unfortunate France! Unfortunate King!"

Becquet died of drink and died whilst drinking. For the last six months of his life he was never sober: his eyes became dull and expressionless; his

actions were involuntary and instinctive; his hand mechanically felt for the bottle to pour wine into his glass, which he had not sufficient strength to empty. To the last moment, Mademoiselle Mars received him with the whole-hearted friendship that was one of her finest virtues. When Becquet died, she had not the heart to regret him although she shed tears at the news.

Mornay formed a singular contrast to all those of whom I have been speaking. Mornay was elegant and aristocratic, he was the *gentry* personified, and, in addition to all these qualifications, he had as much wit as all the rest of us put together. When Mornay was appointed plenipotentiary, and left first for the grand-duchy of Baden, and afterwards for Sweden, Mademoiselle Mars lost the brightest star of her salon. There are minds which possess the qualities of well-seasoned tinder, and set fire to all around with whom they come in contact; Mornay was one of these; the rest of us served him for flint. When, perchance, he happened to be too fatigued to use his own wits, he counted on our supplying his deficiency. Mornay had no fortune; but Mademoiselle Mars left him an income of 40,000 livres per annum at her death. He took down a portrait of her, which he carried away with him, remarking, "That is the only thing to which I have a right here," and he left the 40,000 livres per annum to the heirs of Mademoiselle Mars.

Mademoiselle Mars at the theatre, and Mademoiselle Mars in her private home, were two quite different beings. On the stage, her voice was entrancing, almost like a song, and her looks were endearing and soft, full of bewitching charm. At home, her voice was harsh, she looked almost hard and her movements were brusque and impatient. Her theatrical voice was acquired, an instrument on which she had been taught to play and which she played marvellously well, but she rightly mistrusted it when she had to express great crises of passion, or to give effect to great heights of poesy; she was afraid then of straining her gentle notes, and she almost envied Madame Dorval her hoarse, raucous

voice which enabled her to utter piteous cries that went straight to the heart. I never knew anyone who was more modest about her talents than was Mademoiselle Mars: she never spoke of herself, her triumphs, or her creations; she admired her father, Mouvel, profoundly; she was his pupil, and it gave her evident pleasure to talk of him. She was also a great admirer of Mademoiselle Contat, and it was odd to hear her confessing her inferiority to this great actress, in regard to certain points of art. I cannot say if all the tales told about the age of Mademoiselle Mars be true, but I know she never concealed a week of it from her friends. She had a marble sculpture by Boule, in her salon, which had been given by Queen Marie-Antoinette to her mother because they had both been confined on the same day. Therefore, Mademoiselle Mars must have been exactly the same age as the Duchesse d'Angoulême, who was born on 19 December 1778. When Mademoiselle Mars liked, she could be charming, for she possessed a great fund of humour; her voice was just the voice that could imitate, and when she criticised the members of the Comédie-Française, from Mademoiselle Plessy to Ligier, it was tersely but capitally done. She showed much kindness towards and interest in persons whom she thought to possess talent, and would help them with her advice, her talent and her influence. She once rescued a clown who was performing in the square at Metz and never rested until she had found a small position for him. She recommended him to me in 1833 or 1834, but I had no opportunity of giving him a part for fifteen or eighteen years, when I entrusted him with the rôle of Lorrain in the *Barrière de Clichy.* The man's name was Patonnelle and he was one of the best riders at the Cirque.

In common with Talma, Mademoiselle Mars saw her reputation go on increasing to the very day on which she finally left the stage. Her last creation, Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle, was one of her happiest performances. I was her latest supporter at the theatre and, in all

probability, I had the good fortune of prolonging her career for two or three years.

The latter days of her period at the Comédie-Française were tinged with bitterness. One day, at an extra performance, someone threw a crown of immortelles at her feet, such as are placed upon tombs. It had been put together in one of the very boxes of the theatre, and I could, if I chose, mention in whose. When she left the stage the same thing occurred as after the loss of Talma. Everyone believed himself capable of replacing Talma, and everyone hoped to replace Mademoiselle Mars: they attempted it in their old rôles; they invented new ones. Managers and papers did their part by puffing and praising budding reputations. They had Turenne's money;--had they even the money of Mademoiselle Mars?...

Although *Henri III.* did not bring any very great wealth to our household, it had, nevertheless, produced a considerable change: first and foremost it had freed us from debt; it had repaid Porcher and M. Laffitte; it had permitted us to quit our humble lodgings in the rue Saint-Denis and to hire for my mother a set of rooms on the ground floor, with a garden, at No. 7 rue Madame. She had been recommended to have air and exercise, and I chose that street and quarter so as to be close to Mesdames Villenave and Waldor, who from family reasons had left their house in the rue de Vaugirard and taken a suite of apartments at No. 11 rue Madame. I had hired a separate room for myself, on the fourth floor, at the corner of rue de l'Université and the rue du Bac, and, as my new position brought me visitors from among the ladies and gentlemen of the Théâtre-Français, I made this room as pretty as I could afford.

As I had learnt from past experience never to trust too much to the future, I had compounded for my food for one year, paying 1800 francs in advance; or, to be more exact, I paid for 365 breakfast coupons and 365 dinner tickets, wine not included. Unluckily, a month after I had made

this arrangement, the Café Desmares went bankrupt, and I lost my year's payment and meals. It was my first speculation, and it turned out badly, it will be seen.

Meanwhile, I had been receiving reproaches from an exceedingly charming young lady at the Théâtre-Français, who grumbled because, after having had an insignificant part in *Henri III.* there was none at all for her in *Christine*--for I still flattered myself with the hope that my *Christine* would yet be played at the Théâtre-Français, in spite of the delay owing to M. Brault, who had died meanwhile; and now the Comédie-Française was not in a hurry to take up either. Her reproaches went home, as they were deserved, and I felt I owed her a double reparation. I therefore replied--

"Set your mind at rest: I will recast *Christine* in order to make it more dramatic and up to date, and something shall come out of the transformation that will, I hope, satisfy you."

The mind of a worker is often full of singular prejudices, which are sometimes odd enough to border upon mania: at times he imagines he can only conceive his schemes in such and such a place; at others, that he can only write his play on some special kind of paper. I got it into my head that I could only evolve a fresh *Christine* out of my old *Christine* if I took a short journey, and was rocked by the motion of a carriage. As I was not yet rich enough to go in a carriage, I chose a diligence; it did not matter where the diligence was going, provided I had the *coupé*, the inside or the *rotonde* to myself. I went to the cour des Messageries and, after a couple of hours' waiting, I found what I wanted, a coach with no passenger in the *coupé.* The diligence was bound for Havre. This was, indeed, a chance for me, for I had never been to a seaport, and I should be killing two birds with one stone. In those days it took fully twenty hours to go from Paris to Havre; this, again, suited me well enough. Inspiration would have plenty of time to work, or it would never come at all. I set off

and, as imagination, naturally, plays a principal part in works of art, when my imagination had what it wanted in the way of external conditions for working, it began to work. By the time I reached Havre, my play was recast; I had divided the scenes between Stockholm, Fontainebleau and Rome, and the character of Paula rose out of this fresh genesis. It meant a complete overhauling and rewriting of the entire play, and very little was left of the original one. Although I was in great haste to set to work, I did not start back again to Paris before I had seen the sea. I stayed at Havre just long enough to eat some oysters, to have a sail on the sea, and to buy a couple of china vases which I could have got cheaper in Paris, and then I got into the diligence. In seventy-two hours I had been my journey and reconstructed my play.

I have spoken of the strange prejudices which imperiously impose certain conditions under which work shall be fulfilled. No one is less of a maniac than myself; nobody who acquires the habit of working incessantly, as I did, could work with greater ease than I, and yet, three times, I have felt absolutely compelled to obey a caprice. The first occasion I have just related; the second was over the composition of *Don Juan de Marana*, and the third was connected with *Capitaine Paul.* I was possessed with the notion that I could only conceive my fantastic drama to the sound of some music. I asked for tickets from my friend Zimmermann, for the Conservatoire, and, in the corner of a box together with three strangers, my eyes closed as though I were asleep, soothed into semi-unconsciousness by Beethoven and Weber, I composed the principal scenes of my drama in two hours.

It was different in the case of *Capitaine Paul*: I needed sea, a wide horizon, clouds scudding across the sky, and breezes whistling through the rigging and masts of ships. I went a voyage to Sicily and anchored my little boat for a couple of hours at the entrance to the Straits of Messina. In two days' time *Capitaine Paul* was finished.

On my return, I found a letter from Hugo. The success of *Henri III.* had inspired him with the desire to write a drama, and he invited me to go and hear it read at the house of Devéria. That drama was *Marion Delorme.*

BOOK III — CHAPTER VI

CHAPTER VI

Victor Hugo--His birth--His mother--Les Chassebœuf and les Comet--Captain Hugo--The signification of his name--Victor's godfather--The Hugo family in Corsica--M. Hugo is called to Naples by Joseph Bonaparte--He is appointed colonel and governor of the province of Avellino--Recollections of the poet's early childhood--Fra Diavolo--Joseph, King of Spain--Colonel Hugo is made a general, count, marquis and major-domo--The Archbishop of Tarragona--Madame Hugo and her children in Paris--The convent of Feuillantines

We will now devote a few pages to the author of *Marion Delorme*, *Notre-Dame de Paris* and *Orientales*; for we deem he is well worth the digression.

Victor Hugo was born on 26 March 1803. Where and under what conditions the poet himself tells us on the first page of his *Feuilles d'Automne*:--

"Ce siècle avait deux ans; Rome remplaçait Sparte; Déjà Napoléon perçait sous Bonaparte, Et du premier consul, trop gêné par le droit, Le front de l'empereur brisait le masque étroit. Alors, dans Besançon, vieille ville espagnole, Jeté comme la graine au gré de l'air qui vole, Naquit, d'un sang breton et lorrain à la fois, Un enfant sans couleur, sans regard et sans voix; Si débile, qu'il fut, ainsi qu'une chimère, Abandonné de tous, excepté de sa mère, Et que son cou, ployé comme un frêle roseau, Fit faire, en même temps, sa bière et son berceau. Cet enfant que la vie effaçait de son livre, Et qui n'avait pas même un lendemain à vivre, C'est moi...."

The child was, indeed, so weak that, fifteen months after his birth, he could not even hold up his head on his shoulders, but, as though it were already weighted with all the thoughts of which it only possessed the germ, it persistently fell forward on his breast.

The poet continues:--

"Je vous dirai peut-être, quelque jour, Quel lait pur, que de soins, que de vœux, que d'amour, Prodigués pour ma vie, en naissant condamnée, M'ont fait deux fois le fils de ma mère obstinée."

His mother, of Breton blood, who persevered in battling with death for the life of her child, like a true mother and a Bretonne, was the daughter of a rich ship-owner of Nantes, and granddaughter of one of the leaders of the *bourgeoisie* in that land of opposition. Furthermore, she was cousin-german to Constantin François, Count of Chassebœuf, who renounced that grand feudal name, reminiscent of the *barons pasteurs* of the Middle Ages, for that of Volney, which would merely remind one of the name of a provincial comedian, if the gentleman who had the strange fancy of taking that name had not made it famous by putting it at the beginning of his *Voyage en Égypte*, and at the end of his *Ruines*; she was, besides, cousin of another imperial celebrity, Comte Cornet, who was less literary in his tastes than political. Comte Cornet, whose name is now, perhaps, forgotten, was deputy for Nantes and one of the Conseil des Cinq-Cents; he took part in the doings of the famous 18 brumaire, which changed the aspect of France for half a century. Instead of defending the privileges of the Assembly, he supported Bonaparte's pretensions; and Napoleon, ont of gratitude, made him senator--the usual reward for such services--then count; and so that he should possess everything--in quantity if not in quality--that the members of the old nobility possessed, who had rallied round the Empire, he gave him a coat of arms; but, through one of those pleasantries which a crowned soldier sometimes permits himself, this coat of arms, which recalled the

somewhat plebeian origin of the person whom it was intended to ennoble, was azure with three cornets argent.

Madame Hugo's name was Sophie Trébuchet. She had, as we have seen, two peerages in her family, that of Comte Volney and that of Comte Cornet. Please remember this fact, for we shall have occasion again to refer to it. The Lorraine blood of which the poet sings came from his father, Joseph-Léopold-Sigisbert Hugo. From this side noble descent was quite undoubted; it sprang from an ancient German source.

His grandfather, Georges Hugo, was captain of the guards to some duke of Lorraine, and had been ennobled in 1531, by letters patent dated at Lillebonne, in Normandy, by this duke, who bestowed on him as coat of arms, on a field azure, *au chef d'argent*, two martlets in sable. Three martlets are, as is well known, the arms of the House of Lorraine. So the duke could not have done more for his captain; another martlet, and he would have put him on the same level with himself. But those who wish for fuller details than we give on this subject, and a greater authority, should consult Hozier, register IV., under the heading of *Hugo.* However, as we believe in the magic of names, we will give some information that Hozier does not give--namely, that the old German word *hugo* is equivalent to the Latin word *spiritus*, and means breath, soul, spirit!

The feebler a babe is, the more need there is for haste to baptize it. Major Sigisbert Hugo, in command at that time at Besançon, which was the depot of a Corsican regiment, seeing his third son was so delicate, looked round and selected Victor Faneau de la Horie for godparent, who was shot in 1812 for being the instigating spirit of the conspiracy of which Mallet was the active agent. And from him the poet received his Christian name of *Victor*, which, added to his surname, no matter whether it precedes or follows it, can be translated in no other way than to mean--

"Conquering spirit--triumphant soul--victorious breath!"

The poet never thought of calling himself by any other name than the accident of his birth had decreed, as had his maternal cousin Chassebœuf, and we shall even see later that, when the addition would have been useful to him, he declined to call himself Hugo-Cornet.

Victor's father was one of the rough champions bred by the Revolution; he took up arms in 1791, and did not sheathe his sword until 1815. Others kept theirs in use until 1830 and 1848, but it was rarely that it brought them good fortune. In 1795 he was a lieutenant and fought in the Vendéan War. It was his company which formed part of the detachment, led by Commandant Muscar, that took Charette in the forest of la Chabotière. By a strange coincidence, it was Colonel Hugo who captured Fra Diavolo in Calabria, and General Hugo who took Juan Martin, otherwise known as the *Empecinado*, on the banks of the Tagus; they were the three principal leaders of that great period of wars which lasted more than a quarter of a century. Of course it will be well understood that we do not compare the noble and loyal Charette with the Calabrian brigand or the Spanish bandit. Charette was shot, Fra Diavolo hung and Juan Martin garroted. After the peaceful settlement of la Vendée the lieutenant got his captaincy, left the Loire for the Rhine and civil war for foreign campaigns, and became attached to the general staff of Moreau, with whom he made the campaign of 1796; he next went into Italy, to serve in Masséna's army corps.

In connection with my father, I have mentioned what an antipathy Bonaparte felt towards officers who came to him already distinguished by their actions in the armies of the West and the Pyrenees and the North. Captain Sigisbert Hugo was yet another instance. At the battle of Caldiero, he was commanded by Masséna to hold the head of the bridge, with his company, and he was the pivot on which the fate of the whole battle turned; Masséna accordingly expected to be able to recompense this magnificent feat of arms by obtaining Captain Hugo his majority (*chef de bataillon*). But he had not reckoned for the general-in-chief's

hatred. Bonaparte asked whence Captain Hugo had come, and when he learnt that he had belonged to the Army of the Rhine, he cancelled the nomination. King Louis-Philippe did pretty much the same injustice to the general as Bonaparte had to the captain: the name of the battle of Caldiero is on the Triumphal Arch at Étoile, but that of General Hugo is not there. The poet avenged this strange oversight in the last line of his final stanza on the Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile:--

"Quand ma pensée ainsi, vieillissant ton attique, Te fait de l'avenir un passé magnifique, Alors, sous ta grandeur je me courbe effrayé; J'admire! et, fils pieux, passant que l'art anime, Je ne regrette rien devant ton mur sublime, Que Phidias absent, et mon père oublié!"

However, as Captain Hugo was not among the number of those who are beaten in their career, he obtained his majority at last, but under what circumstances I am not aware. However that may be, he was a major, and happened to be in garrison at Lunéville when the conferences for the ratification of the treaty of Campo-Formio were begun in that town. At these conferences Joseph Bonaparte, who was later King of Naples, then King of Spain and the Indies, was plenipotentiary of the Republic. I knew this King of Naples and Spain well at Florence. His disposition was more gentle than elevated, more placid than bold; like his brothers Louis and Lucien, and we might even say like his brother Napoleon, he had had at first a passion for literature; the others had written memoirs, comedies and epic poems, he had written novels. His daughter, Princess Zenaïde, who is now Princess of Canino, was, I believe, named after one of her father's heroines. Joseph Bonaparte, as plenipotentiary, became intimate with Major Hugo, who, as we have mentioned, joined the depot of the Corsican regiment at Besançon when the conferences were concluded. And we have also stated that it was there the famous poet was born of whom we are now writing.

Some months after his birth, the depot of which his father was in command received orders to undertake garrison duty on the isle of Elba. And on that island, where Napoleon began his decline and fall, the author of the *Ode à la Colonne*, or, rather, of the *Odes à la Colonne*, began to grow strong.

The first tongue that the child, who was predestined to be so celebrated, learnt to talk was Italian; and the first word he pronounced--after those two words with which all human voices, lips and tongues begin, *papa* and *mamma*--was an apostrophe to his governess: "*cattiva*!" he called out one day, before anyone knew he had learnt the meaning of the word. Perhaps it may not be generally known that *cattiva* means *naughty.* Of the isle of Elba the child remembers nothing, and nothing of his early sojourn among his fellow-men; nothing of this earliest halt on the threshold of his existence has remained in his memory.

In 1806 the plenipotentiary Joseph was made King of Naples; he then remembered his friend the major of Lunéville; he inquired what had become of him, learnt that he was living on the isle of Elba, and that he had been promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel, or, as it was still called in 1806, *gros-major.* He wrote to him and proposed he should come and join fortunes with him, and aid him in the establishment of his throne in the beautiful city which all ought to see before they die, and leave in order to die as soon as they have seen it. But no one dared venture on such military escapades without the permission of the master. Lieutenant-Colonel Hugo asked leave of the Emperor Napoleon to attach himself to King Joseph. The Emperor Napoleon condescended to reply that he not only authorised this change of service, but that he should be pleased to see a French element in his brother's armies, which were only the wings of his own army.

Frenchmen never take service in a foreign army without certain feelings of regret, but this army was destined to be one of the wings of the

National Army. And to ameliorate so far as he could the hardships of this exile, the newly made king promoted *gros-major* Hugo a colonel, made him an aide-de-camp and appointed him governor of the province of Avellino. When installed in his governorship, the husband sent for his wife and children, whom he longed to have near him. So, in 1807, Madame Hugo and her three sons set out for Naples; and the child continued the life of wandering which had begun in his cradle, and which, continued through his youth, was to be his lot to the threshold of manhood. It is to these long journeys taken in his dawning days that the poet alludes in the following lines:--

"Enfant, sur un tambour ma crèche fut posée; Dans un casque pour moi l'eau sainte fut puisée; Un soldat, m'ombrageant d'un belliqueux faisceau De quelque vieux lambeau d'une bannière usée, Fit les langes de mon berceau.

Parmi les chars poudreux, les armes éclatantes, Une muse des camps m'emporta sous les tentes. Je dormis sur l'affût des canons meurtriers; J'aimai les fiers coursiers aux crinières flottantes, Et l'éperon froissant les rauques étriers.

Avec nos camps vainqueurs, dans l'Europe asservie, J'errai; je parcourus la terre avant la vie, Et, tout enfant encor, des vieillards recueillis M'écoutaient, racontant d'une bouche ravie Mes jours si peu nombreux et déjà si remplis.

Je visitai cette île en noirs débris féconde, Plus tard premier degré d'une chute profonde! Le haut Cenis, dont l'aigle aime les rocs lointains, Entendit, de son antre où l'avalanche gronde, Ses vieux glaçons crier sous mes pas enfantins.

Vers l'Adige et l'Arno, je vins des bords du Rhône; Je vis de l'Occident l'auguste Babylone: Rome, toujours vivante au fond de ses tombeaux,

Reine du monde encor sur un débris de trône, Avec une pourpre en lambeaux.

Puis Turin; puis Florence, aux plaisirs toujours prête; Naple, aux bords embaumés où le printemps s'arrête, Et que Vésuve en feu couvre d'un dais brûlant, Comme un guerrier jaloux qui, témoin d'une fête, Jette, au milieu des fleurs, son panache sanglant?"

Happy, a hundred times happy, is the man who is able to embroider the web of his life with such magic characters! I too have had recollections similar to those of my literary brother, but I have expressed mine in humble prose, and I rejoice to find them expressed again in his splendid and sonorous poetry. Thence ascend the earliest recollections of the child, indelible recollections, which still shine clearly when extreme old age has come upon us, as a mirage reflects a vanished oasis.

Hugo, who had only once been across beautiful Italy, often talked to me about the grand pictures of it that remained on his memory; they were as present to his mind as though he had been my companion during my fifteen or twenty journeys therein! But he never remembered things in their normal conditions; they always recurred to him in connection with some momentary incident or accident that happened to have changed their ordinary aspect. Thus, Parma was remembered as surrounded by a flood; Acquapendente's volcanic peak stood out lit with the lightnings of a storm; the Trajan column in connection with the excavations that were being carried on round it. And yet his recollection was as exact as it could be. Florence, with its embattled inns, its massive palaces, its granite fortresses; Rome, with its leaping fountains, its obelisks which make it look like a town of ancient Egypt, and its colonnade of Bernino, twin-sister to that of the Louvre; Naples, with its promenades, its Pausilippe, its rue de Toledo, its bay, its isles and its Vesuvius. The three children had amused themselves on the long journey by making crosses with straw and putting them in the cracks between the glass doors and the

grooves they ran in. When the Italian peasants, especially those who lived in the neighbourhood of Rome, saw these simple Calvaries, faithful in their worship of images, they would kneel down or at least make the sign of the Cross. The young travellers had been much terrified at the sight of bandits' heads stuck on poles by the roadsides, shrivelling up in the sun. For a long time the poor children refused to believe they were really human heads, and persisted that they were bewigged masks like those hung outside all hairdressers' shops at that period; but when they were taken down and shown them, in all their hideous reality, they remained very deeply engraved on Victor's memory.

In the case of a man like Hugo, a genius out of the common run, who has already played and will still play a great part in the literary and political history of his country, it is the duty of those who knew him to depict him for his contemporaries and successors, in the light and shade which formed the character of the man and the genius of the poet. Let us hope that the genius of the poet will stand out flawless throughout our narrative: the character of the man will speak for itself by his line of conduct and his accomplished actions.

A home for Madame Hugo and her sons was not prepared for them at Naples, but at Avellino, capital of the province over which Colonel Hugo had been appointed governor. This home was in a palace, a palace of marble, like most palaces in that country, where marble is more common than stone; but this palace possessed a strange peculiarity which was certain to attract the attention and to remain in the memory of a child.

One of those shocks of earthquake which are common in the Italian peninsula had just shaken Calabria from end to end; the marble palace of Avellino had been shaken like the rest of the buildings; yet, being on a more solid foundation than they, after oscillating and trembling in the balance for a moment, it kept upright, but remained cracked from roof to base. The crack extended diagonally across the wall of Victor's bedroom,

so that he could see the country through this most original opening almost as plainly as through his window. The palace was built on a sort of precipice, lined with great nut trees, which produce the enormous nuts called *avelines* (filberts) from the name of the district in which they are grown. When these nuts reached maturity, the children spent their days wandering among the trees, hung over the abyss, to gather the bunches. No doubt this taught Hugo that familiarity with high places, that scorn of precipices and that indifference to empty space, which he possessed beyond most men and which filled me with admiration, for I turn giddy on the balcony of a first storey.

About this time, one of the bitterest enemies of the French was Michel Pezza, nicknamed Fra Diavolo, about whom my confrère Scribe composed a comic opera, although the life of the original was a most terrible drama! Fra Diavolo had begun as a brigand chief, something after the fashion of Cartouche, but with more cruelty. He practised that romantic profession, until Cardinal Ruffo, another brigand chief, only in a higher sphere of society, conceived the idea of reconquering Naples for his beloved sovereign Ferdinand I., who had abandoned his capital, disguised as a lackey, in consequence of the French invasion, which was provoked by his insolent proclamations.

Everyone knows the terrible story of the Two Sicilies, the orgies of blood presided over by two courtesans, in which a whole generation disappeared, and in which, in order to prevent the ruin of the State, they were obliged to give fixed salaries to the executioners, who had been having ten ducats per execution.

Fra Diavolo joined his band to Cardinal Ruffo's army, with which he marched upon Naples, recapturing it in company with the cardinal, and finally being made colonel (and even count, so I understand) by Ferdinand I. Nevertheless, Ferdinand I. returned to Sicily later, not only a fugitive before the French invasion, but also before a brother of the

emperor; and Fra Diavolo, with his rank of colonel and his title of count, started afresh his guerilla warfare and his brigandage. Colonel Hugo was commissioned to take him, and the price of 20,000 ducats was put on his head. He had already escaped once through a prodigious feat of audacity and address. He was pursued, hounded out and hemmed in on every side, with two hundred and fifty to three hundred men, the remnant of his band; but he hoped to be able to escape by a defile that he believed was known only to himself. So he had directed his course towards this defile, but, to his great surprise, he found this final way of escape guarded like the rest. His last hope had vanished! He had no means of turning back; they had tried every gorge and found a wall of bayonets barring the way.

"Come along, then; we have but one way left us!..." exclaimed Fra Diavolo. "Perhaps they may let us take it! Bind me hand and foot to a horse.... You have taken me prisoner, and are leading me to the French colonel to obtain your twenty thousand ducats, the price of my head. Leave the rest to my lieutenant and do as he does."

They had to hasten, for they were within sight of the French detachment, which was growing uneasy as to who the troop of men might be; moreover, they were accustomed, especially in desperate circumstances, to follow Fra Diavolo's instructions with blind obedience. In a second he was strapped and bound down, like Mazeppa, on a horse, and the cortège continued its way, making straight for the French detachment. This detachment was composed of five or six hundred men and was commanded by a major. When they saw the troop marching to them, the French battalion marched to meet it and the two corps came to close quarters. The Calabrian troop halted within a hundred feet of the French, and only the lieutenant, clad like a simple peasant, stepped forward out of the ranks and advanced towards the major.

"What is your business and who is the man you have strapped there?" demanded the major.

"That strapped man is Fra Diavolo," replied the lieutenant, "whom we have caught ... and we want the twenty thousand ducats promised for his head."

Instantly, the name of Fra Diavolo was passed from mouth to mouth.

"You have taken Fra Diavolo?" exclaimed the major.

"Yes," the lieutenant went on, "and, as proof, there he is, bound hand and foot and strapped to the horse."

Fra Diavolo's eyes flashed fire.

"How did you take him?" asked the major.

The lieutenant invented a fable, to the effect that Fra Diavolo, hunted, pursued, hemmed about, had sought shelter in a village which he believed to be friendly to him; but he had been arrested, seized and bound during the night, and the whole village had formed his escort for fear he should escape.

"Bandits! wretches! traitors!" exclaimed Fra Diavolo.

The explanation was all sufficient for the major; besides, the chief thing was that Fra Diavolo was caught; any accompanying explanations concerning the capture were mere questions of curiosity.

"Very good!" he said; "hand me over your bandit."

"Certainly; but first hand over to us the twenty thousand ducats."

"How is it likely I should have twenty thousand ducats with me?" retorted the major.

"In that case," said the lieutenant, "no money, no Fra Diavolo!"

"Humph!..." said the major.

"Oh! I am well aware that you are the stronger force," remarked the lieutenant, "and that you can take us if you wish; but, if you do take us, you will have stolen twenty. thousand ducats from our pockets."

The major was a logical soul, and he realised the justice of the reasoning.

"Very well," he said, "take your prisoner to the headquarters; I will give you a hundred men to accompany you."

The lieutenant and Fra Diavolo exchanged a sly glance which implied that the major had played into their hands.

The hundred men of the escorting party and the two hundred and fifty Calabrian peasants set off for the headquarters six leagues away. But the headquarters never received news of Fra Diavolo, and the hundred men of the escort never reappeared. When a defile was reached, the hundred Frenchmen were slaughtered, and Fra Diavolo and his two hundred and fifty men regained the mountains! Colonel Hugo meant to go on with the pursuit; and, from henceforth, there was a constant series of outwittings and marches and counter-marches between him and the Calabrian chief, which ended in Fra Diavolo being defeated. Taken a second time, Fra Diavolo was sent to Naples, where his trial was to take place, and the 20,000 ducats were immediately paid over to those who had taken him. One morning Colonel Hugo learnt that Fra Diavolo was condemned to be hung.

"Hung!" The word sounded odd to French ears. Colonel Hugo at once started off for Naples and obtained an audience of the king, from whom he wished to solicit a commutation, not of the penalty, but of the manner of execution. He asked that, as Fra Diavolo had been a soldier, he might be shot. Unluckily, Fra Diavolo had been a bandit before he became a soldier, and he had served his own ends before enlisting in the services of Cardinal Ruffo and Ferdinand I. The documentary evidence shown to Colonel Hugo by King Joseph was so crammed with wilful crimes,

murders and incendiary fires that Colonel Hugo was the first to withdraw his proposition. Consequently, Colonel Michel Pezza, otherwise Fra Diavolo, and Count of I know not what title, was summarily hung.

In 1808, Napoleon having declared that the Bourbons of Spain had ceased to reign, Joseph Bonaparte passed from the throne of the Two Sicilies to that of Spain, where Colonel Hugo followed him. Upon his arrival in Madrid, Colonel Hugo was made brigadier-general, governor of the Cours de Tagus, first major-domo and first aide-de-camp to the king, a grandee of Spain, Count of Cogolludo and Marquis of Cifuentes and of Siguença! These were high proofs of favour; but there was one among them all which Colonel Hugo accepted with some aversion: and that was the title of marquis.

"Sire," he said to Joseph, when the King of Spain condescended to announce his intentions towards him, "I thought that the emperor had abolished the title of marquis?"

"Not in Spain, my dear colonel ... only in France."

"Sire," insisted the new general, "if the emperor has only abolished it in France, Molière has abolished it everywhere else."

And General Hugo contented himself with using the title of count, and never bore that of marquis. But, in spite of this, he was none the less be-marquised and be-majordomoed. Among the privileges which accompanied this latter office was that of presenting people to the king. On one occasion the new major-domo had to present to King Joseph the Archbishop of Tarragona, who had come to profess his allegiance to the king. The Archbishop of Tarragona had a reputation for ugliness, which left far behind it that which General Hugo's son later bestowed on the bell-ringer of Notre-Dame. So, when the major-domo looked at the worthy prelate and recognised that his ugliness had not only not been exaggerated but that it was, perhaps, even worse than people had said,

ignorant that the archbishop could speak and understand French, he could not refrain from adding, after he had pronounced the all-important formula in pure Castilian, "*Señor, presento á vuestra Magestad el se señor arzobispo de Tarragona*," the following words in French: "The most villainous-looking brute in your Majesty's kingdom!"

The archbishop respectfully saluted the king; then, turning to the major-domo, he said in the purest French, with a faultless accent--

"I thank you, general!"

In the precarious state of unsettlement through which Spain was then passing, General Hugo felt it to be out of the question, when he left Naples, to bring his family with him. So Madame Hugo, Abel, Eugène and Victor returned to France. Directly Madame Hugo returned to Paris, she took an old convent that had belonged to the Feuillantines; for, during the two years spent in the palace of Avellino, she had learnt to appreciate the effect on the health of her children of an airy residence, where they had room to run wild and play at liberty. We shall see, later, in connection with this convent, what recollections its large garden, its glorious sunshine and its cool shade left on the mind of the poet. Here the three children were allowed full liberty, as I had been allowed in the great park of Saint-Remy whose splendours I have described. Here Hugo managed to avoid going through the university treadmill, and learnt his Latin fairly well and his Greek scarcely at all, thanks to the care of a married priest, an ex-Oratorian, named Larivière.

"*Il savait le latin très-bien, très-mal le grec!*" his pupil said of him, in a scrap of verse yet unpublished.

Madame Hugo dwelt in this retreat, which sheltered her fine brood, from 1808 until 1811. In the early part of 1811 she received a letter from her husband. The government of King Joseph seemed settled, and therefore it

became necessary to go to Madrid, where her three children could be attached to the court as pages.

BOOK III — CHAPTER VII

CHAPTER VII

Departure for Spain--Journey from Paris to Bayonne--The treasure--Order of march of the convoy--M. du Saillant--M. de Cotadilla--Irun--Ernani--Salinas--The battalion of *écloppés* (cripples)--Madame Hugo's supplies of provisions--The forty Dutch grenadiers--Mondragon--The precipice--Burgos--Celadas--Alerte--The queen's review

As we are about to see, it was then a great business to travel to Madrid. First, there was France to cross from Paris to Bayonne. This was merely a question of time. A century ago it took five weeks, and forty years ago it took nine days, to cover a distance that, later, was accomplished in fifty hours, and now is done in fifteen or eighteen. One used to sleep at Blois, at Angoulême and at Bordeaux. Then there was Spain to cross, from Bayonne to Madrid. In due course, we shall see what an uncomfortable business it was to cross Spain from Bayonne to Madrid in the year of grace 1811, in the seventh year of the reign of Napoleon. Madame Hugo hired the whole diligence to take herself, her children and her servants across France. Diligences, at that time, and during the whole of the period, bore the emperor's livery; they were large coaches, painted green; the interior held six and the *cabriolets de cuir* three seats--a total of nine places. The whole of the luggage was put behind and above. Six persons only occupied the vast ark, which started on its journey at the accustomed hour, and rolled heavily away towards the frontier. At Poitiers, two passengers wished to take their seats in the coach, a Frenchman and a Spaniard. They were told that the whole diligence was taken by a French lady; but they appeared to be so disappointed that Madame Hugo offered both of them seats on condition that they did not pay anything, and they accepted her offer. Madame Hugo kept the interior of the coach for

herself, Abel, Eugène, the servant and her chambermaid; Victor declined to be dispossessed of his seat on the cabriolet, and he stayed there with the two strange passengers. He kept an ineffaceable recollection of one of the travellers whose name was Isnel, because he stuffed him and his brothers with cakes and sweetmeats the whole of the journey. At last, on the ninth day, they reached Bayonne; but there they were obliged to stop: they could not go into Spain with what was called treasure. This is a curious bit of history. Joseph was King of Spain, but his sovereignty was confined to Madrid, and to those parts occupied by the French army. All the remaining portions of the country were in a state of insurrection. When any army corps entering the country made an inlet through the insurrectionary forces, the latter, after opening before it, closed up behind it again, and the army became a sort of floating island--a Delos, constantly buffeted by the waves of revolt. There are no means of levying contributions under such circumstances. So the King of Spain and of the Indies, who, in reality, was no more in possession of Spain than of the Indies, not only was unable to maintain the splendours of his court, but would even have died of starvation at Madrid, if Napoleon had not sent this prefect of the empire *his income* four times a year. King Joseph's income was 48,000,000 francs. Therefore, every three months they sent him a consignment of 12,000,000 francs. And this was called the *treasure.* Of course, it will be readily understood that this treasure trove was lovingly coveted by Spanish guerilleros, and a strong escort had therefore to accompany it, to keep these gentlemen as much at a distance as possible. Travellers who had to go to Madrid put themselves under the protection of this escort just as pilgrims to Mecca put themselves under the protection of caravans. But, in spite of every precaution, and the escort of two or three thousand men, the treasure and the pilgrims were not always safe; the preceding convoy had been attacked, pillaged and slain at Salinas, with frightful atrocity. General Lejeune, if I remember rightly, painted a picture of this attack, which was exhibited in the Salon of 1824 or 1825. Notwithstanding this, however, it was much safer to go

with the convoy, and our party therefore waited nearly a month for it at Bayonne. It arrived about the end of April.

Meantime, Madame Hugo had had plenty of time to complete her preparations; she had purchased a carriage, the only one, moreover, there was for sale in Bayonne. It was one of those large trunk-like conveyances only to be seen nowadays in the drawings of Piranesi and also, perhaps, occasionally in the procession of a pontifical gala in the streets of Rome. Picture to yourself an enormous chest, hung between two poles, upon colossal straps, with steps united to these poles, so that you began to climb over the pole, and ended by descending into the carriage. This vehicle had one advantage, however, since, at a push, it could be converted into a fortress, its sides being shot-proof, and only destructible by bullets or grape-shot. Before starting, grave dispute arose concerning the course to take during the march. There were about three hundred carriages and five or six hundred passengers waiting, like Madame Hugo, for the reassuring escort; and it was no easy matter to enforce rules of etiquette in such a crowd as this, composed, besides, almost exclusively of men or women attached to the highest offices in the State, or members of the oldest families of Spain.

Casting a glance over the order of the march, it will be seen that the desirable places, concerning which everyone put forth his own special claims, possessed a value which make the persistency with which they were quarrelled for excusable. This is how the march of the convoy was arranged, with its escort of a detachment of three thousand men:--

First, at the head as advance-guard, marched five hundred men, with loaded arms. Next came the waggons containing the treasure, twenty-five or thirty carriages, surrounded by a thousand men placed five deep. Then came the travellers, according to their rank, title, grade and, especially, according to the seniority of their titles to nobility. These travellers who, as we have said, might easily number some six hundred, filled three

hundred carriages, some drawn by four and some by six mules, forming a line a league in length. This line could not be defended so energetically as the treasure; it would have needed ten thousand men instead of three to protect it. So the carriages were only guarded by a single line of soldiers, instead of five abreast. Finally, the convoy was completed by five hundred more men dragging a piece of cannon forming the extremity of this immense reptile, which could bite with its head, and sting with its tail. The consequence of this disposition was that, to be properly guarded, you had to be quite sure you were of that portion of the convoy which was immediately behind the waggons containing the treasure. Therefore, it was not simply a question of etiquette, who came first, second or third, but a matter of life or death.

Madame Hugo, who had to protect herself and her three children at the same time, advanced her claim not as a fearful woman, but as an anxious mother. Several grand ladies of Spain of very old family, and, among them, the Duchess of Villa-Hermosa, had a right, if they had chosen to enforce it, of taking precedence over Madame Hugo; but as Madame Hugo was the wife of a French general, aide-de-camp to the king, she took precedence of all others and went first, in spite of the protests, recriminations and complaints of the grandees of Spain, male and female, her superiors. She had, also, been wonderfully helped in her claim by the arrival at Bayonne of an aide-de-camp from her husband, M. le Marquis du Saillant, son of that sister of Mirabeau whom the famous orator loved and held in sufficiently high esteem to acquaint with his political sayings and doings, in one of the most curious letters he has written.

The escort was commanded, first, by the Duc de Cotadilla, a man of noble name, great fortune and huge appetite, who had thrown in his lot with Joseph; and, secondly, by Colonel de Montfort, a young man of thirty, who looked charming in his hussar's uniform, and belonged to the race of curled darlings who were nevertheless brave young colonels; amongst whom were Colonels Lefèvre, Bessières and Moncey--all sons

of marshals who had been left killed or mutilated on the battlefields of the Empire; Colonel Moncey was, probably, the only one who survived that ten years' tempest of shot and shell, and saw the Restoration. The Duke of Cotadilla and M. de Montfort produced a very different impression on the youthful imagination of the future poet. Twenty years later we find a reminiscence in *Claude Gueux* of the impression made by the Duc de Cotadilla's appetite.

"Claude Gueux was a great eater; it was a peculiarity of his constitution; he possessed a stomach made in such a fashion that the food supply for two men was hardly sufficient to last him one day. M. de Cotadilla had a similar appetite and laughed at it: but what may be a matter of mirth to a grand-duke of Spain who possessed 500,000 sheep is a burden to a working man and a misfortune to a prisoner."

There is no other mention either before or after this paragraph of the Duc de Cotadilla in *Claude Gueux*; so we see that this illustrious Spanish grandee left a very special mark on Victor Hugo's memory.

I do not know whether Hugo has anywhere spoken of Colonel Montfort; but he will do so, some day or other, for the earliest memories of childhood are bound to break forth sooner or later.

The Marquis du Saillant was a man of fifty or fifty-five, who loved taking life easily, always courageous, but bravest of all if anyone disturbed him at a meal or during his sleep, since nothing being more disagreeable to him than to be disturbed, he thereupon did his very best to make the enemy suffer for disturbing him.

Well, at last the huge cavalcade was set in motion and crossed the Bidassoa in view of the isle des Faisans, the famous political and matrimonial island. The first night they slept at Irun. The child's mind was vividly impressed by the fresh style of architecture, strange manners and different tongue. He ever remembered that halt at Irun, and revisited

it in his poetical dreams, as well as the towns of Burgos, Vittoria and of Valladolid, noted in other ways:--

"L'Espagne me montrait ses couvents, ses bastilles; Burgos, sa cathédrale aux gothiques aiguilles; *Irun, ses toits de bois*; Vittoria, ses tours; Et toi, Valladolid, tes palais de familles, Fiers de laisser rouiller des chaînes dans leurs cours.

Mes souvenirs germaient dans mon âme échauffée; J'allais chantant des vers d'une voix étouffée, Et ma mère, en secret observant tous mes pas, Pleurait et souriait, disant: 'C'est une fée Qui lui parle et qu'on ne voit pas!'"

The manner of travelling, too, made a deep impression on the brain of the child who, as a man, was to possess the descriptive faculty in the very highest degree! How well one can picture the five hundred men who formed the advance-guard; the thousand escorting the heavy, noisy waggons; the great carriage with its gilding half worn off, that came next, drawn by six mules, reinforced, in difficult places, by two and even four oxen, led by a *mayoral*,[1] escorted by two *zagales!*[2] Think of the burning sun, the parching dust, the arms sparkling in the glowing atmosphere, of villages laid waste and the hostile and threatening populations, the unspeakably terrible and bloody recollections which seemed to belong rather to the isles of the Pacific than to a European continent!--and we shall have some idea of scenes which we cannot attempt to describe, which only Hugo himself could relate.

The first day they went three leagues! The second day, they halted for the night at the village of Ernani. In the poet's recollections, the name of the village is changed to that of a man. Everyone knows the romantic bandit, lover of Doña Sol, adversary of Charles V., and rival of Ruy Gomez. On the third day, a curious spectacle met the travellers' gaze: a battalion of *écloppés.* A battalion of *écloppés* was a gathering of soldiers of all arms, the débris of a score of combats, or, may be, of a single battle; for, in

those days, battles were barbarously conducted: often, two, three or four regiments were wiped out; as many as a thousand, fifteen hundred or two thousand wounded would be picked up from the field of battle; a leg would be cut off here, an arm there, a bullet extracted from one, splinters pulled ont of another. All these would go to the rear and, when cured, or nearly so, from the débris of four or five different regiments would be formed a battalion of *écloppés* (cripples), which was sent back to France and left to defend itself on the way thither. The poor fellows had to extricate themselves from the terrible game of war as best they could.

Our cortège, then, met one of these battalions at Salinas. It was composed of Light Infantry, Cuirassiers, Carabineers and Hussars. Not a man among them but had lost an arm or a leg, a nose or an eye; but they were gay, and sang and shouted "Vive l'empereur!" The children were particularly struck by the fact that every man carried a parroquet or a monkey on his shoulder or at his saddle-bow; some even had both. They had come from Portugal, where they had left their limbs behind them, and whence they had brought this menagerie.

At Mondragon, two or three leagues before Salinas, thanks to the devotion of the soldiers, they escaped a very serious danger. By "they," I mean Madame Hugo and her three children. But a slight explanation will be necessary before giving an account of this incident. The soldiers received their rations every three days; according to their usual custom, they consumed the three days' rations in the first twenty-four hours, or flung away what food burdened them; so that the whole cortège usually fasted one day, at least, out of three. This fast was the more painful to bear--especially in the matter of liquids, which were not thrown away but usually consumed prematurely--as they journeyed over arid plains, under a burning sun and in suffocating air. They started at break of day, to avail themselves of the cool air, halted at noon, to eat and drink and then they set off again and travelled till nightfall. The soldiers camped round the waggons; the officers and travellers lodged in the villages or towns on

billet; Madame Hugo was generally lodged with the Alcade. There, her distribution of rations was made her every night: it was the same allowance as that given to her husband when he was on campaign, namely, twenty rations. Now these portions were very large; great mountains of bread and meat and more wine than she could possibly consume, were piled up before her every night. The soldiers who marched to right and left of her carriage, by the side of the six mules and the immense chariot, amounted to about forty men. They were Dutch grenadiers; for the French army, at that time, like the Roman legions of the time of Augustus, was a mixture of all the nations of Europe. These forty men shared the rations of Madame Hugo, who had no need of twenty portions of bread, meat and wine for herself, her children and her servants, since she and they were nearly always supplied with meals by the host with whom they lodged; neither did the *mayoral* and the two *zagales* need any, since they lived on a glass of water, a piece of bread smeared with garlic and the smoke of their cigarettes. The forty Dutchmen were accordingly deeply grateful to Madame Hugo, and their gratitude found expression on two occasions. We will relate the first at once: the second will come in due course.

Mondragon is left by a dark and steep tunnel which forms the gate of the town; the roadway through this tunnel takes a sudden turn on the right, by the side of a precipice. Some slight palings were placed at the edge of the roadway to give any vehicles being carried over the abyss a last chance to pull themselves up, if they happened, by chance, to knock up against one of these barriers. Whether the *mayoral* and *zagales* were unacquainted with the geography of the district, or whether they were unable to control the heavy coach, when the vehicle came out of the dark tunnel it was advancing at a rapid pace, carried away by its own weight, towards the precipice, when the Dutch grenadiers, perceiving Madame Hugo's danger, rushed to the heads of the mules and, forcing them quickly to turn round, stopped the carriage just as one of the wheels had begun to

roll over the edge of the precipice. For one instant the travellers were literally suspended between life and death. But life gained the day. Two or three soldiers were nearly flung off by the shock; but some of them clung to the traces and others to the poles. And, as it happened, the only injuries were a few bruises and sores, which did not prevent them making merry that night with Madame Hugo's distribution of rations. The Duc de Cotadilla, who was very gallant, in spite of his sixty years, and who cantered by Madame Hugo's carriage door throughout the journey, added some bottles of rum to that distribution, and there was a regular feast.

After about twelve or fourteen days' journey, they reached Burgos. They had had frequent alarms since they left Bayonne, but had often found that what they took for guerilleros were only quiet mule-drivers, united into bands for their own protection. This mistake was easily made, since the mule-drivers were armed almost like soldiers and could not be distinguished from such, on account of the dust raised round them, except at close quarters, when it would be seen they rode mules, not horses. At Burgos a halt of three or four days was made, and Madame Hugo took the opportunity these days offered to show her children the cathedral, that wonderful pile of Gothic architecture, the gate of Charles V. and the tomb of the Cid.

Of the tomb of the Cid, the soldiers had made a rifle-target. The child left Burgos dazed and breathless with wonder. Young as he was, he already possessed a passionate admiration for the *chefs-d'œuvre* of architecture; and the cathedral of Burgos, with its sixty or eighty bell-towers, is, indeed, a masterpiece of its kind. By a strange coincidence, General Hugo, who was in command of the Spanish retreat in 1813, knocked down three of these bell-towers when he blew up the citadel of the town of Burgos, of which he was the last governor.

The farther they advanced, the more frequent did traces of destruction become apparent. After Burgos, they stopped at a village which had once

been Celadas; it was a heap of ruins from one end to the other; and, as though it had been feared that the place might revive, the ruins had been thoroughly set fire to. Nothing could be sadder than to see that fire-destroyed village in the middle of the sunburnt plains. A few wall sides stood crumbling and roofless and, of these, the children belonging to the caravan made a fortress, soon dividing their small party into besiegers and besieged. War, which was, in those days, the trade of the fathers, was the play of the children. Little Victor and his two brothers formed part of the besieging party. Just when they were scaling a breach to enter the town, and Victor, who always loved high places, was running along the top of a wall, doubtless to make a diversion during the attack, he lost his footing and fell head foremost from the top of the wall into an uncovered cellar, and his head struck against the corner of a stone with such violence that he was stunned and lay where he fell. No one had seen him fall: his descent had been effected too rapidly for him to cry out. So the assault was carried on as though the besiegers had not lost one of their number. When the town was taken, vanquishers and vanquished counted their numbers, and only then did they discover that one of them, young Victor Hugo, was left gloriously on the field of battle. They began to search for him, Abel and Eugène at the head, and so carefully did they hunt into every nook and corner, that they soon discovered the wounded victim in the depths of a cellar. They thought he was dead, as he did not give any signs of life, and they rushed off with him amidst great lamentations to Madame Hugo, who soon saw he was still alive.

We have forgotten to mention that there were specimens of all kinds of humanity in the convoy, including six or eight Councillors of State, whom Napoleon was sending ready-made to his brother! So a doctor was easily found. The doctor attended to the child and, luckily, the shock had been worse than the actual blow; the wound was therefore more terrifying to look at than dangerous and, although the mark of the cut can even to-day be plainly seen, where Hugo parts his hair, by the next day

the child had forgotten all about it; and like Kléber after the capture of Alexandria, he was ready to take part in besieging a fresh town.

So far, nothing serious had disturbed the march of the caravan. Occasionally, a bullet from a hidden guerillero would bury itself in the thickness of the panels of one of the carriages, or break the glass of a door; and Colonel Montfort would send a score of hussars to search among the undergrowth from whence the stray shot had come; but it was easy enough in that part of the country through which the travellers were then passing for the culprit to slip down the sides of a ravine or gain a mountain gorge and put himself beyond reach.

One night, however, they had a genuine alarm, and expected this time that they were really face to face with a formidable enemy. They had traversed nearly two-thirds of their way and had reached the small town of Valverde, a collection of sombre-looking houses with high walls and no windows, looking like a nest of fortresses of the time of Louis XIII. As usual, the escort had set up its camp at the entrance to the town, sentinels had been posted in all directions and the travellers and officers had received their billeting papers for the houses of the principal inhabitants. Madame Hugo, as usual, lodged with the Alcade. As he left her, the Duc de Cotadilla said--

"Be on your guard, madame; we are in the heart of the insurrection, and your host has not only a very bad reputation but also a very evil-looking face."

Madame Hugo could only judge of the face, and her opinion thereon entirely coincided with that of the Duc de Cotadilla. Moreover, the inside of the house accorded with the appearance of the town and with her host: doors were barred with iron and lined with sheet-lead; there were severe-looking vestibules as dark as the passages in a convent, huge bare-walled rooms with only the earth for flooring on the ground floor and bricks on the first floor; and the furniture was composed of wooden

benches and leather arm-chairs. When Madame Hugo had seen over the whole house to select the rooms that suited her best, she decided on an immense low room on the ground floor, lighted by a branch of pinewood burning in an iron hand which was attached to the wall; she drew ont her bed from the immense portmanteau which enclosed it during the day, and put the children to sleep on a dozen sheepskins, placed M. du Saillant in a recess adjoining the large room and, when night fell, awaited what might happen. The outlook was not a cheerful one; the events that might be expected were terrible to contemplate, for the Spanish had been steadily gaining a reputation for ferocity since the beginning of the war; and the tortures they invented for the wretched Frenchmen who fell into their hands were unmentionably horrible. Among primitive peoples, who are wholly savage, like the Turks, for instance, you know what to expect; it will be one of their three methods of torture and execution--chopping off heads, strangulation or impalement; and the imagination of the executioners does not exceed those three ways of killing. But with a civilised people like the Spanish, who had their Charles V., Philip II. and the Inquisition, it is another matter: the miserable man under sentence of death may be roasted over a slow fire, sawed between two planks, put on the rack, hung by the feet; or have his entrails unravelled like a skein of cotton; or his body slashed in slices like a sixteenth-century doublet; or his eyes put out, his nose, his tongue or his hands cut off. Spanish executioners are men of resource! Besides, if they had exhausted their own imagination, there remained the resources of the Inquisition, for it should be borne in mind that the men who fought against us were Catholics first and foremost, priests and saints!

In spite of reflections like these, dispiriting enough to a mother who is answerable to her husband for the safety of herself and their three children, Madame Hugo began to fall asleep, envying the tranquillity of Colonel du Saillant, who had been asleep a long time in the recess they had discovered adjoining this low room, when, suddenly, the cry "To

arms!" and the noise of sharp firing roused her. She had gone to bed with very few clothes off, especially after the warning she had received, and she was up in an instant. The fusillade went on continuously, though somewhat irregularly directed, and the cries "To arms!" redoubled. In the midst of these cries, someone knocked on the outside shutters of the large low room, loud enough to be heard, but meant evidently to be reassuring. Madame Hugo opened the shutter. It was Colonel Montfort, who had knocked on the shutters with the hilt of his sword.

"It is I, madame," he said, "Colonel Montfort, who have the honour to address you. The enemy has attacked us, but we have taken measures to give it a warm reception, therefore be tranquil. In any case, please barricade yourself in here, and only open to the Duc de Cotadilla or to myself."

Madame Hugo thanked Colonel Montfort for his attentive care; M. du Saillant went out to him, and she shut the door fast behind him, barricaded it, with every available precaution, and waited further developments. The firing continued for some time, and even occasionally seemed to increase; finally it decreased and gradually died out. Which had been victorious? French or Spaniards? She did not know as yet, but she had good hopes that the French had won, and soon there came a fresh rapping on the shutters, and, amidst shouts of laughter, which Madame Hugo recognised as coming from the Duc de Cotadilla, Colonel Montfort and her husband's aide-de-camp, she was asked to open the great door. This done, the three officers entered.

A trumpeter of the hussars had discovered, just outside the town, a bit of meadow where he thought that his horse, to which he was greatly attached, could find a little fresh grass when the sentinels had been placed, he had picketed his horse in this tiny oasis. A peasant had noticed and wondered at this confidence and, when night fell, he had slipped from bush to bush, in order to steal the horse; the animal had allowed him

to approach until he felt the picket detached, when, with a violent shake, he freed himself from his thief, and rushed off neighing and rearing back to the French camp. The sentinel advanced shouting, "Who goes there?" And the horse, of course, went past him without replying. The sentinel fired and fell back on the first outpost, crying, "To arms!" The first outpost fired and cried, "To arms!" and then the soldiers in their turn had run to their piled and loaded muskets, fired and shouted, "To arms!" Hence the alarm, the firing, the fearful tumult, which for an hour had filled the little town of Valverde with fire, smoke and noise.

Nobody dreamt of trying to sleep again for the remainder of that night, so Madame Hugo and the three officers spent it together, and next morning, at daybreak, they continued their march.

The following day, another scene almost as grotesque as the alarming incident of the previous night, was in preparation for the travellers, under the rays of the hot noontide sun. They were halting at that hour in the middle of a great plain. The soldiers were covered with dust, and streaming with perspiration, under a sun of 35 degrees Centigrade, having finished their meal, when a courier arrived for the Duc de Cotadilla, to announce that the queen, who was also on her way under an escort to rejoin her husband, would soon pass by the cortège. The Duc de Cotadilla thanked the courier for his information and, when he had learnt the time that they were likely to meet the queen, and found they could still count on nearly an hour, he sent the courier on his way. Then he went to the door of Madame Hugo's coach, where, we know, he was accustomed to hold converse.

"Madame," he said, "I venture to ask you to lower your blinds, first on account of the sun, and next because of the sights you would see going on among the escort. The queen is going to pass by in an hour's time, and I desire to show her due deference by making my men dress themselves in parade attire; and, to do this, they will have to change everything, from

their collars to their leggings. During this transformation, which will be even more extensive than I have described, there will be evolutions which may be all right for a general or a colonel to see, but which are more unseemly for a lady to look upon. I have warned you, madame, and I am now going to warn the Duchesse de Villa-Hermosa and the other ladies."

And, with his usual politeness, the Duc de Cotadilla took leave of Madame Hugo and issued his commands. Madame Hugo drew down her blinds.

The orders of the Duc de Cotadilla were that the men should at once put on parade dress to line the route for the queen. The men quickly formed single line along the whole of the roadside, piled arms, opened knapsacks and began their toilet. They had just reached the most delicate part of their toilet, on account of which the Duc de Cotadilla had cautioned the ladies to lower their carriage blinds, when a huge cloud of dust appeared on the top of a mountain five hundred feet off, and cries of "The queen! The queen!" rang through the air. The queen had come half an hour sooner than the courier had announced. A stronger head than that of the Duc de Cotadilla might have been upset by such an accident as this; moreover, in no book on the art of warfare had provision been made for such a contingency. So he kept silence, and, left to their own inspiration, the drums beat the call to arms, the soldiers shouldered their weapons and the non-commissioned officers yelled, "Fall in!"

Thus it fell ont that the Queen of Spain held a review such as no other queen or empress, were she even Marguerite of Burgundy or Catherine II., had ever held; and, as she learnt later that M. de Cotadilla had been forewarned of her arrival, nothing removed the idea from her mind that the nakedness of those three thousand men was a joke which the illustrious duke had prepared for her.

The queen went by, and, as the parade dress was of no further use, they resumed their everyday uniform, restored their fine clothes to their knapsacks, the signal for starting was given and the journey was resumed.

[Footnote 1: Translator's note.--Spanish leader of a mule-team.]

[Footnote 2: Young shepherds.]

BOOK III — CHAPTER VIII

CHAPTER VIII

Segovia--M. de Tilly--The Alcazar--The doubloons--The castle of M. de la Calprenède and that of a Spanish grandee--The *bourdaloue*--Otero--The Dutchmen again--The Guadarrama--Arrival at Madrid--The palace of Masserano--The comet--The College--Don Manoël and Don Bazilio--Tacitus and Plautus--Lillo--The winter of 1812 to 1813--The Empecinado--The glass of *eau sucrée*--The army of merinoes--Return to Paris

At length they reached Valladolid; then, after a few days' stay there, they proceeded from Valladolid to Segovia across steep mountains, sometimes sharp peaked, sometimes leading by gentler slopes to high summits from which they could see vast plains basking in the June sunshine.

The Count of Tilly was governor of Segovia. He belonged to the old court, was page to Louis XVI. and left Memoirs which are not wanting in a certain picturesqueness of their own--a much rarer quality at that epoch than the quality of arousing interest. He came to the door of Madame Hugo's carriage to welcome her, installed her in a palace and looked after her and her children during their stoppage at Segovia.

The event that struck the young poet most and remained most vividly in his memory during his sojourn in this town was his visit to the Alcazar--that splendid fairy palace, less famous but as beautiful as those of Granada and Seville, with its gallery containing portraits of all the Moorish kings painted in the trefoils and on backgrounds of gold. We need not explain to our readers that these pictures are later than Arabian times, the religion of the Arabs forbidding them to paint images. The Alcazar at that time was also used as the Mint. M. de Tilly took Madame

Hugo and her children into the coining-room, where he had a doubloon struck specially for each child to keep. One of the greatest of Hugo's youthful troubles was the losing of his coin in Madrid by letting it fall through the crack of a carriage door.

They waited eight days for reinforcements; for they dared not risk setting ont for Madrid without a fresh escort; when this new escort arrived, they resumed their journey to rejoin the convoy party on the Madrid road. At Segovia, Madame Hugo, as we know, had, through the intervention of Count Tilly, been lodged in the palace of a Spanish grandee. As in M. de la Calprenède's palace, everything was of silver, chandeliers, plates, basins, washing-bowls, everything, even to the chamber articles. One of the pieces of furniture that especially charmed Madame Hugo with its beauty and originality of shape was a delightful little *bourdaloue.*

Here I shall be pulled up and asked why a night commode should have been associated with the name of the celebrated pupil of the Jesuits and why a chamber utensil should have been named after a preacher. I will explain, after I have done with Madame Hugo's fascination for this little article of furniture and the consequences that ensued.

Well, Madame Hugo was so delighted with the form of the charming *bourdaloue* that she asked the master of the house in which she was staying if she might buy it of him. But, like a true Spaniard, the old Castillian was an implacable enemy to our nation, so he replied that Madame Hugo could have the coveted object if she wished, but that he never sold anything to the French. As, in this case, to take it was equivalent to stealing it, Madame Hugo refrained, supposing the *bourdaloue* to form part of a collection which it would be a pity to spoil. Now let us explain why those little elongated vessels are called *bourdaloues.* The famous preacher gave such interminably long sermons that ladies were compelled to take certain precautions against their length which we think we need not explain more fully. More happy than

Christopher Columbus, who gave his name to a new continent, the pillar of Christian eloquence gave his name to a new article of furniture, made especially because of his doings--an article which from its long and narrow shape was easily carried about.

Now that we think we have cleared up this historical question to the satisfaction of our readers, we will rejoin the convoy on its journey to Madrid. It had reached within a league of Otero, where they were to pass the night and whose towers they could already discern, when, because one of the spokes of a back wheel of Madame Hugo's gigantic coach snapped in two, they had to make an enforced halt on the high-road, which was paved with enormous pieces of rock. Faithful to his courteous habits, the Duc de Cotadilla had ordered a general halt, causing an outburst of objections. A general halt at seven in the evening! a halt which might last a couple of hours and allow the convoy to be overtaken by nightfall! The duke could hardly have done more even if the accident had happened to one of the waggons containing the treasure, and he was exceeding his duties altogether when it was only for the wife of a French general, a lady who had been a member of the Spanish aristocracy for barely three years! So there was a great clamour throughout the convoy. There had been precedents in similar cases, and the unfortunate carriage had been left behind bag and baggage to the mercy of Providence! The Duc de Cotadilla wished to keep his word, but he had to give way before the chorus of complaints. The convoy meant to continue its way to Otero; but help on which she had not counted was to be given to Madame Hugo and her poor abandoned coach. The forty Dutch grenadiers asked to be allowed the favour of remaining by her coach as escort until the wheel could be mended and it was possible to continue the journey. This favour was granted them. The convoy moved off and gradually, like a receding tide, left the coach stranded on the highway. But never did shipwrecked people alone on a desert island set themselves to work with greater energy to construct a raft than did the forty Dutch grenadiers to the

mending of the wheel. It was completed in an hour or so. When they set off again, the rear of the convoy had long been lost to sight and darkness had begun to fall. However, in spite of all these adverse circumstances, the coach, with Madame Hugo, her three children, the servant, the chambermaid, the forty Dutch grenadiers, entered Otero by ten that night, without having had to pay toll to the guerilleros--a most unusual stroke of good luck. During the night, owing to the efforts of a local wheelwright, whom they compelled by force to undertake the job, with two army blacksmiths superintending his labours, the coach was mended; and next day it was ready to take its place at the head of the file of carriages.

They reached the chain of the Guadarrama Mountains and began to climb them; ascending the highest summit, they made a halt at the foot of the gigantic lion which turns its back on Old Castile, and, with one paw on the scutcheon of the Spains, looks to New Castile; then they descended towards the campagna round Madrid. The campagna of Rome is bare and gloomy, but flecked with glorious sunshine, and looks alive, if one may so put it, in spite of its loneliness. The campagna of Madrid is bare, arid and grey, and like a cemetery. And the Escurial rises up at the end of the plain like a tomb. This, indeed, was the impression it left on me, and also the impression it left on Hugo, who visited it thirty-five years before I did.

"L'Espagne m'accueillit livrée à la conquête; Je franchis le Burgare où mugit la tempête; *De loin y pour un tombeau, je pris l'Escurial*, Et le triple aqueduc vit s'incliner ma tête Devant son front impérial.

Là, je voyais les feux des haltes militaires Noircir les murs croulants des villes solitaires; La tente de l'église envahissait le seuil; Les rires des soldats, dans les saints monastères, Par l'écho répétés, semblaient des cris de deuil!"

The convoy wound over the plain from the Escurial to Madrid like a long snake; they only slept once on the road, at Galapagar. Next day, by six in

the evening, they had reached Madrid. They had scarcely entered its streets before everybody disbanded, overjoyed at being no longer under the restraint of military discipline. Madame Hugo bade farewell to the Duc de Cotadilla, of Colonel Montfort and her forty Dutchmen; then Colonel du Saillant took her to the palace of the princes of Masserano, which was prepared for her reception. The general was at his governorship in Guadalajara: we shall see later what he was doing there.

The palace of Masserano was in the *Calle de la Reyna.* It was a vast building of the seventeenth century, in all the splendour and severity of that period; it had no garden but a multitude of little square courtyards paved with marble, each with a fountain in the centre. These courtyards could only be entered through a kind of postern gateway; the sun never reached down into them, for the walls enclosing them were some forty to fifty feet high; and they were only just large enough for a wolf to walk round the fountain; in fact, they were simply store-places of shade and coolness. So far as Victor's memory carried him, the interior of the palace was of incredible magnificence; especially the dining-room, which had large glass windows on each of its four sides, the light through which showed up in all their glory splendid paintings by Fra Bartolommeo, Velasquez, Murillo, Sébastian del Piombo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael and Michael Angelo. This dining-room led into a large salon, upholstered in red damask, which led into another salon upholstered in blue damask, which in its turn led to what was called the princess's room, an immense chamber, upholstered and furnished in blue figured silk and silver. On the other side of the dining-room, through an anteroom, ornamented solely with oak chests which were meant to serve as seats for attendants, you entered a large gallery which contained a collection of full-length portraits of the Counts of Masserano, in court dress, also of princes of the same name; the principality, by the way, only dated back as far as the middle of the seventeenth century. It was in these great galleries that the children played hide-and-seek with the sons of General Lucotte, in rooms

a hundred and fifty feet long, and among Chinese vases and porcelain ornaments six feet in height! Their evenings were spent on a large balcony, from whence they could see the comet, in which they could distinguish the Virgin giving her hand to Ferdinand VII.,--so said the Spanish priests.

One morning an escort of Westphalian cavalry arrived, accompanying a messenger bearing a letter from General Hugo. The general was unable to come to Madrid, being busily engaged in warfare on the banks of the Tagus. The main purpose of the letter was to recommend the best college for the education of the three children. They were to be placed in the Séminaire des Nobles, where they would be prepared as pages of the king. It was not usual to take boys under thirteen, but, although Abel was only twelve, Eugène but ten and Victor only eight, an exception was made in their favour and a license from the king provided for their immediate admission. They had to leave the splendid Masserano palace, with its beautiful paintings by old masters, its splendid tapestries, its interminable galleries decorated with Chinese vases and the walls whereon three generations of counts and princes seemed to come to life again in their state costumes or in their trappings of war, for the gloomy seminary in the *Calle San-Isidro.* The Séminaire des Nobles was, indeed, a formidable and severe-looking edifice, with its great treeless courts, and one might almost go so far as to say its vast schoolrooms without scholars. There were twenty-five pupils, not including the three new-comers in this seminary, which had contained three hundred before the French invasion. This was, approximately, the proportion of the aristocracy of Spain that had rallied round Joseph Bonaparte. And besides the twenty-five scholars there was, as we have said, the three sons of General Hugo and a Spanish prisoner. The seminary looked indeed a gloomy place to the poor children when they entered it. Imagine those schoolrooms and dormitories and lavatories and refectories intended to meet the needs of three hundred pupils, now containing but

twenty-five unhappy scholars, who looked lost therein. Virgil's phrase, *rari nantes*, seemed entirely to meet the case. The establishment was kept by two Jesuits who controlled the college with apparently equal strictness; these two Jesuits each represented opposite types of their order: one was named Don Manoël and the other Don Bazilio. Don Bazilio was tall and nearly fifty-five years of age; his forehead was bare and bald, and his nose was like a vulture's beak; his mouth was large and firm, and his chin protruded. He was hard and severe in character and never forgave. But, at the same time, he was just, and never punished unless punishment was deserved. The other, Don Manoël, was plump and very broad. His figure was thick-set; he had a smiling, almost a gay, face; and his manner towards new-comers was gentle and gracious and caressing; judging from his appearance, he was always ready to excuse, or at any rate to make allowance for faults; he was extremely false, very deceitful and utterly mischievous; he directed the college alone, in spite of the pretended collaboration of Don Bazilio, doubtless by order of his superiors. When the first edge of his appearance of sympathy had worn off, Don Manoël became unbearable. Lads began by detesting Don Bazilio; but, as he was just, in spite of his severity, this hatred gradually passed away; whilst, on the other hand, people began by liking Don Manoël, and ended by detesting him. But when the latter feeling was aroused it went on increasing *crescendo.*

The studies which these two Jesuits set their pupils were ridiculous. They were so feeble that, in a college composed of young people of eighteen to twenty years of age, a special class had to be started for the new arrivals of whom the oldest was but twelve. They actually judged of the children's capacities by their size when they began to examine them, and gave Abel a Quintus Curtius, and Eugène *De Viris*, and little Victor an *Epitome.* But at sight of this book, with which he had finished a long time before, the child rebelled and boldly asked for Tacitus. The fathers looked at one another in stupefaction and, refraining from punishing the audacious boy

who had delivered himself of this ill-timed jest, they brought him the book. Victor opened it and immediately translated the paragraph about Cocceius Nerva on which he had alighted at haphazard. The two other brothers took up Tacitus in their turn, and gave an equal, if a not superior, proof of skill. They brought them Perseus and Juvenal; the children were familiar with both these satirists, and could not merely interpret them, but even offered to recite whole satires by heart. Thus the children fresh from France made light of these three authors, who were looked upon at the Séminaire des Nobles as beyond the reach of rhetoricians of twenty! The two Jesuits put their heads together, decided that they must make a special class for the three new-comers and settled that they would expound Plautus to them. Don Manoël it was, a true Jesuit, who chose an author full of ellipses, bristling with idioms, crammed with Roman patois, like that which Molière puts into the mouths of his peasant-folk, and for ever alluding to customs that had disappeared even in Cicero's time. But Don Manoël's end was accomplished: the children's brains grew dull over Plautus; and this was exactly what he wished, to break their pride. The twenty-two other pupils were Spaniards, sons of Spanish grandees who had thrown in their lot with Joseph. Among them were two sons of high birth to whom Victor dedicated different Souvenirs in his works: one, the Count of Belverana, whom he put in his *Lucrèce Borgia*, and Raymond de Benavente, to whom he addressed, in 1823, the Ode that begins with this stanza:--

"Hélas! j'ai compris ton sourire, Semblable au ris du condamné Quand le mot qui doit le proscrire A son oreille a résonné! En pressant ta main convulsive, J'ai compris ta douleur pensive, Et ton regard morne et profond, Qui, pareil à l'éclair des nues, Brille sur des mers inconnues, Mais ne peut en montrer le fond."

The young poet noticed one custom peculiar to Spanish manners, namely, these children, whose ages varied from thirteen and every year up to twenty, all used the familiar form of address among themselves, as

became sons of Spanish grandees, and never addressed one another by their baptismal or family names, but only by their titles of prince, duke, marquis, count or baron. They called Victor "Baron," which filled him with pride.

Among these young folk--and to be exact in our figures we ought to reduce the number of these juvenile nobilities to twenty-one--was one who was neither knight, baron, count, marquis, duke nor prince, and who nevertheless was not the least remarkable inmate of the college. This was a young Spanish officer named Lillo, aged fifteen, who had been taken prisoner at the siege of Badajoz. He had fought like a demon, had killed a French grenadier with his own hand and had been taken only after a heroic defence. They were about to shoot him when Marshal Soult happened to pass by, and, having inquired and been informed what was being done, had him despatched to Madrid, with orders that he should be placed in the college. The order was carried out, and Lillo was sent to the college, but in the twofold capacity of pupil and prisoner. The lad, who had borne the rank of second lieutenant, had commanded grown men, had faced battle in open field, equipped as a soldier, took badly to the college discipline full of Jesuitical chicaneries, to which he had to submit like all the others, save in the matter of the common dormitory, where, however, each pupil had his own cubicle. He therefore, as far as he was permitted, kept to himself in solitude, rage burning at his heart's core, and in his relations with the other young lads he was cold, melancholy and haughty. Of course, the three French boys were the object of his particular aversion, and he was constantly picking quarrels with one and sometimes with all three of the sons of the general attached to Joseph, he a soldier of Ferdinand VII. Once he called Napoleon *Napoladron* before Eugène--true, nearly every Spaniard called the conqueror of Austerlitz by that nickname, but Eugène was none the less sensitive? to the insult on that account, and he retorted that Lillo had been taken prisoner between the legs of a French grenadier. Lillo had a pair of compasses in his hand;

he did not wait for any other weapon, but threw himself on Eugène and stabbed him brutally with it on the cheek. The wound, or rather the tear, was an inch and a half in length. Eugène wished to fight a duel, and Lillo was willing enough; but the professors intervened and separated the youth and the lad. Lillo disappeared the next day; and neither Victor nor his brother ever heard what became of him. I can still hear Victor's grave voice when he told me the anecdote, saying--

"And the young fellow was right: he was standing up for his country ... but children do not understand that."

The living at the Séminaire des Nobles was cloistral; probably no monastery throughout Spain kept severer rules. Once a fortnight they went for a walk, but even this was restricted, and they might not even go to the Délices (corresponding to our Champs-Élysées), for fear of guerilla bands. These twenty or twenty-five lads would have been a great prize, and worth a good ransom, belonging, as they did, not only to the first families in Madrid, but also to the families which had thrown in their lot with the brother of *Napoladron*, as Lillo had called him.

From time to time, the boys would look up at the sound of an opening door and they would see a vision out of the seventeenth century appear in the beginning of the nineteenth. One day, when in the refectory, eating their meal in silence, while a junior master, seated on a raised chair in the midst of an immense hall, was reading to them in Spanish out of a pious book, suddenly, the door opened, after a couple of knocks, as though a prince, cardinal or Spanish grandee were outside. The four little Benavente boys had not seen their mother for over a year, and it was the Princess of Benavente. She advanced a few steps into the room and waited. Then her four sons rose, ranged themselves according to their age, eldest first, second next, and so on, and, without taking one step faster than another, advanced ceremoniously and kissed their mother's hand in turn from the tallest to the smallest. The three young French lads

were greatly astonished at the proceeding and at a loss to understand such etiquette as this, for they were accustomed to rush to their mother and fling themselves on her neck, when they caught sight of her.

At the end of six months' sojourn at the Séminaire des Nobles, Abel attained his twelfth year and was allowed by special privilege to enter as a page at that age.

Then came the winter and famine. It was cold everywhere during the fatal winter of 1812-1813, although it was nothing compared with the severity experienced in Russia.

It was the fate of Napoleon to attract and concentrate the attention of the world upon him during his reverses as during his victories.

The twenty-five pupils buried in that vast Séminaire des Nobles, in the dormitories, schoolrooms and refectories intended for three hundred inmates, were perished with cold. Nothing could warm those great rooms wherein there was not a single fireplace; braziers placed in the middle of the rooms only served to emphasise winter's triumph. Besides this, the children were not only perishing of cold, but, worse still, were dying of starvation. The wealthiest in Madrid could not get bread in 1812. And King Joseph himself--probably to set a good example--ordered that nothing but soldiers' bread should be served at his table. People were constantly found in the streets who had not even as much warmth as the braziers at the Séminaire des Nobles, or King Joseph's army bread, lying down on the thresholds of the great in tattered cloaks and dying of hunger and cold. If they were still alive, every effort was made to feed and warm them; if they were dead, they were removed and buried. Bread was as scarce at the Séminaire des Nobles as elsewhere, and the lads complained bitterly of hunger; to the less patient, father Manoël would say--

"Make the sign of the Cross on your stomachs, and that will feed you."

The boys made many crosses, and, although the action warmed them a little, it certainly did not nourish them. But they suspected Don Manoël, who kept fat amongst all the sad and emaciated faces, to have an illicit intimacy with the kitchen, which he hid even from Don Bazilio.

All this while, General Hugo was waging war along the banks of the Tagus against the famous Juan Martin, nicknamed the *Empecinado*, as he had against Charette in the Vendée and against Fra Diavolo in Calabria. He has himself given a modest and learned account of the strategic movements of that fine campaign, which concluded with the capture and execution of the captain of the guerilla hordes which he combatted. We will select a few only of the picturesque accounts of dangers incurred--those fragments which History drops from her robe and which chroniclers carefully collect for their Memoirs.

One day, General Hugo and a hundred men came to a village situated on one of the many little streams that run into the Tagus. In order to avoid rousing needless alarm, he entered the village with only his two aides-de-camp, to obtain from the inhabitants some information of which he stood in need. He came from his camp, which included some five to six thousand men, who were a league lower down the river. To obtain the desired information, he applied to the proprietor of a large sugar-refining factory, who, seeing him accompanied by only two aides-de-camp, said never a word. General Hugo was thirsty. Unable to get his information, he thought he might at any rate get some refreshment and asked for a glass of water.

"Water?" said the proprietor of the sugar refinery. "There is plenty in the river."

And he shut the door in the general's face. The general waited a moment to see if the door would be reopened. Instead of the door, it was a window that was opened, the muzzle of a gun slyly protruded, fired, and a bullet whizzed past. At the sound of the gunshot, the detachment which

had remained outside the town rushed in; and when the soldiers learnt what had just happened they wanted to demolish the sugar factory and burn the village. General Hugo stopped them and said to his orderly, "Go back to the camp, and invite the whole of the six thousand men who form it, in my name, to come and drink some *eau sucrée*; it will be a treat for them--it is a long time since the poor devils tasted any!" It was one of the special virtues of the Imperial epoch to be quick to understand when one wished to understand: the aide-de-camp understood and set off at a gallop. The soldiers also understood. They burst open the doors of the sugar factory, threw two or three thousand sugar-loaves into the river; and for the rest of that day General Hugo's six thousand men had as much *eau sucrée* to drink as they wanted! This was the only revenge he took on the refusal of a glass of water and the gun fired at him. The deed has remained in the annals of the army of Spain as one of the most toothsome jokes a general ever cracked with his men.

On another occasion, also when they were marching by the banks of the Tagus, in the place where I myself--I will tell the story in due course--sojourned thirty years later, one wretched night, on the great plains of Old Castile, between Toledo and Aranjuez, and it was just such a burning sun as made Sancho bitterly regret he had not an excellent curd cheese at hand, suddenly, the scouts fell back at full gallop on the advance-guard to warn General Hugo that what appeared to be an army corps of the enemy, of considerable number, was marching to encounter the French army. And, indeed, so great a cloud of dust was to be seen on the horizon as only a great body of men or the simoom could produce. This dust shone like those clouds of crimson and gold which appear in the atmosphere during the hottest of the dog-days. General Hugo gave orders for a halt. He then rode on in advance with a hundred men to examine the enemy's position himself, and if possible to divine its intentions. There was no doubt about it--it was an immense troop to judge by the space it occupied and the dust it raised, and it was marching

towards him with one of its wings on the right bank of the Tagus. The infantry instantly received orders to prepare for battle, the artillery to plant their batteries on a small hillock, and the cavalry to take up a position on the right wing. Then they despatched a few men on horseback in front under the command of an orderly officer. But both officer and men returned at a gallop a few moments later. General Hugo thought his men must have been *driven back*, and as not a single shot had been fired he was just preparing to give the fugitives a good wigging when on nearer approach he detected unequivocal signs of hilarity on the countenances of both officer and men.

"Well, what is it?" asked the general. "Who is our enemy?"

"General," replied the aide-de-camp, "our enemy is a flock of three hundred thousand merino sheep being driven by two hundred dogs, conducted by a dozen shepherds, and belonging to M. *Quatrecentberger.*"

"What tomfoolery is this, monsieur?" said the general, frowning.

"I am not joking, general," said the officer, "and in ten minutes you will see that I have had the honour to tell you the precise truth."

A flock of 300,000 sheep! It made the mouths of the soldiers water! What a suitable aftermath to the barrels of *eau sucrée* which the general had provided for them!

The army corps consisted of 4000 men; each soldier could have at least a sheep to himself, and each began considering what kind of sauce he would serve to his own dish.

At the announcement of this strange news, M. Hugo advanced to the front. And there he saw through the dust first a dozen men on horseback, armed with long sticks studded with nails, like lances; behind these came the impenetrable front of 300,000 sheep; and upon the heels of these

300,000 sheep two hundred barking, biting dogs darting hither and thither. It looked like the migration of a great Arab tribe, in the time of Abraham. The story was quite correct, except the name of the owner, which the officer had taken the liberty of mispronouncing slightly to suit the occasion. The proprietor's name was not *Quatrecentberger* (four hundred shepherds), but *Katzenberger.* It will be seen that the difference in pronunciation was so slight that the officer may be forgiven his appropriate pun. M. Katzenberger was a wealthy Alsatian speculator who had risked almost the whole of his fortune in a speculation in merino sheep. A great melancholy spread throughout the troops when it became known that the flock belonged to a compatriot. It was utterly unlikely that M. Hugo would allow M. Katzenberger's flock to be impounded, whether of 300,000 or even of 400,000 beasts. And, as a matter of fact, the chief shepherd, who had trembled for a moment at the prospective ruin of his master, received from General Hugo a promise that not only should every single hair of his merinoes go scot free, but that he should have a passport requesting all the French army corps to treat M. Katzenberger's shepherds, dogs and sheep with the utmost respect.

It was an odd incident! The flock reached France without any serious accident, and by this almost unexpected good fortune M. Katzenberger doubled, trebled and quadrupled his fortune. His first action was to offer General Hugo a sum of money proportionate to the service he had rendered him. General Hugo's first and final decision was to decline the offered sum. I believe it was 300,000 francs--a franc per sheep.

And here let us state that General Hugo, who held a high position for four years during the wars in Spain, who was given the charge of conducting the retreat from Madrid to Bayonne, a position which always allowed a general great facilities for enriching himself, died without any picture gallery, or a single Murillo or Velasquez or Zurbaran, possessing no other fortune but his retiring pension. It seems incredible, does it not? And yet so it was. But, the directors of the Musée will ask me, or those

millionaire collectors who bought pictures for 600,000, 200,000, 50,000 and even 25,000 francs, at the sale after the decease of the late Marshal Soult, what benefit did he derive from his disinterested conduct towards M. Katzenberger? He was the gainer by an annual dinner which M. Katzenberger came from Strasbourg on purpose to give him and all the members of his family in Paris, on the anniversary of the great event that made his fortune. And this dinner was on a splendid scale: it must have cost the grateful Strasbourgian at least fifty louis.

During the winter of 1812 and the early months of 1813, in consequence of our misfortunes in Russia, matters began to assume such a threatening aspect in Spain that General Hugo felt it was dangerous to keep his wife and children at Madrid. Therefore Madame Hugo and her two youngest sons were put under the protection of quite as strong an escort as the one we have described, and they made the return journey from Madrid to Bayonne on their way to Paris, as successfully as they had travelled between Bayonne and Madrid. Madame Hugo had thought it best to keep the convent of the Feuillantines, so the two children returned to their old nest with its light and shade, its recollections of work and of play, and, furthermore, the abbé Larivière and his *Tacitus*. Abel Hugo, a soldier boy of thirteen, remained with his father.

BOOK III — CHAPTER IX

CHAPTER IX

The college and the garden of the Feuillantines--Grenadier or general--Victor Hugo's first appearance in public--He obtains honourable mention at the Academy examination--He carries off three prizes in the Jeux Floraux--*Han d'Islande*--The poet and the bodyguard--Hugo's marriage--The *Odes et Ballades*--Proposition made by cousin Cornet

That wretched year 1813 was a strange period of introspection. *Un jour* ... But we will let the poet himself describe matters, in the verses below:--

"J'eus, dans ma blonde enfance, hélas, trop éphémère, Trois maîtres: un jardin, un vieux prêtre et ma mère. Le jardin était grand, profond, mystérieux, Fermé par de hauts murs aux regards curieux, Semé de fleurs s'ouvrant ainsi que des paupières, Et d'insectes vermeils qui couraient sur les pierres; Plein de bourdonnements et de confuses voix; Au milieu presqu'un champ, dans le fond presqu'un bois. Le prêtre, tout nourri de Tacite et d'Homère, Était un doux vieillard; ma mère était ma mère. Ainsi, je grandissait sous un triple rayon! *Un jour* ... Oh! si Gauthier me prêtait son crayon, Je vous dessinerais d'un trait une figure Qui, chez ma mère, un soir entra, fâcheux augure! Un docteur au front pauvre, au maintien solennel; Et je verrais éclore a vos bouches sans fiel, Portes de votre cœur qu'aucun souci ne mine, Ce rire éblouissant qui parfois m'illumine.

Lorsque cet homme entra je jouais au jardin, Et rien qu'en le voyant je m'arrêtai soudain. C'était le principal d'un collège quelconque; Les tritons que Coypel groupe autour d'une conque, Les faunes que Watteau dans les bois fourvoya, Les sorciers de Rembrandt, les gnomes de Goya, Les diables variés, vrais cauchemars de moine, Dont Callot, en riant, taquine saint Antoine, Sont laids mais sont charmant; difformes, mais remplis

D'un feu qui, de leur face, anime tous les plis, Et parfois, dans leurs yeux, jette un eclair rapide! Notre homme était fort laid, mais il était stupide!

Pardon, j'en parle encor comme un franc écolier; C'est mal; ce que j'ai dit, tachez de l'oublier. Car de votre âge heureux, qu'un pedant embarrasse, J'ai gardait la colère et j'ai perdu la grâce.

Cet homme chauve et noir, très effrayant pour moi, Et dont ma mère aussi d'abord eut quelque effroi, Tout en multipliant les humbles attitudes, Apportait des avis et des sollicitudes: Que l'enfant n'était pas dirigé; que, parfois, Il emportait son livre en rêvant dans les bois; Qu'il croissait au hasard dans cette solitude; Qu'on devait y songer, que la sévère étude Était fille de l'ombre et des cloîtres profonds; Qu'une lampe pendue à de sombres plafonds, Qui de cent écoliers guide la plume agile, Éclairait mieux Horace et Catulle et Virgile, Et versait à l'esprit des rayons bien meilleurs Que le soleil qui joue à travers l'arbre en fleurs; Et qu'enfin, il fallait aux enfants, loin des mères, Le joug, le dur travail, et les larmes amères. Là dessus le collège, aimable et triomphant, Avec un doux sourire, offrait au jeune enfant, Ivre de liberté, d'air, de joie et de roses, Ses bancs de chêne noir, ses longs dortoirs moroses, Les salles qu'on verrouille et qu'à tous leurs pilliers Sculpte avec un vieux clou l'ennui des écoliers; Les magisters qui font, parmi les paperasses, Manger l'heure du jeu par les pensums voraces, Et, sans eau, sans gazon, sans arbres, sans fruits mûrs, Sa grande cour pavée, entre quatre grands murs!"

Here I would fain break off the quotation and continue in prose; but, to tell the truth, I have not the courage to do so. Oh! what fine lines yours are, my friend, and what a joy it is to me, not simply to cause them to be read--all the world has read them--but to cause them to be re-read by the hundred thousand readers whose eyes will travel over this chapter and who will sigh, with looks turned towards England--

"Soupir qui va vers toi sur la brise du soir, Fait d'un quart de tristesse et de trois quarts d'espoir."

Let us pick up the thread of Hugo's lines, into the middle of which I had the temerity to venture to put a couple of my own:--

"L'homme congédié, de ses discours frappée, Ma mère demeura triste et préoccupée. --Que faire? que vouloir? qui donc avait raison, Ou le morne collège ou l'heureuse maison? Qui sait mieux de la vie accomplir l'œuvre austère, L'écolier turbulant ou l'enfant solitaire?-- Problèmes! questions! Elle hésitait beaucoup. L'affaire était bien grave. Humble femme après tout, Ame par le destin non pas les livres faite, De quel front repousser ce tragique prophète Au ton si magistral, aux gestes si certains, Qui lui parlait au noms des Grecs et des Latins? Le prêtre était savant, sans doute; mais, que sais-je, Apprend-on par le maître ou bien par le collège? Et puis enfin,--souvent ainsi nous triomphons,-- L'homme le plus vulgaire a de grands mots profonds; *II est indispensable! il convient! il importe!* Qui trouble quelquefois la femme la plus forte ... Pauvre mère, lequel choisir des deux chemins? Tout le sort de son fils se pesait dans ses mains. Tremblante, elle tenait cette lourde balance, Et croyait bien la voir, par moment, en silence, Pencher vers le collège, hélas! en opposant Mon bonheur à venir à mon bonheur présent. Elle songeait ainsi, sans sommeil et sans trêve; C'était l'été vers l'heure ou la lune se lève, Par un de ces beaux soirs qui ressemblent au jour, Avec moins de clarté, mais avec plus d'amour. Dans son parc, où jouaient le rayon et la brise, Elle errait toujours triste et toujours indécise, Questionnant tout has l'eau, le ciel, la forêt, Écoutant au hasard les voix qu'elle entendrait. C'est dans ces moments là que le jardin paisible, La broussaille où remue un insecte invisible, Le scarabée, ami des feuilles, le lézard Courant au clair de lune au fond du vieux puisard, La faïence à fleur bleue où vit la plante grasse, Le dôme oriental du sombre Val-de-Grâce, Le cloître du couvent, brisé mais doux encore, Les marroniers, la verte allée aux boutons d'or, La statue où sans bruit se meut l'ombre des branches, Les pâles liserons, les pâquerettes blanches, Les cent fleurs du buisson, de l'arbre, du roseau, Qui rendent en parfums les chansons à l'oiseau, Se mirent dans la mare

ou se cache sous l'herbe, Ou qui, de l'ébénier chargeant le front superbe, Au bord des clairs étangs, se mêlant au bouleau, Tremblent en grappes d'or dans les moires de l'eau, Et le ciel scintillant derrière les ramées, Et les toits répandant de charmantes fumées; C'est dans ces moments-là, comme je vous le dis, Que tout ce beau jardin, radieux paradis, Tous ces vieux murs croulants, toutes ces jeunes roses, Tous ces objets pensifs, toutes ces douces choses Parlèrent à ma mère avec l'onde et le vent, Et lui dirent tout has: 'Laisse-nous cet enfant!' Laisse-nous cet enfant, pauvre mère troublée; Cette prunelle ardente, ingénue, étoilée, Cette tête au front pur qu'aucun deuil ne voilà, Cette âme neuve encor, mère, laisse-nous la, Ne va pas la jetter au hasard dans la foule: La foule est un torrent qui brise ce qu'il roule. Ainsi que les oiseaux, les enfants ont leurs peurs. Laisse à notre air limpide, à nos moites vapeurs, A nos soupirs légers comme l'aile d'un songe, Cette bouche où jamais n'a passé le mensonge, Ce sourire naïf que sa candeur défend. O mère au cœur profond, laisse-nous cet enfant! Nous ne lui donnerons que de bonnes pensées; Nous changerons en jours les lunes commencées; Dieu deviendra visible à see yeux enchantés; Car nous sommes les fleurs, les rameaux, les clartés; Nous sommes la nature, et la source éternelle Où toute soif s'étanche, où se lave toute aile; Et les bois et les champs, du sage seul compris, Font l'éducation de tous les grands esprits; Laisse croître l'enfant parmi nos bruits sublimes, Nous le pénétrerons de ces parfums intimes Nés du souffle céleste épars dans tout beau lieu, Qui font sortir de l'homme et monter jusqu'à Dieu, Comme le chant d'un luth, comme l'encens d'un vase, L'espérance, l'amour, la prière et l'extase! Nous pencherons ses yeux vers l'ombre d'ici bas, Vers le secret de tout entr'ouvert sous ses pas. D'enfant nous ferons homme, et d'homme poëte; Pour former de ses sens la corolle inquiète, C'est nous qu'il faut choisir, et nous lui montrerons Comment, de l'aube au soir, du chêne aux moucherons; Emplissant tout, reflets, couleurs, brumes, haleines, La vie aux mille aspects rit dans les vertes plaines; Nous te le rendrons simple et des cieux ébloui, Et nous ferons germer de toute part en lui, Pour

l'homme, triste d'effet, perdu sous tant de causes Cette pitié qui naît du spectacle des choses. Laisse-nous cet enfant, nous lui ferons un cœur Qui comprendra la femme; un esprit non moqueur, Où naîtront aisément le songe et la chimère; Qui prendra Dieu pour livre et les champs pour grammaire; Une âme pour foyer de secrètes faveurs, Qui luira doucement sur tous les fronts rêveurs, Et, comme le soleil dans les fleurs fécondées, Jettera des rayons sur toutes les idées.' Ainsi parlaient, à l'heure où la ville se tait, L'astre, la plante et l'arbre,--et ma mère écoutait. Enfant! ont-ils tenu leur promesse sacrée? Je ne sais, mais je sais que ma mère adorée Les crut, et m'épargnant d'ennuyeuses prisons, Confia ma jeune âme à leur douces leçons!"

We see from what the poet tells us himself, what a struggle his mother had to keep up (having for ally the beautiful garden of the Feuillantines) against a master of the college, sent by M. de Fontanes, who was uneasy, after the fashion of Napoleon, that a child should grow up wild in the depths of an old cloister, thus escaping the university training which, in all ages and in every reign, has had for its object the breaking in of high-stepping colts. Thus, at fifteen, the old convent of the Feuillantines had fulfilled its promises, and made the child a poet. We shall see more of this presently, but for the moment let us go back to General Hugo, who, at the very time when the mother and son conflict was proceeding was assisting at the retreat from Spain, after the two great battles of Salamanca and Vittoria, the Leipzig and Waterloo of the South. He had with him, as aide-de-camp, his son Abel, who, when only fourteen, had already been present at and taken part in three pitched battles and seventeen skirmishes. He had no need to envy his old schoolfellow Lillo, of the Séminaire des Nobles, who was an officer at fifteen years of age.

When the remnant of the army of Spain returned to France they found a French *corps d'observation* awaiting them with Imperial orders to incorporate the Spanish army with the French army. But those four years of service in Spain, that arduous campaign during which they had had to

struggle not only against two armies, but also against the entire population; those dreadful sieges rivalled only in ancient warfare, when women and children defended every corner of the ramparts, every home and every stone, with musket and poignard in hand; those sierras, recalling the wars of the Titans, when fires were lit on every high peak; those jagged mountains taken by charges of cavalry; those rock fortresses defended and carried one after another; those scores of passes each like another Thermopylæ; that butchery in which torture and death awaited anyone taken prisoner, all went for nothing, was forgotten, had ceased to exist, had never existed directly Spain was evacuated. It might have been asked of Napoleon why he evacuated Russia. But it had taken a very god to bend the invincible one beneath him; like Thor, son of Odin, he had struggled with Death itself; he had not been vanquished like Xerxes, he had been crushed like Cambyses. The distinction is subtle, but one no more dreamt of disputing with the conqueror of Austerlitz than with the hero vanquished at Beresina. So the services of the French in Spain were regarded as of naught, and--except the 200,000 men left upon the battlefields of Talavera, Saragossa, Bayleu, Salamanca and Vittoria--all was as though nothing had occurred.

Consequently, General Hugo found this order addressed to himself at Bayonne:--

"*Major* Hugo will at once put himself under the command of General Belliard."

On the following day, General Hugo presented himself at the house of General Belliard in the uniform of an ordinary grenadier with woollen epaulettes. Belliard did not recognise him. General Hugo gave his name.

"What does this private soldier's uniform mean?" Belliard inquired.

"Grenadier or general," was Hugo's response.

And Belliard flung his arms round him. That very day he sent back the order to the emperor. It was returned with this correction in the margin in Napoleon's handwriting:--

"*General* Hugo will immediately take up the command at Thionville."

History has related the details of that siege in which General Hugo defended the citadel and governed the town. The citadel of Thionville was one of the latest to float the tricoloured flag. But it had to yield, though to the Bourbons, not to the enemy. General Hugo could not stop in Paris: there were too many heart-breaking scenes for the old soldier in the capital, where women strewed flowers in front of the Cossacks, where the people shouted "*Vivent les allies!*" and where the statue of the emperor was dragged through the gutters.

He bought the château of Saint-Lazare at Blois and retired there. Means did not allow of the beautiful convent of the Feuillantines being kept any longer. Madame Hugo remained at Paris in modest apartments, to look after her children, Eugène and Victor being placed in the abbé Cordier's boarding school, rue Sainte-Marguerite No. 41. Abel, an officer exempt from these things, was left free. Eugène and Victor were destined for the École polytechnique.

We have already pointed out that the convent of the Feuillantines had kept its word and turned Victor into a poet. Now let us hear about the boy's first attempts.

How grateful would I have been to-day to any contemporary of Dante, Shakespeare or Corneille who would give me similar details of their lives, that twenty years of friendship with Victor Hugo enables me to give here!

It was just at the height of the Restoration. The Académie had announced as the subject for its annual prize, to be awarded on 25 August, Saint Louis's Day, "The happiness that study brings in all situations of life."

Victor went in for the competition without saying a word to anyone about it. He put his name down, according to the rules of the competition, in a sealed paper together with his piece of verse; but, after his name, he added his age, fourteen and a half. Besides giving his age thus, there were these lines in the course of the poem:--

"Moi qui, toujours fuyant les cités et les cours, De trois lustres à peine ai vu finir le cours."

Think of this future philosopher, who, at fourteen, had *fled from cities and courts!* What delicious childish naïveté! But, strange to relate, it was this admission of fourteen years of age that condemned the poet, and prevented him from winning the prize. M. Raynouard, the *rapporteur*, declared that the competitor, by allowing himself *trois lustres à peine*--this was the method of counting in 1817 and is still used by the Académie--had intended to make game of the Académie. And, as though it were not a customary thing for the Académie to be made fun of, the prize was divided between Saintine and Lebrun. However, they read the whole piece composed by the impudent person who made fun of the Académie by speaking of his fourteen years and a half. The assembly, which enjoyed the Académie being thus made game of, highly applauded the lines of the young poet, who at the very moment he was being praised at the Académie was playing prisoners'-base in the college courtyard.

The following stanza was specially applauded, and would have been encored if encores were allowed at the Académie:--

"Mon Virgile à la main, bocages verts et sombres, Que j'aime à m'égarer sous vos paisibles ombres! Que j'aime, en parcourant vos gracieux détours, A pleurer sur Didon, à plaindre ses amours! Là, mon âme, tranquille et sans inquiétude, S'ouvre avec plus de verve aux charmes de l'étude; Là, mon cœur est plus tendre et sait mieux compatir A des maux que peut-être il doit un jour sentir."

It had been a remarkable contest; for, among the competitors, besides those we have named who won the prize--Saintine and Lebrun--were Casimir Delavigne, Loyson, Who has since acquired a certain popularity which has been interrupted by death, and Victor Hugo. Loyson obtained the *accessit*, and Victor Hugo, in spite of M. Raynouard's contention that he had made game of the Académie, was the first to have honourable mention.

Casimir Delavigne, who had really committed the crime of poking fun at the Académie by treating the subject in exactly the opposite way, had a separate honourable mention apart from the competition.

Victor was playing at prisoners'-base, as we have said, whilst he was being applauded at the Académie. The first news he heard of his success was brought him by Abel and by Malitourne, who came rushing in, leapt on him and told him what had just happened and that he would in all probability have obtained the prize if the Académie had been ready to admit that a poet of fourteen could have written the lines. The supposition--not that he had wished to mock the Académie, but that he could lie--hurt the child exceedingly, and he procured his birth-certificate and sent it the Académie.

Vide pedes! vide latus!

They then had to believe it. And the indignation of that worthy grandmother changed to admiration.

M. Raynouard, the perpetual secretary, sent the honoured poet a characteristic letter. There was a deliciously fine mistake in spelling in the letter sent by the perpetual secretary: he told Victor Hugo that he should be pleased to make (*fairait*) his acquaintance. Two other members of the Académie wrote to the young poet without suggestion from outside. These were François de Neufchâteau and Campenon.

"Tendre ami des neuf sœurs, mes bras vous sont ouverts, Venez, j'aimie toujours les vers!"

wrote François de Neufchâteau.

"L'esprit et le bon goût nous ont rassasiés; J'ai rencontré des cœurs de glace Pour des vers pleins de charme et de verve et de grâce Que Malfilâtre eut enviés!"

wrote Campenon.

And Chateaubriand called Hugo "*l'Enfant sublime.*" The appellation stuck to him.

From that moment the youth was no longer his own master, but was given over to that consuming tyrant we call Poetry.

In those days, people still went in for the *Jeux Floraux*, and Hugo competed in two successive years, 1818 and 1819. He won three prizes. The successful pieces were *Moïse sur le Nil*, the *Vierges de Verdun* and the *Statue de Henri IV.* Besides these, he published two satires and an ode. The satires were the *Télégraphe* and the *Racoleur politique*; the ode was the *Ode sur la Vendée.* He published these three things at his own expense and, strange to relate, they brought him in 800 francs.

Poetry sold in those days: society was greedy for novelties and, when anything new was offered it, eagerly put its lips to the cup.

Meanwhile, two years of rhetoric in Latin, two years of philosophy and four years of mathematics had prepared the student for entrance at the École polytechnique.

He now began to face the future seriously, for the first time, and it terrified him. The vocation for which he was being educated was not the one for which he was fitted.

Just when he was about to take the leap and present himself for examination, he wrote to his father that he had found a profession: he was a poet and did not wish to enter the École; he would do without his allowance of 1200 francs. General Hugo was a man of decision himself and he realised that the boy had made up his mind; there was no time to be lost: Victor had eighteen months yet to study. He suppressed the allowance and abandoned the poet to his own resources. Victor possessed within himself as inexhaustible a treasure as those in the *Thousand and One Nights*, and he had the 800 francs from his satires and the ode. On these 800 francs he lived for thirteen months, and during these thirteen months he composed *Han d'Islande*. That curious book was the work of a youth of nineteen.

While he was writing *Han d'Islande* Victor's mother died--an event that influenced the sombre tone of his work considerably. This was his first sorrow and he never forgot it. From the day that that deep sorrow settled on his life, Victor never wore anything but black clothes or a black coat, and he never sealed his letters with aught but black sealing-wax.

And, indeed, we who have seen him grow up, from his childish days at the Feuillantines, at Avellino and at the Séminaire des Nobles, can guess how much his mother was to him. One day, in one of those moments of profound grief when the sorrowful heart seeks for surroundings in harmony with its own mourning, the youth went to Versailles, that most sorrowful and mournful of all places. He breakfasted at the café, holding a paper in his hand which he was not reading, for he was deep in thought. A life-guardsman, who was not given to thought and wanted to read, took the paper out of his hands. Victor at nineteen was fair and delicate of complexion and he looked only fifteen. The life-guardsman thought he was dealing with a boy, but he had insulted a man--a man who was in one of the dark crises of life, when danger often comes as a blessing. So the young man accepted the quarrel that was thrust upon him, coarse and foolish though it was. They fought with swords, almost there and then,

and Victor received a slash in the arm. This *contretemps* hindered the appearance of *Han d'Islande* for a fortnight. Happily, his grief-stricken heart had its star as every dark night has, and its flower as has every precipice;--he was in love! He was passionately in love with Mademoiselle Foucher, a maiden of fifteen with whom he had been brought up. He married this young girl, and she is to-day the devoted wife who followed the poet into exile. *Han d'Islande*, sold for 1000 francs, was the dowry of the wedded pair, who between them could only add up thirty-five years. The witnesses of the marriage were Alexandre Soumet and Alfred de Vigny, both poets just starting out in life and in art themselves. This thousand francs had to be used for housekeeping.

The first volume of poetry Victor published at this time was printed by Guiraudet, No. 335 rue Saint-Honoré and sold by Pélissier, place du Palais-Royal; it brought him in 900 francs, which were to be spent on luxuries. And out of these 900 francs the poet bought the first shawl he gave his young wife. Other women, wives of bankers and princes, have had more beautiful Cashmere shawls than yours, Madame Hugo, but none were woven out of more precious and valuable tissue!

This first volume was an immense success. I remember hearing about it when I was in the provinces.

Lamartine's first volume, *Méditations poétiques*, had appeared in 1820. It had an enormous and deserved success, and sooner or later it was destined to be superseded by another successful rival. It chanced this time that the rival proved equally successful, and the two successes kept pace with one another, hand in hand supporting each other. Nothing happened that could set the poets at variance, their styles were so unlike; nor did politics, thirty years later, succeed in severing the two men, no matter how different their opinions were.

The wedding took place at the house of M. Foucher, the father of the bride, who lived at the War Office. The wedding feast took place in the

very hall where, by a strange coincidence to which we shall presently return, General la Horie, Victor's godfather, was sentenced.

Han d'Islande, which we have most unfairly deserted, achieved, by reason of its curious originality, quite as great a success as its admired sisters the fair and fresh *Odes.* But it did not bear its author's name and it was impossible to guess that that bunch of lilies and lilacs and roses called *Odes et Ballades* grew under the shade of the rugged and dark oak tree called *Han d'Islande.* Nodier read and marvelled at the latter production. Good and worthy Nodier! he was always to be found feeding his mind on everything that could nourish it and on everything that could expand his intellect. He announced that Byron and Mathurin were surpassed and that the unknown author of *Han d'Islande* had attained the ideal of a nightmare. He, the man who was to write *Smarra*! was, upon my word, very modest. Nodier was not the sort of man from whom an author could long conceal his anonymity, no matter in what disguise he masqueraded. The great bibliomaniac who had made so many discoveries of this kind, quite as difficult to detect, discovered that Victor Hugo was the author of *Han d'Islande.* But who was Victor Hugo? Was he a misanthrope like Timon, a cynic like Diogenes or a mourner like Democritus? He raised the veil and found, as we are aware, a fair-complexioned youth who had only just reached his twentieth year and looked but sixteen. He recoiled in amazement: it was incredible. He expected to find the distorted countenance of an aged pessimist; he found the youthful, open, hopeful smile of a budding poet. The very first time they met each other the foundations of a friendship were laid that nothing ever changed. Nodier always loved and was loved in return after this fashion.

Meanwhile, a competence amounting almost to a fortune, had come to the young housekeepers: the first edition of *Han d'Islande*, which was sold for 1000 francs, had run out, and just when Thiers was making his literary début, under cover of the name of Félix Bodin, with his *Histoire*

de la Révolution, Victor was selling his second edition of *Han d'Islande* for 10,000 francs. Lecointre and Durey were the publishers who thus showered gold upon the nuptial bed of the young people. Honours now knocked at their door. We have spoken before of cousin Cornet, who had been made a senator and count under the Empire, and a peer of France under the Restoration; Victor's growing fame pleased the family pride of the old député of Nantes and member of the *Cinq Cents.* He had no child of his own to whom to bequeath his coat of arms of azure with its three cornets argent and his peer's robes; so he proposed to throw the mantle over the young poet's shoulders on one condition. True, the condition was a severe one: in order that the giver's name should not be forgotten, the young poet was to call himself Victor Hugo-Cornet. The proposition was transmitted by General Hugo to the author of *Han d'Islande* and of the *Odes et Ballades.* The author of *Han d'Islande* and of the *Odes et Ballades* replied that he preferred to call himself simply Victor Hugo; and if he wanted to become a peer of France at some future period he did not require the assistance of another, but would become so through his own unaided efforts. So Comte Cornet's offer was declined.

He had another cousin, Comte Volney, who nearly made him a similar proposal to become his heir; but, unluckily, he discovered that *Han d'Islande* had been written by the same hand as the *Odes et Ballades*, so he shook his head and buttoned his peer's robes over his own shoulders more tightly than before.

BOOK III — CHAPTER X

CHAPTER X

Léopoldine--The opinions of the son of the Vendéenne--The Delon conspiracy--Hugo offers Delon shelter--Louis XVIII. bestows a pension of twelve hundred francs on the author of the *Odes et Ballades*--The poet at the office of the director-general des postes--How he learns the existence of the *cabinet noir*--He is made a chevalier of the Légion d'honneur--Beauchesne--*Bug-Jargal*--The Ambassador of Austria's soirée--*Ode à la Colonne*--*Cromwell*--How *Marion Delorme* was written

In 1824, at the same time as the appearance of a fresh volume of Odes, delightful little Léopoldine was born, whose death he witnessed later under such sad circumstances in front of the château de Villequier, drowned with her husband, on a fine day, by a sudden gust of wind. It was a cruel stroke of destiny, perhaps intended to prove the temper of the father's heart, which was to be severely tried during the days of civil strife that were in preparation for him. All these Odes bore the impress of Royalist opinions. The young man, scarcely past childhood, was the son of his Vendéenne mother, that saintly woman who saved the lives of nineteen priests in the civil war of 1793. General Hugo's friends, who held what were called at that time "Liberal opinions," without openly belonging to the Opposition, were yet often concerned at these ultra-monarchical tendencies; but the general shook his head and answered them smilingly.

"Leave things to time," he said. "The boy holds his mother's opinions; the man will hold his father's."

Here is a statement of the poet himself, which sets forth the promise made by his father, not only to a friend, but to France, to the future and to the whole world:--

"*December* 1820

"The callow youths who succeed nowadays to political ideas are in a strange predicament: our fathers are generally Bonapartists and our mothers Royalists. Our fathers only see in Napoleon the man who bestowed epaulettes upon them; our mothers only see in Bonaparte the man who took their sons away from them. Our fathers see in the Revolution the grandest result that the genius of a National Assembly could produce; the Empire, the greatest thing that the genius of a man could devise.

"To our mothers, the Revolution only meant the guillotine, and the Empire a sword. We children who were born under the Consulate have all been brought up at our mothers' knees,--our fathers were in camp,--and since they were often deprived of their husbands and brothers through the vagaries of the conquering Man, they riveted their hopes on us, young schoolboys of eight and ten years of age, and their gentle motherly eyes would fill with tears at the thought that by 1820 we should be eighteen, and by 1825 be either colonels, or else killed. The acclamation that greeted Louis XVIII. in 1814 was the delighted cry of our mothers. There are very few adolescents of our generation but have sucked in, with their mothers' milk, a hatred of the two periods of violent upheaval which preceded the Restoration. Robespierre was the bogey that frightened the children of 1803; and Bonaparte the bogey that terrified the children of 1815. I was lately strongly upholding my Vendéen opinions in my father's presence. He listened to me in silence, then he turned to General L----, who was with him, and remarked, 'Leave things to time: the child holds his mother's opinions; the man will follow his father's.' This prophecy set me to thinking. Whatever the case may be, and even admitting that, up to a certain point, experience modifies the impressions that we receive during our early years, *the honest-minded man is sure not to be led astray if he submits all these modifications to the severe criticism of his conscience. A good conscience kept ever*

awake saves him from all the devious pitfalls wherein his honesty might go astray. In the Middle Ages people believed that any liquid in which a sapphire had rested was a preservative against plague, carbuncles, leprosy and every kind of disease. Jean-Baptiste de Rocoles said, 'Conscience is a similar sapphire!'"

These few lines completely explain Victor's political conduct at different periods of his life. Meantime, the Royalist opinions which he revealed in his beautiful verses to those who looked upon such opinions as heresy were absolved by good deeds.

Let us mention a fact that will also serve to show the poet's life from an original aspect. In 1822 the Berton conspiracy burst forth, and all eyes were turned towards Saumur. Among the conspirators,--besides Berton, who died bravely, and Café, who opened his veins like a hero of old with a scrap of broken glass,--was a young man called Delon. I had caught occasional glimpses of this young man at the house of M. Deviolaine, to whom he was related, either carrying little Victor on his shoulder or jumping the future poet up and down on his knees. He was the son of an old officer who had served under General Hugo's orders. In the famous trial of the Chauffeurs this officer was the captain *rapporteur*; in the equally famous trial of Malet he was major *rapporteur*, and, in both trials, without making any distinction between the accused, he had pronounced sentence of death on them. So General la Horie, Victor's godfather, of whom mention has been already made, was shot by Delon's orders. It was a strange coincidence that the son of the man who had pronounced sentence of death on others for conspiracy, should be doomed to death for the same cause! Since the day on which Major Delon had delivered sentence on General la Horie, instead of declining to adjudicate in the case, there had been a complete rupture between the Hugo and Delon family.

But although intercourse between the fathers was broken off, there had not been any rupture between the children. Victor lived then at No. 10 rue de Mézières. One morning he read in the papers the terrible story of the conspiracy of Saumur. Nearly all those concerned were arrested, with the exception of Delon, who had escaped. Very soon, childish recollections, strong and indelible, rose to the poet's mind; he seized his writing materials and, forgetting the family hatreds and the difference of opinion, he wrote to Madame Delon, at Saint-Denis:--

"MADAME,--I learn that your son is proscribed and a fugitive; we hold different opinions, but that is only another reason why he would not be looked for at my house. I shall expect him; at whatever hour of day or night he comes he will be welcome. I am sure that no other place of refuge can be safer for him than the share of my room which I offer him. I live in a house without a porter's lodge, in the rue de Mézières No. 10, on the fifth floor. I will take care that the door shall be kept unlocked day and night.

"Accept my most respectful greetings, dear madame, and believe me, yours, VICTOR HUGO"

When this letter was written, with the guilelessness of a child, the poet entrusted it to the post. To the post! A letter addressed to the mother of a man for whom the whole police force was in search! Well, when it was posted, Victor crept out every night at twilight to explore the neighbourhood, expecting to find Delon in each man who was leaning against a wall. Delon never appeared. But something else appeared, to the immense surprise of the poet, who had not made any move towards it whatever, namely, a pension of 1200 francs which the author of *Odes et Ballades* received one morning in his small room in the rue de Mézières, the grant being signed by Louis XVIII. It could not have arrived at a more opportune time, for the poet had just married.

On 13 April 1825, Hugo went to the hôtel des Postes to engage three places on the mail coach for himself, his wife and a servant. They were going to Blois. He was anxious to secure these three seats in advance, but, unfortunately, this was not an easy thing: the mail went as far as Bordeaux, and to save places as far as Blois meant risking the emptiness of the seats from Blois to Bordeaux. However, the favour which Victor required could be granted by one man, and that man was M. Roger, the Postmaster-general. M. Roger was by way of being a literary man, he belonged to the Académie and might possibly grant Victor Hugo his desire. So Victor decided to go to the Postmaster-general's house. The usher announced the poet and, at Victor Hugo's name, which at that time was already well known, especially by reason of the ode which had appeared on the death of Louis XVIII. (the ode we have already partly quoted), M. Roger rose and approached the poet with demonstrations of the greatest friendliness. Needless to relate, the request for reserved places on the mail coach to Blois was at once accorded. But M. Roger, having the good fortune to have secured a visit from the poet, would not let him go easily: he made him sit down, and they talked together.

"By the way," M. Roger suddenly burst out in the middle of the conversation, "do you know to what you owe your pension of twelve hundred francs, my dear poet?"

"Why, I probably owe it to my small efforts in literature," Victor answered laughingly.

"Yes, of course," replied the Postmaster-general; "but would you like me to tell you exactly how you got it?"

"Certainly, I should be glad to know, I must confess."

"Do you remember the conspiracy of Saumur?"

"Of course."

"Do you recollect a young man named Delon who compromised himself in that conspiracy?"

"Perfectly well."

"You remember writing to him or, rather, to his mother, offering the outlaw half your room at No. 10 rue de Mézières?"

Victor made no answer this time; he stared at the Postmaster-general with startled eyes, not amazed at the magnificence of the worthy M. Roger, but at his powers of penetration. He had written that letter alone, between his own four walls: he had not told a single soul about it. Not even his own nightcap--that confidant which Louis XI. thought ought to be burned, since it had been the recipient of certain secrets--knew anything about it, seeing he never wore a nightcap.

"Well," continued the Postmaster-general, "that letter was laid before King Louis XVIII., who already knew you as a poet. 'Ah! ah!' said the king, 'he possesses great talents and a good heart ... that young man must be rewarded!' and he ordered a pension of twelve hundred francs to be settled on you."

"But," Victor finally stammered out, "how did my letter get to the notice of King Louis XVIII.?"

The Postmaster-general burst into shouts of Homeric laughter. And, simple-minded though the poet was, at last he understood.

"But," he exclaimed, "what became of the letter?"

"Why, *naturally*, it was replaced in the post."

"And reached its destination?"

"Probably."

"But if Delon had accepted my offer and had come to me, what would have happened?"

"He would have been arrested, tried and probably executed, my dear poet."

"So that my letter would have been regarded as a deathtrap for him; and if he had been arrested, tried and executed ... the pension I have received would have been blood-money! Oh!..."

Victor uttered a cry of horror at what might have happened, clapped his hands to his head and rushed out into the antechamber, where M. Roger followed him, laughing greatly, telling him he had left his hat behind him and saying--

"Remember that the mail coach is entirely at your service, for the day after to-morrow, April 15."

His horror at what might have happened gradually subsided into calmness, and Hugo breathed again when he realised that Delon was in safety in England. But he began to believe in the existence of that famous black cabinet that he had looked on as a fable, and he vowed never again to offer an outlaw shelter through the medium of the ordinary post.

When the day of departure for Blois arrived, he and Madame Hugo and her lady's-maid went to the hôtel des Postes and, just as he was about to enter the coach, an orderly officer, who was very nearly too late, rode up at full gallop and placed a letter in his hand which bore the king's seal. It contained a commission making him a chevalier of the Légion d'honneur, signed by Charles X. Hugo was only twenty-three at the time, and that is an age when such things cause immense delight, especially if they are bestowed graciously. In the general promotion, Hugo and Lamartine had at first been mixed up together in what is popularly termed a *batch*, and King Charles X. had struck off both their names. M. de la Rochefoucauld, who approved of the list and was particularly glad of the

inclusion of the two young poets, ventured to inquire of His Majesty why he had cancelled two such celebrated names as theirs?

"Precisely because they are so famous, monsieur," replied Charles X., "in order that they may not be confounded with other names. You must present me with a separate report for MM. Lamartine and Hugo."

The warrant was accompanied by an official letter from M. le Comte Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld and by a friendly letter from his secretary, M. de Beauchesne.

M. de Beauchesne, or rather Beauchesne, was a true guide to M. de la Rochefoucauld in every piece of good work he did, and it should be mentioned that the Director of the Fine Arts, who was greatly taunted by the Opposition papers at that time--I am not referring to political matters--did excellent work in the way of encouraging literary efforts. Let me repeat, however, that Beauchesne was his guide in these matters. Beauchesne was then a charming fellow of twenty-four or twenty-five, and has since developed into a charming poet. So loyal a heart was his that he seemed to have taken for his motto, "*Video nec invideo*"; and, indeed, what more could he have wanted? All who were great called him *brother*, and all who were good called him *friend.* A free and loyal Breton when the true monarchy fell, but Beauchesne remained faithful to its ruins. I shall relate in its proper place how once we very nearly had a duel over politics, and I shall maintain that we were never better friends than then, when we faced each other sword in hand. Dear Beauchesne! He disappeared quite suddenly: it was ten or fifteen years before I saw him again, but one morning he came to see me as though he had only left the previous day, and we embraced heartily. He brought with him a charming tragedy or drama, I forget which now, a phantasy taken from one of our ancient *fabliaux*--the *Épreuves de la belle Griseldis*--which, in all probability, will be read, received, played and applauded at the Théâtre-Français. He had a bewitching little mansion in the bois de

Boulogne which he sold. Ivy has no time to grow over the homes of poets. I remember when he had just built his house he sent me his album to write a few lines in, and I wrote these:--

"Beauchesne, vous avez une douce retraite; Moi, je suis sans abri pour les jours de malheur! Que votre beau castel, pour reposer sa tête, Garde dans son grenier, une place au poëte, Qui vous garde en échange une place en son cœur."

I lost sight of Beauchesne a second time. A catastrophe happened to me which left me indifferent, but which most people look upon as a great misfortune. I opened a letter full of tender sympathy. It was from Beauchesne. I did not answer it then; I will answer it to-day. As this is by no means the last time I shall mention dear Beauchesne I will not bid him *adieu* but *au revoir ! ...*

So Hugo received his brevet of chevalier, and M. de la Rochefoucauld's official letter, with Beauchesne's friendly one, at the same time. He buttoned them all three next to his heart, climbed upon the coach and composed the whole of the ballad of the *Deux Archers* during the drive between Paris and Blois. When he arrived at Blois he joyfully laid his brevet in his father's hands. The old soldier took off from an ancient coat, that had received the dust of many lands, one of his old decorations that had faced the fire of many battles, and tied it to his son's buttonhole, wiping away a tear--I strongly suspect that every father's eye is capable of that weakness. During this visit to Blois the poet received a private letter from Charles X., inviting him to be present at his coronation at Rheims, and Hugo set out in company with Nodier.

At Rheims he found Lamartine, with whom he became acquainted. They each acknowledged the king's hospitality, Lamartine by his *Chant du sacre*; Hugo by his *Ode à Charles X.*

In 1826 *Bug-Jargal* appeared. Just as *Christine* had been composed before *Henri III.*, so *Bug-Jargal* had been finished before *Han d'Islande.* I do not know why this chronological transposition was made in the publication.

In 1827 the Austrian Ambassador gave a grand soirée, to which he invited all the most illustrious persons in France, and all the most illustrious persons in France, who are always eager to attend soirées, went to that of the ambassador. The marshals were there among the rest of the people, and a singular thing happened at this particular soirée. At the door of the salon was the customary lackey to announce the names of the visitors who had been deemed worthy of an invitation. When Marshal Soult arrived, the lackey asked him, "What name shall I announce?"

"*The Duc de Dalmatie*," replied the marshal.

"*M. le maréchal Soult*," announced the lackey, who had received his orders.

This might very well have been thought to be a mistake, so the *illustre épée* (as he had been called since the time of Louis-Philippe, who, probably, did not care to call him the Duc de Dalmatie any more than did the Austrian Ambassador) paid no attention to the matter.

Marshal Mortier came next.

"What name shall I give?" asked the lackey.

"*The Duc de Trévise.*"

"*M. le maréchal Mortier*," called out the lackey.

The eyes of the two old comrades of the emperor flashed lightnings of interrogation across at one another; but they did not know what to reply, for it was not yet quite clear what would be the best course to take.

Marshal Marmont came third.

"What name shall I announce?" asked the lackey.

"*The Duc de Raguse.*"

"*M. le maréchal Marmont*," announced the lackey.

This time there could not be any mistake about it; so the two first arrivals joined the third and told him of their difficulty. But they all three decided to wait a while longer.

The Duc de Reggio, the Duc de Tarente and all the other dukes of the Imperial creation came, one after another, and, although they all gave their ducal titles, they were only announced by their family names.

The insult was open and patent, and offered publicly, and yet the insulted men silently withdrew, to nurse the insult they had endured. Not one of them thought of striking the insulter. But a poet was ready to demand redress and to obtain it on their behalf! Three days after this insult had been offered to the whole of the army, in the person of its chiefs, the *Ode à la Colonne* appeared.

ODE À LA COLONNE

"O monument vengeur, trophée indélébile! Bronze qui, tournoyant sur ta base immobile, Sembles porter au ciel ta gloire et ton néant, Et de tout ce qu'a fait une main colossale, Seul es resté debout! ruine triomphale De l'édifice du géant!

Débris du grand empire et de la grande armée, Colonne d'où si haut parle la renommée! Je t'aime; l'étranger t'admire avec effroi, J'aime tes vieux héros sculptés par la victoire, Et tous ces fantômes de gloire Qui se pressent autour de toi.

J'aime à voir sur tes flancs, colonne étincelante! Revivre ces soldats qu'en leur onde sanglante Ont roulés le Danube, et le Rhin, et le Pô; Tu mets,

comme un guerrier, le pied sur ta conquête, J'aime ton piédestal d'armures et ta tête, Dont le panache est un drapeau.

Au bronze de Henri, mon orgueil te marie. J'aime à vous voir tous deux, honneur de la patrie, Immortels, dominant nos troubles passagers, Sortir, signes jumeaux d'amour et de colère, Lui, de l'épargne populaire, Toi, des arsenaux étrangers.

Que de fois, tu le sais, quand la nuit sous ses voiles Fait fuir la blanche lune, ou trembler les étoiles, Je viens, triste, évoquer tes fastes devant moi, Et d'un œil enflammé, dévorant ton histoire, Prendre, convive obscur, ma part de tant de gloire Comme un pâtre au banquet d'un roi!

Que de fois j'ai cru voir, ô colonne française! Ton airain ennemi rugir dans la fournaise; Que de fois, ranimant des combattants épars, Heurtant sur tes parois leurs armees dérouillées, J'ai ressuscité ces mêlées Qui s'assiègent de toutes parts!

Jamais, ô monument! même ivres de leur nombre, Les étrangers sans peur, n'ont passé sur ton ombre; Leurs pas n'ébranlent point ton bronze souverain, Quand le sort une fois les poussa vers nos rives; Ils n'osaient étaler leurs parades oisives Devant tes batailles d'airain.

Mais, quoi! n'entend-je point, avec de sourds murmures, De ta base à ton front bruire les armures? Colonne! il m'a semblé qu'éblouissant mes yeux, Tes bataillons cuivrés cherchaient à redescendre; Que tes demi-dieux, noirs d'une héroïque cendre, Interrompaient soudain leur marche vers les cieux.

Leurs voix mêlaient des noms à leur vieille devise: TARENTE, REGGIO, DALMATIE ET TRÉVISE, Et leurs aigles, sortant de leur puissant sommeil, Suivaient d'un bec ardent cette aigle à double tête Dont l'œil, ami de l'ombre où son essor s'arrête, Se baisse à leur regard comme au feu de soleil.

Qu'est-ce donc, et pourquoi, bronze envie de Rome, Vois-je tes légions frémir comme un seul homme? Quel impossible outrage à ta hauteur atteint? Qui donc a réveillé ces ombres immortelles, Ces aigles qui, battant ta base de leurs ailes, Dans leur ongle captif pressent leur foudre éteint?

Je comprends: l'étranger, qui nous croit sans mémoire, Veut, feuillet par feuillet, déchirer notre histoire, Écrite avec du sang, à la pointe du fer ... Ose-t-il, imprudent, heurter tant de trophées? De ce bronze, forgé de foudres étouffées, Chaque étincelle est un éclair.

Est-ce Napoléon qu'il frappe en notre armée? Veut-il, de cette gloire en tant lieux semée, Disputer l'héritage à nos vieux généraux? Pour un fardeau pareil il a la main débile: L'empire d'Alexandre et les armes d'Achille Ne se partagent qu'aux héros.

Mais non; l'Autrichien, dans sa fierté qu'il dompte, Est content si leurs noms ne disent que sa honte; Il fait de sa défaite un titre à nos guerriers, Et, craignant des vainqueurs moins que des feudataires, Ils pardonne aux fleurons de nos ducs militaires, Si ne sont que des lauriers.

Bronze! il n'a donc jamais, fier pour une victoire, Subi de tes splendeurs l'aspect expiatoire? D'où vient tant de courage à cet audacieux? Croit-il impunément toucher à nos annales? Et comment donc lit-il ces pages triomphales Que tu déroules dans les cieux?

Est-ce un langage obscur à ses regards timides? Eh! qu'il s'en fasse instruire au pied des Pyramides, A Vienne, au vieux Kremlin, au morne Escurial; Qu'il en parle à ces rois, cour dorée et nombreuse, Qui naguère peuplaient, d'une tente poudreuse, Le vestibule impérial!

A quoi pense-t-il donc, l'étranger qui nous brave? N'avions nous pas hier l'Europe pour esclave? Nous, subir de son joug l'indigne talion! Non, au champ du combat nous pouvons reparaître. On nous a mutilés, mais le temps a peut-être Fait croître l'ongle du lion....

De quel droit viennent-ils découronner nos gloires? Les Bourbons ont toujours adopté des victoires; Nos rois t'ont défendu d'un ennemi tremblant, O trophée! A leur pieds tes palmes se déposent; Et si tes quatre aigles reposent, C'est à l'ombre du drapeau blanc.

Quoi! le globe est ému de volcans électriques, Derrière l'Océan grondent les Amériques, Stamboul rugit, Hellé remonte aux jours anciens; Lisbonne se débat aux mains de l'Angleterre; Seul, le vieux peuple franc s'indigne que la terre Tremble a d'autres pas que les siens.

Prenez garde, étrangers! nous ne savons que faire; La paix nous berce en vain dans son oisive sphère, L'arène de la guerre a pour nous tant d'attrait! Nous froissons dans nos mains, hélas! inoccupées. Des lyres à défaut d'épées; Nous chantons comme on combattrait.

Prenez garde! la France, où grandit un autre âge, N'est pas si morte encor, qu'elle souffre un outrage; Les partis pour un temps voileront leur drapeau. Contre une injure, ici, tout grandi, tout se lève, Tout s'arme, et la Vendée aiguisera son glaive Sur la pierre de Waterloo.

Vous dérobez des noms! Quoi donc, faut-il qu'on aille Lever sur tous vos champs des titres de bataille? Faut-il, quittant ces noms par la valeur trouvés, Pour nos gloires chez vous chercher d'autres baptèmes; Sur l'airain de vos canons mêmes Ne sont-ils point assez gravés?

L'étranger briserait le blason de la France! On verrait, enhardi par notre indifférence. Sur nos fiers écussons tomber son vil marteau! Ah! comme ce Romain qui remuait la terre, Vous portez, ô Français, et la paix et la guerre Dans les plis de votre manteau!

Votre aile en ce moment touche, à sa fantaisie, L'Afrique par Cadix et par Moscou l'Asie; Vous chassez en courant Anglais, Russes, Germains; Les tours croulent devant vos trompettes fatales, Et de toutes les capitales Vos drapeaux savent les chemins.

Quand leur destin se pèse avec vos destinées, Toutes les nations s'inclinent détrônées; La gloire pour vos noms n'a point assez de bruit; Sans cesse autour de vous les États se déplacent Quand votre astre paraît tous les autres s'effacent; Quand vous marchez, l'univers suit.

Que l'Autriche en rampant, de nœuds vous environne, Les deux géants de France ont foulé sa couronne; L'histoire, qui des temps ouvre le Panthéon, Montre, empreints aux deux fronts du vautour d'Allemagne, La sandale de Charlemagne, L'éperon de Napoléon.

Allez, vous n'avez plus l'aigle qui, de son aire, Sur tous les fronts trop hauts portait votre tonnerre Mais il vous reste encor l'oriflamme et le lys; Mais c'est le coq gaulois qui réveille le monde, Et son cri peut promettre à votre nuit profonde L'aube du soleil d'Austerlitz.

C'est moi qui me tairais! moi qu'enivrai naguère Mon nom saxon mêlé parmi des cris de guerre; Moi qui suivais le vol d'un drapeau triomphant; Qui, joignant aux clairons ma voix entrecoupée, Eus pour premier hochet le nœud d'or d'une épée; Moi qui fus un soldat quand j'étais un enfant!

Non, frères! non, Français de cette âge d'attente! Nous avons tous grandi sur le seuil de la tente; Condamnés à la paix, aiglons bannis des cieux, Sachons du moins, veillant aux gloires paternelles, Garder de tout affront, jalouses sentinelles, Les armures de nos aïeux."

This was the first sign of opposition against the Government of the Bourbons of the older branch that Hugo had given.

In the course of that same year, 1827, *Cromwell* was published. The poem itself did not raise so much discussion as the preface, which was a novelty in the poetic world. In 1828 appeared the *Orientales* and the *Dernier jour d'un condamné.* Finally, on 16 February 1829, as I have said, *Henri III.* was played.

Hugo and Lamartine were almost entirely responsible for the revolution in the poetical world, but the revolutionising of the whole of the drama had yet to come. Happily *Henri III.* began the work with its bold and new style. Besides, this representation, the full details of which I have already given, delighted Hugo, and gave him much encouragement. We saw each other after the play and he held out his hand to me.

"Ah!" I cried, "at last I have the chance of grasping your hand!"

I was very happy over my success, but the right to clasp those hands was the most precious thing I had won.

"Now," said Hugo, "it will be my turn next!"

"When the day comes don't forget me...."

"You shall be at the first reading."

"Is that a promise?"

"It is a definite engagement!"

With that we parted.

And, indeed, the very next day Hugo chose the drama of *Marion Delorme* from among the different subjects that were already in his mind. For, just as a mother carries her babe within her until it is ripe for birth, so we mental creators carry our subjects in our brains before they are brought forth. Then, one day, he said to himself, "On 1 June 1829 I will begin my drama." And on that date he did actually set to work upon it.

On the 19th, he had completed the first three acts. On the 20th, at break of day, as the sun rose and filled his window with its golden rays, lighting up his room in the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, he composed the first lines of his fourth act:--

"LE DUC DE BELLEGARDE. Condamné?

LE MARQUIS DE NANGIS. Condamné!

LE DUC DE BELLEGARDE. Bien!... mais le roi fait grâce?..."

Next day, just twenty-four hours later, when the sun was again paying his accustomed visit, he wrote the last line--

"On peut bien, une fois, être roi par mégarde!"

During those twenty-four hours he had neither eaten, nor drunk, nor slept; but he had written an act containing nearly six hundred lines--an act which I take to be a masterpiece; six hundred lines which to my thinking are among the finest in the French language.

On 27 June *Marion Delorme* was finished.

BOOK III — CHAPTER XI

CHAPTER XI

Reading of *Marion Delorme* at the house of Devéria--Steeplechase of directors--*Marion Delorme* is stopped by the Censorship--Hugo obtains an audience with Charles X.--His drama is definitely interdicted--They send him the brevet of a pension, which he declines--He sets to work on *Hernani*, and completes it in twenty-four days

Hugo had no need to write to Nodier as I had done, and to wait for an appointment with Taylor: he was already as famous before *Marion Delorme* as I was unknown before *Henri III.*

As I have already mentioned, Hugo notified me of a reading at Devéria's house, and invited Taylor to this reading, together with de Vigny, Émile Deschamps, Sainte-Beuve, Soumet, Boulanger and Beauchesne--in fact, the whole Pleiades; and so the reading began.

The first act of *Marion Delorme* is a masterpiece; there is nothing in it to which one can take exception, apart from Hugo's mania for making his characters enter by windows instead of by doors, which here betrayed itself for the first time. No one could be more free from envious feelings than I am. So I listened to this first act with the profoundest admiration, intermingled, however, with some sadness. I felt how far behind his style I was, and how long it would be before I attained to it, if I ever should at all. Then came the second and the last three acts successively. I was seated next to Taylor, and at the last line of the play he leant over to me and said--

"Well, what do you think of that?"

I replied that I would be hanged if Victor had not shown us his finest piece of work. And I added, "I am certain he has."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because *Marion Delorme* shows all the qualities of the work of a mature man and none of the faults of a young one. Progress is impossible to one who begins by perfect work or work very nearly perfect."

I am interested to find I was right, whether from conceit or not; I still believe that *Marion Delorme* is, if not quite his best piece of work, yet one of his best. I congratulated him very heartily and very sincerely; I had never heard anything to compare with the lines of *Marion Delorme.* I was overwhelmed by the splendour of their style, I who lacked style throughout my work. If I had been asked to exchange ten years of my life in return for some day attaining such a style as that, I should not have hesitated for one moment, I should have given them instantly! One thing offended me greatly in the fifth act: Didier goes to his death without forgiving Marion. I entreated Hugo to substitute a more humane spirit for that inflexible character. Sainte-Beuve agreed with me and, between us, we obtained poor Marion's pardon.

Now came the question of the Censorship. None of us believed that it would pass the character of Louis XIII., though admirably drawn, simply because of its accurate drawing and the vividness of its colouring. True, the act which contained Louis XIII. could have been taken out without in any way spoiling the interest of the piece, and Crosnier many times omitted it at the theatre of the Porte-Saint-Martin, without the public perceiving the omission. It was what critics of petty words and petty things call a superfetation, a *hors d'œuvre.* What a magnificent *hors d'œuvre* it was! What a sublime superfetation! I would allow anyone to take their choice among my dramas, if I might but have written the fourth act of *Marion Delorme.* For that matter, it was a great failing with Victor Hugo, for a time, to compose his fourth acts so that they could be taken

out like separate episodes. The fourth act of *Hernani*, which contains the stupendous monologue of Charles V., can be taken out without injury to the play, and it is the same with the fourth act of *Ruy Blas.* But, because this fourth act was not an integral part of the play, does it follow that a marvellous conception ought to be suppressed? Because a woman is beautiful, is it absolutely necessary to throw her jewels into the water, especially if they be worth thousands?...

Reports of the reading leaked out in Paris, and there was quite a steeplechase of theatrical managers to the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs to obtain *Marion Delorme*. Harel came first. Directly he entered, he seized hold of the manuscript and, regardless of everything, began writing on it below the title, "Received by the Odéon theatre, 14 July 1829." It was the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille, and Harel thought he would take *Marion Delorme* by surprise as the Bastille had been taken by our fathers! Harel was repulsed with loss; but, as his name was on the manuscript, he stuck to it that he had taken possession of it.

A day or two after Harel's attempt, M. Crosnier was announced and introduced into the drawing-room. Hugo was reading a newspaper; he rose and showed M. Crosnier to a seat. When M. Crosnier took it, Hugo himself resumed his seat and waited. But, as M. Crosnier kept silence, Hugo took up his paper again; which course decided M. Crosnier to open his mouth.

"Monsieur," he said, addressing Hugo, "I have come to see your father; I was told he lived here. If it is not taking too much advantage of your kindness, would you be so good as to tell him I am here?"

"Alas I monsieur," Hugo replied, "my father died a year ago, and I presume it is with me you desire to speak."

"I wish to speak to M. Victor Hugo."

"I am he, monsieur."

Crosnier could not believe that this slightly built, fresh-coloured young man, who looked nothing but a boy of twenty, could be the man about whom there had already been so much stir for the past five or six years. However, he revealed the object of his visit. He had come to ask *Marion Delorme* for the theatre of the Porte-Saint-Martin. Hugo smiled and gave him the same answer that Harel had received, namely, that the Théâtre-Français had been promised the first refusal. Crosnier smiled in his turn, with the fine-edged smile that is peculiarly his own; then, taking up a pen--

"Monsieur Hugo," he said, "allow me to inscribe my acceptance under that of my confrère."

"Write what you please, monsieur," said Hugo; "but you must remember that there are already two acceptances before yours."

"No matter, monsieur; I wish to take my place. For, bless me! who knows? I may be the one to bring out your play in spite of its having been already accepted twice!"

And he wrote under Harel's acceptance--

"Received by the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre, 16 July 1829."

Supported by this twofold acceptance, *Marion Delorme* was presented to the Théâtre-Français and was received with unanimous applause. I recollect that as we were leaving the reading, full of enthusiasm over what we had all heard, Émile Deschamps pointed to a bill which announced the evening's play and, shrugging his shoulders, exclaimed compassionately, at the sight of Racine's *chef-d-œuvre*--

"And *they* are going to play *Britannicus*!..."

None of us to-day, not even Émile Deschamps, would confess to having given utterance to the above *mot.* I am certain that we should all have

said it in 1829, and more than one who has since paid his visit to the thirty-nine Academicians envied him the phrase at the moment.

The play was distributed, and immediately after its reception began to be rehearsed. Mademoiselle Mars played Marion; Firmin, Didier; Joanny, Nangis; Menjaud, Saverny, etc. But, one morning, the dreadful news spread abroad that the play had been stopped by the Censor! The same thing had happened to *Henri III.*; the Censor always stopped everything; it was his business, and then the sentence could afterwards be relaxed, if the work justified its existence, or the author clamoured loudly enough. I had remonstrated and *Henri III.* had escaped safe and sound out of his claws, thanks to M. de Martignac, who had come to my aid. So Hugo applied to M. de Martignac. But well-meaning, cultured and even literary as was this model of ministers past, present and future, he confessed himself powerless. It was a question that did not merely affect a Valois but a Bourbon; not merely a predecessor but the grandfather of Charles X. No one but Charles X. could pronounce judgment on this family question. Hugo decided to ask an audience of Charles X. and it was granted him. In those days persons who approached the kings of France had to wear court dress *à la française* and a sword. Hugo raised great objections at having to submit to this disguise; but Taylor undertook to collect the necessary articles of apparel. He set great store by *Marion Delorme*, and to gain permission to produce it he would have dressed up Hugo as a Turk or a Chinaman. The day of the audience came and Hugo went to Saint-Cloud, where he found the antechamber crowded. Among those in attendance were Madame du Cayla, who had just put the finishing touch to the Polignac ministry; and Michaud of the Académie, who was going to Palestine. Michaud was Reader to the king. He was covered with as much gold braid as the coats of four generals all put together! Nevertheless, he was a man of much genius. Hugo was busily talking to him when the two doors opened and His Royal Highness Monseigneur the Dauphin was announced. Hugo had never seen the

being for whom he had wished the Arc de triomphe to be raised, except at a distance:--

"Que le géant de notre gloire Pût y passer sans se baisser!"

He saw what looked like a monkey, yet without a monkey's grace; a kind of mummy, with its face perpetually contorted with neuralgia, crossing the hall, responding to all the bows and greetings and homage with a deep growl, from which you could not make out one single word clearly. And that was the conqueror of the Trocadero! the pacificator of Spain! He took no more notice of Madame du Cayla than of the rest. Perhaps, if some courtier had whispered to him that a great poet was present, he might have stopped to see what sort of an animal a poet was. No courtier informed Monseigneur le Dauphin and he passed without stopping. Soon afterwards, King Charles X. passed through with as gracious and smiling a presence as his son's was grotesque and ill-tempered. He greeted Madame du Cayla with a word, shook hands with Michaud and Victor, bowed to others and entered his audience-chamber. A moment later, Madame la Comtesse du Cayla was summoned. Without troubling himself concerning the length of time she had been waiting, or whether she had come before the other visitors, the last king of the line of chivalrous kings sent for her first, because she was a woman. Madame du Cayla remained nearly an hour with the king. This was not too long wherein to give birth to a ministry which itself a year later was to give birth to the Revolution of July. Then, when Madame du Cayla withdrew, the poet was called. Charles X. first recollected that he was the successor of François I. and then that he was the descendant of Louis XIV. The poet went in, and we will let him relate what took place at that remarkable interview in his own words:--

"C'était le sept août.--O sombre destinée! C'était le premier jour de leur dernière année! Seuls, dans un lieu royal, côte à côte marchant, Deux hommes, par endroits du coude se touchant, Causaient.... Grand souvenir

qui dans mon cœur se grave! Le premier avait l'air fatigué, triste et grave, Comme un trop faible front qui porte un lourd projet. Une double épaulette à couronne chargeait Son uniforme vert à ganse purpurine, Et l'ordre et la toison faisaient, sur sa poitrine, Près du large cordon moiré de bleu changeant, Deux foyers lumineux, l'un d'or, l'autre d'argent. C'était un roi, vieillard à la tête blanchie, Penché du poids des ans et de la monarchie! L'autre était un jeune homme étranger chez les rois, Un poëte, un passant, une inutile voix...

Dans un coin, une table, un fauteuil de velours Miraient dans le parquet leurs pieds dorés et lourds; Par une porte en vitre, au dehors, l'œil, en foule, Apercevait au loin des armoires de Boule, Des vases du Japon, des laques, des émaux Et des chandeliers d'or aux immenses rameaux. Un salon rouge orné de glaces de Venise, Plein de ces bronzes grecs que l'esprit divinise, Multipliait sans fin ses lustres de cristal; Et, comme une statue à lames de métal, On voyait, casque au front, luire, dans l'encoignure, Un garde argent et bleu, d'une fière tournure.

Or, entre le poëte et le vieux roi courbé, De quoi s'agissait-il? D'un pauvre ange tombé Dont l'amour refaisait l'âme avec son haleine: De Marion, lavée ainsi que Madeleine, Qui boitait et traînait son pas estropié, La censure, serpent, l'ayant mordue au pied.

Le poëte voulait faire, un soir, apparaître Louis-Treize, ce roi sur qui régnait un prêtre; Tout un siècle: marquis, bourreaux, fous, bateleurs; Et que la foule vînt, et qu'à travers les pleurs, Par moments, dans un drame étincelant et sombre, Du pâle cardinal on crût voir passer l'ombre.

Le vieillard hésitait.--Que sert de mettre à nu Louis-Treize, ce roi, chétif et mal venu? A quoi bon remuer un mort dans une tombe? Que veut-on? où court-on? sait-on bien où l'on tombe? Tout n'est-il pas déjà croulant de tout côté? Tout ne s'en va-t-il pas dans trop de liberté? N'est-il pas temps plutôt, après quinze ans d'épreuve, De relever la digue et d'arrêter le fleuve? Certe, un roi peut reprendre alors qu'il a donné. Quant au théâtre,

il faut, le trône étant miné, Étouffer des deux mains sa flamme trop hardie; Car la foule est le peuple, et d'une comédie Peut jaillir l'étincelle aux livides rayons Qui met le feu dans l'ombre aux révolutions! Puis il niait l'histoire, et, quoi qu'il en puisse être, A ce jeune rêveur disputait son ancêtre; L'accueillant bien, d'ailleurs; bon, royal, gracieux, Et le questionnant sur ses propres aïeux.

Tout en laissant aux rois les noms dont on les nomme, Le poëte luttait fermement, comme un homme Épris de liberté, passionné pour l'art, Respectueux pourtant pour ce noble vieillard. Il disait: 'Tout est grave, en ce siècle où tout penche. L'art, tranquille et puissant, veut une allure franche. Les rois morts sont sa proie; il faut la lui laisser. Il n'est pas ennemi; pourquoi le courroucer Et le livrer, dans l'ombre, à des tortionnaires, Lui dont la main fermée est pleine de tonnerres? Cette main, s'il l'ouvrait, redoutable envoyé, Sur la France éblouie et le Louvre effrayé, On s'épouvanterait--trop tard, s'il faut le dire,-- D'y voir subitement tant de foudres reluire! Oh! les tyrans d'en has nuisent au roi d'en haut. Le peuple est toujours là qui prend la muse au mot, Quand l'indignation, jusqu'au roi qu'on révère, Monte du front pensif de l'artiste sévère! Sire, à ce qui chancelle est-on bien appuyé? La censure est un toit mauvais, mal étayé, Toujours prêt à tomber sur les noms qu'il abrite. Sire, un souffle imprudent, loin de l'éteindre, irrite Le foyer, tout à coup terrible et tournoyant, Et, d'un art lumineux, fait un art flamboyant. D'ailleurs, ne cherchât-on que la splendeur royale, Pour cette nation moqueuse mais loyale, Au lieu des grands tableaux qu'offrait le grand Louis, Roi-soleil fécondant les lis épanouis, Qui, tenant sous son sceptre un monde en équilibre, Faisait Racine heureux, laissait Molière libre, Quel spectacle, grand Dieu! qu'un groupe de censeurs Armés et parlant has, vils esclaves chasseurs, A plat ventre couchés, épiant l'heure où rentre Le drame, fier lion, dans l'histoire, son antre!'

Ici, voyant vers lui, d'un front plus incliné, Se tourner doucement le vieillard étonné, Il hasardait plus loin sa pensée inquiète, Et, laissant de

côté le drame et le poëte, Attentif, il sondait le dessein vaste et noir Qu'au fond de ce roi triste, il venait d'entrevoir.

--Se pourrait-il? quelqu'un aurait cette espérance? Briser le droit de tous! retrancher à la France, Comme on ôte un jouet à l'enfant dépité, De l'air, de la lumière et de la liberté! Le roi ne voudrait pas, lui? roi sage et roi juste! Puis, choisissant les mots pour cette oreille auguste, Il disait que les temps ont des flots souverains; Que rien, ni ponts hardis, ni canaux souterrains, Jamais, excepté Dieu, rien n'arrête et ne dompte Le peuple qui grandit ou l'Océan qui monte; Que le plus fort vaisseau sombre et se perd souvent, Qui veut rompre de front et la vague et le vent, Et que, pour s'y briser, dans la lutte insensée, On a derrière soi, roche partout dressée, Tout son siècle, les mœurs, l'esprit qu'on veut braver, Le port même où la nef aurait pu se sauver!... Charles-Dix, souriant, répondit: 'O poète!'

Le soir, tout rayonnant de lumière et de fête. Regorgeant de soldats, de princes, de valets, Saint-Cloud, joyeux et vert, autour du fier palais Dont la Seine, en fuyant, reflète les beaux marbres, Semblait avec amour presser sa touffe d'arbres; L'arc de triomphe, orné de victoires d'airain; Le Louvre, étincelant, fleurdelysé, serein, Lui répondaient de loin du milieu de la ville; Tout ce royal ensemble avait un air tranquille, Et, dans le calme aspect d'un repos solennel, Je ne sais quoi de grand qui semblait éternel!" . . . . . The day after this interview and the refusal--for Charles X. refused to allow *Marion Delorme* to be played--Victor Hugo's pension, which had been 2400 francs, was raised to 6000 livres, in compensation. Everybody knows how the poet refused--we will not say scornfully, but with dignity--this increase of his pension. A great deal of discussion has since raged round this refusal. Certain puritans even now hold to the opinion of the senator of M. Louis Bonaparte, and blame the poet for keeping his original pension of 2400 francs after the interdiction of *Marion Delorme* by Charles X. God have mercy on them! They are now in the Halls of Elysium and the finest poet of France, and therefore of the world, is in Jersey! I ask Lamartine's forgiveness for speaking of

Hugo as the first poet of France and of the world: Hugo is exiled, and Lamartine is too generous not to yield the palm to him. If Lamartine were banished like Hugo--and, for the sake of his fame, I am sorry that he is not--I would have said, "The first two poets of France and of the world!"

One day, in a club, I was speaking of Prince Louis Bonaparte, and I called him "Monseigneur." It was at the time of Prince Louis Bonaparte's exile. A voice shouted to me--

"There is no longer any *Monseigneur.*"

"I always speak of those who are exiled by that title," I replied.

And my voice was drowned by applause.

When Hugo returned from Saint-Cloud, he found Taylor awaiting him. The news he brought back was bad enough, like the news of Madame Malbrouck's page. Taylor was in despair.

"We have nothing else in our portfolios!" he repeated.

At that time the Comédie-Française had ten plays of M. Viennet, four or five of M. Delrieu, two or three of M. Lemercier, without reckoning M. Arnault's *Pertinax* and M. de Jouy's *Julien*, etc. etc. And that was what Taylor called having nothing in his portfolios!

"We were building on *Marion Delorme* for the winter season," he said, "and now our winter season will be ruined!"

Hugo let him go on lamenting and then asked--

"When did you hope to play *Marion Delorme*?"

"Why, either in January or February."

"Ah, good! then we shall have a margin.... Very well...." and he fell to making a calculation. "This is the 7th of August: come back to me on the 1st of October."

Taylor returned on the 1st of October. Hugo picked up a manuscript and gave it to him. It was *Hernani.* Hugo had begun this second work on 17 September and had finished it on the 25th of the same month. He had taken three days less over its composition than in the case of *Marion Delorme.* Let us, however, hasten to explain that the plots of both plays had been matured beforehand in the poet's head.

BOOK III — CHAPTER XII

CHAPTER XII

The invasion of barbarians--Rehearsals of *Hernani*--Mademoiselle Mars and the lines about the *lion*--The scene over the *portraits*--Hugo takes away from Mademoiselle Mars the part of Doña Sol--Michelot's flattering complaisance to the public--The quatrain about the cup-board--Joanny

There was this time nothing to fear from the Censorship: unless it were on the ground of modesty, there was nothing in *Hernani* to which it could take exception. I really believe I have spoken of the *modesty* of the Censorship! Upon my word, how shocking of me! but since I have said it, let it stay!

The piece naturally took the place of his first-born, *Marion Delorme*; it was read for form's sake, received with shouts of hurrahs and acclamation--Hugo read very well, especially his own works--the parts were allotted and the rehearsals started at once. I do not state the fact of Hugo's fine reading here because I think his manner of reading had any influence either way on the enthusiasm of his reception, but because, never having heard him speak at the Tribune, I cannot form any idea of the style of his public speaking from the very different opinions I have heard expressed concerning his oratorical style. I can only say that his speeches when read always seemed to me to be masterpieces of language and logic.

With the rehearsals began the worries. No one at the Théâtre-Français felt much real sympathy with the Romantic school save old Joanny; the rest (and Mademoiselle Mars was first among their number, in spite of the splendid success she had just achieved in the Duchesse de Guise) really looked upon the encroachment as a species of invasion by

barbarians, to which they were laughingly obliged to submit. Underneath the flattery paid us by Mademoiselle Mars, there was always the mental reservation of an outraged woman. Michelot, professor at the Conservatoire, a man of the world, with finished manners, showed us his most gracious and agreeable side; but at heart he loathed us. And as to Firmin, whose talent was so essential to us--a real talent, although it had nothing to do with the highest reaches of form, namely, the plastic side of art--well, his literary judgment was worthless; he merely possessed a kind of dramatic instinct, which served in lieu of art, and gave movement and life to his acting. He liked us well enough, because we supplied him with means to exercise his qualities of action and life; but he was terribly in fear of the older school, and accordingly remained neutral in all the literary quarrels, rarely appearing at a reading, so that he might avoid being obliged to give his opinion. He was not a stumbling-block, but, on the other hand, he was certainly not a support.

The play--by which we mean the leading parts--was distributed between the four principal actors of the Théâtre-Français whom we have just mentioned. Mademoiselle Mars played Doña Sol; Joanny, Ruy Gomez; Michelot, Charles V.; and Firmin, Hernani. I have said that Mademoiselle Mars felt no sympathy with our style of literature; but I ought to add or, rather, to repeat that, in her theatrical dealings, she was strictly honourable, and, when she had gone through her first representation of a part and endured the fire of applause or of hissings that had greeted the fall of the curtain, no matter what the play was in which she was acting, she would have died rather than give in; she would submit to a martyrdom rather than--we will not say deny her faith, because our School was not included in her creed--break her word.

But, before this point was reached, there were between fifty and sixty rehearsals to be gone through, at which an incalculable number of observations were hazarded at the expense of the author, faces were made, and pin-pricks given him. And of course it often happened that

these pin-pricks penetrated through the skin and stabbed to the heart. I have recounted my own sufferings from Mademoiselle Mars during the rehearsals of *Henri III.*; the discussions, quarrels, disputes even which I had with her, the passionate scenes which, in spite of my obscurity, I was unable to refrain from causing, no matter what I risked in the future. The same thing was just as likely to happen to Hugo, and did happen. But Hugo and I were two absolutely different characters: he was cold and calm and polished and severe, and harboured the remembrance of good or ill done him; whilst I am open and quick and demonstrative, and make game of things, forgetful of ill, and sometimes of good. So the arguments between Mademoiselle Mars and Hugo were entirely different from mine. And remember that, on the stage, dialogues between actor and author usually take place before the foot-lights--that is to say, between the stage and the orchestra--so that not a word is lost by all the thirty to forty actors, musicians, managers, supernumeraries, call-boys, lighters-up, and firemen present at rehearsals. This audience, as will be understood, always does its best to catch any episode likely to distract the *ennui* of the daily work, the rehearsal itself; this fact considerably adds to the nervous irritability of the interlocutors and, in consequence, tends to introduce a certain amount of tartness in the telephonic communications which take place between the orchestra and the stage.

Things happened somewhat after this fashion. In the middle of the rehearsal Mademoiselle Mars would suddenly stop.

"Excuse me, my friend," she would say to Firmin or Michelot or Joanny, "I want a word with the author."

The actor to whom she addressed her remark would bow his assent and stand motionless and silent where he happened to be.

Mademoiselle Mars would come up close to the footlights, with her hand shading her eyes, although she knew well enough in what part of the

orchestra to look for the author whom she was pretending to find. This was her little curtain raiser.

"M. Hugo?" she would ask. "Is M. Hugo here?".

"I am here, madame," Hugo would reply, as he rose from his seat.

"Ah! that is all right!--thanks.... Will you please tell me, M. Hugo...."

"Madame?"

"I have this line to say--

'Vous êtes, mon lion, superbe et généreux!'"

"Yes, madame; Hernani says to you--

'Hélas! j'aime pourtant d'une amour bien profonde! Ne pleure pas ... Mourons plutôt! Que n'ai-je un monde, Je te le donnerais! Je suis bien malheureux!'

And you reply to him--

"Vous êtes, mon lion, superbe et généreux!'"

"Do you like that phrase, M. Hugo?"

"Which?"

'"*Vous êtes, mon lion!*'"

"That was how I wrote it, madame; so I think it is all right."

"Then you stick to your *lion?*"

"I may or may not, madame. If you can find something better, I will insert it instead."

"It is not my place to do so; I am not the author."

"Very well, then, madame; if that be so, leave what is written exactly as you find it."

"Really it does sound to me very comic to call M. Firmin *mon lion!*"

"Oh! that is because while acting the part of Doña Sol you think of yourself as Mademoiselle Mars. If you were a true pupil of Ruy Gomez de Sylva, a noble Castilian of the sixteenth century, you would only see Hernani in M. Firmin; you would look upon him as a terrible robber-chief, who made even Charles V. tremble in his capital; then you would comprehend how such a woman could call such a man *son lion*, and you would no longer look upon it as comic!"

"Very well! if you stick to your *lion* we will say no more. It is my duty to say what is written, and as the manuscript has '*mon lion!*' I will say '*mon lion!*' Of course, it is all one to me. Let us go on, Firmin!

'Vous êtes, mon lion, superbe et généreux!'"

And the rehearsal would be resumed.

But, the next day, when Mademoiselle Mars reached the same place, she stopped as on the day before and, as on the day before, she approached the footlights, again going through the pretence of looking for the author with her hands shading her eyes.

"M. Hugo?" she would say in her harsh voice, the voice of Mademoiselle Mars and not of Célimène. "Is M. Hugo there?"

"Here I am, madame," Hugo would reply with the same placidity.

"Oh! that is all right. I am glad you are here."

"I had the honour of presenting you my compliments before the rehearsal, madame."

"True.... Well, have you thought over it?"

"Over what, madame?"

"Over what I said to you yesterday."

"You did me the honour of saying a great many things to me yesterday."

"Yes, that was so ... but I mean about that famous hemistich."

"Which?"

"Oh, good gracious! you know quite well the one I mean!"

"I swear I do not, madame; you make so many neat and valuable suggestions that I confuse one with the other."

"I mean the line about the *lion.*"

"Ah yes! '*Vous êtes, mon lion!*' I remember...."

"Well, have you found another line?"

"I confess I have not tried to think of one."

"You do not then think the line risky?"

"What do you mean by risky?"

"Anything that is likely to be hissed."

"I have never presumed to claim exemption from being hissed."

"That may be; but you should avoid being hissed as much as possible."

"So you think the *lion* phrase will be hissed?"

"I am certain of it!"

"Then, madame, it will be because you have not rendered it with your usual talent."

"I shall say it as well as I can.... All the same, I should prefer...."

"What?"

"To say something different...."

"What?"

"To have it altered altogether!"

"For what?"

"To say"--and Mademoiselle Mars made a show of trying to find the word which she had really been turning over in her mind for three days--"to say, for instance ... ahem!... say ... ahem!

'Vous êtes, *monseigneur*, superbe et généreux!'

Monseigneur enables the line to be scanned just the same as *mon lion*, does it not?"

"Quite so, madame; only *mon lion* lightens the line, and *monseigneur* makes it heavy."

"I would much rather be hissed for a good line than applauded for a bad one. Very well, very well ... we will not bother any longer about it.... I will say your *good line* without changing anything in it! Come, Firmin, my friend, let us go on....

'Vous êtes, mon lion, superbe et généreux!'"

It is a well-known fact that, on the day of the first representation, Mademoiselle Mars said, "*Vous êtes, monseigneur!*" instead of "*Vous êtes, mon lion!*"

The line was neither applauded nor hissed: it was not worth either notice.

A little farther on, Ruy Gomez, after having surprised Hernani and Doña Sol in one another's arms, at the announcement of the king's coming hides Hernani in a room, the door of which is hidden by a picture. Then

begins the famous scene known by the title of the *scène des portraits*, which is composed of seventy-six lines and takes place between Don Carlos and Ruy Gomez, the scene in which Doña Sol listens as mute and motionless as a statue, in which she only takes part when the king wishes to have the duke arrested; when she tears off her veil and flings herself between the duke and the guards, exclaiming--

"Roi don Carlos, vous êtes Un mauvais roi!..."

This long silence and absence of movement had always been an offence to Mademoiselle Mars. The Théâtre-Français was used to the traditions of Molière's comedies or the tragedies of Corneille and was up in arms against the *mise en scène* of the modern drama, neither understanding, as a whole, the passion of action nor the poetry of stillness. The consequence was that poor Doña Sol did not know what to do with herself during these seventy-six lines. One day she decided to have the matter out with the author. You know her way of interrupting the rehearsals and of advancing to the footlights. The author was in front of the orchestra and Mademoiselle Mars was behind the footlights.

"Are you there, M. Hugo?"

"Yes, madame."

"Ah, good!... Do me a service."

"With the greatest pleasure.... What is it?"

"Tell me what I am to do here."

"Where?"

"On the stage, while M. Michelot and M. Joanny are holding their dialogue."

"You are to listen, madame."

"Yes! I am to listen.... I know that; but I find listening rather tedious."

"Yet you know the scene was originally much longer and I have already cut it down by twenty lines."

"Yes, but could you not cut out another twenty lines?"

"Impossible, madame!"

"Or, at all events, arrange that I take some sort of part in it."

"But you naturally take part by your very presence. It is a question of the man you love whose life or death is being debated; it seems to me that the situation is sufficiently moving and strong to enable you to wait in patient silence to the close."

"All the same ... it is long!"

"I do not feel it so, madame."

"Very good! then we will say no more about it.... But the public are certain to ask, 'What is Mademoiselle Mars supposed to be doing with her hand upon her breast? It was not necessary to give her a part just to remain standing still, with a veil over her eyes, without saying a word for half an act!'"

"The public will say that under the hand of Doña Sol--not of Mademoiselle Mars--her heart is beating; that, beneath the veil of Doña Sol--not of Mademoiselle Mars--her face is crimsoning with hope or turning pale with terror; that, during the silence--not of Mademoiselle Mars but--of Doña Sol, Hernani's lover, the tempest is gathering in her heart which bursts forth in these words, none too respectful from a subject to her sovereign--

'Roi don Carlos, vous êtes Un mauvais roi!...'

And, believe me, madame, it will be sufficient for the public."

"If that is your idea, well and good. It is not on my account I am troubling myself about it: if they hiss during the scene it will not be at me they are hissing, as I do not speak one word.... Come on, Michelot; come on, Joanny; let us proceed.

'Roi don Carlos, vous êtes Un mauvais roi!..

There, does that satisfy you, M. Hugo?"

"Perfectly, madame." And Hugo bowed and sat down with his imperturbable serenity.

The next day, Mademoiselle Mars stopped the rehearsal at the same place, came up to the footlights and, shading her eyes with her hand, said, in exactly the same voice as that of the day before--

"Are you there, M. Hugo?"

"I am here, madame."

"Well, have you found me something to say?"

"Where?"

"Why, you know where ... in the famous scene where these gentlemen say a hundred and fifty lines while I stare at them and do not utter a word.... I know they are charming to contemplate, but a hundred and fifty lines take a long time to say."

"In the first place, madame, the scene is not a hundred and fifty lines in length, it is only seventy-six, for I have counted them; then, I did not make you any promise to put in something for you to say, since, on the contrary, I tried to prove to you that your silence and immobility, from which you emerge with terrible *éclat*, is one of the beauties of the whole scene."

"Beauties, beauties!... I am much afraid the public will not agree with you."

"We shall see."

"Yes, but you may see a little too late.... So you definitely mean to have your way in not giving me anything to say through the whole scene?"

"I do."

"It is all one to me; I will go to the back of the stage and let these gentlemen talk over their business in the front of it."

"You can retire to the back of the stage if you wish, madame, but as the affairs under discussion are as much yours as theirs, you will spoil the scene.... When it suits you, madame, the rehearsal shall be proceeded with."

And the rehearsal was continued.

But, every day, there were some interruptions of the kind to which we have just drawn attention; this annoyed Hugo greatly, for he was still only at the outset of his dramatic career, and imagined that the greatest difficulty was the creation of the play and the most vexatious that of putting it into proper form; he now discovered that all this was child's play compared with the rehearsals. At last, one day, he lost patience and, when the rehearsal was over, he went on the stage and, approaching Mademoiselle Mars, he said--

"Madame, may I be allowed the honour of a few words with you?"

"With me?" replied Mademoiselle Mars in astonishment at this solemn beginning.

"With you."

"Where?"

"Where you will."

"Come this way, then"; and, walking first, Mademoiselle Mars led Hugo into what in those days was called the *petit foyer* (small green-room), which was, I believe, situated where nowadays is the salon belonging to the manager's box. Louise Despréaux was seated in a corner by herself.

We have mentioned that Louise Despréaux was one of the pet aversions of Mademoiselle Mars, Madame Menjaud being her favourite. I have described, in due course, the scene I had with Mademoiselle Mars over Louise Despréaux concerning the distribution of the part of page to the Duchesse de Guise. When she saw Mademoiselle Mars and Hugo enter, she discreetly rose and left the room; although I have strong suspicions that, with the inquisitiveness of seventeen years of age, she glued her ear and her rosy young face to the keyhole.

Mademoiselle Mars leant against the mantelpiece, holding her part in her hand.

"Well, what do you wish to say to me?" she asked.

"I wished to tell you, madame, that I have just made a resolution."

"What is it, monsieur?"

"To ask you to give up your part."

"My part!... Which?"

"The one you asked for in my drama, to my great honour."

"What! the part of Doña Sol," exclaimed Mademoiselle Mars, astounded; "do you mean this part?" ... And she pointed to the roll of paper which she held in her hand, frowning her black eyebrows over those eyes which could on occasion assume an incredibly hard expression.

Hugo bowed.

"Yes," he said, "the part of Doña Sol which you hold in your hand."

"Ah! that is it, is it?" said Mademoiselle Mars; and she struck the marble chimneypiece with the roll, and stamped on the floor with her foot. "This is the first time an author has ever asked me to give up my part!"

"Very well, madame; I think it is time an example should be set and I will set it."

"But why do you want to take it from me?"

"Because I believe I am right in saying, madame, that when you honour me with your remarks you appear totally to forget to whom you are speaking."

"In what way, monsieur?"

"Oh! I am aware that you are a highly talented lady ... but there is one point, I repeat, upon which you seem to be ignorant, to which I ought to call your attention; namely, that I also, madame, am a talented person: take this fact into consideration, I beg of you, and treat me accordingly."

"You think, then, that I shall act your part badly?"

"I know that you will play it admirably well, madame, but I also know that, from the beginning of the rehearsals, you have been extremely rude to me--conduct that is unworthy both of Mademoiselle Mars and of M. Victor Hugo."

"Oh!" she muttered, biting her pale lips, "you do indeed deserve to have your part given back to you!"

Hugo held out his hand.

"I am ready to take it, madame," he said.

"And if I do not play it, who will?"

"Oh! upon my word, madame, the first person that comes to hand.... Why, Mademoiselle Despréaux, for instance. She, of course, does not possess your talent, but she is young and she is pretty, and so will fulfil two out of the three conditions the part demands; then, too, she will yield me the deference to which I am entitled, of the lack of which, on your part, I have had to complain."

And Hugo stood with his arm stretched out and his hand open, waiting for Mademoiselle Mars to give him back the part.

"Mademoiselle Despréaux! Mademoiselle Despréaux!" muttered Mademoiselle Mars. "Ah! indeed that is a good joke!... So it seems you are paying attentions to Mademoiselle Despréaux?"

"I? I have never spoken a word to her in my life!"

"And you definitely and formally ask me to give you back my part?"

"Formally and definitely I ask you to give me back the part."

"Very well; I shall keep the rôle.... I shall play it, and as no one else would play it in Paris, I swear."

"So be it. Keep the rôle; only, do not forget what I have said to you with regard to the courtesy that should obtain between people of our distinction."

And Hugo bowed to Mademoiselle Mars and left her utterly overcome by that haughty dignity to which the authors of the Empire had not accustomed her; they had grovelled before her talent, conscious that, without her, their plays would not bring them in a halfpenny.

From that day, Mademoiselle Mars was cold but polite to Hugo and, as she had promised him, when the night of the first representation came, she played the part to perfection.

Michelot, a very different person from Mademoiselle Mars, was polite almost to the verge of sycophancy; but as he detested us in his heart of hearts, when the hour of the struggle came, instead of fighting loyally and valiantly, as Mademoiselle Mars did, he slyly went over to the enemy and gave the sharpshooters in the pit the hint where, at the most opportune moments, they might find our weakest places. Many liberties were taken with Michelot's part which an actor who had cared less for popular opinion would never have allowed himself to take. As a matter of fact, before the representation, we had waged rude warfare against the risky passages in the part of Don Carlos; I remember among others having very regretfully made Hugo cut out a quatrain to which Michelot seemed to cling tenaciously: I have since discovered why. These four lines were of that charmingly quaint turn which is natural to Hugo and to no one else.

When Ruy Gomez de Sylva goes back to his niece's house and is on the point of taking Don Carlos and Hernani by surprise, the latter, fearful for the reputation of Doña Sol, wishes to hide the king and himself in the very narrow cupboard which Don Carlos was about to vacate, wherein he was sufficiently uncomfortable by himself; but the king rebelled against the suggestion. Is it, indeed, he says--

"Est-ce donc une game à mettre des chrétiens? Nous nous pressons un peu; vous y tenez, j'y tiens. Le duc entre et s'en vient vers l'armoire où nous sommes, Pour y prendre un cigare.... Il y trouve deux hommes!"

For these lines to have their comic effect, they ought to be flung off with the lightheartedness and easy bearing of a king who numbers only nineteen years, and who is in the heyday of prosperity (notice that Charles V. was but nineteen when he was made Emperor of Germany)--well, they were declaimed in the same tones as Mahomet saying--

"Si j'avais à répondre à d'autres que Topyre, Je ne ferais parler que le Dieu qui m'inspire; Le glaive et l'Alcoran, dans mes terribles mains, Imposeraient silence au reste des humains!"

It was perfectly idiotie! so, on my persuasion, and in spite of Michelot's objections, who privately hoped those lines would *produce their effect*, the erasure was decided on and pitilessly adhered to.

I have said that it was very different with Joanny: he was an old soldier, the soul of honour and openness, who came to the fourth rehearsal without his manuscript, for he already knew his part thoroughly; so if one had to find any fault with him at all, it was that he became *blasé*, by the thirty to forty general rehearsals, before the first public performance of the piece.

This first representation was an important affair for our party. I had won the Valmy of the literary revolution; Hugo must win the Jemmapes in order that the new school might be well on the way to victory. So, when the time comes to speak of the first reproduction of *Hernani*, we will give it the full attention it deserves. But for the moment we must be slaves to chronology and pass from Victor Hugo to de Vigny, from *Hernani* to *Othello.*

BOOK III — CHAPTER XIII

CHAPTER XIII

Alfred de Vigny--The man and his works--Harel, the manager at the Odéon--Downfall of Soulié's *Christine*--Parenthesis about Lassailly--Letter of Harel, with preface by myself and postscript by Soulié--I read my *Christine* at the Odéon--Harel asks me to put it into prose--First representation of the *More de Venise*--The actors and the papers

Whilst the Théâtre-Français was waiting for the famous 1st of October, on which Hugo had engaged to provide the unnamed drama at which he was working, in place of *Marion Delorme*, they decided to rehearse Shakespeare's *Othello*, translated by Alfred de Vigny, which, in common with *Henri III.* and *Marion Delorme*, had been received with enthusiastic acclamation at its reading before the committee.

Alfred de Vigny completed the poetic trinity of the period, although his work was of a lower order: people talked of Hugo and Lamartine, or Lamartine and Hugo, and spoke of Alfred de Vigny as of the next rank. Alfred de Vigny possessed very little imagination, but he had a fine and correct style; he was known by his romance *Cinq-Mars*, which would only have met with a medium success had it appeared nowadays, but, coming as it did at a time of dearth in literature, it had a great run.

When Hugo read *Marion Delorme* de Vigny had whispered to his friends--this sort of thing is always said to one's friends--that Didier and Saverny, the two principal characters in the drama, were an imitation of Cinq-Mars and de Thou. But I am convinced that, when Hugo wrote his play, he never even thought of de Vigny's romance.

Besides the novel *Cinq-Mars*, de Vigny had composed several dainty little poems in the then current manner: Byron had set the fashion for this kind of poem. Among these five or six charming little poems were *Eloa* and *Dolorida.* Finally, he had just published an extremely touching elegy on two unhappy young people who had committed suicide at Montmorency, under cover of the noise of the music of a ball.

De Vigny was a very singular man; he was polite and affable and gentle in all his dealings, but he affected the most utter unworldliness--an affectation, moreover, that accorded perfectly with his charming face, its delicate and refined features, encased in long fair curly hair, making him look like a brother of the cherubim. De Vigny never descended to earthly things if he could avoid it; if perchance he folded his wings and rested on the peak of a mountain, it was a concession which he made to humanity, because, after all, it was useful to him when he held his brief intercourse with us. Hugo and I used to marvel greatly at his utter unconsciousness of the material needs of our nature, which many of us, Hugo and I among the number, satisfied not only without any feeling of shame but with a certain sensual enjoyment. None of us had ever surprised de Vigny at table. Dorval, who for seven years of her life had passed several hours a day with him, declared to us with an astonishment almost amounting to terror, that she had never even seen him eat a radish! Now even Proserpine, a goddess, was not so abstemious as that; carried off by Pluto to the lower regions, she had, from the first, in spite of the preoccupation of mind to which her unappetising sojourn had naturally disposed her, managed to eat seven pomegranate seeds! Nevertheless, these characteristics did not prevent de Vigny from being an agreeable companion, a gentleman to his finger-tips, always ready to do you a kindness and totally incapable of doing you a bad turn. Nobody exactly knew de Vigny's age; but, judging approximately, as it was known that de Vigny had served in the guards on the return of Louis XVIII., and

supposing he was eighteen at the time he entered the service, say in 1815, he must have been thirty-two in 1829.

It will be observed that all these great revolutionaries were very young and that the revolutionary poets were very much like the three generals of the Revolution of whom I have, I believe, spoken, who commanded the army of Sambre-et-Meuse, and whose combined ages reckoned seventy years: Hoche, Marceau and my father.

The coming representation of *Othello* made a great stir. We all knew de Vigny's translation, and although we should have preferred to have been supported by national troops and a French general, rather than by this poetical condottiere, we realised that we must accept all the arms we could against our enemies, especially when such arms came from the arsenal of the great master of us all--Shakespeare. Mademoiselle Mars and Joanny were allotted the principal parts. They were powerful auxiliaries, but they were not precisely the kind we wanted. Mademoiselle Mars and Joanny looked a little awkward in the habiliments which (dramatically speaking) were not suitable to their figures. Mademoiselle Mars was a charming woman of the Empire period, refined, light, delicate, graceful, satirical, possessing none of the gentle, innocent melancholy of the Moor's mistress; and Joanny, with his *retroussé* nose *à la* Odry and his gestures with no grandeur or majesty in them, did not recall the gloomy and terrible lover of Desdemona. The part of Iago that Ducis had replaced by that of Pezarre, as one replaces a flesh-and-bone leg by a wooden one, fell to the lot of Perrier, and was to make its appearance in full daylight for the first time.

So the representation was looked forward to with much impatience; but, whilst awaiting this solemn occasion, which, as we have mentioned, was to take place at the Théâtre-Français, another production was being prepared at the Odéon which was of special importance to me, namely, the *Christine à Fontainebleau* by Frédéric Soulié. M. Brault's *Christine*

died a few days after its birth, as I have said in due course, and had disappeared without leaving any trace!

The Odéon had been recently reorganised on new lines. Harel, whom we have seen attempting to seize *Marion Delorme* at Hugo's house by surprise, formerly secretary to Cambacérès, formerly sous-préfet of the department of l'Aisne, formerly préfet of the Landes, a political refugee in 1815, editor of the *Nain Jaune* in Belgium, in short, one of the most versatile men who ever lived, had just been appointed director of the Odéon, I believe in place of Éric Bernard. He had opened the theatre with Lucien Arnault's *États de Blois*, which did not meet with a great success, in spite of the sumptuous manner in which the piece had been mounted; and, being a good journalist and clever at handling the triple element which comprises the feuilleton, the short paragraph and the puff, Harel knew how to set the drums sounding in favour of my friend Frédéric Soulié's *Christine à Fontainebleau.*

I had not seen Frédéric since the night upon which we had parted with feelings of coldness towards one another and had each--decided to go on with our own *Christines. Henri III.* and its success and all the renown it had brought with it had passed without my hearing mention of Soulié's name. His *Christine* was finished and that was the last I heard of him. He had sent me two seats in the gallery for his *Juliette* and I had sent him two balcony tickets for my *Henri III.*, and that was the extent of our exchange of politeness. I expected seats to be sent me for *Christine*, but, to my great astonishment, I did not receive them. Later, I found out that this was due to Harel, who feared I should do the play an ill turn, and so opposed tickets being sent me.

As I had no seat for the first production I made no effort to procure one for myself; and I went to bed quite satisfied that I should hear first thing next morning whether the play had been received with applause or hissed at. As a matter of fact, one of my good friends, a lad who had done

nothing then beyond showing promise of talent but who has since made his mark, Achille Comte, came to my room at seven next morning. Poor *Christine* had fallen quite flat. Soulié, apparently, had conceived the notion of introducing an Italian bandit in the forest of Fontainebleau, and this had produced the most grotesque effect imaginable. The day before, I should have thought that this news would have delighted me after Soulié's treatment of me; but, on the contrary, it made me feel wretchedly miserable. The innocent and primitive friendships of our youth are the only real friendships.

The reading of *Marion* had not only impressed me deeply, but it had done me immense service: it had opened out to me hitherto undreamed-of poetic suggestions; it had revealed to me possibilities in the way of treating poetry of which I had never thought; finally, it had given me my first idea for *Antony.* The day after the reading of *Marion Delorme* I set to work with unusual courage. Before the music of the lines I had listened to the previous night had ceased ringing in my ears, I had started, inspired by the harmony of their dying strains; and the new *Christine* opened its eyes to the strains of the distant and melodious echo which still lived in my spirit, although the sound itself had ceased.

I must be allowed a brief digression on the subject of *Christine*: I give it as a study in manners and customs and I hope it will not be mistaken for boasting.

There was in those days, outside the literary world, a big fellow who was half an idiot, with a long crooked nose and legs like Seringuinos in the *Pilules du Diable.* He was, I believe, the son of an Orléans apothecary and he played the young Don Juan to chambermaids and daughters of the porter, whom he transformed into baronesses and duchesses in his elegies and sonnets; he wrote a novel which was published but, I am certain, was never read. This novel was entitled the *Roueries de Trialph.* His name was Lassailly.

There are certain people who acquire the odd privilege of introducing the grotesque into the most mournful and heartrending of scenes, and Lassailly was one of the most highly favoured of these purveyors of the ridiculous. Once, I had gone to bed and was writing the first scene between Paula and Monaldeschi and had got to these lines--

"Oh! garde-moi! je serai ta servante! Tout ce qu'une amour pure ou délirante invente De bonheurs, oui, pour toi, je les inventerai! Quand tu me maudiras, moi, je te bénirai-- J'aurai des mots d'amour qui guériront ton âme; Garde-moi! Je consens qu'une autre soit ta femme; Je promets de l'aimer, d'obéir à sa loi; Mais, par le Dieu vivant, garde-moi! garde-moi!..."

Suddenly I heard the door of my sitting room open and a howling being of some sort or other approached my bedroom; next I saw my bedroom door open and Lassailly entered, flinging himself on the carpet and tearing his hair. The apparition was so unexpected, so strange and even so terrifying that I stretched out my hand for the double-barrelled pistols I kept in a recess at the head of my bed. When I saw that it was Lassailly, I pushed the pistols back and awaited an explanation of this exhibition of buffoonery. The explanation was sad enough: the poor devil's father had thrown himself into the river and Lassailly had just learned both that his father had been drowned and that his body, after having been taken out of the water, was exposed at the Orléans Morgue, whence it could not be taken away without the payment of a certain sum of money. Lassailly had not a halfpenny towards this sum and he had come to ask it of me. At the sight of the son weeping for his father, who had met with his death in this deplorable manner, I could only visualize one mental picture: I was not so much impressed by the son's grief, which, however extravagant in expression, to the point of grotesqueness, was still, perhaps, sincere at bottom; but by the thought of the real, unforeseen and irreparable misery of the poor wretch that had been drawn from the waters of the Loire, pale and streaming, and sad, with eyes dimmed by death, and face smeared

with river weeds, now laid on the damp stones of the Morgue. I did not attempt to console Lassailly: one does not offer comfort unless people ask for it. Rachel weeping for her children in Ramah, and filling the air with her lamentations, would not be comforted, because they were not.

"My friend," I said, "let us get to the most pressing part of the business. You want to go to Orléans, do you not? To bury your father? You say it will cost you a hundred francs; I think it will cost you more than that, and I would like to offer you as much as you will need; but I can only offer you as much as I possess.... Open that chiffonier drawer, which contains a hundred and thirty-five francs, take a hundred and thirty and leave me five...."

Lassailly tried to throw himself into my arms, made an attempt to embrace me and called me his saviour; but I gently pushed him away, pointed with my hand to the drawer and repeated--

"There, there ... take it; ... take a hundred and thirty francs, and leave me five."

He took the sum and left, and when he had gone I resumed and finished my scene between Paula and Monaldeschi. A fortnight later, the first, and to be accurate also the last, number of a little paper was brought to me. A critic announced in a prefatory article that it meant to tell the truth for the first time about the various high-flown false reputations that sprang up in a night. The article went on to say that it meant at last to put men and things in the places God had intended them to occupy.

I This series of the avengers of justice, these literary executions, began with Alexandre Dumas. The article was signed "Lassailly," and had brought him in a hundred francs! The man who brought me the paper was acquainted with what I had done for Lassailly a fortnight before.

"Well," he asked, "what do you say to that?"

"Poor boy!" I replied; "he has perhaps had to bury his mother!"

And I stuffed the journal into the chiffonier drawer from whence he had taken the hundred and thirty francs which he never paid back. Lassailly has since died, and the paper was never resuscitated.

Let us now return to the two *Christines.* Directly, as I have said, I learnt the failure of Soulié's, I finished mine within a month almost, and it then had the form it now bears. I went, that same day, to find the manager of the Théâtre-Français, whose name I have forgotten. He was a kind of mulatto, with big eyes and yellow skin, and, with the letter of the committee in my hand, M. Brault's *Christine* having been played, I asked that mine should be put in rehearsal. There was, indeed, to be a committee the next day; and the manager replied that he would lay the matter before them. The committee decided that as it was a matter of common knowledge that I had altered my work, I ought to submit to a second reading. But as this second reading was, in reality, a third reading, I declined the proposal outright. And with this struggle with the Comédie-Française began a lasting series of friendly dealings between us. In the middle of the conflict I received a letter from Harel couched in the following terms:--

"MY DEAR DUMAS,--What do you think of this idea of Mademoiselle Georges? To play your *Christine* immediately, on the same stage and with the same actors as those who played Soulié's *Christine*? The conditions to be settled by yourself. You need not trouble your head with the idea that you will strangle a friend's work, because it yesterday died a natural death.--Yours ever, HAREL"

I called my servant, and on the epistle which I have above transcribed I wrote the words--

"MY DEAR FRÉDÉRIC,--Read this letter. What a rascal your friend Harel is!--Yours, ALEX. DUMAS"

My servant took the letter to the sawmill at la Gare and, an hour later, he brought me back this answer at the bottom of the same letter. Frédéric had written--

"MY DEAR DUMAS,--Harel is not my friend, he is a manager. Harel is not a rascal, only a speculator. I would not do what he is doing, but I would advise him to accept. Gather up the fragments of my *Christine*--and I warn you there are plenty of them--throw them into the basket of the first rag-and-bone man that passes your way and get your own piece played.--Yours ever, F. SOULIÉ"

It will be admitted that Harel's letter was a very curious document, with its preface and its postscript. With this authorisation, I did not see any difficulty in the way of accepting Harel's offers. My sole stipulation was that, whether my play were received or not at the reading of the committee, it should be proceeded with within six weeks of the date of the agreement.

The reading before the committee was fixed for the following Saturday and the reading before the actors for Sunday night. I had my reasons for being suspicious of the committee: it had received me under reservation of correction and, as the committee of the Théâtre-Français had given me Samson as reviser, the committee of the Odéon appointed MM. Tissot and Sainte-Beuve as their advisers. As Cavé rose to leave, he declared that the play contained some fine passages, but that it was not suitable for acting. And he was the only friend I had on the committee!

Harel was completely staggered; for, although he was an able man, he could not distinguish good poetry from bad, and did not know what was great or beautiful.

I wish it to be thoroughly understood that I do not mean these remarks to apply to his doubts about *Christine*, but only to his judgment generally. He worshipped Voltaire, and, before he died, he had the happiness to be

decorated for his eulogium on the author of *Zaïre.* While I strongly admired Voltaire as a philosopher and narrator, on the other hand I thought but little of him as a poet, and specially as a dramatic poet; as a dramatist, his methods are ordinary, worn-out and melodramatic; as a writer, his lines are poor, sententious and badly rhymed. It is unfortunate for the philosopher of Ferney, but it must be, confessed that it is only in his infamous poem the *Pucelle* that he is well-nigh unapproachable; and even those who are revolted by the impiety, historical calumny and patriotic ingratitude of it are compelled to admire the work, for it is a masterpiece.

In spite of Cavé's opinion and Harel's perturbation, the reading before the actors was still allowed to take place on the following day: it had been agreed upon. I say *it had been agreed upon*, because, if it bad not been, the reading would certainly never have taken place. And Harel asked permission for Jules Janin to be present at the reading. Janin had then made over all his rights to Harel, and although I did not place absolute reliance in the fanciful and capricious taste of the future prince of critics, I made no opposition to his presence. I possessed, at that time, the horrifying amount of assurance that always accompanies inexperience and supreme self-satisfaction. It has taken a great deal of success to cure me of my conceit!

I read to the actors--that class of people which, taking all things into consideration, is the quickest at judging beforehand of the effect of a piece, although every actor, in general, listens to the work that is being read to him from his own particular point of view, thinks mainly of the effect of his own part and does not worry himself over those of his neighbours. The reading was a great success, but Harel was none the less troubled by an idea that he did not reveal until next day. He came to me at break of day to propose to me, in all simplicity, to put *Christine* into prose. And this was how Harel exhibited himself to me in all his glory at

the very outset. Of course I laughed in his face and, after laughing at him, I showed him the door.

The following day, the first rehearsal took place, as though no such suggestion had ever been made. The piece was capitally mounted: Georges played Christine; Ligier, Sentinelli; Lockroy, Monaldeschi; and Mademoiselle Noblet, whose début it almost was, played Paula. It had been decreed on high that the person for whom the latter rôle had been made was not to play it! "Man proposes, God disposes." Even the two slight parts of the assassins of Monaldeschi were played by two actors of the very highest merit, Stockleit and Duparay.

Just as my rehearsals began, Alfred de Vigny's ended. Our relative partisans were exasperated with us, and with some reason. They demanded loudly that we should not be played, whilst we demanded with even louder outcries that we should be played.

The first representation of the *More de Venise* was introduced with every appearance of a battle. Mademoiselle Mars had gone over bag and baggage from the old style of comedy to the new modern school of drama; we had won over Joanny, Perrier and Firmin, and in short there was not an actor down to the excellent David, who had accepted the small part of Cassio, who would not be acting in the Shakespearian exhibition that was preparing. The rage of the men who for thirty years had monopolised the Théâtre-Français had to be seen, before an idea could be conceived of the howls and curses that were flung at us. These gentlemen only seemed acquainted with Shakespeare through what Voltaire had said about him, and Schiller by means of M. Petitot. When M. Lebrun and M. Ancelot had borrowed their *Maria Stuart* and *Fiesque* from the German Shakespeare, they decided that MM. Ancelot and Lebrun had done Schiller great honour thereby, and a host of articles had demonstrated that very indifferent works--works only fit for the stage of a fair--were real classical masterpieces! This time, the public was not

going to see Shakespeare corrected, castrated and docked, but--save for the loss he must necessarily sustain from translation--the giant himself, who had kept the crowning place in England during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. If these sacrilegious exhibitions continued, what could Zaïre say confronted with Desdemona, Ninus with Hamlet or the *Deux Gendres* with *King Lear?* Such pale and sickly counterfeits of nature and truth must fail and come to nothing or suffer by comparison!

I opened a paper by chance and in it I read:--

"The representation of the *More de Venise* is being prepared for as though there were going to be a battle to decide some great literary question. It is to settle whether Shakespeare, Schiller and Goethe are to drive Corneille, Racine and Voltaire from the French stage."

This was a delicious lapse from truth and exquisitely spiteful; for, thanks to the notion of the expulsion of the masters, it excited the bourgeois classes, and the question, which was entirely beside the mark, by the very form it took, gave justification to those who put it.

No! indeed no! These masters of art were no more driven from their time-honoured Parnassus than the *bourgeoisie* drove out the aristocracy from the positions they had occupied since the beginning of the monarchy. No, we did not say to these great masters, "Retire and give up your places to us!" but, "Allow us to aspire to the same rights with you, if we deserve to do so. The heathen Olympus was large enough to contain six thousand gods, make then a little space, ye gods of old France, for the Scandinavian and Teutonic gods. The religion of Molière, of Corneille and of Racine was ever that of the State; but let liberty for all religions be proclaimed!"

But they were too narrow and exclusive, and, instead of welcoming these new gods, instead of hailing all that was lofty in them and only criticising

what was unworthy in them, the political exiles of yesterday wanted to-day to enforce a literary proscription. It seems incredibly strange and mysterious, but nevertheless so it was!

In spite of violent opposition, *Othello* succeeded. The groans of the jealous African were heard for the first time, and people were moved and shivered and trembled under the sobs of that terrible wrath. Joanny, carried away by his part, was often remarkable in his acting, and once or twice he was sublime. I never saw anything more picturesque than that great African figure as it strode the stage in the darkness of night, draped like a spectre in its large white *burnous*, whispering in a gloomy voice, with arms extended towards Desdemona's dwelling--

"... Get you to bed on the instant; I will be returned forthwith ..."

Mademoiselle Mars, who was of a much wider discernment in her art than Joanny, was uniformly excellent; once she was sublime, namely, where, springing up on her bed, she exclaims, giving the lie in advance to Iago's accusation--

"He will not say so."

I am writing all this from memory, as will be readily guessed, so I quote only the parts that stand out most clearly in my mind, after an interval of twenty-two years. I may therefore be pardoned for not quoting more than these two instances.

Well, the strange part of the situation was that the Liberal papers, those which cried up movement and progress in politics, were the reactionaries in literature; while the Royalist papers, those which took the side of stagnation and conservatism in politics, were the revolutionaries in literature. It was still more difficult to comprehend if one did not know that the *Constitutionnel*, the *Courrier français* and the *Pandore* were edited by MM. Jay, Jouy, Arnault, Étienne, Viennet, etc., whilst the *Quotidienne*, the *Drapeau blanc* and the *Foudre* were under the

management of Merle, Théaulon, Brisset, Martainville, Lassagne, Nodier and Mély-Jeannin. The one set worked for the Théâtre-Français and, having usurped the position, meant to keep it; the others, in general, had only worked for the boulevard theatres, and these were eager to have a breach made in the classical ramparts to give access to themselves. Merle was, besides, the husband of Madame Dorval, whose talent was just beginning to make a sensation and who had created with incontestable success the rôles of Amélie in *Trente Ans ou la Vie d'un Joueur* and of Charlotte Corday in *Sept Heures*, also of Louise in *l'Incendiaire.* We need not mention the part of Héléna in *Marino Faliero*, for the part was poor and Madame Dorval was not able to transform a bad part into a good one.

I have mentioned that the rehearsals of *Christine* had begun. Let us leave them to pursue their course and take a peep into the world of city-life, which we have deserted for a very long time for the world of the stage. Whilst changing scenes, we will nevertheless conduct our reader to the house of a comedian who was worth quite as much attention as the actors we are leaving. Furthermore, he was not among those who for fifty years had been playing the less conspicuous parts in the great drama which had attracted all attention and occupied all minds, during the conclusion of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Let us reveal the fact that we are about to speak of Paul-François-Jean-Nicodème, Comte de Barras.

BOOK III — CHAPTER XIV

CHAPTER XIV

Citizen-general Barras--Doctor Cabarrus introduces me to him--Barras's only two regrets--His dinners--The Princess de Chimay's footman--Fauche-Borel--The Duc de Bordeaux makes a mess--History lesson given to an ambassador--Walter Scott and Barras--The last happiness of the old *directeur*--His death

I have related how my successful play *Henri III.* had launched me in the world and the curiosity there was excited over its author. Barras was among the number of those who wanted to be introduced to me. The name which I inherited from my father was of special historic significance to the Man of the Convention, the Directoire, 9 thermidor and 13 vendémiaire.

The history of Barras is known by heart. He was the son of an ancient Provençal family, and he had entered the army early; he had been sent to the isle of France and to India, where he had valiantly taken part in the defence of Pondicherry. He left the service with the rank of captain, and had come to Paris, where he had led an extremely dissipated life. Taken from this life of pleasure by his fellow-citizens of Var, who made him their député, in 1792, he had been a member of the Convention amongst the Montagnards; was charged with a mission, the following year, to suppress both the Federalist and Royalist movement which was agitating the South; had assisted at the recapture of Toulon from the English; and here had become acquainted with Major Bonaparte, thus being able to judge the advantage such a man would be to any party. On 9 thermidor, he was made commander of the armed forces of Paris: he it was who seized Robespierre and gave him up to the scaffold. Some days later, he was himself attacked by the Sections (called by the Convention instead of

my father, who could not, as we have seen, respond to the appeal because of his absence); he pushed Bonaparte forward, who was on his side on 13 vendémiaire and against him on 18 brumaire. It was said at that time (but this, I think, is one of the calumniating statements that conquerors are only too willing to make, concerning the vanquished, with respect to their victories, when not fairly won) that Barras was carrying on negotiations for the return of the Bourbons and twelve millions were promised to this new General Monk as the price of their restoration.

The events on 18 brumaire having squashed the Bourbon counter-revolution, Barras, being proscribed by his former protector, retired to Brussels and then to Rome. He only returned to France in 1816; settling down at Chaillot, where he had since dwelt, and where, thanks to an income of 200,000 livres which he had saved out of the various shipwrecks of his political career, he kept a charming and very luxurious household, waited on by a large retinue of servants. I specially refer to the number of servants, because Barras always had at his sumptuous table as many servants as guests, and several times I have dined there when there were twenty to twenty-five guests.

I was introduced to the old dictator by one of my oldest and best friends, a man whom I was always delighted to see when I was well and still more pleased to see if I were ill, namely, Doctor Cabarrus, son of the handsome Madame Tallien. Cabarrus was then, and indeed still is, a fine strongly built man, with a sympathetic face and a character to accord. Endowed with a charming nature, sound learning and untiring observation, Cabarrus had, less by his social position than by his own personal work, been thrown into the midst of all the aristocratic circles--the aristocracies of birth, talent and science. No one could tell a story better than he, or, rarer gift still, be a better listener than he: he had a fine, delicate smiling mouth, and showed a lovely set of teeth when he laughed, which lit up his face. Barras was very fond of him, which was not astonishing, because everybody who knew Cabarrus liked him.

So it was Cabarrus who took me, one Wednesday morning, to Barras's house. I had been warned that the old dictator was always addressed as *Citizen-general*; there was no compulsion in the matter, of course, but that was the title which pleased him best.

Barras received us seated in a great arm-chair, which he vacated as rarely during the last years of his life as Louis XVIII. left his. He remembered my father perfectly well and the accident that had prevented his taking command of the armed forces on 13 vendémiaire, and I recollect that several times that day he repeated over to me this sentence which I give word for word:--

"Young man, do not forget what an old Republican says to you: I have but two regrets, I ought rather to call them remorses, which will be the only ones present at my bedside when I come to die. I have the two-edged remorse of having, overthrown Robespierre by the 9 thermidor, and of having raised Bonaparte to power by the 13 vendémiaire."

It will be observed that I have not forgotten what Barras said to me, although on one of the two points (I will leave my reader to guess which) I am not entirely of his opinion.

Wednesday was Barras's reception day. Cabarrus had chosen it hoping that the "Citizen-general" would keep me to dinner, where I should meet with various representatives of the end of the last century and of the early days of the present one--representatives who, by the way, whatever they might be, when inside Barras's house, became subdued to the Republican spirit, and were simply citizens, whether male or female. Cabarrus was not disappointed: the old dictator invited us to stay dinner and, if we did not wish to return to Paris, offered us the use of a carriage to take us a drive in the woods until the dinner-hour came. Cabarrus had his business to attend to, and I had mine; so we accepted the invitation to dinner, but declined the carriage, and took leave of Barras.

In 1829, Barras was an extremely fine-looking old man of seventy-four. I can see him now in his arm-chair on wheels, his head and hands seeming to be the only portions of him which were still alive, but these appeared to contain vitality enough for his whole body: he wore a cap which never left his head and which he never took off for anybody. From time to time, this moral life, if one may use such a phrase, this artificial life, replete with will-power, deserted him and then he looked like a dying person.

We returned to dinner. I have dined with Barras three times, and at each dinner I witnessed an unusually odd incident. On the first occasion--the one of which I am speaking--we were between twenty and twenty-five in number. Among the guests was Madame Tallien, who became the Princess of Chimay. She came accompanied by a footman whose marvellous plumes were the admiration of the whole company. We had been introduced into the salon, where the first comers did the honours of the house to those who arrived later. Barras never appeared except at the dinner-table. When the dinner-hour arrived, the folding doors were flung open into the dining-room and each guest found the place that had been put for him; the bedroom door was then opened and Barras was wheeled to the centre of the table; then the guests sat down and attacked the delicate repast with good appetite. Barras's own meal was very odd: a huge leg of mutton was brought to him and carved in such a fashion as to bring out all the gravy; the joint was then carried back to the kitchen, and the gravy was left in Barras's deep plate. He sopped bread in the gravy and this concoction formed his meal. I never saw him eat anything else on the three occasions I dined with him.

On this particular day, in the middle of dinner, a great noise was heard in the kitchen as though a fight were going on, and we could hear shouts mingled with bursts of laughter. Barras was accustomed to be admirably waited on and in an unusually silent manner. Not a single one of the servants who waited behind the guests ever breathed a word or rattled a plate or jingled the silver. Apart from the luxuriousness of the food with

which the table was loaded, one could have imagined oneself in a pythagorean school. Only one man was allowed to speak when he wished and that was the valet-de-chambre, the steward, and, better still, the friend of Barras. His name was Courtand.

"Courtand!" Barras asked, frowning, "what is all that noise?"

"I do not know, citizen-general," Courtand replied, himself as greatly astonished at this infraction of the rules of the house; "I will go and see."

Courtand went out and, five seconds later, re-entered, every face turning to the door to look at him.

"Well?" asked Barras.

"Oh! it is nothing, citizen-general," Courtand replied, laughing.

"But what was it about?"

"The servants belonging to the citizens present"--and Courtand pointed towards the guests, who, it should be said, mostly belonged to Republican opinion--"are plucking feathers from citizen Tallien's footman and the poor devil shrieks because they pinch his skin a bit while they are doing it."

"And what has he done to deserve to be plucked alive by the other servants?" asked Barras.

"He called his mistress *Madame la Princesse de Chimay!*"

"Then he deserves his punishment: his mistress is not called the Princesse de Chimay, she is called citizen Tallien."

On another occasion--this, too, happened at table--one place remained empty. The guest who was late was the famous Royalist agent with whom you are acquainted, Fauche-Borel, who, six months later, was reduced to misery by the ingratitude of the Bourbons, and committed

suicide by throwing himself from a window at Neuchâtel. He was very intimate at Barras's house and it was said that it was through his mediation that the abortive negotiations were entered into in 1792 between the Bourbons and the old dictator. Well! Fauche-Borel was late: he arrived at the roast course, with tear-stained face, holding his handkerchief in his hands.

"Ah! here you are, my dear Fauche-Borel," Barras exclaimed. "Why are you so late as this?"

"Ah! citizen-general, rather ask why I am so upset."

"Well, my dear fellow, what is the matter?"

"Oh, general, I have seen the most touching, the most moving, the most instructive spectacle ... I have just come from the Tuileries ..."

"Ah! ah!--and was it there you saw this touching, moving, instructive scene? You were very lucky, my friend, to have managed to fall on your feet! Come, tell us what you saw, so that we too may be moved and softened and edified."

"Well, citizen-general, M. le Duc de Bordeaux spilt some water on the floor of the great salon where he was playing."

"Really!"

"And the Duc de Damas said to him, 'Monseigneur, you have made a mess on the floor; I am much distressed about it, but you must wipe it up.' 'What! I must wipe it up!' the young prince exclaimed. 'Why are there no servants here?' 'There are, but, as the mess was made this time by your Highness, your Highness must wipe it up.... Go and fetch a mop!' said the duke to a footman; and, when the man hesitated, he added, 'Do as I command you!' The lackey arrived with a mop five minutes later, and His Highness shed many tears; but M. de Damas was firm and

Monseigneur was himself obliged to mop up the mess he had made! What do you say to that, citizen-general?"

"I should say," Barras replied, in the sarcastic tones that were habitual to him, "that the tutor of the Duc de Bordeaux did quite right to teach his pupil a trade; so that when his noble parents depart he will have something in his hands to take to."

Another time--again it happened at table--a famous general, who was an eminent soldier and a man of striking abilities, then ambassador at Constantinople, related, with bitter feeling, a scene that took place during the Revolution.

By chance, Courtand, Barras's valet and steward and a free-spoken friend, stood behind the general's chair. He touched the general on the shoulder in the very middle of his story.

"General," he said, "I must stop you--it did not happen at all as you are telling it: you are slandering the Revolution!"

The general turned indignantly to Barras to call his attention to this familiarity on the part of his lackey. But Barras broke out--

"Messieurs, Courtand is right! Tell the episode as it happened, Courtand; re-establish the facts and give a lesson in history to Monsieur the ambassador."

And Courtand related the facts as they had occurred, to the great satisfaction of Barras and the amazed astonishment of the company.

When Walter Scott came to Paris to hunt up documents connected with the reign of Napoleon, whose life he was proposing to write, Barras, who had some precious papers to show him, desired to see him and begged Cabarrus--who knew the history of the Revolution as intimately as did Courtand, but could tell it better than he (we mean no offence to the memory of Citizen-general Barras)--to invite the celebrated

romance-writer to come and dine with him. Cabarrus began by having a long conversation with Walter Scott, who, knowing that he was in the society of the son of Madame Tallien, talked much of all the events in which Cabarrus's mother had played a part: finally, the messenger approached the real object of his visit and transmitted Barras's invitation to the Scottish poet. But Walter Scott shook his head.

"I cannot dine with that man," he replied. "I shall write against him, and it would be said, as we say in Scotland, 'that *I have flung his own dinner-plates at his head!*'"

One afternoon, Cabarrus invited me to spend an hour with him in the afternoon, and I put in my appearance punctual to the time appointed.

"Barras will die to-day," he said to me; "would you like to see him for the last time before his death?"

"Certainly," I replied; for I was anxious to be able to say later to people, who had only known him by name, "I saw Barras on the day of his death."

"Very well, come with me: I am going literally for the purpose of saying good-bye to him."

We got into a carriage and went to Chaillot. We found Courtand looking very melancholy, and, when Cabarrus asked him how his master was, he only shook his head. He showed Cabarrus into the room of the dying man all the same, and, as I was with Cabarrus, let me go in too. We expected to find Barras sad and pale and weak and depressed, but he was merry and smiling and almost rosy-looking, though this colour was but the flush of fever. We began by apologising for my presence: I had met Cabarrus in the Champs-Élysées and, learning that he was going to inquire after Barras, I wished to accompany him. Barras made me a little friendly inclination with his head to indicate that I was welcome.

"But," Cabarrus exclaimed, "what did that pessimist of a Courtand tell me, general? He made out that you were worse; on the contrary, you look ever so much better!"

"Ah yes!" said Barras, "because you find me alone and cheerful ... that does not alter the fact that I shall be dead to-night, my dear Cabarrus! Do you hear that, Dumas? I am like Leonidas and shall sup to-night with Pluto! I shall be able to tell your father, who would be happy enough to see you, that I have seen you to-day."

"But what were you laughing at when we came in?" Cabarrus inquired, trying to turn the conversation from talk of death to matters of life.

"What made me laugh?" Barras replied. "I will tell you. Because I have just played a capital trick on our rulers.... As I have been a man of power, they have had their eyes on me; they know I am dying, and they have been watching for the moment of my death to seize hold of my papers. I have therefore, since the morning, been busy attaching my seal to these thirty or forty boxes. After my death, they will be seized; but I have given directions for counsel to be called in and the matter will be publicly tried before a court of justice.... This may last for four or six months or a year ... after which my heirs will lose, my papers being State property. They will then solemnly open these forty boxes which you see there, before a council of ministers ... and, instead of the precious papers, which are in a place of safety, do you know what they will find?"

"No, I confess I have not the slightest idea."

"My laundress's bills for thirty-five years ... and they will take a lot of adding up, for I have sent plenty of dirty linen to the laundries since 9 thermidor...."

Barras burst into such a frank and merry peal of laughter that he fell back exhausted, and that evening he died, as he predicted, shortly before the Revolution of 1830.

END OF VOL. III