

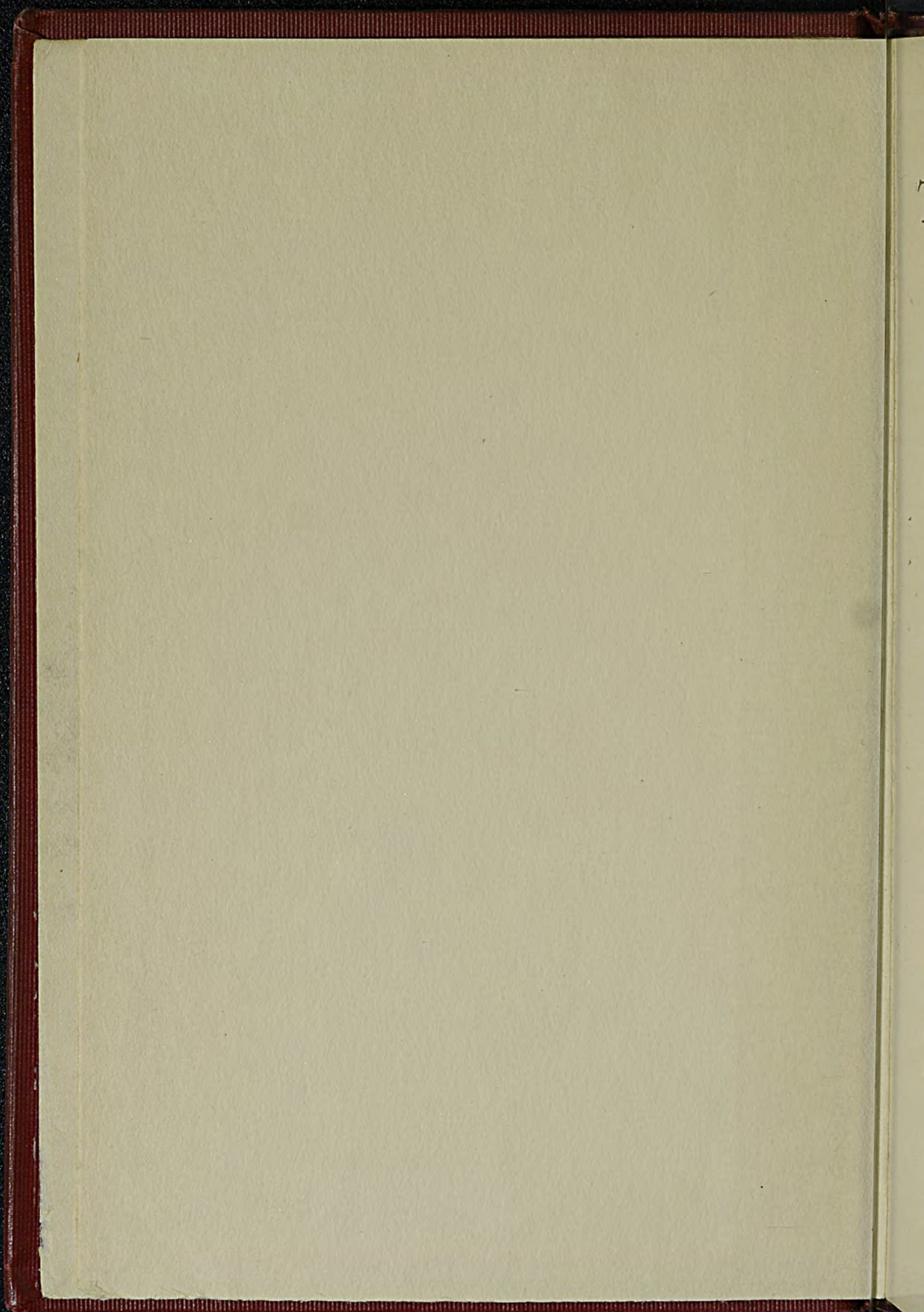
The INNER MAN

FLORENCE CREWE-JONES

BERTRAND SMITH'S
"ACRES OF BOOKS"
633 MAIN ST.
CINCINNATI

A SECRET SERUM THAT INDUCES MENTAL TELEPATHY;
HERO USES SERUM TO FREE AN UNJUSTLY-ACCUSED
MURDERER

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Hyde Park,
Cincinnati,
Ohio



THE INNER MAN

*Adapted from the French of Michel Corday
and Andre Courveur*

BY

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AUTHOR OF "THE RED NIGHTS OF PARIS,"
"THE MAN WITHOUT A FACE," ETC.



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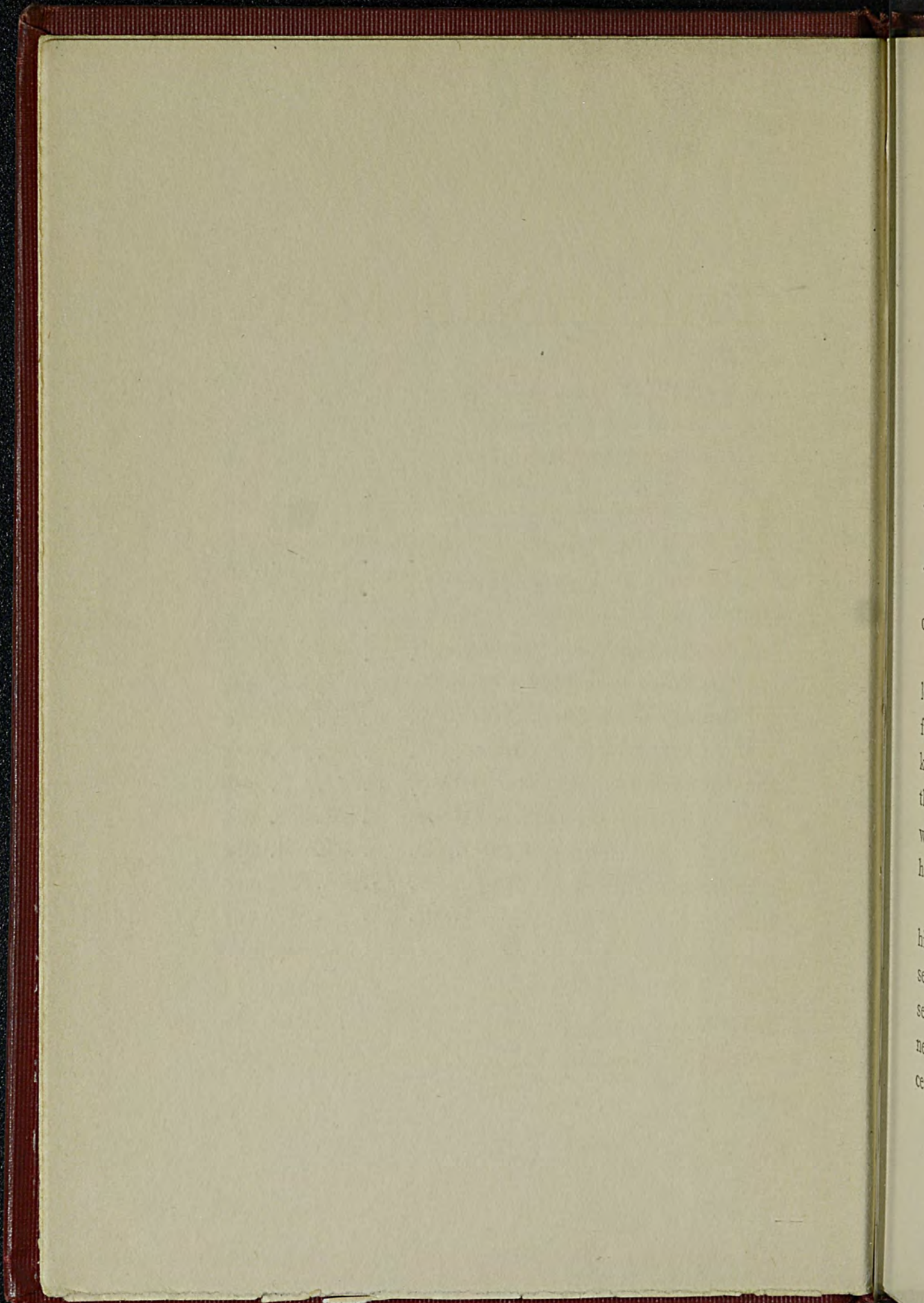
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THE INNER MAN

CHAPTER I

IN THE GARDEN OF SLEEP

IN the clear night Gabriel Mirande could see the white walls of the village, and above the foliage on the square the dark outline of the church and the steeple.

The young savant was alone on the road which led from the station of Chatigny. It was a peaceful country night; all seemed to sleep but the twinkling stars which moved and glittered above in the summer sky. Now and again a soft perfume was wafted in the calm air—the odor of the ripe harvest, the crumpled grass, and the warm earth.

Mirande shivered. The perfume passed over him like a caress. Since he had left Paris his senses seemed to be more refined, more keen; he seemed to be under the influence of an abnormal nervous tension. Perhaps he owed it to the excessive emotions he had experienced recently, per-

haps to the odd stimulus administered him by his master, Brion.

As he entered the village and passed the doorways, the echo of his footsteps sounded sharp and clear. Only one window was alight at the inn. From time to time a dog in a yard barked as he passed; and, unable to conquer his nervousness, he started each time—a shudder ran down his spine—although he was in a familiar spot and knew all the houses in this village where he was born.

He walked through the square under the limes, whose flowers scented the night, then pushed open an iron gate which grated mournfully. He was in the cemetery where the tombs were grouped together around the church according to the old custom.

This spot was also familiar to him. He had often come there with his father and mother and his sister Jeanne—to this garden of sleep, shaded with yew-trees and rose-bushes. On the crosses and stones how many names there were, already half effaced by time, which brought back to his memory friendly faces!

But this time it was before a newly made grave

that he paused in pious meditation. Three days ago—only three days—Simone Castellan had been buried in the cemetery of Chatigny. Mirande knew the family-vault well, marked by a rich marble slab laid flat on the soil in a secluded corner under the great aspens. In the dark shadows, cowering by the screen of foliage, he could see the crosses, the wreaths, and the bunches of flowers on the tomb; the blossoms were still fresh and gleamed as though they had kept the light of day in their petals.

Standing beside the grave with bent head, he sank into a sad reverie, for the woman who slept beneath the sod was the friend of his childhood, of his boyhood, and all the poetry and love of his life were buried there.

How he had loved her! He had worshiped her at a distance. She had seemed almost divine to him. When he was only a little schoolboy—a little country boy, timid and thin—he had looked with a kind of awe through the iron paling at the large house where she lived on the banks of the Yonne. And later, when a guiding hand had raised him above his position, and he had come back as a student to Chatigny on his vacations, he had felt,

when he met Simone and when he passed before her house, that same religious fear.

Perhaps he would never have spoken to her had it not been for his sister Jeanne.

The strict discipline at the Convent of Sens had neither taken the courage nor the spirit from Jeanne. Between the two little girls, drawn together doubtless by the contrast of their characters, there had sprung up a firm friendship. Simone's relations, who passed in the village for being very haughty, dared not deprive her of a playmate; so the beautiful château had been opened to him—the infatuated little rustic.

The vacations to him were like rays of light—patches of blue in a dull school-life. The children had fishing parties, picnics on the grass, wild romps in the woods, where Gabriel's shyness vanished and Jeanne's laugh rang out, and even the gentle Simone became animated and gay.

The years at college passed, hard and dull, but crowned with the joy of the vacations. Then came a day when he returned to the village and found Simone no longer a little girl, but a dignified young lady.

It was at the time when he entered Brion's lab-

oratory as assistant to the old chemist. The youthful friendship was ended now, the student no longer liked to go to the large house. When he met Simone he was formal. He had lost his natural manner and his simplicity, for he was conscious that he loved her.

Not for anything in the world would he have told her so. He was afraid that it would appear that he loved her for her fortune. She was rich, and in the future she would be even more so; and he had nothing. But even if he had told her, and if in return she had confessed that she loved him, she was too much under the influence of traditions, too obedient to her family to go against their wishes.

Up to the day when she married, according to the rules of her world, he had nourished a secret and hopeless passion for her. She became the wife of Dr. Castillan.

Who knows if his grief was not more bitter on the day he heard she was married than a year later when he learned that she was dead? Perhaps he suffered less in knowing that she was lost to all than lost to him alone.

He had not the strength to follow her body to

the grave. But, when the funeral rites were over, he had seized the first opportunity to start for Chatigny, where she had expressed a wish to be buried.

A letter he had received in the morning furnished an excuse for his journey. That same evening, when his work in the laboratory was finished, he took the train, even though the state of fever and weakness into which Brion had fallen had earlier caused him some anxiety.

All his troubles seemed to come at the same time. At the moment when his benefactor's health occupied his thoughts, there had come the news that Simone Castellan was dead. Then, a short while before, his best friend, his sister's betrothed, had been accused of robbery and murder, and was condemned to penal servitude for life.

Mirande could still hear his friend's vehement protests of innocence, and see the fierce gesture with which he menaced the judge and the jury.

He reproached himself that other thoughts should intrude upon his memory at this moment when he stood beside the dead. He wanted to speak to her, to tell her things that he had not dared say while she was living. Now she belonged

to no one—not to her proud relatives, nor her husband. She had returned to herself. He could tell her all he wished.

Obeying less the ritual usage than the instinctive desire to get nearer her grave, he bent still lower, then knelt on the ground. With closed eyes and lowered head he evoked the memory of bygone years. He vividly recalled her face as it used to be.

Suddenly, he raised his head and put his hand to his temples. Was it the night—the place—that caused this evocation? It seemed that he had heard some one speak!

He turned round sharply and peered into the space between the marble slabs and the black crosses which rose up in the clear night. He was alone. There was no one in the cemetery.

Evidently he had been the victim of a hallucination. Yes! The voice had struck him as eery—as though addressed directly to his mind, without first striking his ear.

Again he heard a vague murmur. This time he could have made no mistake! He distinctly heard the words: "I cannot—where am I?"

Another second he hesitated, not daring to detail

his thoughts to himself. Then the truth overwhelmed him, stunned him! It was Simone! She was not dead! He leaned down and put his ear against the stone. He heard some faint moans, without accent, as though they came from a distance:

"I am stifling—stifling! Where am I? Air! Air! What is this—on my face?"

How was it possible for him to hear these weak mutterings through so many obstacles? Yet he took no time to marvel at it. She lived! She lived!

She must have just come out from a trance. What atrocious martyrdom! He must snatch her from these tortures before she succumbed to them. He would save her—would snatch her from the tomb.

Springing to his feet he trampled on the graves in his mad haste to reach the cemetery gates.

Beyond, he could still see lights in the tavern.

He ran to the door and found it locked. He beat upon it with his fists and his feet. A window sash was raised and some one leaned out, grumbling.

"Mme. Castillan is not dead!" cried Mirande

madly. "She is buried alive! Come down! Come to the graveyard!"

He had run to the inn which was nearest, but he needed other help. He was guided with that extreme lucidity which comes to certain men at the most critical moments. His brain was working clearly. He must get the mason, the grave-digger, the doctor, the sexton. Fortunately he knew all the people, and knew their homes.

Alas! At each house he found the inmates sunk into the torpor of their first sleep. It seemed that a leaden weight pressed upon the sleeping village. At first no one answered his frantic calls. Then he was received with surly words and suspicious questioning. But this quiet, reserved man would have broken down the walls and smashed in the doors of the homes to wake up the entire town.

He shouted his name and shrieked the news to them, calling until his throat was torn; then he commenced again to rain blows on the closed doors until his fists were bruised and bleeding.

Soon his frenzied cries took effect. Now, as he battered on the closed shutters, he could hear the sound of heavy steps and the muttering of voices. His attention was so marvelously keen that it

seemed that he could divine the sense of the distant words.

Here a man was grumbling at being disturbed from his sleep; another was all curiosity at hearing the strange news; elsewhere there was incredulity, or the hope and calculation of gain; and then, again, there was joy—the beautiful human joy of being able to snatch a fellow-being from the great enemy.

All the men he needed were aroused, and Mirande, without waiting for them, ran back toward the cemetery. He felt that he must be on the move; that he must do something to forget how quickly time was passing. The precious lost moments! What if help arrived too late—if the spark of life, reanimated in the tomb, should go out forever?

She must be suffering abominable torture now she had regained consciousness. To be buried alive! Who knows if the case is not more frequent than is generally believed?

He recalled the daring theories of Doisteau, a young surgeon whom he had known during a period at the Brion laboratories. According to Doisteau, it was frequently only death in appear-

ance. An organism should not cease to be unless it is worn out and decays. In many accidents life was only suspended; and if it escaped definitely from the clutches of death, it was through some skilful intervention, some fortunate chance that seized it and put it back on its right course. It is the motor which stops at the corner of a road. One finds out what has gone wrong and one repairs it, and then it starts on its way again; but if it is left to itself it will never move again.

Meanwhile, the village was showing animation. There was a slamming of doors, a rush of heavy feet, quick, excited words. Soon a little crowd had gathered around the grave. The slow work began. Mirande lost his lucid calmness as the time flew by. But he still seemed to catch faintly from these men, as though in a sort of delirium, the thoughts that he had caught from behind the closed shutters.

He could not stay there longer inactive, his hands idle. He wanted to work. He seized a pick-axe and struck like the others to help displace the massive stone.

Suddenly, while they were uniting their efforts,

Mirande heard Simone's voice again. She had recognized the horror of her position.

"Buried alive," she moaned—*"since when? Some hours? Help! Help!"*

Overcome with terror and despair, he cried out to stimulate their zeal: "She speaks! She is alive! Quick! Quick!"

In the group around the grave there were the innkeeper, the mason, the sexton, and the bell-ringer, who also performed the office of grave-digger. The four men, without stopping their work, listened. But they soon showed by their manner that they had heard nothing. Evidently their senses were too hardened and too coarse to hear the faint voice.

At this moment the doctor joined him. He was a big man, vigorous and jovial, whose experience and methods Mirande appreciated. Out of breath by his run, he asked in a tone which betrayed his incredulity: "Well, do you think you can still hear anything?"

This secret resistance annoyed the student.

"Listen yourself," he said tersely.

The doctor kneeled and put his ear to the marble, then got up again.

"Not a sound—absolutely nothing," he said; "and yet I have very keen hearing."

This time Mirande began to feel a great fear. Perhaps he had been the victim of a terrible hallucination. But he would soon know, for the slab of stone, pried at with wooden levers, moved at last.

They saw an obscure excavation. The mason threw the light from the lantern into it, and they saw a second stone provided with an iron ring. Mirande leaned over the opening, from which came up a cold, damp air. He could still hear a plaintive moan, but it was with increasing difficulty now; the voice seemed to be deep in the earth. It was getting weaker. Soon it would die away.

Had Simone come back to life only to die again, or had she only lost consciousness?

Mirande implored the men to work more quickly still. The splinters of stone flew under the quick blows from their axes. Yet it seemed that their efforts would have been in vain, that the sepulcher would never be opened in time. The young savant felt a strange sudden depression come upon him, provoked no doubt by his anguish and his fatigue. It was the anxious hour which precedes the break

of day. It was chilly. He shuddered. These men, whose secret thoughts he had been able to fathom, were suddenly become as strangers and far removed.

Some villagers who got up at dawn had been told of the great event, and had joined the group of men. Some offered their services. Others, with their hands behind their backs, looked on curiously, at once mocking and awe-stricken. Their presence only added to Mirande's suffering; he would have liked to have finished the work alone—far from these profane eyes, which seemed almost hostile.

Then the second stone was raised up. In the gray light of the coming day the coffin could be seen. It was lifted out and laid on the grass, while shaking hands unfastened the lid. Mirande stooped down and put his ear to the casket. Not a sound! Nothing!

Yet, he had not been mistaken. He had heard moans coming from the tomb. What interminable moments! He turned to the doctor.

"Be ready," he said piteously, "as soon as you feel her heart beat."

The doctor nodded. He knelt down, and when

the lid was off he quickly drew aside the winding-sheet at the side of the left breast. He put his head down. Then, almost immediately, he sprang up, his face aglow.

"She lives!"

In spite of the foresight of the old physician, the miracle had materialized. But he was so overjoyed that he had made a mistake that he was incapable of action.

As for Mirande his limbs shook but an excess of rapture cleared his mind. He must act at once.

Simone's face still wore the mask of death. Her flickering life hung by a thread. She must be carried as quickly as possible to her home.

Aided by the doctor he lifted up the inert head and poured a few drops of stimulant between the bloodless lips. Then running ahead of the little group who carried her he hurried to her home.

In the absence of Dr. and Mrs. Castellan, the gardener and his wife lived at the house alone. The physician had his practice in Paris, and it was in the city that his wife had been taken dangerously ill.

Mirande found the two caretakers up. He told

them the wonderful news—that their mistress was coming home.

He shook them from the stupor into which his words had thrown them—gave them orders. With the most minute care he attended to the smallest details, absorbed entirely in saving Simone.

Then came the moment when, in her light room, in the comfortable warmth of the bed, she heaved a deep sigh and at last opened her eyes. It was only then that Gabriel Mirande realized that in this house he was a stranger. Simone was married. His work was ended. He had given back to Castillan—his wife. There remained nothing more for him to do but to go. A wave of bitterness against fate suddenly swept over him.

What irony—to have saved her only to lose her again?

It was better for him to leave at once. When Simone had completely regained consciousness she would be surprised, perhaps annoyed, to see him sitting at her bedside. How could he explain his presence at the tomb?

He drew the doctor aside.

“She is saved, is she not?”

“Certainly—evidently a case of catalepsy. She

must have awakened at the moment you heard her, then she fainted again; but there is no danger now."

"You are sure?" insisted Mirande.

"Quite sure; but why?"

"I am going back to Paris. I left Brion in a very weak state. His condition rather worried me, and I want to get back to him."

The old doctor gave Mirande a sharp look. He knew of the old friendship that existed between Simone and Gabriel, and perhaps he suspected the deeper affection that had grown out of this friendship; but he was careful not to betray his thoughts. He took Mirande's outstretched hand and shook it warmly.

"Go," he said; "and count upon me."

Mirande took a last look at Simone. Her golden hair was spread over the pillow. Her face was already pink with the return of life.

It was one of those clear mornings, sparkling and pure, that makes one feel they would like to toss off the fresh air, like a liquor. The young student walked through the gardens, where, in every alley, at each seat amid the elm-trees, there rose up the invisible statue of some memory.

He went into the gardener's quarters.

"As soon as the post-office is open," he said, "telegraph to Dr. Castillan. I have no time to wait; I must catch the train."

He walked toward the station, along the banks of the Yonne. He wanted to make a short cut, and also avoid passing by the cemetery. He was in such a hurry to leave the village, and put aside the temptation of seeing Simone again, that he forgot the avowed object of his journey—his visit to his lawyer.

The office was not yet open. The money that he had come to receive could be sent to him that same day. Alas! it was a very small sum—all that he and Jeanne had been able to raise on a mortgage on the old homestead and the few acres of land that their parents had left them. It had cost them a great deal of heartburning to borrow on their old home, but the sacrifice was necessary.

In spite of appearances and his recent conviction, they could not believe that Henri Lacaze was guilty. They had tried to find out the truth. Then, from the first, they had seen that without the help of money all other efforts in his behalf would be in vain. Without the small sum that they were going to receive, they would not even be able to pay the detective whom they had engaged.

A bell was ringing when he reached the station. He sank down on a bench. He felt overcome by the same great weariness which had come upon him at the moment he had ceased to hear Simone's moans. He went over again the events of the prodigious night just past.

Now that he could put the facts together, one point appeared to him to be inexplicable. How was it possible that, through so many obstacles, he could have heard Simone's weak voice? How could he have heard her moans, and his companions not have heard them?

That certain stimulating serum which Brion had tried on him the night before, did it develop the acuteness of the senses?

His master would certainly know how to explain this mystery. His impatience to see him again increased. He decided that he would go at once to the laboratory upon leaving the train; but, first, he would send a telegram to Jeanne, telling her the wonderful news.

Again the strange events of the night began to whirl around in his tired brain. The train came in, he took his seat in a compartment, and within a few minutes he had sunk into a deep slumber.

CHAPTER II

A MARVELOUS SECRET

“He-la! Train’s stopped! All out!”

Mirande was roughly shaken. He woke up, and saw with astonishment a uniformed guard looking down at him as he lay stretched out on the seat of an empty car.

“Where am I?” he asked in a bewildered voice.

The man replied with a loud laugh. Mirande sat up and put his hand to his forehead, where the mechanism of his thoughts was working in utter confusion. He looked out of the window. In the half-daylight he could see some great walls, and, in the distance, the end of a metallic arch webbed a wide patch of sky.

The porters were clearing away the baggage. It was Paris.

“I tell you you’ve got to get out,” said the guard; “they’re going to shunt the train.”

“I’m going! I’m going!”

With dazed mind and trembling limbs, he stag-

gered to the corridor and stumbled down upon the platform. A porter walked ahead of him, pushing a truck upon which was a long black trunk which had the shape of a coffin.

Mirande shuddered.

"It is true—last night—Simone. How could I have slept?"

He turned away his head. He wanted to forget. He felt strangely depressed. In vain he congratulated himself that he had brought the woman whom he loved most in the world back to life, and that soon, through him, she would have health and happiness. But another would profit by this miracle. He felt the same bitterness that he had felt when he stood by the sick woman's bedside. What soothing certitude death deals out—to know that no one can possess that which does not exist! But already his conscience revolted at the odious thought.

"This way out! This way out!"

Yes, he would go out, and take up his normal life, and think of nothing but his work. He gave up his ticket absently. The collector looked at him narrowly as he went by.

Around all railway stations there is a special at-

mosphere. The excitement and the haste of those going away meet the lassitude and weariness of the traveler returning. It is like the fluids of opposed electricity. Little by little, a sort of equilibrium is established—the excitement of the departures is quelled, and the weariness of the arrivals finds relief. All travelers, and those who meet in the large railway stations, have observed this influx and reflux, and felt themselves drawn into the whirl.

Yet, this time Gabriel Mirande, usually so sensitive to the surrounding atmosphere, did not notice it. He looked absently at a woman who, at the last moment of saying good-by to her husband, placed her head on his shoulder and sobbed piteously. He derived no amusement from a noisy crowd of Cook's tourists—English, German, and Roumanian—who, in the care of a young guide with a gilt-braided cap, stood looking about them in astonishment while waiting on the curbstone for their cabs. Neither did he feel the animation of the large boulevard which was already half-hidden with the tramways and automobiles. The windows in the high houses were opened to the morning sun. Yet he felt as though a hand of lead was weighing

on his brain. He took a few haphazard steps. Then, whipped up by the fresh morning air, he roused himself slightly.

"What am I doing here?" he muttered. "And my master? I was going to see him at once—he was very ill last night."

He stood on the pavement, hoping that an empty taxicab would come along. As he did not see one, he hailed a cab.

"Cabby, 15 *bis* Rue Mechain."

"Rue Mechain?"

"Yes; it leads out of the Rue Saint-Jacques, not far from the Observatory."

"Right," said the driver, touching his forehead.

A sharp pull of the reins, a light touch of the whip, and the horse was off.

"Go to the postoffice first—the nearest one."

What had he been thinking about? He had intended sending a telegram to Jeanne, telling her that Simone had come back from the dead. Although Jeanne had not seen her friend since her marriage to Dr. Castillan, Mirande could picture his sister's joy upon learning the wonderful news. He hurried into the postoffice and scribbled a blue telegram. Twenty words were enough. Later he

could give her full details—after he had seen Maître Brion. Then he would go to their little home and tell her all that had happened in the night.

He wrote the address very carefully: "Mlle. Jeanne Mirande, 12 Rue Monge," then slipped the blue paper in the telegram-box.

Now for the Rue Mechain! His dear old master—he was going to his bedside with filial devotion. He owed him, materially and morally, all that one man could owe to another. The savant had been his protector since his childhood. Mirande remembered the day when the chemist, already in the full glory of his scientific discoveries, had installed himself at Chatigny. At first he had taken an old farmhouse on the outskirts of the village, because he wanted solitude. Then the green peace of the fields along the banks of the Yonne had won him, and he bought the house and the grounds around it. Then, little by little, he pulled down and reconstructed it until he had a dwelling all his own.

Brion was a tall, bearded man with a thin, ungainly body mounted on long legs. He was considered peevish and unsociable. The people saw him pass through the village always deep in

thought, and alone; he never uttered a word to any one. Dressed like a peasant in a blue linen smock and thick boots, a large knotted stick in his hand, he defied the dust and the mud. He tramped the woods and fields for hours; sometimes he stopped and looked down intently at the ground; then he would pull up a plant, which he would place carefully in a botanist's box slung over his shoulder by a leather strap.

His looks and his manners had made the people suspicious at first. Through the windows of a shed in his garden, they used to see him burning strange lights; there were green, red, and yellow flames. They also attributed to him cabalistic powers. They called him the wizard. They imagined that he threw spells over people, and they held him responsible for an epidemic which had carried off an entire herd of sheep.

A short while afterward, when they learned, through a reporter who had interviewed him, that, instead of bringing an epidemic on their sheep, he had been trying to find a remedy for this sickness, the fear that they felt for him, still remaining superstitious, was transformed. They considered that he was still a magician, but a good one. And when

they learned that his science brought him money, that he invented serums for all kinds of illnesses, and that he had an institute in Paris which was a rival to the Pasteur Institute, he became a local glory.

The cult of the peasant for riches had accomplished the miracle of transforming a devil into a god.

At the time when the savant showed his friendship for Gabriel he was still unpopular. Incited by their parents, who then attributed to the wizard the loss of their sheep, the children of the village would stand outside his house and throw stones at the windows where they could see the strange fantastic lights. But little Gabriel did not share this superstitious hatred. Several times, when he had met the wizard on the road, he had touched his cap, and the man had smiled at him; he did not appear to be so terrible—in fact, he rather attracted the boy.

He told his comrades not to annoy the savant. At first he spoke to them quietly; he tried persuasion; but when he saw that they paid no attention to what he said, and that two windows were again shattered, he suddenly got angry, and

bravely used his fists in the service of right. He rushed at the leader of the band, and, one against ten, struck out wildly. The number was too much for him, and he would have been defeated if an ally had not suddenly appeared upon the scene. It was the wizard himself, armed with his big stick. A few blows, well applied, quickly dispersed the youngsters.

"So it is you who are defending me, my little man?" said the savant in a kindly, paternal voice. "Let me tell you, you have done me a very great service. You have just saved a culture of rare microbes; a stone would certainly have broken the receptacle. And I can tell you they are precious to me, my microbes."

Gabriel was confused, but he looked bravely up at the wizard; and when the man's bony hand stroked his cheek he received the caress without a shudder. Under the fierce, thick eyebrows he saw a kind look.

"You look intelligent. What is your name?"

"Gabriel Mirande."

"*Mirandum*," said Brion, smiling.

Gabriel did not know whether he should smile also. The savant's speech was very enigmatical. It

savored of magic. Perhaps this man really was a wizard, after all!

But the strange person continued:

"Where are your parents? I would like to see them and congratulate them."

"They are dead," answered the boy; "mother died three months ago, and father died just before mother."

"Poor youngster," muttered Brion.

As time went by, the savant took a great interest in his little champion. He found that he was capable of more advanced study than that which he received at the village school. He thought of the boy's future; if he studied hard, and then received a favorable report from his schoolmaster, he could easily obtain for him a scholarship at the Sens high school. He himself would defray the necessary expenses, *parbleu!* Gabriel would pay it back to him later, in helping him with his scientific work, in doing small services for him during the vacations.

As to the little sister, Jeanne, she should be put in an orphanage under the patronage of charitable ladies. So the two children, in stepping over the barrier that lies ever between plow and book,

did not have to break into their small heritage—the farm and the few acres won by the hard work of their ancestors.

After Gabriel had passed his bachelor's degree, the head master of the Sens high school would willingly have passed him on to the Normal School, but Mirande wished first to consult with his old friend.

Brion opposed the idea; he did not believe in the stiff examinations which exhaust the brain, or the subsequent régime which holds it enchained.

His own brain had escaped; it had found its independence; it had been fruitful; it had permitted him to launch out into realms still unexplored by science; it had helped him solve biological mysteries; maintained his laboratory and his pupils.

He offered to take Mirande as partner in his researches, but the student declined his offer on the ground that he had no resources. Brion replied that he would give him a salary at once, and it would be sufficient to permit him to have Jeanne come to Paris and live with him.

Then Gabriel accepted with enthusiasm. He respected Brion, and to work in his laboratories, under his direction, filled him with pride. He donned

the long, white blouse and took his place among Brion's followers in the large, light room adjoining the master's private laboratories.

He learned the benefits of vaccine, the power of toxins, their molecular grouping, their radioactivity. And his amazement increased still more when Brion drew him into vaster fields of speculative hypothesis.

After his day's work Mirande went home on foot. It was his only exercise and, rain or shine, he would not forego it. Sometimes Jeanne would wait for him outside the institute. Then he would take her by the arm with brotherly affection, and they would start off laughing and chatting, stopping before shop-windows, going out of their way to see the things they most preferred. On fine summer evenings they would take the boat and go down the river as far as Billancourt or Meudon, and have their dinner at a little country restaurant.

But usually Gabriel went home alone. He walked quickly, knowing that the little sister would be anxious if he were late. He knew the welcome he would have—two arms twined around his neck, the dinner ready, savory soup steaming on the table.

But, one evening, he had gone home grief-

stricken. Jeanne had guessed at once. Simone was married. With tacit accord they had never spoken of a marriage that they knew was impossible. Yet, when he had gone to his room, his shoulders drooping, his limbs shaking, she felt with a bitterness mixed with anger how much her brother was suffering. She understood now Simone's long silence. Jeanne respected her brother's grief; she knew that nothing she could say could help him. Soon she was to suffer also.

That good-natured daredevil, Henri Lacaze, the aviator, although his visits were not frequent, sympathized deeply with his friend. The aviator would go away for weeks at a time to Mourmelon to perfect a helioplane that he had invented; then he would reappear at the little apartment, triumphant or depressed according to the results that he had obtained.

One evening when he had dined with his friends he had pressed Jeanne's hand as he was saying good night to her in the hall. Then he said in his blunt way:

"Listen, Jeanne, I don't know how to make fine phrases, but perhaps if we went into partnership—you and I, Jeanne—we might perhaps, the two of

us together, be able to console poor old Gabe. What do you think of the idea?"

The proposal was a little cloudy, but it was lit up by a flame from the steel-gray eyes. And Jeanne knew that here were true sympathy and love.

"Later. Wait, I do not say no," she consented with a little smile; "but not just now. He is still too sad."

For a long time she kept her secret, but one morning a newspaper announced that Henri Lacaze, who had gone to pilot his famous helioplane at a meeting in Buenos Aires, had died of yellow fever.

Jeanne read the paragraph, then fainted. When she regained consciousness Gabriel was bending over her.

"Don't worry, darling; it is a false alarm," he said. "Look, here is another paper which contradicts it. He has had the yellow fever, but only very slightly, and now he has quite recovered."

She clung to him now, sobbing with joy.

"And you hid that from me," he said reproachfully. "You might have known that if anything could have made me forget, it would be to hear that you two were happy."

They telegraphed. The reply was favorable. Henri Lacaze would soon be returning. The sea-voyage would almost cure him, and a season at Vichy would complete the recovery. When he was quite well they would announce their engagement. Alas! Fate does not stand still for want of work when it has begun to strike. Jeanne was to suffer still.

All these events came vividly to the young savant's mind now. The abnormal compression of his brain had passed away; his ideas had free play. He would have continued his train of thoughts if the carriage had not turned into the Rue Mechain. There seemed something unusual going on in the street. Gabriel was surprised, for it was usually so quiet.

On the pavement opposite the Institute Brion a group of men were talking together softly as at a funeral. At the windows of the houses close by faces could be seen. Some reporters were there in their long coats and slouch hats, taking down notes. An automobile drew up at the curb, bringing two men—doctors, without a doubt.

Mirande recognized among the group some of Brion's students, and still others who had long since

left the institute but who remained no less attached to their master. He saw Doisteau, the celebrated young surgeon, among the latter. He was an old friend of Gabriel Mirande's, and the latter joined him now.

"Ah! Doisteau—it is you. The master is worse, then. Yet when I left him last evening he did not seem dangerously ill. What has happened?"

The surgeon shook his head gravely.

"I have been talking to my colleagues who have just left him. There is a vague infection, which they can't diagnose. It complicates the bad state of M. Brion's heart. Paralysis is gaining; his limbs are gradually getting cold. Ah! Science! Science! You mock at our ignorance!"

"Is there no hope?"

"None whatever."

"Can he still speak?" asked Mirande in despair.

"Yes; his mind is clear. Just now he said good-bye to us all, and asked us to look after his work. It is terrible. He asked for you several times. Go to him quickly, old man; he wants you. He is in his laboratory; he asked to be carried there."

Gabriel shook hands with the surgeon, and walked quickly through the grounds. At the end

of the thick shrubbery stood the institute, an imposing brick and stone building with large windows. All around the house were trees and shrubs. The oblique rays of the sun fell on this oasis; it was like the corner of a shady wood in the center of Paris.

Yet Mirande's sadness increased as he contrasted this exuberant nature and the death-struggle that was so near. Here so much life; there a mortal exhaustion. He looked at the immense oak which spread its branches over the lawn, and thought of the splendid human tree, so robust, so fruitful, yet shattered now.

He went into the vestry, where his comrades' white blouses were hanging, ran up a few steps, opened a door, then stopped at the threshold of the laboratory, overcome with emotion.

The shades were lowered, but in spite of the shadows he could discern the familiar room—the rows of pigeonholes, the cases, the great porcelain chimney which hid a mass of instruments, retorts, and pans. In the center of the room stood a table of pellucid glass covered with microscopes, retorts, and vials filled with colored solutions. This display alone revealed an incessant labor, the continual

struggle of a brain for triumph against material inertia and its eternal snares. A doctor and the faithful servant, Catherine, were bending over the dying man.

The master! Was it really Brion under this heap of coverlets? This great body lying on the couch and breathing in gasps—did it belong to his master? Only the head was alive. It struggled against the death of the body and the limbs.

Amid the tangled gray hair and the white beard the keen light shone in his eyes as ever. It was more brilliant still at Mirande's coming.

"At last—it is you—it is you, my boy," he muttered in a weak voice which vibrated oddly, as though the vocal cords had been unevenly stretched.

He turned his head with difficulty, and looked at the doctor and the nurse.

"Leave us—I want to be alone with Mirande. I want to speak to him—alone."

The doctor wished still to render assistance to the dying man, and Catherine seemed not to understand his request. She leaned over him to arrange the hot-water bottle at his feet.

"Leave us alone—alone," he repeated.

They obeyed reluctantly. Mirande reassured

them with a sign. Then, when they had gone, he went up to his master and fervently held out both hands to him.

“Ah, master!”

“No useless effusions, my boy,” murmured the savant; “we have not the time. I can scarcely breathe. Paralysis is gaining upon me. It is coming to my head—to my voice—can you hear me?”

“Very well, master.”

“Then let us speak.” An anxious look passed over his face. “The door—if any one should hear.”

Gabriel walked to the door, to make sure that it was fastened.

“It is closed,” he said.

“Let us speak—quick! What did you do yesterday evening? What happened?”

“Oh, sir, speak only of yourself!” implored Gabriel.

“I speak of myself in speaking of you,” said the savant enigmatically.

“Tell me! What has happened since you left me?”

Gabriel began to tell him about the wonderful night through which he had passed. When he mentioned Simone’s name Brion interrupted him.

"You love her?" he said gently.

"How do you know?" asked Mirande in surprise. His master smiled weakly.

"What does it matter? I know. You will see how I knew presently. Continue! Quick!"

As Gabriel continued to tell his story, the old man's excitement increased. When he heard that Simone had come back to life a look of intense triumph came into his eyes. Then, overwhelmed by the excess of joy, he murmured:

"Beyond everything! Wonderful! What triumph!"

His look rested on his pupil; his eyes shone with victory, but he said ironically:

"You mean to tell me that you heard Mme. Castellan's voice?"

"Evidently."

"In spite of the obstacles—the two slabs of stone—the coffin—the voice of a weak woman, a woman almost dead? Why, you can scarcely hear mine. Do you think it was really so?"

All the doubts which had assailed Mirande since daybreak, and which he wanted to submit to his master, came upon his mind with renewed force. All the improbability of the event rushed upon him.

“And yet,” he thought, “how could I have known otherwise?” He wanted to convince himself and bring back this terrifying problem within the limits of the possible. The supposition that had already come to him returned—perhaps a particularly excessive sensibility had affected him in the night, the hysteria that enables one to catch sounds inaudible to normal ears.

“Master,” he asked wonderingly, “was I in my normal state? Was I not under the influence of some power? Were not my senses made extraordinarily keen by that injection you gave me at the moment when I was leaving you? You said you were giving me strength. Tell me, was it that? What was there in that serum you gave me?”

Again the look of triumph came into the old man’s face, and, controlling the trembling of his lips, he murmured:

“So you have guessed. Yes, it is a wonderful discovery, and I experimented upon you. Pardon me, my boy, I was obliged to do so to convince you. But I did not dare to hope for such decisive proof. I wanted to confide my secret to you before I died—to you who, among all, is most worthy to possess it; to you—the brave, the noble heart—that I have read so often.”

He stopped. Would he have the time to tell his beloved pupil about his discovery? His efforts had exhausted him. Death was drawing near. The light went from his closing eyes, his head dropped on his chest as though he were in a deep sleep. But it was only a sinking spell.

Gabriel seized a bottle of salts and held it to his master. The strong odor revived him; he began to breathe again in quick gasps. He looked up at his pupil and remembered.

With his eyes he made a sign; he looked at the corner of the laboratory where there was a safe in the wall near the chimney.

"The white safe—the key is in my vest pocket—on the right," he murmured.

Mirande threw back the coverlet, and searched in his master's pocket and pulled out a small, notched key.

"Open."

Mirande obeyed. The safe was strongly protected.

"The box of bottles—note-book at the side."

"I see them."

"Leave them in their place—close it—keep the key—you—no one else."

The student, after giving a double turn to the lock, slipped the key into his pocket and came back to the bedside of the old man.

"Listen now—nearer. I have discovered a talisman without rival. The serum—the blue bottle. In the note-book—the formula, the mode of employ—my own observations."

He stopped a moment like a wrestler who snatches a few seconds to collect his strength.

"He who is injected with this serum," he went on, "can read the thoughts of others—as if he heard their voice—it lasts some hours. He becomes the receiver—as in wireless telegraphy. Keep the secret—keep it at any cost. If not, they will think you are a madman. A secret—my last wish."

He tried to say more, but his tongue was held in the grip of the paralysis which now had reached the finer nervous centers. He was powerless. His eyes filled with tears. Was it because of his powerlessness, or a last farewell to the pupil whom he loved? His head fell back on the fringed cushions, there was a sharp contraction of the face, a yearning look from the eyes, and the great discoverer had breathed his last.

CHAPTER III

THE CRIME

When Mirande got outside the institute, he wondered if he had not been dreaming. This supreme interview with Brion—had it really occurred? Several times he tried to force himself to get interested in what was passing in the street, to prove that he was awake, that he was really walking in the open air.

He did not dare to measure the understanding of this power that had come to him from his master. At the most, he would only assure himself that this discovery had been made by the chemist and that he had not spoken in delirium.

He thought over the events of the preceding night. Assuredly, without a supernatural influence, it would have been impossible for him to have heard Simone's weak voice through the earth and the stone. When he had imagined that he had merely guessed at what the workmen and the doctor were thinking—first behind the doors of their

homes, and then beside the tomb—he had actually received their thoughts without knowing it. And later when Simone's voice appeared to come from a distance and to be dying away, and when he began to feel that the men standing round were strangers to him, the action of the serum was doubtless wearing off.

Yes, the miracle of the night explained all—and he alone could explain the miracle.

He reached the Rue Monge. He ran up the five flights of stairs quickly, happy to see Jeanne after so many anxious events, and to be able to give her the details of Simone's resurrection. For the first time he felt sorry that Brion had told him to keep his discovery a secret.

Jeanne was sitting with her elbows on the table, her head buried in her hands. Before her was an open letter. Mirande recognized Lacaze's large handwriting. He felt that Jeanne had had another terrible blow, and he decided not to tell her until later that Brion was dead.

He had not made a mistake. Ah! the fierce egotism of love! He kissed her on the forehead; she turned to him absorbed in her own thoughts.

"Henri is going away to the Isle of Ré," she said

dully; "from there he is to be sent to the penal settlements in Guiana. Read it—it is terrible, terrible!"

Gabriel took the letter and read:

MY DARLING—I have never called you so before, but I dare to-day, for you know that I love you, and, dearest, this time, it is the end. They are sending me to the Isle of Ré, and from there to the penal settlements. Jeanne, have you the courage not to turn from me? Will you remain faithful to the memories that unite us, or have you already turned against me? What matters the undeserved punishment that I shall suffer? What matters the torture of the terrible future that awaits me? That is nothing compared to this separation from you, sweetheart. This punishment is too cruel! They can torture me, they can tear my body, they can burn my flesh, but to snatch you from me at the moment when my arms were going to enfold you, is too much for me to bear.

Do you realize what I am losing? Do you understand now how hopelessly I cling to the memory of you? What is life without you?

What agony—this thought that perhaps you do not believe that I am innocent, that you scorn my love; this love which is the only solace in my misery! If you believe that I am guilty, Jeanne, tell me at once; then nothing will matter. They can take me, and it will not be for long. I shall welcome death—

Jeanne interrupted her brother.

"Isn't it terrible? Oh! Gabriel—I will follow him. I will go down there; I will go to Guiana, and I will marry him. I will go as soon as they will let me join him, for now we cannot save him. We have come to nothing; we have not succeeded. You see, brother, we are too weak."

Too weak—yes, they were too weak. Then, suddenly inspired by revolt and pity, there flashed into Mirande's mind a means to save his friend. This power that Brion had put into his hand, this divining faculty, why did he not use it for the cause? By it, he could get money, influence, and all that was lacking to conquer the stupidity, the indifference, and the wickedness of men.

Too weak? Well, they would cease to be weak. He had to force himself to remember that it was his master's dying wish that he should keep the secret, so great was his desire to cry out his hopes and his confidence.

A loud ring at the bell startled them from their thoughts. After some talk in the hall, Francette, the servant, came into the room, familiarly and brusquely.

"It's a man," she said.

"What man?"

"Don't know. He's tall, straight, and as thin as a nail, with a mustache sticking up. He said that you were expecting him, but I told him he'd have to wait. You never can tell—you can't trust anybody nowadays."

She finished with a laugh. She was a curious little person, this Francette. She was made up of contrasts. Her nose, which was too large at the nostrils, suddenly ended with a pert little tilt; her creamy white skin was covered with freckles. Beyond her lips, which were too short, shone two rows of perfect teeth. The pronounced arch of her eyebrows shaded a look that was tender and submissive. The rough curls of her copper-colored hair fell as far as her little straight collar.

Was she pretty, or ugly? It was difficult to say. Take her altogether, she was like some hearty country dish flavored with delicate spices.

Her language was as odd as her looks. Free and frank, she mixed ridiculous words with slang phrases. She had been in the Mirandes' service for two years, and by now Jeanne and her brother had grown accustomed to her ways. Besides, how could

they help showing indulgence to her? No devotion could compare with hers.

Since the day when Henri Lacaze had been arrested, Francette, in her unique manner, had consoled both master and mistress. She upheld their confidence; she was always hopeful, and her gaiety and her jokes held in check the most poignant anxiety. And, as at this trying time, Jeanne had neglected the cares of the house, Francette took upon herself to be the housekeeper.

She sharply defended her master's interest. With a coquettish word she drove a better bargain with the butcher; with a grimace she got a bigger measure from the grocer. She washed, ironed, mended all the linen, waxed the floors, beat the rugs, and found time to consult cook-books in order to serve the most savory dishes.

She felt that money was not plentiful in the house, and that they were exhausting their savings to defend Mlle. Jeanne's betrothed, so she wanted to refuse her wages, and declared point-blank that she also intended to contribute something to the cause.

After all that, how could one scold her for her

free way of talking and acting! One does not reproach the sun for entering the house.

Only once had her good humor been known to have an eclipse. It was when Simone was married to Dr. Castillan. They had never spoken to her upon the subject, but she had her own thoughts on the matter probably; in any case, she became unbearable. All day long she made a racket in the kitchen, knocking the dishes and banging the saucepans about. For a week nothing that she had cooked was fit to eat.

Then she came back to her normal state. Her smile brightened the house, and her hearty laugh was heard again.

Mirande did not scold her for receiving the visitor in the way she had.

"It must be M. Nitaud, the detective," said Jeanne.

"That's it," cried the servant; "it's Nitaud. He told me his name. I thought he said 'negro.' Has he come from the police? Is he any good?" she added inquisitively.

She was interested in everything that concerned Henri Lacaze. Mirande promised that he would tell

her more after he had seen the detective, so she consented to show the man into the parlor.

The detective answered the description Francette had given of him. He was upright, tall and thin; but despite his thinness, his muscles were powerfully developed. He had remarkable eyes, keen and piercing. They attracted the attention at once. When they were fixed on one, the intensity of their look made one feel uneasy. He had a broad forehead, short gray hair, and a turned-up mustache—small, like Francette's tooth-brush.

"M. Mirande?" he asked, as Gabriel entered the room.

"Yes, my name is Gabriel Mirande, and I wrote to you because there is something very difficult that I want you to do for me. I could not go to any one better, I think, than the one——"

The detective with a motion waved aside the pending compliment. He sat down, put his soft hat on the floor, and looked at Jeanne, whose presence he seemed to think superfluous.

"Mademoiselle is my sister," explained Mirande. "I wish her to be present."

"Very well; I am listening," replied the detec-

tive. Mirande hesitated a moment, and then said: "You must have heard about the Lacaze affair?"

"Yes, but only vaguely. I was away at the time, in America, where I was working upon something for the Russian government—a nihilist affair. I merely learned of the murder through the newspapers, and know only as much as others who read the papers."

"After what you know, doesn't the case appear to you to be very clear, very concise?"

"It seemed to me very commonplace. Besides, I must tell you that the investigations of the police have no interest whatever for me. I know too well what they are worth. I was once an inspector on the police force, then I went into business on my own account. The police? Bah!"

"It seems to me," said Mirande, "that they don't put enough zeal into their work, and that they are too partial. They seemed to want to find M. Lacaze guilty. They did all they could to find him guilty, but my sister and I firmly believe in his innocence."

"Indeed we do! He is innocent. I am sure he is innocent," said Jeanne earnestly. "So, too, you, sir——"

A second time, with an impatient movement, M. Nitaud stopped a compliment. As decisive in his queries as in his attitude, he began:

"You want a revision, then?"

"Exactly."

"Were there any defects of procedure?"

"Some, but they are not sufficient."

"Then we shall be obliged to get new evidence, and prove that a mistake has been made?"

"Yes," said Mirande, "something that would create a doubt, for the judges and jury who condemned Lacaze, alas, had no doubts. The verdict—penal servitude for life—was unanimous."

"Oh! it is abominable—a man so brave—so good," cried Jeanne.

The detective gave her a quick look. He seemed to understand her, for he made a gesture as though in pity, and his harsh voice took a softer tone. "I ask nothing better than to help you," he said, "but it will cost you a great deal. To reopen a trial, procure fresh witnesses, knock down the structure the police have built—that takes money. We must have some sharp men—we cannot do without them. Have you thought of that?"

"Everything that we have you can take," said Jeanne; "everything."

"I will make a calculation, approximately.

"Give me something to go on with," said Nitaud, "so that I can begin at once. I don't trim my clients," he added briefly.

He turned to Gabriel.

"Now tell me," he said, "all the facts. Do not be surprised if I insist upon the smallest detail. In our profession a grain of dust can have its importance. Tell me first about Henri Lacaze. Who is he? Where did you know him?"

Gabriel gave Jeanne a quick glance as though to tell her to have courage. Once more they were obliged to go over the tragedy.

"I knew Henri Lacaze at the Sens high school. He was an unruly child—at times he showed a violent temper, and chafed at the severe discipline. But he had a remarkably intelligent mind, a generous heart, and was susceptible to kindness and reason. He never worked until the eve of an examination. To every one's surprise he would pass more brilliantly than those who had studied for weeks. When we left college we lost sight of one another. Six years later I met him again in Paris, where he

had become an enthusiastic aviator. He had just invented his famous helioplane. You undoubtedly have heard about it?"

M. Nitaud excused his ignorance. Aviation had made such rapid strides that he could not be expected to know about the helioplane. He was in a hurry to pursue his inquiry.

"What sort of life does he lead—Bohemian?" he asked.

Slightly embarrassed by his sister's presence, Gabriel thought for a moment.

"Bohemian? Certainly; he does the same as his comrades. Those who run the risk of being killed at any moment enjoy life to the full when they can. But he used to take his amusements by fits and starts—like a man who works hard, then suddenly relaxes."

"Any debts?"

"Yes, some debts. That was one of the charges against him. In fact, he was very deeply in debt. He got in debt because he was too generous; and also, I am sorry to say, because he was thoughtless. Most of his debts were due to the heavy expense of a little factory that he had built where he made his machine. He was anything but practical. He had

no idea of business, and for that reason much was spent that need not have been. His industry was the principal cause of his straits."

"Any love affairs?"

This time it was Jeanne who replied for her brother. She said simply: "M. Lacaze and I have been engaged to be married for a year."

The detective bowed. On this delicate matter he decided to question Mirande when they were alone. Turning to him, he continued: "He had a violent temper, you say?"

"Yes, but his violence was always inspired by sentiments of justice, of truth."

"For example?"

"Well, throughout the entire trial he threatened the district attorney, the judges, and the jury. He used some very strong language, and it certainly prejudiced them against him. Just imagine! At the last hearing he shook his fist in the prosecutor's face."

"Well, if he was innocent," Nitaud mused excusingly, "can you tell me of any other time in his life when he acted in a violent manner? Did he ever quarrel in his factory?"

"No, all his men loved him. I do not think——"

Ah, yes! I remember something. It was at Issy-les-Moulineaux, the day they were starting for the races up north. The aviation grounds were guarded by the military. Lacaze had forgotten his card, and he tried to break through the line of soldiers. One of the non-commissioned officers stopped him. He got into a temper because they would not take his word. He insisted, and became more and more excited, and finally he gave the soldier a clout. The race committee had much trouble in arranging the matter. That was just like Lacaze."

"Yes, I see."

The detective tugged at his short mustache.

"Now, about the victim—a cousin of M. Lacaze, and one from whom he would inherit some money, if I remember rightly?"

"Yes, M. Gagny. A very old man."

"This M. Gagny, had he any other relations?"

Mirande hesitated for a moment. Simone was also cousin to the old man. Like Simone and Lacaze, old M. Gagny had also come from the environs of Sens. Mirande felt that he would rather not mention Simone's name to the detective. However, after a moment's hesitation, he decided to do so.

"Yes, one of our friends, Mme. Castillan," he said.

"This lady, who also would come in for a share of M. Gagny's fortune, would now have even more since Lacaze's condemnation."

The events had come so quickly, one upon another, that this fact had never entered Mirande's mind.

"It is possible," he said evasively.

But the detective seemed to dwell upon it.

"Did the police search on this side?"

"Why should they?" asked Mirande. "The police had no suspicions in that quarter, I assure you. Besides, Mme. Castillan herself is very rich—rich and worthy of all respect. No—you must dismiss that idea entirely."

The detective did not insist.

"Very well; now, the crime."

Gabriel looked at Jeanne. The bare mention of the fatal night seemed to affect her greatly.

"You had better leave us, Jeanne," he said.

But she drew herself up straight and refused to leave.

"M. Gagny was killed in his house in the Avenue Raphael," began her brother; "number two *bis*.

We went to the house once on the day that M. Lacaze introduced my sister to his cousin."

"How did he receive you?"

"Very badly."

"For what reasons?"

"For no reason whatever. He treated us as he did every one else—as though we were intruders. This old man lived like a hermit. He was completely wrapped up in himself."

"He was rich?"

"Yes—about ten millions."

"How did he get it?"

"By hoarding; he was a miser."

"Yes, but there must have been a foundation for such a fortune."

"He inherited his father's money; also his wife's, who died many years ago. Think! he has been accumulating the interest for fifty years. He was eighty-three when he was murdered."

"But the keeping up of a large house, the servants—all that takes money."

"I tell you," insisted Gabriel, "that old Gagny economized in every possible way. He never traveled; he belonged to no club; he wore his clothes until they were threadbare; gathered his vegetables

from his own grounds, having turned them into a kitchen-garden. He made a meal off of a slice of bread and a bit of cheese. He kept only two servants, and when the woman became old and infirm he reduced her wages. That is the sort of man he was."

"Then why did he live in a private house on the Avenue Raphael? Why didn't he sell it and take a room?"

"Because he had stowed away some splendid furniture and a collection of rare pictures that came to him from his father. All these things, as time went by, became more valuable. To keep them was still another way to add to his wealth."

"A miser—a crazy man."

"Yes, he was mad," agreed Gabriel; "mad for the love of gold. He must have taken to his bed the day when he lent Lacaze money."

The detective started.

"M. Lacaze borrowed money from him, then?"

"Oh, not very much. Five hundred francs to pay his workmen once when he was driven into a corner. He must have gone down on his knees to get it."

"Why didn't he ask us for it?" said Jeanne sor-

rowfully; "we might have saved him a step which probably helped condemn him in the minds of his judges. But he was so proud—too proud to ask us."

The detective began again to pull his mustache. With his eyes fixed on the floor he thought deeply. He frowned. It was evident that he looked upon this borrowing with disfavor.

"I think I remember," he said after a pause, "that Lacaze admitted that on the evening of the murder he tried again to get some money from the old man."

"That is true," replied Gabriel. "That evening Lacaze went a second time to his cousin. His creditors were hemming him in, and he had to get two thousand dollars to save himself from bankruptcy. He went there at eight o'clock and rang the bell of the iron gate on the avenue."

"That is, at the kitchen-garden that you mentioned just now?"

"No, this is a small garden in front and full of shrubbery. The kitchen-garden is at the back, and another private house stands between it and the Boulevard Suchet. I tell you these details because they have their importance. Well, Lacaze rang the bell and the door was opened by Justin, the man-

servant, who took him to his master. At first they talked together calmly, then they became excited, and Justin said that he heard angry words. As Lacaze left he was hurling insults at his cousin, and he did not seem to care who heard them."

"What kind of insults—threats?"

"Oh, no! Some cutting remarks about his cousin's miserly ways. But nothing that showed any intention that he wished to harm his cousin. Lacaze left, and Justin closed the iron gate after him and locked it as he always did."

"Where did Lacaze go, then?"

"To Issy-les-Moulineaux. He was going up in his machine by night."

"Well that is an alibi isn't it?" exclaimed the detective.

"Yes, but what is the use of it? He went up in his aeroplane alone. A good number of witnesses testified at the trial that he went up alone by night."

"Ah, that's a pity!" murmured Nitaud.

But he caught the look of anxiety on Jeanne's face, and tried to hide the bad impression that Gabriel's words had made.

"What time did he come back from his flight?"

"About four in the morning."

“And what time did the doctors say that Gagny had been murdered?”

“About 2 a. m.”

“Who discovered the crime?”

“Justin, the old man. It was his custom to take his master his breakfast. When he found that he had been murdered he went at once for the police, who proceeded as usual.”

“What did they discover?”

“That M. Gagny had been stabbed in the heart, stretched out at the foot of the bed in his shirt, and seemed not to have offered any resistance. He had not even cried out, for neither of the servants had heard a sound. The sureness of the blow in the region of the heart and the scarcity of blood that flowed from the wound seemed to indicate that the murderer possessed certain notions of anatomy, or that this was not his first murder. Near the body was found the instrument of the crime—a file which had been recently sharpened. What was peculiar about it, it was marked with the letter ‘L’ in red paint.”

“H-m! ‘L’—Lacaze. Does your friend mark his tools in this way?”

“Yes.”

"This file had been stolen from him!" exclaimed Jeanne before giving the detective time to reflect on this serious fact.

"Wait, Jeanne; let me finish. When M. Nitaud knows all——"

He turned to the detective.

"In the room nothing indicated that robbery had been the motive of the crime. The desk, which was full of deeds, was intact. All the pictures were there, and the rare curios, which might easily have been carried away. The coolness, the method, and, if I may say it, the cleanliness of the crime seemed to give the impression that the assassin had carried out an order."

"And naturally," interrupted Jeanne, "the police saw in the criminal's lack of self-interest one more bit of evidence against my fiancé. They pretended that it was to his interest not to steal what he would inherit, anyway; but I ask you, sir, couldn't he have pretended that it was for burglary? And would he have used his own tool marked with his initial? He would have known that that would have condemned him—a child would have known it."

Nitaud did not reply.

Turning to Gabriel, he asked: "Did they notice

next day that this file was missing from Lacaze's workshop?"

"They could not say—my friend's place was always in such disorder."

"Then it was this tool left beside the body that led the police to suspect him?"

"It came from that. The discovery of the tool was the strongest point in causing his arrest. That was the investigating magistrate's chief argument. Throughout the whole affair this same man showed a revolting partiality."

"Who was it?"

"M. Dutoit."

The detective started when he heard the name.

"Ah! It was Dutoit, was it? I know him. He's a hard one. It was through him that I sent in my resignation. It's a pity when a man's fate depends on an imbecile like Dutoit."

Jeanne's face brightened.

"I'm not sorry that I've got to deal with him," continued Nitaud; "but go on, tell me how he explained the murderer's coming and going."

"Behind the house, as I told you, is a kitchen-garden, which is separated from the Boulevard Suchet by some property which is to let. The crim-

inal must have passed by this empty house, jumped over the wall, and then run across the garden."

"Without leaving any trace?"

"Left no trace whatever. The soil was dry. Then, once there, he got into Gagny's house."

"How? Wasn't the door closed?"

"It was closed and locked, the windows also. But there is another door in the basement—you go down a few steps to it. This door has glass panels and iron bars. It was the custom to leave the key on the inside of the lock. The murderer broke the pane of glass. He cut himself, for they found some blood-stains near the door. He had only to put his hand through the opening to turn the key and lift the latch; then he was in the house, and it was quite easy for him to find the floor where the victim slept."

"Which shows, in any case, that he was acquainted with the house," remarked the detective thoughtfully.

"You say he cut himself?" he asked after a moment's pause.

Gabriel felt the importance that he attached to this question. He was about to reply when Jeanne

again interrupted him. "Here, again, poor Henri is the victim of fate. The same evening when he made his flight he was fixing a wire on his aeroplane and he cut his wrist."

"They must have looked on the machine, for there would surely have been some blood-stains on the wire," said the detective.

"No, he wiped them off," she admitted in a crushed voice.

There was a tense silence. Nitaud seemed to be inclined to think that Lacaze was guilty. He made a significant grimace. A clock struck the hour of noon.

"And the murderer left no indication whatever as to his personality? Did they look for his fingerprints on the locks, the banisters, the furniture in the room?"

"They looked for them, but there were various marks, and they were contradictory."

"And, even if they had found Henri's fingerprints," said Jeanne, "what would that have signified?—for only a few hours before he had been there to see his cousin."

Nitaud shook his head. The edifice built up by the police seemed to him to be made of solid cement.

For once, his enemy, Dutoit, had been served by circumstances. He spoke his thoughts without trying to spare his listeners.

"All this is not very good for your friend," he said, "even if he is innocent."

"He is! I swear it on all that I hold most sacred in this world," cried Jeanne. "You believe he is? Tell me that you believe he is," she said imploringly.

"Evidently," stammered the detective. "You say that he is, and I don't wish to think otherwise. But a young girl's declaration does not always satisfy the law. We want proofs. Admit that your friend cannot furnish proofs, and that, on the contrary, all the circumstances go against him. Admit also that only one man had an interest in killing Gagny—the one who would inherit his money and who was on the verge of bankruptcy. And then, what? It is a pity that M. Lacaze had a quarrel with his cousin; that his alibi could not be verified; that the file found by the body belonged to him; that he was wounded on the wrist that very same night, and that the assassin carried nothing away with him. Really, all that looks very dark."

He saw how distressed the brother and sister

were. He would not leave without giving them a ray of hope.

"To encourage me in the work," he said, "I have nothing but your belief. That is not very much; but, all the same, it is a stimulant, because you're both in earnest. I'll begin at once and see what I can dig up."

He picked up his hat and, no longer being able to hide his spite, he shook his little finger menacingly at an imaginary person. "And if I can show M. Dutoit," he muttered, "that he has made a mistake—if only for that—I'd do the work with pleasure."

When the detective had gone Jeanne gave way to her despair and threw herself, sobbing, into her brother's arms. He tried to calm her. He spoke to her soothingly.

How he would liked to have given her more than ordinary words! How he would liked to have revealed his secret and cried out to her:

"Hope! We will win! We were weak, we were blind, it is true. But now, thanks to Brion, both power and light are ours!"

CHAPTER IV.

FOR BIG STAKES

On a sultry afternoon through clouds of dust, and amid the hubbub of horns and whistles, the automobiles were returning from Dorville-sur-Mer after a race-day. With a jerk they pulled up before cafés and restaurants, making a long line along the quays of the port. They wound in and out with miraculous dexterity, avoiding collisions which seemed inevitable. The light runabouts, profiting with every block, glided between the imposing limousines like small boats in a fleet of battleships; the breeze from the open sea fluttered the flimsy veils which draped the women's faces; the rays from the setting sun flashed on the brass fittings of the cars.

Mirande watched the smart crowd from the terrace of a café, and at the same time listened to the conversation of two young men who were sitting at the table next to his. They seemed well informed. They knew every one by name. Mirande

listened eagerly. His country childhood, then his studious youth, had kept him far from the gay world. This smart society inspired him more with awe than with curiosity. He had never been at one of these gatherings, where one could see samples of all notorieties.

It was the ardent wish to save his friend from the gallows that had forced him here. This was the well-spring of influence, where the most powerful opinions were born.

He had tried to get the newspapers to take up the cause that enthralled him, had tried to make friends with judges, to get politicians interested. But from the first he found that his efforts would be useless—he was so powerless, so alone, so beaten in advance.

His boyish timidity came upon him forcibly now; he felt lost in this smart throng. His two neighbors continued to name the people who, through their riches, their brains, or their position, were high in power. This time Gabriel knew that his timidity would not last. He was going to face the struggle with confidence on the strength of a talisman which would give him the victory.

Impatient to act and save his friend in time, still

he had quickly seen that it would be difficult for him to find a footing in the Parisian summer colonies. To try his strength in a first contest he had chosen Dorville, where a few days since society had gone for the races, and where he knew that the men he wished to meet would be found.

Soon after the detective's visit he had started for the seashore. Jeanne was a little surprised at his sudden departure; naturally, he had told her only a part of the truth—the hope of meeting down there some people who would help them in their cause.

He had not gone to the races, for the serum acted only during a few hours, and he would have to put himself under its influence at the most favorable moment. He had carefully made his choice. He was waiting for the evening.

Mirande learned that what he needed most to save his friend was money. He needed money so that he could act quickly, money which would enable him to please, money to stimulate and awaken dormant memories, money to open doors and lips.

He had decided to get his first supply at the gambling tables. It is true that the important place that he now occupied at the laboratory since Brion's

death brought him in a higher salary. But he wanted a large, round sum at once, and there was no other way in which he could procure it quicker, nor which would better utilize his faculty of divining.

He did not try to deceive himself upon the principle of the step that he was taking. He even suffered from this temptation. He was going to possess an unfair superiority over his opponents. If it had not been that he must help Lacaze at once, he would never have taken this extreme step. But time was passing. Besides, he would enrich himself only at the expense of men who had too much money and who went to the green tables less for gain than for distraction.

The casino at Dorville was celebrated for its high stakes. It was frequented by the wealthiest and the most influential men. Perhaps, moreover, he would have an opportunity to approach them and be able to subjugate them by his penetration. With one blow he might advance both influence and fortune.

Meanwhile, the stream of carriages had almost ceased. Already twilight was falling upon the empty quays along which the last automobiles went

at full speed. Mirande took his dinner in a near-by restaurant. He was feeling lonely; he was in the habit of dining with Jeanne, who until lately had made his meals so gay with her chatter; and now, obliged to rely upon himself, he felt his apprehension increase as the hour drew nearer for him to make his terrible test.

Outside a clear moonlight night prolonged the day. Mirande left the restaurant and walked along the little wooden jetty which protected the port and separated it from the beach. The sea was at full tide and calm. The ripple of the waves broke gently on the framework of the pier. At the end of the platform a green light shone from the top of a semaphore.

Mirande sat down on a bench and faced the shore.

Lights were twinkling, massing on Dorville in condensed constellations. From the distance came the strains of an orchestra. He felt alone—as alone as if he were in a boat on the great dark sea.

He looked at his watch. Almost nine o'clock. From the notes that the old chemist had made, the serum would act at the end of an hour. The moment had come.

He opened the case in which the small receptacle rested upon its bed of wadding. It was a glass tube tapering to a point at each end, and contained a pink liquid, slightly phosphorescent. Mirande crushed one of the points, and in the opening carefully inserted the end of a hypodermic needle. The little metal reservoir filled by a slow suction. Mirande drew up his left sleeve to pierce the forearm.

But for a moment he was seized with giddiness. He doubted. Such a power! Such a miracle! It was not possible. Brion had been ill, on the brink of death, delirious perhaps. In his fever he had believed in the realization of his great dream.

Yet, how about this note-book that he had found near the case of receptacles in the safe that his master had pointed out to him? These notes had been written by the savant when he was in full possession of his faculties. The oldest dated as far back as ten years. What logic was contained in his record! What scientific accuracy in the mode of preparation! And the result of experiments quoted with a precise brevity, the glimpses thrown into the consciousness of another, like a scalpel

wound in a full brain! The words had the sharp flavor of truth, the very odor of life.

And Mirande himself, had he not experienced this prodigious action without knowing it? Without that power could he have heard Simone's moans through the stones of her tomb? That night he was in a superhuman state. He had been able to penetrate the thoughts of the men as they stood around the grave.

No, no! He could not doubt. Once again the unbelievable was truth.

Resolutely he pushed the needle under his skin and injected the serum. But at the moment when he had achieved the decisive act a revolution worked in his mind. It seemed that his conscience, his inner self, rose up against the violation of the natural laws, that the cells in which the thought worked revolted against this daring invasion.

His scruples awoke and, full of new strength, stifled the voice which had bidden him act.

This was desecration! He, Gabriel Mirande, was going to commit a profane act. He was going to rob the thoughts of others. And all the relations of human beings—habits, laws, love—were founded on man's invincible right to keep the secret

to himself. Forehead against forehead, heart to heart, two lovers could not read each other's thoughts. Each jealously guarded his own mystery, remained to the other an enigma. This freedom to think for oneself was a man's right, his supreme right, his sacred endowment, his impregnable refuge.

And he, Gabriel Mirande, was going to throw down this last rampart, to tear away this last veil. Was there not something impious, odious, in this act? It was a crime of high treason against humanity.

He was tempted to give it up and remain there, seated on the bench between the sea and the sky, in absolute solitude, until this awful power had left him and he had again become as other men.

But why? Why should he let the opportunity to know slip? There, a few steps from where he sat, in less than an hour, he would test this miracle, would prove it. Should he deprive himself of the task that he had undertaken? He thought of Lacaze condemned to penal servitude for life, of Jeanne heart-broken.

Love, compassion, and curiosity mastered him. He rose up hastily.

Now, he regretted the time he had lost arguing with his conscience. For he must know his ground, trace his plan of battle before he fell under the spell of the serum.

He walked quickly across the quays toward the casino. He went through the deserted grounds, which were brilliantly lit up and gay with large red-and-white tents. In the vestibule he had to pass before a tribunal of solemn inspectors and submit to the usual formalities to obtain a card of admittance to the gambling-rooms.

In a brilliant, sumptuous room an eager, silent crowd was already gathered round the tables. Mirande noticed that the greater part of the men were in evening clothes. Until now he had been careless of his dress, but he saw with confusion that he was not dressed like the other men. He was in his traveling suit. His embarrassment increased. He felt so out of place that for a moment he was tempted to turn back and throw up the game. But he recovered himself. In a few minutes would he not be superior to all these men?

Suddenly a hand fell on his shoulder, another was stretched out to him.

“By Jove! What the deuce are you doing here, Mirande?”

He looked up. A tall man with a determined chin, black mustache, sharp black eyes, and high forehead stood before him. He recognized Captain Delacoste, who had had command of the regiment in which he had served two years, first as artilleryman, then as quartermaster. The officer had always taken an interest in him. Severe in service, he was genial and cordial in private life, intelligent and worldly. Mirande had always liked his superior officer.

“Captain!” he exclaimed.

The officer smilingly corrected him.

“Not captain—major. Oh, never mind; don’t apologize. It dates only a week back. I’m on furlough, and I thought I’d run down and see the races. I dote on the sport. But you, a pillar of the laboratory, what are you doing in this hole of perdition?”

Mirande invented a story as best he could. He explained that he had been working hard, and had come down to the sea to rest for a few days, and being alone and having nothing to do he had been tempted to stroll into the casino.

"Do you play?" asked the major.

Mirande, who congratulated himself upon having found this well-informed guide, refrained from telling an untruth.

"Well," he admitted, "I am not afraid to play a small game."

On his way to the casino he had been meditating upon his chances of success. At games of pure luck like roulette his power of divining would not serve him at all. At baccarat his superiority over a normal punter would scarcely assert itself; there remained games like poker, which left something to the initiative, and where the fact of knowing the thoughts of one's adversary constituted a formidable advantage.

He admitted a secret preference for poker. He had played the game for entire evenings in the guard-room. But did they play it at the casino? He had not time yet to find out. He admitted his preference to the major, and asked if he could find partners.

"Here they play a little of everything," said the officer; "but first we will stroll round the rooms; you have never been here before?"

"Never."

"Then this is the moment to try your luck," said Delacoste. "I play willingly, but I've had such bad luck."

For a few minutes they mingled in the big crowd standing round the tables, then they came to a quiet room lit only with soft-shaded lights placed on tables. The silence was unbroken, except for the rustling of the cards and the ritualistic words.

The major made a slight salute with his hand to four players at the end of the room, then said in a low voice to Mirande: "Don't think me impertinent, but have you any money to lose?"

Mirande had brought with him the few thousand-franc notes he had raised by a mortgage on their land. He replied to his officer that he had a certain sum that he did not mind risking.

"Well," said Delacoste, "down there at that table in the corner you can try your luck. But, by Jove! they are hard players. If you really have any strength, the game will be great. I'll introduce you. I know three of the men; the fourth is a newcomer."

"Who are they?"

"That good-looking young fellow is Gomard, a society man. You know old Gomard, the capsule-

man—his offspring hasn't invented anything. He's a mere loafer, a lazy young snob who spends his father's millions."

"And the others?"

"That one with the fine beard is Martigue, the lawyer; he has one of the best practices in Paris. He boasts of being richer than the richest of his clients."

Mirande breathed freely. He need not have too many scruples about playing with these two; but a third person interested him—a true gentleman, proud and distinguished. He was richly but quietly dressed, and played without excitement, with a nonchalant haughtiness. He pointed him out to his companion.

"Oh! that one?" replied Delacoste. "He is a nobleman—the Marquis of Strezza, a Genoese. He is a fine player, although it appears that he has just lost an enormous sum in a select and very secluded club right here in Dorville. But at the casino luck seems to smile upon him. He deals willingly at baccarat. He is a good banker, impassive and courteous, indulgent even to the little punter and he even goes as far as to calm the ire of the croupier when he gets ugly."

Mirande resolved to spare this generous adversary.

"I saw something rather amusing the other evening," continued the major. "The marquis held the bank. It was a little game. He had given two bills to each of the pictures and two others to himself. On the demand for cards he dealt an eight to the left and an eight to the right. Before dealing to himself he turned half round to drink some lemonade, and at once, profiting by his inattention, a good number of chips were pushed on to increase the stakes. The marquis put down his glass, looked at the game again, drew a card and cut—a nine. The tricksters had lost."

But Mirande was scarcely listening now. At first weak and infrequent, some strange thoughts began to cross his brain. He was conscious that he had not originated these thoughts, but he was recording them. The miracle of science was commencing.

Fortunately Major Delacoste, attracted by a quarrel, had moved away a few steps. Mirande remained alone, leaning against a mantelpiece.

As yet, the serum could not have attained its full power.

These thoughts were only the vanguard of those which soon would rush upon him. They probably came from the players who were nearest to him, or from the hardest thinkers. Then, very quickly, they augmented in number and in strength; soon they multiplied. In his head there was a chaotic tumult of ideas, a cerebral activity, a hundred times more intense than the most exalted delirium. He pressed his hand to his forehead, it seemed that he was going mad.

Now he understood his master's thrilling description.

Yes! one became like a wireless telegraph station which vibrates to every errant wave. Innumerable messages came from the four corners of the room and hurled themselves upon him, jumbling and entangling, in the disorder and the extravagance of an unheard of delirium. They came and went, came and went, all the preoccupations of the game—despair, hope, names of the cards, sums of money, fear, triumph, anguish. And there were also casual reflections which crossed the minds of the players—trivial anxieties, plans, desires, obsessions of love!

But from the notes that Brion had made he had foreseen that this new faculty would require a cer-

tain training. It would have to be educated, so to speak. One's attention would have to reach out in a determinate sense, perceive one thought more clearly than all others—the same as one hears at a table, in the hubbub of a general conversation, one voice, the preferred voice, more distinct than the others.

In spite of his deranged mind, Mirande tried to get the control of this power. It seemed to him that, after a few moments, he had obtained some result. He commenced to isolate himself relatively from the mental tumult, to choose a particular person and read his mind clearly by the simple process of looking at him.

The major beckoned to him. The one stranger had just got up from the table where poker was being played, and Delacoste had proposed that his young friend take the place. Mirande came over and was introduced to the other three players. The officer gave Mirande a word of caution. The game began.

Resolved to spare the Marquis of Strezza, Mirande began the struggle against his two other opponents and strove to exert his clairvoyance on them only. Gomard was prudent, Martigue reck-

less. But thanks to an extreme tension of mind, fixing his look first on one and then on the other. Mirande commenced to know both their cards and their intentions. He passed when they had a good hand, coped with them when they risked or attempted a bluff. He had good results. Soon a heap of gold and notes was piled up before him.

But luck had favored the Marquis of Strezza as well. Mirande, who had obstinately refused to cross-fire with him, knew that a final game must take place between the two winners. He felt an extreme repugnance to play against the marquis; it spoiled the joy of his triumph.

It was now the marquis's deal. Mirande turned his mind from Martigue and Gomard and tried not to understand the murmur of their thoughts, concentrating all his attention on the nobleman. Suddenly he started! He did not see the act, but he caught the base decision. His aristocratic opponent had substituted a hand. The Genoese was nothing but a sharper!

So this explained his indulgence for other cheats! Mirande's scruples vanished instantly. In deceiving this deceiver there was both pleasure and profit.

Excited by this strange contest, Mirande followed the subtle working which he had seen planned in his adversary's mind. The marquis dealt to his opponents in such a way that Martigue and Gomard would draw only one card. Mirande, with three of a kind, ought to ask for two. The fifth card was to be taken by the clever nobleman.

It was to be the eight of hearts, which assured him the flush he had planned and the pot.

But when Mirande's turn came he thwarted the ruse. Instead of asking for two cards, he asked for one only.

In spite of himself the marquis could not help showing his surprise. He looked up quickly.

"One card only?"

"Yes; one card, if you don't mind."

"I beg your pardon; I thought I could not have heard correctly."

At the same time Mirande was watching his adversary's aristocratic hands, which, willing or unwilling, should now give a club instead of the lucky heart. But the sharper had more than one card up his sleeve, so to speak. As if by accident he let a card fall; it turned with the face up.

"Oh! pardon me. How awkward I am," he cried. "Card seen, card burnt, is it not?"

He knew full well that this was against the rules of the game. At that very moment in his secret thoughts he was evoking the names of the experts who condemned this practice. Mirande took a malicious pleasure in confusing him.

"Pardon," he said, "you yourself should keep it. Schenck, Florence and Keller, who were authorities in this matter, as you well know, state clearly that the dealer should keep the card in a case like this."

The marquis flushed slightly. He had just thought of these American authorities. He regained his self-possession and bowed.

"As you wish," he replied.

He kept his unlucky club. But he did not throw up the game. He wanted to play with audacity. The flush was lost, bluff remained. The two others passed. Strezza risked his all. Mirande, who was following his adversary's game, would not let himself be taken in with this daring ruse. Engaging nearly all he had to equalize his partner's stake, he held the trick and took it. Then he swept off everything, the game was finished.

Mirande got up from his seat. It cost him some-

thing not to show up the aristocratic Genoese, to let him go on freely and work his victims. But he himself, although it was under pressing circumstances and with no thought of further gain, had he not also perverted chance, used an illegal weapon?

He had not time to debate with his conscience. He picked up his winnings, quite a small fortune. The major congratulated him warmly.

"My compliments! I had no idea you were such a player. A splendid player, and a run of luck into the bargain!"

Still dazzled by his prodigious effort and his great triumph, Mirande turned round and saw a crowd of men looking at him curiously. He had, as a matter of fact, although concentrating his attention on his adversary, perceived these reflections, in which surprise and admiration were mingled. The triumph of a young beginner over these well-known gamblers was quite an event among the old-timers of the casino. Delighted and proud Major Delacoste seized the arm of his protégé.

"See! here is Favery, the publisher of the *Lumière*," he cried; "he has been lost in admiration over your skill. I want you to meet him."

Mirande looked at the man. What Favery, the

publisher whom he had vainly tried to influence to use his powerful newspaper on Lacaze's behalf? He was a well-groomed man, polished and correct, and very youthful in appearance.

Mirande brought the full power of his new faculty to bear on the publisher. Then he discovered that, at the very moment that he was being introduced, Favery, by an odd vanity, most ardently wished to convey an impression of youth. He composed his features, held up his chin, and gave to his expression an air of frankness.

Mirande pretended to be surprised, and, turning to the major, said: "I should not have thought that M. Favery, of whom I have heard so much for so long, was still so young."

Favery was secretly pleased, but he pretended not to have heard the compliment.

"I must congratulate you on your play," he said courteously. "Believe me, I am an old player, and I think you have shown your skill in a most remarkable manner—a shrewdness and boldness of the finest order."

Oh, miraculous effect of the serum! The timid savant heard his boldness extolled! But he wanted to achieve the conquest of this influential publisher.

Again he plunged at him. According to his habit, Favery was judging the merits of his interlocutor, thinking how he could utilize them some day. Then, by the association of ideas, he came back to the great project which obsessed him. It was a free newspaper distributed by millions of copies, and which would live by its advertisements alone. Favery had jealously kept his project a secret, letting it ripen and not intending that it should become known until the moment of execution.

Mirande replied to his compliment: "As to these qualities, sir, you have them more than any one else, I should say. You have often displayed them. And I know that they will assure the success of the next great enterprise that you are contemplating."

Favery started. He had only told his secret to one person in the world, his mistress. He at once doubted her. Then, in a strained tone in which anxiety and haughtiness were mingled, he said: "What do you mean?"

But Mirande looked at him frankly. "Why," he said, "aren't you always working out some great plan?"

Favery smiled, but he was still convinced that this young man had guessed his secret and held him at his discretion.

Mirande congratulated himself. Here was a man who would certainly not close his door to him now when he knocked. This singular combat with this invincible and new weapon excited him, intoxicated him. He wanted more battles, more new conquests. Then Delacoste, whose enthusiasm was increasing, called upon another man who had been watching the play. This man was still young—short, clean-shaven, and with sharp bright eyes.

“And you, Raucourt,” said the major, “do you believe that the faculties of a good player would serve him in politics?”

Raucourt was one of these parliamentarians of the vanguard, in whom his colleagues hoped they saw a future chief. The severity of his opinions, the uprightness of his life, his ambitions, and even a certain physical resemblance, had often made people compare him to Robespierre.

What! The major knew Raucourt also! Mirande was surprised. Then he remembered that his friend's position as military attaché of the Cabinet brought Major Delacoste in frequent con-

tact with newspaper men and politicians. This Raucourt could also serve him to begin a motion in Lacaze's favor. Mirande turned and scrutinized Raucourt.

The deputy pondered a moment. He would be a poor judge, he said, for he himself did not play, but he remembered how, in the evenings, in the silence of his room, with what patience he had consulted the cards, as much to relax his mind as to know what the future would bring him.

"I think there is no bearing and aptitude between the player and the politician," he replied gravely.

But Mirande, who had caught the deputy's little mental confession, said: "You are probably right. Yet there is perhaps some analogy between the unforeseen in a public career and in that of card playing. Chance and the initiative are mingled in both cases in the same way. That is so true that even men at the height of their glory are often very superstitious. There are some celebrated men—artists, savants, legislators—who do not disdain to consult the cards to learn what their fortune will be."

"It is possible," answered the deputy carelessly.

As he moved away Mirande knew that the

politician would have a sort of ill feeling mingled with fear for him for the perspicacity he had shown, but at the same time he was pleased that his weakness was also shared by other celebrated men.

The major drew Mirande into the baccarat-room and suggested a little game.

"While you have your luck," he said.

Mirande knew that Delacoste, who was more of a player at heart than he wished to appear, wanted to profit by this run of luck to go into partnership. But he had excellent reasons to refuse. A strange weariness was creeping over him. Amid this excited crowd, so many desires, so much calculation, so many cries of avarice satisfied or thwarted, so many absurd beliefs, came to stamp themselves in chaos on his brain, that fatigue and depression at last mastered his curiosity.

He was just going to say good night to his friend when a tall, beautiful woman, haughty and smiling, came up to them. He had already seen her on the stage. It was Mlle. Lambrine. She held out her hand to Delacoste. Mirande knew this time that it was no one connected with the Ministry.

"Well, Major," she asked, "you are not playing this evening?"

"I have not done so yet," he replied; "it is the fault of my young friend here, who has just beaten Strezza, Martigue and Gomard, and who won't continue his luck at bac."

Mirande bowed to the actress. She did not interest him, but he could not resist penetrating her thoughts. And he knew that the way he was dressed did not find favor in her sight. He looked out of place in his ordinary day clothes among so many evening suits, and she did not care to be seen talking to him.

He was more amused than annoyed. He offered an apology.

"No, really it is too late," he said, "and besides, you know I just ran down here and am only in my traveling suit, while all the others are in evening clothes."

Aware that he had guessed her thoughts from her manner, the actress flushed and looked embarrassed. But already Mirande had moved away. He crossed the room with a quick step, anxious to escape from this hubbub which filled his head, to be at last on the seashore, far from men, alone—alone in the silence of the night.

CHAPTER V

A PORTENT OF VICTORY

From the back of his lodge the *concierge's* surly voice called out:

"M. Nitaud? Third floor, turn to the left."

It was summer and not later than six o'clock, but the hallway was so dark that Gabriel Mirande had to feel his way along. He reached a landing and wondered if he had not passed the third floor, when he was just able to make out a plate on a door and struck a match to read the name. It was:

"Nitaud. Private detective."

He rang the bell and was shown into a hall by a maid who disappeared at once. He was kept waiting some time, when, hearing voices in the room near him, he pushed open the door and found himself in the detective's office.

It was a large, ordinary room furnished in walnut and moleskin. The walls were covered with numerous white and green pasteboard boxes. Nitaud was seated before his desk, which was well lit up

with electric light. In his house-coat, his cap on his head, pen behind his ear, and pipe in his mouth, he had the satisfied appearance of an honest business man, well content with his day's work.

Three others were there—odd-looking persons—a pale workman, dressed in rough clothes and a blouse; a priest who muttered his prayers with his nose in his breviary, and a deaconess, in a shabby dress and worn gloves and whose face was hidden under the brim of a black hat.

Nitaud looked up and saw Mirande.

"It's all right, fellows," he said reassuringly to the others. "This is a client. I'll take your reports later; you may go."

"All right, chief," three male voices replied together. Mirande knew then that the garb of the priest, the deaconess and the workman disguised three sleuths.

"You've just come at the moment when I wanted to see you," said Nitaud, looking at his visitor curiously.

The detective was surprised to see such a change in his client. When he had seen Mirande before he had worn very ordinary clothes, he had been even careless in his dress, as most savants are.

Now he was well groomed and dressed in the height of fashion. A light overcoat with silk revers partly hid his correct evening attire.

"*Sapristi!* but you are fine!" the detective could not resist saying.

"Yes, I am going to the theater," Mirande explained.

He sat down without being invited. Before his trip to Dorville he probably would have waited to be asked to take a seat. But gold had given him confidence. And besides he had seen that to succeed with certain people it was necessary to give them the impression of wealth, or at least to let them think that he was a man of means.

From a side-pocket he carelessly drew out a roll of bank-notes.

"First of all, M. Nitaud," he said, "allow me to complete my retainer."

He peeled a note for a thousand francs from the roll, and placed it on the table.

"We have just sold our property at Chatigny," he explained, for the detective was looking at him in astonishment. "I think that we shall need all this money to succeed in our quest, and I have

decided to spend it. Use it; I don't want you to leave anything undone."

The detective seemed pleased. He liked his clients to be generous. He slipped the note into a drawer, and put the key into his vest-pocket, then waited until he was questioned.

"Well, what's doing?" asked Gabriel.

"To speak the truth, M. Mirande, not very much," confessed Nitaud. "I myself went to the houses in the Boulevard Suchet and the Avenue Raphael. I questioned M. Gagny's servants minutely. I took a week, in an automobile, to follow the same direction that M. Lacaze took in his machine. I stopped at every village and questioned right and left. I had hopes that I could find a peasant who had seen the light in his machine during his flight. But with all this work I've found nothing."

"And the file?"

"The file naturally has been the principal object of my researches. I put my best man on to that—the one you saw dressed as a workman. I sent him down there to live at Billancourt and Issy-les-Moulineaux. He's an energetic chap, and as sly as a fox. He soon got in touch with the eight

men whom M. Lacaze employed and wormed the information out of them individually. Well, each one told him how they employed their time on the night of the murder. He verified their alibis—every one. And there's nothing doing in that direction."

Mirande looked downcast.

"In a word, you got nothing?"

"Nothing whatever—except this. But I don't think it is of any importance. See!"

Nitaud stretched out his hand to one of the pigeonholes on his desk and took up a piece of glass upon which was a long dark stain.

"See here," he said, "this is something that was overlooked by the police. I found it in the dust in the basement of Gagny's house, just near the door that the murderer opened. This is a bit of the glass that he broke, and this dark stain is blood. Without the slightest doubt it comes from the cut that he got when putting his hand through the opening. I have been thinking over the matter. I don't see that we can learn anything from it, still I brought it along."

Gabriel seized the piece of glass and examined it under the full light from the electric lamp.

The blood of the murderer! What an irritating mystery! And what an advance if the blood corpuscle could present the special physiognomy of each individual—if anthropology were capable of classifying a person according to the composition and aspect of the blood, just as they are classified by the aid of skull measurements and finger prints. In truth, biology had already inaugurated this system. Already it differentiated between human blood and animal blood. But science did not go beyond this—still ignored the “sanguinary imprint.”

Mirande looked eagerly at the piece of glass, felt it, turned it over, invoked it, as though to draw a great secret from it.

“But this glass is yellow!” he said suddenly.

“Yes, the panels in the door were of yellow glass.”

“Yellow! Yellow!” repeated the savant in a voice like one inspired—a voice of triumph. “Yellow! Do you understand the word—the yellow fever? Would you believe it? I had not yet thought of it—I, a pupil of the great Brion!”

He jumped up from his chair. Nitaud looked at him in astonishment. His words were incomprehensible to the detective.

"But he had the fever!" cried the young savant excitedly. "If he was the one who killed the man, this fever is still there sleeping in this blood. If he is the murderer, we shall find it here. Ah, Brion—great, genial Brion!"

This time his incoherence was so apparent that the detective began to get alarmed. Without doubt his client had gone crazy. Probably this Lacaze affair had been knocking on a brain that was overtired with work, and had knocked it a bit too hard.

It was not the first time that a madman had come to sit in this chair, had told him words as strange as these.

"I do not quite follow you," said the detective prudently.

Mirande saw the detective stretch his hand out to the bell. He saw that Nitaud was ready to call for help. He quickly controlled his excitement.

"Do not be afraid, Nitaud," he hastened to say. "I assure you I am in my right senses. But I can quite understand your astonishment, for I forgot to tell you an important event in Lacaze's life."

Nitaud, partly reassured, turned with curiosity to listen to him.

"I forgot to tell you," he continued, "that my friend, during a recent aviation meet in South America, caught the yellow fever."

"Ah! I see. It is the color of this glass that brought that back to your mind?"

"Exactly."

"But I don't see what interest——"

"Capital interest, M. Nitaud. Capital! For my master, Professor Brion, who has just died——"

"Brion! Yes, I know he was a great savant."

"Well, Brion among other biological works has made a study of the yellow fever microbe."

"And this microbe can be found in blood?"

"Science denies it up to the present. It believes that, the disease once cured, the microbe disappears with the waste of the organism. But among other prodigious discoveries Brion has found the means of reviving—of bringing back to life, so to speak—this bacillus at the moment when it seems to be entirely destroyed."

"Splendid! That is grand!"

The detective struck his fist on the table to show his admiration. His eyes found their mobile intelligence. He pushed his cap to the back of his head with an air of triumph.

"So," continued Mirande, "if I do not find in this stain of blood a trace of yellow fever, Lacaze could not have been the murderer."

"Perfect! I understand," said Nitaud.

For some time the two men looked at the little piece of glass in silence. Then the savant said:

"There is one point upon which I should like to be informed. Do the police keep their criminal exhibits for any length of time after a case is concluded?"

"Why, certainly."

"So that if they have any other objects stained with blood——"

"You can experiment on them. Your experiments would then be of an official character."

"That is enough," said Mirande. "I'll take this piece of glass, then, and examine it. And thanks again for having found it, and for having brought it to my notice."

Nitaud gave him a small box filled with cotton in which Mirande carefully placed the precious object. Excited and hopeful, he held out his hand cordially to the detective, who shook it warmly.

Gabriel walked toward the boulevards. Jeanne had gone to visit some friends, so he decided to

seek distraction from his work and anxieties and go to the theater. The shop windows were being lit up. The sky was soft and calm, and the murmur of the crowd seemed to be cheering the success of the cause on which he had entered. Suddenly a hand touched him on the arm and a voice behind him cried cheerily:

“So it’s the gay life for you?”

“You—Major?”

It was the officer, his overcoat thrown back, displaying his white cravat. Evidently the major retained a good impression of that evening at Dorville, for at once he asked the savant: “Free tonight?”

“I am going home,” Mirande thought it prudent to say.

“No! no!” cried the major. “I am going to take you along with me. We will dine in the Bois, and afterward we’ll go and spend the evening at Lambrine’s.”

“Mlle. Lambrine? But I am not invited.”

“I am inviting you. You have been introduced to her. That is sufficient. She has promised us some antique dances; it seems they are rather

curious. And then I think that a little baccarat will help us along till daybreak."

"As you will."

Mirande understood now why the major was so insistent. His luck at cards had brought him this excessive good grace. Contemptible prestige! He was about to make more excuses when Delacoste interrupted him.

"Come now; you will meet some very interesting people. There are more Parisians in Paris just now than one would think. You do not know, then, that Lambrine receives the pick of the magistracy, of art and science and politics. It might be useful some day."

This time Mirande let himself be finally persuaded. But he preferred to be introduced into the actress's home only when he was under the influence of the serum. He would be able to manage it—the time to jump into a taxi, to reach the laboratory in the Rue Mechain, and give himself an injection of the serum and return. He would still be in time to dine with the major.

"I accept," he said; "but you must excuse me if I have to go home first."

"I am not going to let you do anything of the

kind," protested the officer; "you are just as likely not to return. No, no. I have you, and I'm not going to let go of you."

And, in truth, a quarter of an hour later Mirande was seated in the open air before a table covered with white damask, and where the delicate shades of flowers blended with the soft light from silken lamp-shades.

Delacoste, as a man accustomed to this sort of thing, took upon himself to give the order: *Compôte de ris-de-veau; perdreau rôti; camembert; peaches, and extra dry.*

Mirande looked a little bewildered at the sight of all this luxury around him. Inside the brilliantly lighted restaurant he caught a glimpse of magnificent gowns and jewels, and in the garden the foliage with the soft lights falling upon it took on a soft hue.

"So," remarked Delacoste, "you have never been to Lambrine's. You will see a real little palace. What taste—what *chic!* It's something superb."

He boasted of the beautiful woman's influence. Although not possessing real talent, she played leading rôles. Newspaper critics, knowing her prestige, were not sparing in their praise. At her

home the cabinet ministers could have held council, there were so many ministers there. Even royal guests, who were visiting Paris, honored her with a visit.

"The clever creature! All those whom she has honored with her affection still remain her friends. She brings them all together, and so tactfully that one scarcely recognizes the chosen one of the moment. For my part, I really could not say who has succeeded Castillan."

"Castillan! What Castillan?" cried Mirande.

"Why, the only Castillan, the unique Castillan, the most up-to-date of our physicians. What, didn't you know about that little intrigue?"

No, Mirande did not know. But what caused him so much emotion was not to learn of this liaison, but to know that he was going to meet Simone's husband.

It had so happened that in his studious life he had never met the doctor. He had heard him spoken of as a clever, brilliant man, with a charming personality, but he had never seen him.

For one moment he was tempted not to go to the reception. But why? He would probably have to meet him sooner or later. Castillan had already

written him a letter expressing his deep gratitude for the part that he had taken in his wife's astounding resurrection. He could not avoid him always. And perhaps it would be better for him to get it over and meet him when Simone was not there. So it was with a firm step that he walked into Mlle. Lambrine's home an hour later.

From the door, where a footman in correct livery was stationed, the rich style of the house was revealed. On the walls in the hall and on the staircase were hung rare pictures; a priceless marble statue served as a lamp-bearer. Oriental rugs covered the stairs. Two more footmen on the landing showed the way to the guests.

Everything showed the beautiful home created by an aristocratic, refined taste. The richness was stamped in the pattern of the antique furniture, in the rareness of the woods, the harmony of the drapings, the exquisite statues of marble and bronze, the priceless bric-à-brac in the cabinets and on the tables.

In the midst of this subdued splendor was a crowd of well-known men and lovely women.

Delacoste touched Mirande's arm.

"There! You have never seen Castillan. That

is he talking to Lambrine over there by the chimney."

Mirande looked eagerly in the same direction as Delacoste. At first he only saw the handsome profile of a man slightly inclined to be stout, and who was wearing a fancy waistcoat. Then when the man turned he noticed that he was about forty years of age, that he had fine lines at the corner of his dark eyes, hair brushed back, a pointed beard, dark and lustrous, and the warm coloring of an Oriental skin.

So that was Castillan! Simone's husband, her master! That was the man whom he had hated and cursed in secret. Mirande, whose heart was so full of indulgence and altruism, hated this man.

Meanwhile Lambrine was coming toward them, followed by her companion, Delacoste having bowed to him.

"I took the liberty of bringing my young friend, Gabriel Mirande, with me. You have already met him at Dorville," he said to his hostess.

She judged Mirande with a look and found him evidently much better dressed than at the Casino, and, while with the air of a queen she held out her hand to him, laden with jewels, she said to the major:

"You did quite right."

Upon hearing the stranger's name, Castillan could not suppress a slight cry of surprise. He begged Mlle. Lambrine to introduce him to the young savant. When this was done he quickly drew Mirande aside.

"I am delighted to meet you at last, M. Mirande," he said, "even though it be in a place other than my home. I cannot thank you sufficiently for your miraculous intervention in my life and that of my wife. My letter could not half express our gratitude. My wife wants to see you. Every day she scolds me for not having called upon you; but you can imagine what a Parisian doctor's life is—the busiest, the most bewildering existence!"

The voice was well modulated, the tone subdued but confident. Mirande was astonished to feel his hostility begin to melt.

"Has Mme. Castillan quite recovered?" he inquired.

"Not completely. But it is only a question of days and of care; besides, you can judge for yourself when you come to see us. We will speak of this miracle when we have more time. You must not fail us. Have I your promise, M. Mirande?"

"Certainly, Doctor."

Some new arrivals came up to shake hands with the physician. He apologized, leaving Mirande in a group of men who were discussing politics.

He pretended to listen to what they were saying, but he felt out of place; he felt lost. All seemed to bewilder him—the heavy perfumes, the murmur of voices, the profusion of lights.

"Ah, for my serum!" he thought.

If, for the few minutes while he was with these celebrated men and women, he could only possess a little of his penetrating thought and superiority. He was deprived of his ammunition; he felt weak, embarrassed and crushed. He had the impression of being smitten with a sort of infirmity, of a mental deafness. To be able to hear all these people without being able to divine their thoughts he felt the same confusion, the same difficulty as if he had seen them move their lips without hearing their words.

Soon his regrets and his bewilderment increased as he recognized the smooth face and the piercing eye of M. Dutoit, the prosecuting magistrate who had sent Lacaze on the long road to prison. This obstinate and vindictive judge—how he had despised

him at Lacaze's trial, and how he had trembled at his frown! Here was this enemy before him, holding out his hand, and his face wreathed with smiles.

"How do you do?" he exclaimed cordially. "Delighted to meet you again. We met before under circumstances that were so painful for you. I have not forgotten your devotion to your unfortunate friend. Ah! you had no luck in that affair."

"Unfortunately, no; everything seemed to be against my poor friend," said Mirande sadly.

But in spite of his words his manner was timid and his tone submissive. The judge was puffed up to feel that he still had the young savant in his power, just as he had held him there on the witness-stand, facing the searching light from the shadeless windows.

This man would have liked to have continued to play with his prey, but the fact that they had met in the same house and were now wearing the same dress diminished the distance, and forced him to remember that they were now on an equal footing.

"Suppose we go and take a glass of champagne," he said good-naturedly.

Mirande could scarcely drink. His throat seemed to close up; he thought that he would choke. He regretted with more bitterness than ever that he was without the magic power which slept down there in Brion's safe. What strength abandoned! Twenty drops of serum would have given him a prodigious brilliancy.

False compassion! Apparent civility! How he would have torn the veil from this hypocritical judge! How quickly he would have bared the brain of this pompous little man with the smooth face and have guessed the motives of his severity, his weaknesses and his faults! What a revenge!

At this moment Castillan came back.

"What! you know one another, you two?" he said gaily.

"Old acquaintances," replied the judge, smiling indulgently.

"Ah, that's true! I forgot." ,

For a moment the three men looked at each other with half-veiled emotion—triumph, suspicion, fear, greed. For a moment Mirande sensed the future dimly. He was the weak one now, but in the faces of the men in front of him he read his own sure victory.

CHAPTER VI

A CONFRONTATION

Jeanne threw the long windows of the fifth floor wide open and leaned out on the iron railing. She was waiting for her brother. Under the sunshine which crowned the recent shower the pavement shone like silver. The people who had taken shelter under the doorways held out their hands to see if the last drops had fallen before going on their way again.

Jeanne looked down upon the street with glad eyes. She was happy this morning. She had again found an interest in life because Gabriel had brought her a little piece of glass and had told her what important testimony he was going to draw from it—how he intended to show that in the congealed blood on the bit of glass the yellow-fever microbe was absent, and that, according to Brion's methods, it should have been found there, if Lacaze—who once had had the fever—had committed the crime.

Never had her brother's science held such prestige

in her eyes. The object-glass of the microscope suddenly acquired a divine power.

At last, the proof! the blessed proof! the liberating proof! Gabriel would bring it to her in a moment when he returned from the laboratory, where he had gone this morning so full of hope and confidence.

Why was he so late in coming? He had promised to take a taxi, so that he would be back to her sooner. Perhaps he had called first at the Palais de Justice. She looked up and down the street.

Certainly he would bring her the proof of Henri's innocence. Poor Henri—how she loved him, still more now since he had had this terrible blow! To make the time pass more quickly she ran back to her room and looked at his photograph. It was a good likeness—his eager expression, his intelligent and loyal look, the haughty poise of his head, his way of folding his arms. How could the judges have thought for a moment that he was guilty? Such an honest, such a sincere face! She was just going back to the balcony when the door opened, and her brother came in.

"Well?" she cried excitedly. But suddenly she turned cold with fear. Gabriel's strained look, his

drawn features spoke more eloquently than words.

"Speak!" she implored.

He did not reply. He dropped into a chair as though prostrated. She went up to him and shook him roughly.

"Speak! Tell me! I have the right to know. What have you found?"

"The proof."

"Of what?"

"That he is guilty. The blood has been analyzed and it contains——"

"No! no! It is not possible!" she cried.

"It is so," replied her brother in a dull voice.

Then, casting aside his dejection and in a hurry to tell her all, he said:

"Poor Jeanne, I wish I were mistaken. I have consulted all my colleagues. I took them, one after the other, before my microscope, and I asked them, 'What is this bacillus?' and each one gave the same reply, 'Yellow fever.' This is the last stroke. Now all we can do is to keep silent."

Jeanne shuddered.

"I will not be silent," she said defiantly; "on the contrary I will cry out louder than ever that this is another error."

With a weary gesture he blamed her this time for her obstinacy. To revolt against the judgment of men—very well. But the testimony of science was irrefutable. Yet, seeing her still so fervent, so passionately blind, he softened.

“Believe me,” he said, “I hoped for all, like you. Like you, I have fought all. But it is useless now. One cannot struggle against this evidence. We must bow to it, Jeanne. Think, if you wish, that Henri had a moment of madness. Think, if you wish, Jeanne, that he had just motives to hate Gagny, that he struck a miserable miser who was not worthy to live. Tell yourself that perhaps his love for you drove him to that crime; that perhaps it was for you, to make you happy, that he wanted to come quickly into his inheritance, to escape bankruptcy. Yes, find any excuse, but do not hide the truth from yourself any longer, my poor little sister.”

Jeanne shook her head resolutely. With dry eyes and a sneer on her lips she clasped her hands.

“It is you—you, who speak to me like this—you who have stood by me and proclaimed his innocence? You believe that he is guilty? Then I ask you to reflect that in deserting him you are losing

me. And shall I tell you what I think? You are a coward! You are as submissive to mere suggestions as the jurymen. Like them, you refuse to see that a terrible chain of circumstances can bind innocence!"

"Circumstances, Jeanne?"

"Mere circumstances! I believe it! Keep your conviction, but do not try to shake mine. Think for a moment. Ask yourself why Henri is more guilty to-day than he was yesterday. Is this analysis a more irrefutable evidence than the others. It is evidence of another coincidence, of the tenacity of fate. What does it prove? That the murderer had had yellow fever—that is all.

"Is Henri the only man in Paris who has had yellow fever? There are soldiers and sailors enough. Then why Henri? Stand beside him and beside me!"

Mirande shook a gloomy head.

"I know, I know. But think! This new circumstance adds to so many others."

Then, feeling that she was to stand alone, she cried out in her hopelessness: "Oh! why can't you share my confidence?"

Suddenly Mirande had an inspiration. Why

hadn't he thought of it before, since the analysis of this blood had made him doubt? The confidence—the sure knowledge——

He could have it! he could have the absolute certitude, thanks to Brion's prodigious heritage. He would see Lacaze. He would read in his brain the confession of the crime, or the assertion of innocence. He could not hesitate. The serum would tear away the last veil. The truth would appear. He did not even dispute the arbitrary means that he was about to employ—the desecration of a love; the probing of a heart. No, he must know. He must finish with this odious uncertainty.

Impatient to act and forced to hide from his sister his decision, he said as he took her hands: "Yes, yes, you are right, little Jeanne. I must stand beside you. As long as there is no absolute proof that he is guilty I must remain faithful to my first convictions. I must search for the proof. Forgive me and believe in me again."

Her tears thanked him. But already he was on his way out. He wanted to get to Lacaze, whom he had not seen since the trial. He would get his friend Doistreau to help him. It was scarcely eleven o'clock. He would find him at home.

Mirande was almost afraid to take this new step for fear of the result. Yet all the same, if there were only one favorable chance in a thousand he ought to seize it. Perhaps Lacaze had been overwhelmed by a relentless fate.

As he went down the Rue Monge he remembered a gambler whom he had noticed at Dorville before leaving the baccarat-room. It was one of those poor wretches—a parasite of society—who draw their fear of the morrow into the pleasure resorts and wait and watch for the fortune at cards, like the bandit who watches in ambuscade. His despairing eyes that evening told his terrible intentions. He lost again and again. With what trembling hands and haggard face he gave up his last piece of gold.

Then, at this supreme moment of temptation, Fate turned. He won. In a quarter of an hour he was doubling, tripling and quadrupling his winnings with a joy that equaled his despair. What resurrection for him! What exultant joy in throwing down on the table his handfuls of gold! And what triumph when he tore himself away so that he should not lose what he had won and went into a corner of the room and there, panting like a wild

beast with its prey, smoothed out the crumpled notes and made piles of the gold and the ivory chips! That is Fate! And Fate, after having crushed Lacaze, might now, even now, suddenly turn again. The bitter cup that the one man drinks for thousands of others in the obscure distribution of rights and wrongs might suddenly be dashed from him, and Fate again change the dregs into a generous liquor.

Mirande had arrived at the Place Maubert. With a quick glance he looked round to make sure that he was not observed. Then he walked along by the market building to a taxi that was waiting. The chauffeur nodded to him. It was a public cab, but Mirande had hired it so as to have it always at his disposal. But he could not let Jeanne know without telling her how he had acquired his little fortune. He gave the chauffeur Doisteau's address.

When he arrived at the house the surgeon was just getting out of his carriage. He had been on duty at the hospital and had just returned, weary but satisfied.

"Ah, my friend," he exclaimed, "what a morning I have had! Three stomachs, a breast, a shoulder and a knee. I'm fagged out, but happy."

"And why this joy?"

Doisteau held up before his friend's eyes a vial which contained some liquid and a piece of tissue. The surgeon held it reverently as though it were a sacred vase.

"Look," he said, "fifty centimeters of an apache."

"An apache!"

"Yes, all the same there are some amusing things in our profession. The dance of death turns sometimes to vaudeville. Just imagine, they brought me just now one of those filthy loafers who live on alcohol and crime. He had been in a pretty stiff fight—a question of honor, so it appears, and he'd got a magnificent stab in the abdomen. He was dying from it. I might say he was already dead—cold, bloodless. The pulse stopped, he was a corpse! Anyone else would have sent him to the morgue. But you know my theory. I think doctors give up too quickly; just because a body has every appearance of death, it is not to say that life is extinct. A little skill can bring life back to the right channel. The human body has oil like an auto. Well, I made them bring this supposed corpse onto the operating table, and I did the neatest bit of work I've ever done in my life. My corpse——"

"Is alive?"

"Is alive." The surgeon laughed, but Mirande, absorbed in his plan, remained thoughtful.

"Doisteau, I want you to help me," he said.

"Anything you like."

"See here, you are the prison surgeon. Can you get me into the Santé?"

"It is against the rules," he said. "What do you want to do in that hole?"

"I want to see Lacaze. You know that he is ill. His journey has had to be postponed."

"Yes, I know. I have noticed him on several occasions, poor fellow."

The surgeon pulled his mustache. He was perplexed.

"I would prefer that you had asked me anything else," he said; "but for a friend—a friend like you. Listen, you have nerve. Just at this moment I am replacing one of the doctors, if you promise me not to compromise me I will pass you through as my assistant."

As soon as his sister Jeanne had left the house the next morning Mirande looked at his watch. The serum took one hour to act. He just had the

time. At a quarter past eight he took the needle out of the case and very gravely proceeded to sterilize it in an alcohol flame. Then, breaking the point of a glass container, he filled his needle and pushed it into his flesh.

In the emotion of his first test at Dorville on the seashore he had not studied the physiological reaction of the serum on himself. This time he intended to watch its course minute by minute. He was surprised not to feel any symptoms whatever—no forerunner, not a wave on the brain, nothing. Had he made a mistake? No, there was no error there. Besides Brion's note-book, which he had consulted so many times, did not indicate any preliminary troubles. The time would pass quicker if he occupied his thoughts. He thought of his old master. He saw again the venerable face now livid with the approach of death. He heard his last words, shattered by paralysis. There, again, was some mystery. Had Brion hurried his end by the abuse of the serum? Did it act on the system in an injurious manner?

As the hands of his watch pointed to nine o'clock a shudder ran over him; he was dazed as though with an attack of vertigo. A light perspiration

came out on his forehead. Then he felt a powerful need of action—a great desire to communicate with another. A thousand energies animated him, lifted him up. To employ them he arranged and disarranged the papers on his desk. He wrote down feverishly a chemical formula which he had been trying to remember for some months, and which came to him suddenly.

He watched the hands pointing to the hour more impatiently still.

“Quarter past nine. At last!”

He got up. But at this moment he perceived some odd thoughts. At the same time he heard voices in the hall. The cerebral language and the language spoken were so directly mingled—expressive, both, of the same just indignation—that he was unable to separate them.

He was going to see what it was all about when Francette knocked at the door and, as she always did, burst in without waiting.

“What do you think?” she cried breathlessly with flashing eyes. “What do you think, that animal won’t leave anything unless he’s paid for it?”

“What animal, Francette?”

“That coal dealer. *Pardi!* *Mam’zelle* went out

without leaving me any money, and he says he's going to take his old coke back if we don't pay for it. Have we ever owed him a cent? We're not Rothschild, for sure; but all the same we're not rogues."

"Well, why didn't you advance it out of your own money? You have done that many times before."

For a moment Francette was silent. Her mutinous nose tilted a little bit more; her mouth half opened. But Mirande received the message of her thoughts.

"Ah, little master, if I could pay again I would, but I can't. All my money has gone. Nothing left, not a cent. Ah, my poor savings—all blown in on your housekeeping! When you got short I had to, and *man'zelle* was so worried she didn't know what was spent. It was for her, Lacaze, but more'n them all, for you, little master, because you're so kind, and so handsome, and I'm crazy over you—just gone crazy over you!"

But she recovered herself and said aloud as though the thought had just struck her.

"Why, that's true! Sure, I might have paid, but I never thought of it!"

A touching falsehood! Mirande received this

secret confession of love and generous devotion full in the heart. For a moment he felt as though he would like to take Francette's freckled face in his hands and kiss her upon the forehead. Poor little Francette! At least he could recompense her for her kindness to them. He took out his pocketbook.

"Hold out your hand, my brave Francette," he said.

He slipped a large blue note into her little rough hand.

"There, Francette," he said; "pay the coal dealer and keep the rest for yourself."

"For me! Not for me?" she cried in astonishment.

Then to herself: "He's gone off his head. This isn't possible. My little boss is off his head, sure enough."

She pushed back his gift, but Mirande forced it into her hands again and hurried away so as not to have it returned.

Still touched by this naïve homage, he went down the stairs, when the rustling of a dress attracted his attention.

He looked over the banisters and saw Jeanne just below. So he was going to learn his sister's

thoughts also. He knew her purity, her moral beauty; yet if some shadow appeared on this whiteness, some trivial trait on the immaculate page! A base thought. But the desecration would be still more base. No, let the veil of illusion continue to shroud their love. But through fear, almost as much as through respect, he stepped back and hid himself in a dark recess.

Instinctively he would have stopped up his ears if he had not been convinced that he would still remain sensitive to immaterial waves of thought. Alas! The recess did not take him far enough away. Scarcely two yards separated him from his sister when she passed him without seeing him. He could not escape from the current of her thoughts.

But what happiness! Dear Jeanne! Her thoughts were full of grief. At this moment, as always, she was thinking of her lover. She was thinking how she would go into exile with Henri far away in Guiana. He was innocent, but this disgrace had come upon him, and she would share his disgrace. She would bid him have patience, she would comfort him, and the truth would all come out in the end.

Ah, all hearts were not base and selfish! There were Jeannes and Francettes everywhere.

His sister passed.

Mirande hurried down the stairs, for he was late. He reached his taxi which was always stationed at the Place Maubert. He told the chauffeur to drive to the Santé prison.

The chauffeur was inwardly swearing at his motor. Mirande caught his thoughts. And at times when the machine grazed a passer-by he received the flight of other thoughts like the quick rustling that one hears in an automobile as it spins past each tree on the road.

Doisteau was waiting before the prison door.

"I am late."

"A little, but never mind," he said politely.

But inwardly he was annoyed at having to wait when he had so much to do. Mirande apologized for keeping him waiting.

"Follow me," said the surgeon.

"You are going to follow me," was what he thought with some apprehension. "We are both scoffing at the prison rules. Now I wonder what you have got so particular to say to your friend Lacaze? And I wonder if you really believe that

he is innocent? Are you not defending him so energetically more to save your own honor in the eyes of others? Perhaps you think that you can help him to escape. Perhaps you have a false beard for him in your pocket, or a revolver. You know, although I think a great deal of you, you mustn't play any tricks—no tricks, mind."

Now they had passed the heavy door where some soldiers stood yawning. They crossed a little courtyard surrounded with a high wall and went into a wide corridor with winding passages and stairways. Then in the middle of a large hall they came to a glass office on a raised platform. It commanded a full view of the passages upon which the cells opened.

A warden touched his hat to the surgeon. Doisteau gave a signature and introduced Mirande as his assistant. Then Doisteau and his friend went down one of the cold, bare passages with doors on either side. The surgeon, in passing the keeper who was watching this row of cells, said:

"This gentleman is going to examine the prisoner Lacaze." Then to Mirande: "I will come back for you when I have finished my visits."

Doisteau went on his way and while the warden

opened the door with a great fracas of keys Mirande fought with his last scruples. He was going to read the conscience of his friend, who, without defence, was delivered up to him. But the warden had opened the door and left him. He entered the cell. Then a great wave of pity swept over him.

Henri Lacaze was stretched out on his miserable pallet. He was asleep—the heavy sleep that at last succeeds a night of fever. The bedclothes were thrown aside, only a sheet covered his body. The shirt, which enveloped him like a shroud, showed the thinness of his body. And what a drawn face behind the long, unkempt beard! What moral torture was stamped on his wasted features! If his friend were guilty, his suffering, his anguish, had already paid the full penalty of his crime.

He slept. Mirande knew that his sleep was without dreams. He slept, sunk down to nothingness. If he could only leave him so and let him forget for a time. But it was impossible.

“Henri! Henri!” he called.

The condemned man started and rubbed his eyes.

“Gabriel! You!” he exclaimed, stupefied.

At the same time the brain awoke. Mirande per-

ceived the slow grouping together of his ideas. At first the prisoner thought that he was dreaming.

"Yes, it is I—really I," he said to convince him at once. "I wanted to come and see you, and I had to resort to a trick to get in here. Doisteau helped me."

"Ah, Doisteau? I have seen him several times. He is not very nice. He pretends not to recognize me, although I met him several times at your laboratory."

"You must pardon him."

"There are too many people whom I must pardon," said Lacaze fiercely.

His anger was only a flash. Already the sick man's thoughts had flown to his sweetheart with such intensity that it drove all other thoughts away."

"And Jeanne?" he asked brokenly.

"Jeanne is very worried about you, naturally."

Lacaze misunderstood. He thought it was on account of his health that Jeanne was worried.

"Poor little girl," he said, "it is true I am not in very good shape, but tell her that you found me in much better health, all the same."

"I cannot tell her that, Henri, for she does not

know that I am here. She must not know. I do not wish you to mention it in your letters."

"Why?"

"Why," said Mirande hesitatingly, "because I don't want her to be sorry that I did not bring her."

His embarrassment increased. He hunted for his phrases. He scarcely knew what to say so as to bring together the ideas that were necessary for his investigation—what to say to call forth the thoughts that would bring him the confession of the murderer or the cry of the innocent.

A direct questioning would have been brutal—above all at this moment, when he was carried away by his memories. His thoughts flew so rapidly that Mirande could scarcely follow. He thought of the happy hours that he had spent with Jeanne in the little apartment in the Rue Monge, and soon he was thinking of a flight in the blue sky on the tremulous wings of his aëroplane.

Ah, now! if he could recall that journey that he had taken on the night of the murder, when he had cut his wrist with the wire. But not once did he think of that night. He almost seemed to be afraid to do so, so far did he keep it from his thoughts.

"I should so like to have seen Jeanne," he said aloud, "to have thanked her. Her letter—ah, those letters! They are so tender and so touching. She seemed determined to join me in Guiana, but I could not let her. There would be too many hardships for her. It would be a terrible life for her to bear."

Now, surely, this time he was coming to the tragedy, and he would yield up his secret thoughts. But, no! It seemed that he ignored it, or that he resigned himself to the decree of the law.

But perhaps, Lacaze, worn out with sickness, did not think there was any need to assert his innocence. Perhaps he thought that his friends knew he was not guilty. Their eagerness to defend him at the time of the trial was sufficient evidence.

And the condemned man continued to avoid talking of the crime. He spoke of his health, of his feverish nights, of the small incidents of prison life, with a frankness that Mirande criticized word by word. He hid nothing. He faithfully interpreted his thoughts. So well that Mirande, in his turn, drew back before the brutality of a direct interrogation. He got farther away from his object. He inquired about his diet, about his wardens;

then, without speaking of the serum, he told him of Brion's death, and the resurrection of Simone Castillan, and that he had met the doctor at Mlle. Cambrine's home.

Suddenly an inspiration came to him.

"And whom do you think I met there?" he said.

"I don't know."

"Dutoit. Judge Dutoit."

"Dutoit! The wretch! The despicable individual! If ever I get hold of that man——"

With an energy that one would not have thought he possessed, the prisoner sprang up on his pallet, his rage in his eyes. All his hatred came into his face, and was stamped on his hollow cheeks like two spots of fire. What an outburst of revolt! What fiery indignation! All that words could not express, the thoughts cried out with an eloquence, with an irresistible force. Ah, what a brilliant defence this was! And Mirande gathered these mute assertions with so much eagerness, remorse, and joy that he could scarcely trust himself to speak.

"Poor, poor old chap! Poor old Lacaze, if you could only know how I feel for you! If you knew how much Jeanne and I think of you. But there,

we will have our revenge on Dutoit. We will pull you out of this."

This sudden emotion, after the cold, calm manner in which his friend had greeted him, astonished Lacaze.

But there was no time for either to say more. Doisteau had appeared at the door.

"Ah, all goes well," said the surgeon to himself. "No! He didn't bring a false beard, nor a gag, nor a revolver."

CHAPTER VII

"THOU ART THE MAN"

"Lacaze is innocent! He is innocent!"

With light step and joyful heart, Mirande repeated the words as he walked along the outer boulevards. Upon leaving the prison he had come far away from the busy section, so as to escape the confusion of foreign thoughts, because he was still so much under the influence of the serum.

Thus all the judges in the world were as one in this inexplicable enigma. Never had they been able to tell if the accused, who protests his innocence, is sincere or a liar. Never could they discover the truth which operates in his brain. But he, Mirande, had the supreme proof.

He regretted again that he could not tell Jeanne his secret, but he intended to let her know, without betraying himself, that now he was as convinced of Henri's innocence as she was.

And with what new strength he would drag La-

caze from his prison and proclaim his innocence! A plan began to work out in his mind.

He would go and see Favery, the publisher of the *Lumière*. This time he would see him personally. How warmly he would plead his cause! He would show him what advantage it would be for his newspaper to open a campaign of which the issue was so certain. Favery would be the first to denounce a judicial error. Little by little the public conscience would awaken, and people who had been silent through prudence would perhaps now speak. The generous-minded, incensed by the wrong that had been done, would take up the affair. The law itself, if it were only to defend its doings, would bring forth its proof, and in that way betray its weakness. Mirande would try to make things easier for the prisoner until the revision of his trial.

But suddenly he stopped. To have a new trial, he would be obliged to produce new facts, or point out the real murderer. In his joy of knowing that Lacaze was innocent, he forgot the crime itself and its perpetrator. In spite of all his new power, would this divinatory faculty ever be able to find the assassin?

When he returned home he found a letter on his desk. He opened it, and read the signature of Simone Castillan. He read the note eagerly. She was still weak, but she was receiving a few friends the next day for tea, to celebrate her convalescence. She counted upon him—the one who had saved her must surely be there. She was so sorry that she had not yet had the opportunity to express her gratitude to him. Her husband insisted that he should come and see them.

Mirande threw the note on the table. His first intention was to refuse. He wanted to keep away from her. But perhaps, if he avoided her after all that had happened, they might begin to suspect something. How would Simone explain his conduct to her husband? That she had not seen her old friend since her marriage Castillan had no reason to disbelieve. But he would be astonished if he did not come to see them after bringing her back from the dead. This strange aloofness would awaken the doctor's suspicions, and he would guess of his love for his wife. He was trying to live it down, and he had not the right to let her husband guess it.

Then, suddenly, the temptation came to him to

learn what Simone's thoughts were. A few days before he would have repulsed such an idea. He would have obeyed the same sentiment that had forced him to step back into the darkest corner of the staircase when Jeanne passed him. But it was precisely because he had kept of this mental apparition such an impression of whiteness and purity and splendor, and it had brought him such comfort that he was anxious to plunge again into these lustral waves. Even the humble confession of the servant—this cry that he had involuntarily caught from poor Francette's heart—incited him to further attempt.

With boyish egoism and callousness, of which he was duly conscious, he only retained of this avowal the certitude of being able to inspire love. His timidity and his want of confidence in himself were weakening. But he was not thinking of making love to the doctor's wife, nor of trying to turn her from the right path. Deceit and dishonor were repugnant to his nature.

He only wanted to learn what were her thoughts of him—to know if she still kept the great friendship for him that she had had when they were children. And he wanted to make sure that she

was happy; that she had nothing to complain of in her married life.

His heart beat quickly as he entered her drawing room, so intense was his desire to see her again. He was not yet under the influence of the serum. Now that he knew the exact effects, he had arranged that they should be manifested at the end of an hour.

As yet only three-quarters of an hour had passed since he had pierced his flesh, so that at the beginning of his call he was not disturbed by the rustling of foreign thoughts. He congratulated himself that he had taken this precaution, for, when he entered the room, it was like entering a cage of magpies. Several women were gathered around Simone, and all talking at the same time. Dazed already by this excited chatter, he would have lost his head completely if, in addition, he had had to listen to their interior voices.

Simone was nestling in an armchair by the fireplace. Her face lit up when she saw him. She held out her hand to him. "Ah, this is good of you!" she said softly.

Then she resumed her conversation with her women friends, and he was able to watch her at

his will. She had now almost recovered from her terrible experience; she only seemed a little languid; but this was in keeping with her natural charm. She was alive—and all his love that he hoped he had stifled surged up again. She was alive, but she belonged to another. She would never be his. The irony of fate willed that she should always remain to him but a distant idol—the unattainable.

The conversation turned upon theaters and fashions and the usual topics that one hears at this sort of "at home." And then Mme. Castillan told her friends that her maid, who was so clever, had left her. And then, of course, all the women condoled with her. It was so hard to keep a good servant. And the bad ones had such pretensions that soon one would not be able to get any help at all.

Mirande scarcely listened. He was afraid he would not be able to exercise his power over Simone in the midst of this buzzing of voices. Already, when with Lacaze, he had experienced the difficulty of leading the thought of his subject into a chosen direction, then to prevail upon it, and to formulate this thought in words. How could he draw Simone down into her own self, and make

her give up her thoughts upon herself, and think of her own life in the midst of these magpies?

He began to get anxious for the hour. For the first time he looked round the large drawing-room, where the soft lights from the shaded lamps fell on rare furniture, beautiful tapestries, and antique curios. It all might have come from a museum.

At last he discovered a Louis XV clock hanging on the wall near the chimney. Past six o'clock! The truce was ended, and the women's chatter had not ceased. Resigned, he waited with his eyes fixed on the carpet.

Then, little by little, the light babble around him was doubled. He heard another concert of voices almost as frivolous and as noisy. Thoughts of admiration and envy for the furniture and the arrangement of the room; thoughts about the refreshments, a wish to take another sandwich, sharp criticism on the dresses and the manners of each one, anxiety to appear more elegant and prettier than the others.

In the swarm Mirande caught some thoughts about himself. Some were piqued because he was so silent. Others did not admire his tie, but they liked his hair and his smart, slender shoes. But

with each one there was one thought which dominated all others—the desire to end the visit and be gone. Some were afraid they would not have time to make all the calls they had intended; others had an appointment with the milliner or the dressmaker; others were simply glad that they had paid their call and now wanted to go.

Mirande, worn out by this interior verbiage, wondered in his turn: “Why in the world, if they are in such a hurry to go, don’t they go?”

Then, fortunately, the door-bell rang, and first one and then the other took this opportunity to say good-by. They took leave of their hostess with many gushing words and regrets, a quavering of the voice, while all the time the wish to be gone was uppermost.

As they passed out of the room, a man came in. Mirande recognized him at once. It was Quatrefin, a financier who operated big industrial deals and was also interested in aviation. He was an up-to-date, well-proportioned man with a frank look and a straight-forward manner. He was highly respected in the business world. He had been convinced of Henri Lacaze’s innocence, and had testified in his favor at the trial. In his testimony he

had stated that, at the moment of the aviator's arrest, he was on the point of loaning him a large sum of money.

Mirande had been grateful for all that he had said for his friend, and after the trial he had expressed his gratitude to him.

Quatrefin gallantly kissed Simone's hand and congratulated her on her recovery.

"I ordered a few flowers as I passed the florist's," he said lightly, "to celebrate your convalescence, *madame.*"

Suddenly Mirande perceived that the financier's thoughts also surpassed his words. He felt more pleasure than he showed to see Mme. Castellan again. She interested him. She attracted him far more than he let it appear.

Mirande felt a sharp pang of jealousy. Then his common sense told him that a beautiful woman like Simone could not go through life without inspiring passion and admiration. But Simone—did she know how much this man cared for her? Forgetting to be prudent, and ignoring her visitors, he looked at her fixedly. He sighed. She was quite cool and indifferent. She thought of Quatrefin simply as her husband's friend.

"Have you seen my husband?" she asked him.

Quatrefin was secretly annoyed at her indifference.

"We came together," he replied. "He will be here in a moment."

He shook hands warmly with Mirande. "I'm glad to see you again," he said.

He meant it. But, at the same time, he wondered why the young savant was at the Castellans'. He was surprised to find such a change in him since the trial. He was well dressed and his manner was now more assured.

Castillan came in. The last woman took this opportunity to leave.

"What! You are running away just as I come?" said the doctor in a disappointed tone, although he was quite indifferent to the woman.

"No, no," she answered; "but I am dining out to-night."

She did not say that first of all she had to go to her hairdresser to have her golden hair touched up, because the natural color was beginning to show again on the temples.

"Well, and that poor Lacaze! Is he really going

to the colonies?" inquired Quatrefin. "You haven't found out anything yet?"

Mirande was obliged to keep silent concerning his researches.

"Nothing," he replied. But again he defended his friend warmly. In his earnestness, he became excited; he assured them that in the end he would find the real murderer. He watched their faces to see if his words had convinced them. Then, suddenly, he caught a piercing thought like a burst of jeering laughter.

"Ah! *Sherlock*, you'll be very clever if you find out who the murderer is!"

Castillan! Only Castillan could scoff like that!

The doctor knew something, then? Mirande fixed him with his eyes and concentrated all his thoughts on him. He wanted to force him to think of the crime.

"And you, doctor; you were related to the victim. Have you no clues?"

"Oh, no," the physician replied carelessly; "the affair is ended now. Since Lacaze was sentenced I have not occupied myself about it."

And mockingly he added to himself: "Besides,

it would be quite useless. I myself would be unable to find the poor devil who did the deed!"

He knew! He knew the murderer! Was it possible?

Mirande wanted to jump at his throat and throw the words in his face: "I have read you! I have heard you! Speak! Say who was the murderer! Speak at once."

But no; Brion was right. They would take him for a madman. They would lock him up in an asylum. He must be always on his guard and not betray himself. The physician was turning his mind from the tragedy. With an effort Mirande brought him back to speak of the crime.

"I cannot rid myself of the idea that it was a professional who committed that murder," affirmed Mirande.

"You think so?" replied the doctor skeptically.

Then came the lower voice: "Ah! and if you knew, honest Mirande, what professional! I see him now as they brought him to me at the hospital—his great body wasted by a malady of the liver, a repercussion of the yellow fever. I can hear his rough, hoarse voice. Ah, but what a beautiful cure that was! And what gratitude he showed—this

wild creature, this apache, this ravager of the Seine. He was ready to get rid of one who was in my way. A life! He offered me a life as one offers a statue to a physician! How many times have I seen him standing at the hospital door watching for me to come out, dogging me, and tempting me. Lord! the opportunity was too good to let slip.

“Like a bloodhound he had almost scented the track upon which I was going to throw him. A hint—two hints sufficed: the thing to be done, and the name of the one to be suspected. There was no time to lose; the money had to be got.”

Then, suddenly, the thought changed its course, on a word from Quatrefin. The financier attributed the murder of old Gagny to vengeance. Castellan took his friend by the shoulders and shook him familiarly.

“Quatrefin! Quatrefin, my friend,” he cried, laughing, “for Heaven’s sake, let’s leave that affair alone now. You know that here in France we are stricken with the judicial-error malady.”

Mirande had received the mute confession like one receives a bullet in the head. It had penetrated him with such rapidity that he staggered. His hand

grasped the back of a chair to prevent him from falling. Then he drew himself up stiffly. It was Castillan who had instigated the crime and turned the suspicion on Lacaze.

Castillan! Simone's husband! How difficult it was to remain calm under this terrible revelation—as calm as though he had not learned it.

But the name—the name of the murderer! He must know it so as to be able to proclaim the truth to the world. For he could not tell in what manner he had discovered it. They would not believe him. At any price, he must get this name from Castillan. He tried to control his voice.

"Yet, doctor, if the police found a murderer, if a man came forward and confessed?"

"Well, then, in that case," answered the doctor, "I should have to bow to it."

"But," he thought, "that would not hurt me. This man will never betray me. Those brutes have a special sort of honor. If they are wounded in a brawl with their companions they obstinately refuse to tell which one struck them. This ruffian, when he said he would get the old man out of my way, said that he would never tell. And he will keep his word. And, besides, it is to his interest to do so.

Once taken, he is lost forever, with or without an accomplice. If I am free and unsuspected, I can save him from the guillotine. If I were at his side, I could not help him. But what good are these chimeras? This man has sunk down again into the lowest life. They will never discover him there. I myself could not find him if I wished to do so. At the hospital he refused to let his identity be known. I don't even know his name. He was just a number—the number of his bed."

Mirande was in despair. He could get nothing more from this villain. He was sure of Lacaze's innocence and sure of Castillan's guilt; yet he was unable to prove it. For he was obliged to keep his secret.

But he would watch Castillan, and perhaps soon he would learn more about his accomplice. He was on the trail now.

He was overwhelmed by his discovery. He wanted to get away from the murmur of other thoughts, to breathe the air outside. He held out his hand to Simone.

"Already?" she asked. "It has given me such pleasure to see you. You'll come again, won't you?"

Only a few words, but they touched Mirande deeply, for they were the echo of her thoughts.

Better still, they accorded with them like the refrain and the words of a perfect song. What harmony! A song from the heart!

Mirande listened to it for the first time, and for the moment he forgot the lying voice, the terrible discovery, and this sink of blood that was hidden behind the forehead of Simone's husband.

CHAPTER VIII

FRANCETTE HELPS THE CAUSE

This monstrous thing was possible, it was certain! Castillan had instigated a murderer. This fashionable, courted doctor was an assassin. And what an assassin! The most cowardly, the most vile. He had not even had the nerve to strike the blow himself. He had used the gratitude of a brute.

That one of these outcasts, one of these vagrants of the social organism should lie in wait for his prey and pounce upon it was abominable. But at least he knew what it was to suffer. He had been hungry. He had envied others their happiness. There had been no conscience to turn him from the wrong. In his narrow brain he considered that he had a right to pleasure and riches. Crime is less unjust from these who trample down injustice.

But Castillan, a man whose life was crowned with power, with success, with money—Castillan, a murderer! Castillan unpunished!—was this not the

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most revolting defiance thrown in the face of society?

In the street, after having left the doctor's home, Mirande gave vent to his indignation. Fate, that had already given him this man as a rival, now pointed him out to be punished for a crime. This same hand, which had led Simone to the altar, pointed the finger at the murderer and had sent Lacaze to a cell.

His anger increased. His hatred surged up within him. He felt that it might make him act rashly. His contempt and disgust spread out upon all humanity. He drew away from the passers-by, so that he should not catch, at each contact, some base thought. But soon the sharp, cold air outside calmed him somewhat. He tried to group together the facts that he had learned.

Castillan, so as to get all of Gagny's money, had had the old man murdered with such cunning that the suspicions of the police had fallen at once upon the other heir, Henri Lacaze. And the man whom Castillan had employed to do the crime was a grateful thug whom he had attended while on duty at the hospital, for an illness caused through a previous attack of yellow fever. A nameless thug! Cas-

tillan himself did not even know the man's name and had lost all trace of him.

Like a mighty lord he had prescribed the act to an underling, and had not concerned himself about the matter afterward. How the murderer had studied the house in the Avenue Raphael, how he had procured a file marked with Lacaze's initials, and how he had profited by the day when the old man and his young cousin had had a violent quarrel, and how he had managed to avoid the police—all this Castillan did not know.

Much remained a mystery to Mirande, but he was now on the right track. Would this grateful thug ever appear before his master? Castillan had faith in his discretion, in his special kind of honor; but, perhaps in a moment of want, of hunger, he would come back and threaten him and blackmail him. How would he be able to find out if the criminal returned? How could he put a close enough watch upon the physician so as to know at once if the man returned? He felt the necessity for an active watch. He must protect Simone also. He knew the man, and he knew now that he was capable of any cruelty.

If his subtle intelligence warned him that he was

suspected, he would try to escape—now that he had the money. Whom could he employ to watch him? It was a delicate task. For a moment Mirande thought of Nitaud. At their first interview the detective had wanted to begin his investigations in that quarter. Would he be willing to do so now? And, if so, how could he explain what had given rise to his suspicions. Then Mirande admitted the truth to himself. He disliked the thought of placing one of those men whom he had seen in Nitaud's office near Simone, the woman he loved.

When he arrived at his apartment he was still hesitating what course he should take. Francette was bustling round her kitchen, and at the same time holding a conversation with Jeanne, who was occupied in her room.

"*Mam'zelle,*" she called out, "d'ye know what I'd do if I were in your place?"

"No, what would you?"

"I wouldn't fuss any more about the law, seeing how indifferent it is."

"Well?"

"Well, I don't think that one has to be so mighty smart to get a man out of jail. D'ye know Latude? He's a chap at the Gobelins Theater. I saw him

there. He's an old fossil. Well, you know he _____"

She stopped short as she heard Mirande closing the door after him. But her eagerness gave Mirande an inspiration. Why look for intelligence elsewhere? The courage and the cunning necessary were all here, within his reach. Simone had said that she wanted a maid. If they polished up Francette and taught her her part, she would be quite able to take the situation.

Yes, he would employ Francette. But he would have to tell Jeanne. Already he had told her that, in spite of the analysis of the stain of blood, he was now firmly convinced of Lacaze's innocence, so there was nothing surprising that he should keep up the search. So he invented a story. He had met Nitaud, the detective, who wanted to learn more about Castillan. They themselves had been against his carrying his researches in that direction, at the beginning, but now the detective insisted. He began to think that the doctor knew the murderer and he wanted to put some one to watch Castillan. Who could do it better than Francette, if she could get a position in the house as maid.

It was an appalling suspicion, but Jeanne was

too eager to free her *fancé* to dispute the means by which they might discover the murderer.

"You know, Francette, how much we like you," Mirande began, after they had called her into the room.

"Well, I like you, too."

"We want you to do something for us—a very great favor."

"I'm at your service."

"It's about our friend, M. Lacaze. You can help us a lot if you like."

What delight she felt when she learned that she was going to count for something in this affair which had held her on the rack for months. At last! She was going to enter into it. At last they thought of her. She was intoxicated with the breath of battle, she shivered with the heroism of a recruit who is going to risk his life for his country. Gabriel Mirande, Jeanne Mirande, Henri Lacaze. They constituted her country!

Never had the living contrast of her physique been so violently pronounced—the furious scowl of her eyebrows, the glittering copper of her hair, the long swaggering limbs all seemed to express an eager vengeance. And the little tilted nose and the

small, sharp, doglike teeth all spoke the malicious joy of succeeding where the police had failed.

“Understand me well, Francette——”

“I understand. Go on. I’m no fool.”

Mirande told her his plan.

For some time they had suspected Dr. Castillan. He had such strange ways and was acquainted with so many low characters and spent money so far beyond his means that they had wondered if he didn’t know something about this crime. Moreover, through it, he had inherited another fortune. Some one, therefore, had to be in the house to watch him, to note his actions, and, if necessary, to protect Mme. Castillan; for the worst might be expected from him. It just happened that Mme. Castillan required a maid. Here was a good opportunity.

“Well, Francette, what do you say about trying for this position?” Mirande asked. The girl’s attitude had changed as Mirande continued to speak. Her nose seemed to turn down, her lips closed, the flame went out of her eyes.

“It makes me shiver,” she said.

It did not make her shiver; it made her sad and miserable. What was the “little master” asking

her to do? To wait on Mme. Castillan, the lady who had made him so unhappy; the lady that he had not had the courage to ask to marry him? And, then, there was the grief of leaving them—this home which was her home, this furniture, this polished floor, the saucepans, all that she kept clean and bright was here, all the things she loved.

“It makes me shiver—it makes me shiver,” she repeated.

Poor Francette. Even though she did not possess his clairvoyance, Mirande knew what she felt. How he sympathized with her! If it had not been for the anxious look in Jeanne’s eyes, he would have given up the idea.

“Oh, Francette,” Jeanne begged, “I ask you to do it as a personal favor for me.”

And then, as it was for the service of the little master, it was to please him, Francette could not hesitate longer. She put aside all her repugnance—put it away in the depths of her heart, just as, later, she rammed her clothes down into the bottom of her trunk and shut the lid. The romance was finished. Now to business! And, as quickly as her face had clouded, so it regained its brightness. Her nose tilted, her teeth gleamed.

"It makes me shiver," she said again, this time with a broad grin. "But I got to do it. Let 'er go! I'm on."

She was ready to fight. She walked briskly forward, holding herself rigid, her brows drawn together as though she already saw the enemy.

"Wait a minute," said Gabriel; "you have not only to get into the house, but you have to stay there."

"*Pardi!* why should I stay there? A hole like that!"

"Because, precisely, Francette, the place is not a hole, as you say. On the contrary, it is a very imposing house with everything in grand style. I am not blaming you, but I must tell you that your odd ways of talking and your manners might astonish people who are not used to you as we are."

"I understand," she said; "here I don't pose, but there I've got to. I don't have to put on airs here. But you see what I can do when I'm in society."

Gabriel and Jeanne watched her with surprise go into a corner of the room, and then turn and walk toward them with demure step and eyes lowered; her sly expression suddenly changed to modest re-

serve. She bowed, without any awkwardness or affectation, to an imaginary person.

"Good day, sir. Are you quite well, sir? Oh! yes, *madame* is very well also; she slept so well. Patients? Yes, the reception room is full of them. Don't keep them waiting, sir."

She bowed again. She was so comical with her grave, polite manners that Mirande and Jeanne burst out laughing.

"Why, Francette!" exclaimed Mirande, "you have kept your talent hidden from us. With a few rehearsals you will have nothing to learn!"

In one evening, under Jeanne's tuition, Francette's manners really did become perfect. Jeanne told her not to talk so much, initiated her into the polite way of talking in the third person. And then, the next morning, armed with references that they had procured from the good-natured Doisteau, because it would not have done for them to know that she had been in service with the Mirandes, Francette knocked at the Castellan's door. At the end of an hour she returned triumphant. They had engaged her at once.

The moment came for their last advice to her. Above all, at the first visit from a person she sus-

pected, or at any suspicious indication, she was to let them know at once. Mirande was having the telephone put in his apartment and in two days it would be installed.

"Now, you call me up on the phone, Francette. It will be fixed here in two days' time. I have already the number 1900—05. And when you want me at the laboratory, call up 1326—21."

Francette looked frightened.

"I'll never remember such numbers," she said with a frown. "But wait!"

She snatched up a pencil and wrote the two numbers down on the white cuffs which matched her straight collar.

"There! That's my telephone book," she said triumphantly. "Now I'm all right."

Gabriel and Jeanne leaned over the balcony to see the last of her. Her shabby trunk was placed beside the coachman. She leaned out of the window waving her handkerchief until the cab passed out of sight.

"She's a good girl," said Mirande; "I trust nothing will happen to her."

"Why, what do you think would happen to her?"

"I don't know; it is perhaps a presentiment—a little remorse."

Three days passed without Francette sending any news. Then on the fourth day she rushed in to see them like a whirlwind. She had been sent on an errand which brought her in their direction. This was the first time she had gone out. She was still gasping for breath from her quick climb up the five flights of stairs as she explained why they had not heard from her.

Nothing startling had happened. Everybody had treated her fine. She hadn't made any blunders. *Madame* was better. She was very kind and gentle; but she didn't seem very happy. She'd find out why it was before long. Because, when the master neglects the lady, she almost always tells the maid all about it. *Monsieur* took good care not to neglect himself. Bah! and sometimes he didn't even have the politeness to say good morning at breakfast. And he was never there to say good night.

At six o'clock *monsieur* had the hair dresser and the *masseur*, and dressed up in his evening suit and went off, and didn't come back until the next morning. At the house they didn't talk much about him

before her, because she was a new girl; but soon they would. Those swells are the worst lot one could imagine. The chauffeur was too fond of his whisky, and the kitchen maid was always gadding about, and there was a certain couple there, the valet and the cook, who were only fit to be put in the garbage pail.

The cook bragged of making two cents on every bunch of carrots; and the valet said he was going to have his revenge on the boss because he'd passed some remarks about him. He said that he'd put something in the dishes that he took to the table. She was afraid to eat. She lived on boiled eggs and chocolate.

And that was all that she knew for the present.

Four more days passed without her giving any sign of life. Mirande was anxious; he did not know what steps to take. Time was passing. More than a week had passed without anything being done. Again he thought he would confide in Nitaud, and tell him to put on one of his men to find out Castillan's accomplice.

Then, one fine morning, Francette came to see them at an early hour. At first they scarcely recognized her. She was dressed up in a gown her

mistress had given her. A mauve veil hid her fair skin and softened the brilliancy of her copper-colored hair. Before questioning her upon this wonderful change, Gabriel and Jeanne asked briefly:

“Well, anything new?”

Happy to be able to speak again a few words of slang, she gave a sharp click to her teeth with her finger nail and cried:

“Nix!”

“You haven’t found out anything—nothing at all?”

“Nothing! It’s always the same thing. It’s not because I keep my eyes in my lap. The valet is ill and I have to show the patients in now. And there isn’t a soul but big swells who come to see the doctor. No apaches; I look through the keyholes, and glue my ears to the doors, and whenever an envelope isn’t stuck down tight I read the letter before he does. Ah! well—nothing doing.”

Mirande decided that he would go and see Nitaud. He tried to hide his disappointment from Francette.

“*Sapristi!*” he exclaimed; “but how fine you are. You have a holiday to-day, then?”

Francette beamed.

“Ah! Mirande, I’m godmother—there’s a little bit of a snip come into my family.”

As she spoke, she took some parcels tied up with ribbon that hung from her arm. Mirande remembered vaguely that Francette had told him some time ago how good some poor people had been to her; how they had taken pity upon her when she was a baby, and had brought her up until she was old enough to go into service. Her foster-parents were very poor, but they had just offered themselves the luxury of a sixth child, her godson; and she was going to take this opportunity to return a little of their kindness.

Ah! she hadn’t had to save up. The big bill that the little master had given her had all been spent for the new baby. She had bought the clothes, a fine cradle, all white and green, and an ivory and silver teething ring. So many beautiful things!

She enumerated her gifts with a face all flushed with pleasure. Her heart was full of a forlorn tenderness, of latent maternity. Suddenly Mirande became all attention to what she was saying.

“For sure!” she said warmly, “when one has towed like they have all their lives, they can very well forget to do it for just one day.”

"Towed, you say. What do they do, Francette?"

"They are barge people."

"Oh! Where?"

"On the Seine."

"On the Seine! Where do they live?"

"Anywhere they happen to be in their barge. But the wharf is at Charenton."

"You lived that life, didn't you? You know all the barge people?"

"What a question!"

"Tell me! Among these people you meet some pretty tough ones, don't you? Plenty of kidnapers?"

"Not in my family," she replied hotly.

"But, Francette, you need not feel hurt at what I am saying. This is very important. I shouldn't think of classing your foster-parents with those individuals. I am speaking of the vagabonds, the thugs, and those vile creatures who prowl along the banks of the Seine. You must have heard of such."

"Sure I've heard of 'em. There are enough of 'em. I know some of 'em, even."

"Oh! Francette!"

In his excitement Gabriel had seized her hands.

He did it unconsciously, but it touched the girl so deeply that she let all her bundles fall to the floor.

"Oh, my candy!" she wailed, as a box of sugared almonds was scattered over the carpet.

"Oh, that's nothing! Wait a minute."

He helped her to arrange her packets. Jeanne had gone out of the room, and he profited by her absence to tell Francette that he thought the man who had murdered M. Gagny was one of the river pirates of the Seine. He told her all he knew about the man—the illness for which Dr. Castillan had attended him; the cut on his wrist, and that he had taken up his life again among the barge people. She might, perhaps, be able to find him.

"What's his name?" she asked.

"I don't know."

"What's his mug like?"

"I don't know."

"What's his age?"

"I don't know."

"Well, that isn't much to go by."

She was puzzled. She swung her parcels on the end of her arm so violently that they were in danger of another upset.

"Then I've got to make another change. Go

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back to the barge, be a girl on the towing-path. I've got to quit your Castellans."

Mirande had not thought of this alternative. Yet, some one must be on watch in the physician's house, some one must be there to protect Simone.

"If it is necessary," he said slowly.

She noticed his hesitation.

"Well, then, I see what must be done. I'd better stay with *madame* in the daytime, and then at night do the same as the kitchen-maid does. She goes gadding out at night to have a good time, and I'm to sneak out, too, and go to Charenton. That's it, isn't it?"

Mirande looked confused.

"You would do that, Francette?" he stammered.

She did not reply at once. Night! All the dangers of the dark shores and the notorious low resorts, the bad women, the drunken murderers, the coarse songs, the shrieks, the fights, the sharp whistles, the flashing knives, the pools of blood, all the horror of what she would have to go through rose up before her. But at this moment she looked at Mirande, caught the imploring look in his eyes. Then she straightened up proudly.

"Sure," she said.

She was ready to begin, proud to make another sacrifice. She was ready to brave all for her little master. For a moment she had feared the dangers, but now she was all enthusiasm.

The handle of the door turned. Jeanne came into the room. Mirande put his fingers to his lips to impose silence. Francette gave him a wink which meant that she understood. She was happy; now they had a secret in common.

CHAPTER IX

A FRIGHTFUL CONFESSION

It was the evening of dress rehearsal at the Athénée. Every one knows how very select these preliminary performances are. You elbow men whose names you whisper and whose faces you recognize. You go there to be seen, and the next day, even before the newspapers, one can speak of the play and show that you were among the distinguished audience.

At these performances it is very rare that a spectator leaves his seat merely to have the pleasure of promenading up and down before the theater, but this is what Mirande had done. Walking quickly from end to end of the blind street which is formed at this part of the Square Boudreau, he waited for the second act to end. He had more than one reason for wishing to leave the theater.

In his power of divining, he dreaded the mental tumult of the hall. He wanted to keep his intellect clear, for he would soon have need of it. And

then a stronger reason still had made him leave his place. He had caught sight of Simone and Dr. Castillan sitting a few seats away from him. He could not bear to see them together—the doctor sitting there so proudly displaying with cynical importance his fashionably cut waistcoat and his dark, lustrous beard; and she so blonde, so delicate. How her quiet beauty contrasted with her husband's flamboyancy. Her very attitude seemed in direct contrast to the splendor of her gown, her lace cloak, the costly necklace of pearls which gleamed on her bare throat.

Mirande knew that any man with more courage than he would not have hesitated to speak to them. It was more than a month since he had met either of them. The occasion was propitious. He owed it to Lacaze to probe deeper into Castillan's dark soul, and then how much he wanted to read still further the secret book of Simone's life. But with Simone his scruples forbade him. She had married Dr. Castillan to obey the social laws of her world; she did not love him. But he was a man of great fascination and charm, and who knows if, unconsciously, spurred by the return of her old friend, her husband was not trying to make himself

more agreeable to her? She could remain indifferent to a husband who neglected her, but would she remain so to one who was eager for her love? This question Mirande had been asking himself, and that was the reason why he had left his seat.

For a moment he stopped to read the posters on the front of the theater. Lambrine's name stood out in large letters. Mirande wondered if the *liaison* between the doctor and the actress was still going on, or if he had her friendship still. Was it for her that Castillan had committed a crime? Did he get Gagny's money for her? This is what Mirande wished to know. If the serum-detector ran in his veins to-night, it was because he was going to learn the secret about Lambrine. He had already had a bouquet of flowers sent to her dressing-room. Presently he would go and present his compliments to her.

The people were coming out of the theater; the play must be over. As Mirande ran up the wide staircase some one coming down called to him.

"Ah, M. Mirande! I am sorry you are going in just as I am leaving."

He turned and saw a man in a big fur coat who resembled Robespierre. It was Raucourt, the

young politician, who had just been elected Keeper of the Seals in the new Chamber. Since the evening at Dorville, Gabriel had met the late deputy on several occasions. He had not failed at each of these meetings to espouse the views of the one whom the people had so justly nicknamed "The Incorruptible of the Third Republic." Here was another opportunity to flatter him.

"Ah, Mr. Minister!" he cried gaily. "I am delighted to be able to congratulate you, and also to congratulate our country. It is fortunate for France that a man like you is in power. I am sure that your reforming spirit is going to be given scope at last."

Raucourt looked pleased and showed that he appreciated the compliment. Mirande wanted to profit by the minister's urbanity and call up the Lacaze affair, but he felt that this was not the place nor the time to importune a man who was in a hurry to go home, and whose mind was full of his recent glory. He was now high in the minister's esteem and he could afford to wait.

The curtain had only that moment dropped; the greater part of the audience had not yet come into the aisles. Mirande hurried to the back of the

stage; there were about twenty yards to traverse—the length of the dressing-rooms. What varied thoughts came to him through the walls! Some broke out very clear—“Yes, and I thought that that typhoid would do for him!” and, “It is quite an art to appear to be applauding.” “Dear me, dear me! Not bad, that idea in her last act; I’ll use that in my next piece!”

Everywhere there was an ingenious rustling of malice and baseness, mingled with the deep thoughts of envy from the women for the gowns and jewels of Lambrine.

Mirande would like to have escaped from it, but he could not. Then, suddenly, came an impression like some delicious perfume. The thoughts came from the playwright’s children. “Ah, but it is our own father who wrote that! How proud we are of him! All these people have come here because father wrote that play. And how they clapped!” But this was only a passing breath, and once more he was plunged into the pestilence. He passed on as quickly as possible.

He opened a little door which led to the stage and came face to face with Favery, the publisher of the *Lumière*. Mirande nodded to him. He had

not seen him since the memorable evening at Dorville. He intended to go and call upon him as soon as he had discovered Castillan's accomplice. He perceived that the publisher had to search his memory.

"Where have I seen him?" ran his thoughts. "Ah, yes, at the casino—Dorville. A scientist of the Brion institute. Very nice young fellow." Then an anxious thought—"I wonder if he noticed that I am decorated now?"

Mirande took care to notice. He congratulated Favery upon having obtained the red ribbon. Upon which the director said carelessly: "Bah! that was some time ago."

The publisher went on his way. Mirande went up a few steps to the stage.

There the lights were softened, noises subdued. A fireman was pondering over his inability to understand the play. Some attentive machinists were changing the scenery and only thinking of their work. One of them, however, was cursing the people who got in his way; another with hollow cheeks and bright eyes was wondering what effect the sudden declaration of a strike would have. But Lambrine appeared. She came from the stage after

four encores, intoxicated with her art. And Mirande noticed that, even in the midst of the applause, she had not ceased to admire the pearl collar that Simone Castillan wore and how ardently she wanted it.

"Ah, it is you!" she said. "You spoil me. They are lovely flowers. Come with me to my *loge*. How did you like the play?"

"It was a great success."

"Yes, wasn't it? I am so happy that I am able to interpret such a beautiful thing."

"I should think it is a fine thing," thought the actress, "and I have to play it for an entire season, two hundred times in succession, every night, every night, the same words, the same gestures!"

Catching up her train, and followed by Mirande, she went up the staircase and passed down a passage. They came to her room, which was furnished and beflowered like a boudoir. On the threshold a look of disgust came over her face. Castillan was half reclining on her sofa, waiting for her. At the sight of Mirande he felt a slight uneasiness, but his manner did not betray him.

"My dear fellow," he cried, "wasn't Lambrine superb this evening?"

"Superb," repeated Mirande, bringing his power to bear on the doctor. Castillan had placed a costly jewel-box on the Louis XVI dressing-table. He waited for the moment when Lambrine should see it and utter a cry of delight and gratitude. Evidently the *liaison* was not ended. The doctor's secret impatience testified to so much humiliated fervor and imploring frenzy that Mirande could tell at once what immense power the actress had over him.

And she? Lambrine had seated herself before her table and begun to touch up her face. In the mirror Mirande could see the reflection of her beautiful enameled face. He concentrated his mind upon her. Now, how easily he could have his revenge on the doctor! How he could have humiliated him by revealing to him the secret thoughts of his beautiful mistress. At this moment she was speculating on the love of a rich nobleman who was on a visit to France, and who followed her everywhere she went.

He wanted to marry her. And she was dreaming of becoming a countess; the mistress of a noble house, and living under foreign skies, as soon as she

should have spent to the last cent all that remained of old Gagny's money.

Finally she condescended to notice the jewel-box. Hiding her satisfaction under an impassive mask, she opened it and took out a beautiful necklace of pearls, weighed it in the palm of her hand, and, as a connoisseur, appreciated its orient, then ended by clasping it round her neck. The necklace was worth ten times the one Mme. Castillan had worn, and she knew it.

"Very nice—very pretty indeed," she murmured. Castillan stammered, not quite assured.

"Really? Does it please you? Are you sure?"

"Yes, yes, it is very nice," she replied carelessly.

The doctor was embarrassed by Mirande's presence. He did not dare to say more, but he satisfied himself with giving her a gloomy, burning look. And how long it lasted! And what a terrible confession Mirande caught! What a deep plunge he suddenly made into the horror of this dark soul.

"And that is all—that is all that you find to say? Not a tender word, not a cry of delight, nothing! Never, then, shall I be able to hold you, to chain you, not even by gratitude, nor by interest? Yet, if you knew all that I have done for you, to satisfy

you, to keep you! Ah, if I could speak! How many times have I been tempted to do so—perhaps the crimes themselves would touch you more than the money that I drew from them. That old man that I had murdered, the innocent man that I have sent to prison—all that was for you, to get the gold to throw into your lap. But that was not enough. His gold I had to get for myself. I could not share it with another. I had to have the control of it all, so as to be able to give it all to you.

“And when poor Simone was struck with catalepsy, it was you—yes, still you—who tempted me. If I used my authority, my prestige, to keep the official doctors away from her, if I guaranteed her death, it was for you—all for you. For I was not sure—no, I was not sure that Simone was dead!”

CHAPTER X

FRANCETTE MEETS THE CRAB

It was night. The train of the little railroad that belts Paris drew up at the Point du Jour station, and only one woman got out. One would not have recognized Francette under the big cloak which covered her from head to foot, and through the thick veil which was drawn over her face. As soon as she left the compartment she tucked a packet of clothes under her arm and picked up her skirts and walked briskly toward the exit. She pushed her ticket into the collector's hand, grumbled at him for being so slow in taking it, and went down the staircase which leads to the foot of the viaduct. She was soon outside, on the pavement of the boulevard Excelmans. There a lighted *kiosque* showed her the way to a cab stand. She walked across quickly, looked at the clock, which pointed to ten, and jumped into the first taxi.

"To Billancourt, Rue de Meudon. I'll stop you

when I want you to stop," she called out as she jumped in. "Go along the river."

Once the city limits were passed there remained still five more minutes before she would arrive at her destination. It was more time than she required to make the change, to transform herself into another person. She folded up her clothes, replaced her cloak by a red woolen shawl, took off her hat and her veil and left it on the carriage seat. She mussed her hair, dragged it down over her forehead, and covered it with a common lace shawl.

"I'm fixed all right now," she murmured.

She looked from the windows and tried to pierce the mist outside. The night was plunged in shadows that the December fog made still more sinister. Few lights were burning. To the right she could see a dim outline of walls, some bare shrubs in the garden of a tavern, a dark brick mass—a factory closed for the night; while, to the left, there was a mysterious darkness—a boulevard of night which led down to the open river, where some vague reflections shimmered, broken by the current.

"The Seine looks like black coffee with eyes in it," muttered Francette.

This poor comparison gave her a little courage.

The coffee made her think of coffee grounds, and she had great faith in coffee grounds. Quite recently she had consulted a fortune-teller, who had studied the grains at the bottom of her cup, and had prophesied that her adventure would be crowned with success. This prophecy had kept up her courage for the last month, since the time when she had begun to go almost every night, when not tired out, along the banks of the river and into the low resorts to hunt up an unnamed murderer for her "little master."

It was not an easy thing she had to do, nor convenient. In the first place, to be able to leave the Castellan home, she had to tip the *concierge* and let the *concierge* have doubts as to her virtue, and this made her very unhappy when she had time to think of it. And then, it needed some courage to prowl along the banks of the Seine at night, to go into low drinking resorts and mix with the vile class of individuals who haunt these places.

She had beaten the entire track, going up the Seine from Bercy as far as the Port-à-l'Anglais, and she had seen terrible sights and had been overcome with terror at passing so close to danger—above all, at the beginning, when she came in con-

tact with a gang and they suspected her of belonging to the police. What terrible eyes had questioned her, what noses had snorted at her! It was like being in a den of wild beasts. At these tense moments one word, one movement would have lost her. With their knives they would have stabbed her without pity. But she played her part and used her gay laugh; with a laugh she could soften the most savage.

Thus her tactics were invariable. She went into the dens, took in the assembly at a glance, then sat down and called for an absinthe. She waited for a break in the deep silence her entrance generally made. They wondered who she was, and whence she came. One of the band would come and sit beside her and try to draw her into conversation.

Francette was not reserved. Oh, no! At once she told the story of her life, a lamentable story of the slums. She deplored the severity of the police, they had just sent her friend away to the *Bat d'Af*—forced African service! Magic words! That was enough! Francette was one of them. Her new friend would introduce her to the rest of the company.

There were some fine types of the scum of Paris

—bargemen, wharf-loafers, apaches, and their companions. They drank various “twist drinks,” corrosive “mixed drinks,” the strongest absinthe, and Francette had to accept these drinks from them—at least when she did not offer them, which was usually the case.

But she was very prudent, she took good care not to drink them. She would wait until there was a heated argument; then, in the excitement, she would slip her glass under the table and sprinkle the floor with her drink. They found that she had astonishing resistance, and, in the end, she gained the reputation of being a steady drinker.

This reputation and the trick that she played upon them would have amused her if her economic house-keeping instinct had not revolted at thus spending so much of her “little master’s” money.

However, in the long run she did not regret her generosity, when at last she found herself in the good graces of the gangs.

Quickly initiated into the coarse jokes, pretending to understand those that had not the slightest comprehension for her, she replied to them with a tit for tat. And the obscurity of her repartee passé

in the eyes of these brutes for an impudence even greater than their own.

There was no mistake about it. Francette was quite one of them. And they did not hesitate to talk before her of their crimes, or spread out the glory of their wicked deeds in the past.

She listened eagerly. She encouraged them to boast of their crimes, and then she would tactfully draw the conversation to the murder in the avenue Raphael.

Until now it had been without result. The gangsters knew of the affair, for it was celebrated. Inhaling the smoke from their cigarettes, they disdainfully gave their opinions upon it. They were not interested in the crime, for Lacaze, whom they believed to be the murderer, was not one of them. Yet one among them, Francette thought, might even now be resisting the temptation to boast. She changed her tactics. Braving the menacing looks from their women friends, she questioned one by one individually, and drew them aside.

Had they ever traveled? Where had they done their military service? So as to be able to draw a confession from them she had told them about her friend who had been sent to the *Bat d'Af*.

Then she inquired about their health. She talked of the colonies and the bad climate which gave the fever. She did not give up her examination until she had seen that it was useless.

But matters became more complicated at the hour of closing, toward two o'clock in the morning, when she had to go out and was forced to refuse the escort of an apache who offered to see her home. She had only found one way to escape from such an offer—that was to run from the tavern and lose herself in the dark night. She had always seized the moment when they were singing a song, or when a fight was on, hitherto, when, getting to the door, she would run for her life. But she knew that if she continued to leave in this manner they would become suspicious, so she decided to pick out a useful escort.

She chose him one evening. He was as weak and as ill-favored as it was possible for nature to make him. His name was Popol, alias the Maggot, a surname which justified his mark of degeneracy—a skull in the form of a pear, covered with coarse hair; his protruding and melancholy eyes; his wet, distorted mouth, and his little, emaciated body, supported on short, weak limbs.

Francette could not fear him. She could have flattened him with a blow. He had nothing to his credit but a few small robberies of no importance, for which he had stupidly allowed himself to be taken, and had served a few light terms in prison.

All one evening Popol had worshiped her in silence. And she had given him some hope on condition that he would leave her outside the tavern and never follow her, and never ask her where she lived. He obeyed. And now, thanks to this inoffensive companion, she could continue her search as far as Alfortville. When she had finished she would give Popol a last rendezvous and never come back to him.

She had now to search down the river. She had decided to go first to Billancourt, which was nearer town and more thickly infested by gangsters than any other part. But there they were on their guard. For the last three nights that she had been prowling in this vicinity she had scarcely ingratiated herself into a single gang. She had not learned anything that could serve her. To-night she was going there on a last visit before passing further down the river.

The chauffeur had passed the Rue de Meudon.

She knocked sharply on the window-pane of her cab and called out:

"Say, there! where are you going?"

Muttering, the chauffeur stopped his car, turned and got on the right route.

"To the left now; go as far as the square."

"Stop!" she called out, after a short ride. Several dark, muddy streets ran from the place. They were lit with one feeble gas jet. The fog was so dense at this part that at every few steps one had to stop. An empty tramway passed on its noisy course without even stopping at the station.

"Wait for me here," Francette said to the chauffeur, as she sprang out. The man looked at her in surprise. What had the woman done to herself? Why this change? He was afraid that he would not get his money.

"*He-lâ*, little lady," he said; "you think you are going to leave me without anything?"

Francette understood. She took five francs from her pocket and gave it to him.

"Don't worry yerself," she said; "you're going to get a good tip later."

She left him with these words and walked across the square to the road straight before her. The

road, under the cloud of fog, was lonely and sinister; but at a short distance from the nearest street-lamp was the entrance to the den where she was going to spend a few hours. She quickened her pace. Before entering she peered in at the window and threw a glance round the interior. As usual, it was deserted, there were no customers to be seen.

The landlord, M. Achille, a chubby-cheeked man with his sleeves rolled up, showing his muscular arms, was indolently dipping his glasses into the counter-tank and wiping them on the same dirty towel with which he had mopped his fat, purple face. But that was only for show, to deceive the passerby; behind was a room where only the initiated were allowed to enter.

Such a noise of drunken cheers and songs came from the den that for a moment Francette's heart seemed to stand still with fear, and she felt that she dared not risk her life that evening. But she shook off her terror and bravely opened the door. She greeted the landlord's smile with a grimace and bravely entered the apaches' den. The men stopped singing when they saw her.

"Why, here's Casque de Lune!" called out a drunken voice.

"Sure! and the moon's still red," cried another.

Francette at once fell into their mood. She looked at them with a broad grin which showed the two rows of her fine white teeth.

"Name the color," she said; "the drinks are on me."

They moved aside to make way for her, so that she could get to the end of the infamous den. A reddish light from a lamp lit up the place; the walls were covered with coarse inscriptions which betrayed brute passions and hatred of the police. "Death to the bulls!" was by the side of some hearts pierced with arrows, and daggers crowned ingenious declarations of eternal love. A glass roof formed the ceiling. One of the panes was broken. It served as a ventilator for the tobacco smoke, the alcohol fumes, and the gases from a stove in the corner.

Two greasy wooden tables and some benches were all the furniture the room contained. These tables were surrounded by about twenty dubious customers—watermen, wharfmen, laborers out of work, who only adopted a calling to hide their crimes.

Francette had been to this place three times, and

she knew most of the men present. She tapped Nenesse, alias the Eel, on his bald head—bald before his thirtieth year. He was a tall, lanky fellow, who had not his match for catching a lighted cigarette in his mouth after throwing it up in the air. Then there was Jules Crevard—"Bulwarks"—a lazy giant whom she dug in the ribs with her fist. He worked on the wharfs occasionally, but more frequently wrestled at the fairs, taking an amateur from the crowd and giving him the honor of felling a professional, or felling him, according to the orders of the manager of the show.

Then Francette pursed up her lips and made a noise like a motor, for Julot le Rossignol (the Nightingale), a very young man with a very old face, pitted marks, and whose lips were always drawn up in a smile, showing his stumps of teeth. He always wore large checked trousers, and his hair plastered down on his forehead.

He was a mechanic. From time to time he got a job in a factory, but was discharged at once for his inveterate idleness. He was popular with the ladies on account of his voice, a miserable tenor. Yet he whispered his love-songs with conviction while striking his heart.

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There were many others to whom Francette vouchsafed her absurd familiarities. She did no less for the ladies, but, nevertheless, she felt that they were venomous. They were secretly annoyed at the power that she already had over their companions. The tall Paulette, "The Glory of Dijon"—it was not known why she shared this name with a rose; there was none of the flower's brilliancy in her faded skin, consumed, one might say, by the fire from her loving eyes—the tall Paulette killed her with a sneer; while Emilie Rouquet, a big creature whose three chins shook on her adipose chest, spat out an oath as she approached; and Marie Lalêque, who was still called "Billiard Ball," because she was anemic, spread out her feet and tried to trip Francette as she passed. But Francette was careful. She saw the trap and jumped nimbly over the limbs and sat down next to a man whom she did not yet know, but whose very aspect made her shudder.

"So it's the 'Crab' whose to have the honor," sneered Emilie Rouquet.

Foteau, alias the Crab, was a tall man of thirty-five, with broad shoulders. His face wore a dazed, bestial expression. The lids of his big, staring eyes

were affected with a chronic heaviness. His unkempt mustache straggled over a dull cadaverous skin, denoting ill health.

But the most striking thing about this man were his hands. The rough, hard grip that they gave was like the touch of flint, and made them seem like crustaceous appendages. They were enormous and hairy and developed like formidable claws. He liked to show them. They were his adornment, his pride.

He owed to them many triumphs. He would spread them out on the zinc counter and bet a drink that he would bend a piece of money as easily as he would drink his absinthe. And, as they held him to his bet, he twisted the coin with one claw and poured the absinthe down his throat with the other. These exploits had gained for him his nickname.

He did not turn aside when Francette glided between him and Julot the Nightingale. He expressed his satisfaction by slowly turning toward her his bloodshot eyes. As she looked at him without apparent fear, he leaned toward his neighbor and said in a thick voice: "All to the good."

"You're not so fierce, either," retorted Francette.

This exchange of compliments made them friends

at once. The Crab spread out his claws, while Julot the Nightingale, piqued at not being noticed, also wanted to show his worth. He coughed and cleared his voice, preparing for a song. The instinct of rivalry rose up at once in the two ruffians.

"Look here, now," cried the Crab with a fierce oath, "do you want to make trouble?"

But Achille, the landlord, came in at this moment with the drinks. He had heard Francette's offer when she entered the cabaret, and he was not the man to forget it. His abdomen shook as he leaned across the customers and distributed the wine. Nenesse, alias the Eel, seized a bottle and threw it up in the air and juggled with it. Then he uncorked it for the fat Emilie Rouquet, who smacked her tongue in approval. Upon seeing this, Jules Crevard, Bulwarks, quickly filled up his glass. He lifted a quart bottle to the height of his nose, and without direct contact with his mouth poured the wine down his throat. There was a guzzling noise in his throat like a tap running. The Glory of Dijon and Billiard Ball applauded him noisily.

"And you, ain't yer goin' to have anything to put down yer guzzle?" asked Francette of the Crab,

who had spread out his claws over his glass in sign of refusal.

[The brute gave a melancholy shake of his head.

"No! On account of my fever," he explained regretfully.

"Your fever," repeated Francette, pricking up her ears.

"Yes, the doc's condemned me to white. I can only drink white. Will yer stand us for a milk, Casque de Lune?"

"Milk for my steady," called Francette to the landlord, her voice almost a shriek.

An inexplicable emotion seemed to oppress her. She was on the right track at last! The fingers which bent coins—were they the same that had dug the file into old Gagny's heart? She could not believe it at first. It had happened so many times in her adventures that she had caught at something and then discovered that she was on the wrong track. She overcame a feeling of repulsion and placed her trembling hand on the shoulder of the brute beside her.

"What fever did you have, old man?" she asked in a sympathetic voice.

"Yellow fever."

"Where was that, old man?"

"Not in Paris, you may be sure. I was in the colonies."

She thought she was going to faint. At last! She *was* on the right track! She had only to go ahead and throw out the questions she wanted answered. Did the man know Castillan? Did he poach along the Seine? Had he ever worked at Lacaze's factory? Or, at least, had he been near enough to the workshops to get the instrument of the crime? And did he know the house in the Avenue Raphael, and how it was situated, and the basement door, and the way it was closed?

At once this last thought obsessed her. She fixed her look on the right wrist of the apache, to see if she could see a scar. But even if a scar still existed it could not be seen for the thick covering of hair. She must be very careful. It needed all her tact now to draw a confession. Her freckled face had assumed a look of great pity, when she noticed that Julot was all attention and jealously listening to what they were saying. She turned to him and made a grimace to give him encouragement.

"And you, my fine nightingale, aren't you going to sing to-night?" she asked.

He was flattered. A smile broke over his stumps of teeth. Francette got up.

"Everybody shut up!" she cried. "The Nightingale's going to sing."

Julot cleared his throat, and announced his song:
"In the Stars."

And while the singer, with his hand on his heart, screeched out his love-song with languor and ecstasies that made the eyes of the Glory of Dijon glitter and expanded still more the throat of Emilie Rouquet and brought the cheeks of Billiard Ball to a white heat, Francette began the struggle with the terrible ruffian beside her.

Ah, how she pitied him! Liver complaint was a bad thing to have, and when one had everything else with which to succeed in life, especially with the ladies! How could he have caught it? Did he say it was in the colonies? Wasn't it wicked to send poor chaps out to croak in a foreign land? But, never mind, he must keep up his nerve—there were still some kind hearts in France, and they would help him! And if they were careful and kept their eyes open—on account of the police, who

poked their noses into everything—they could slip along the shores on Sunday nights and get something here and there.

“Yes, but when you’ve got something hanging over you, I’d like to know how you can have a good time.”

“What have you done?”

“Nothing much. And then I haven’t the coin. I’m broke.”

“What’s your lay?”

“It depends. Sometimes I pick up things along the Seine. Sometimes I help with the fliers at Issy-les-Moulineaux.”

Francette blanched. For the moment she would not insist. But the criminal was giving himself up at each word. She filled a glass of milk and offered it to the Crab.

“You’d rather have something stronger, eh!”

“You bet!”

“Then it’s your doctor who told you to take milk. Don’t go and believe the doctors; the whole bunch of them are a lot of liars. They do all they can to make you give up.”

“Not mine,” swore the Crab.

“Well, who’s he, then?”

Did the man scent a spy? or was it a generous impulse that made him reply briefly:

"He's a swell, he is."

But the voice was distrustful, the intention evasive. Francette felt that all would be lost if she insisted. She changed her tactics, put herself in a position to watch each passing expression of the man's face.

"Well, that may be," she said. "Evidently there are some good ones. I, myself, I know a peach of a doctor; he cured me at the Boucicaut Hospital." And, as the Crab seemed to show an interest, she risked the great question:

"Do you know Castillan?"

If the ruffian had admitted his crime Francette could not have been more convinced when she felt at this moment the sharp, instinctive contraction of his claws. At the same time a gleam came into the man's terrible eyes and penetrated her. There was no doubt. It was he! But the man controlled himself, and after a curt "No" he lapsed into silence.

The game was becoming dangerous. Francette was afraid to question further. A terrible menace had sprung into the man's eyes. Besides, what was the use of continuing? It was too dangerous for

her to try to learn more. From now on she had only one object. Race to the nearest telephone. Tell Mirande that she had found the murderer. Tell him where to find this den, and come back again to the place, to keep the man until the arrival of the police.

She turned again to the Nightingale. He had just finished his song and had almost swooned in a manner that was very effective. Everyone gave him hearty applause. Francette complimented him; but to have warbled so much he must be dry. Wouldn't he accept something for his throat?

Now was the opportunity! Francette seized it.

"I haven't any money left," she said ruefully, "but I'll go and see if M. Achille will give me credit for a round."

She got up amid loud cheers. Bulwarks offered her his arm; the Eel began to do his conjuring tricks again in her honor; even the ladies began to appreciate her generosity. The Glory of Dijon smiled. Emilie Rouquet bridled up and made a fourth chin, and Billiard Ball assisted her to get past the benches. But the moment she had left the room the Crab jumped up, his claws closed tight.

"Say, there," he said thickly, "keep yer eye on her, and see if she speaks to the boss!"

"No!" exclaimed the Eel, whose eye was glued to the crack in the door.

"A spy," hissed the Crab; "as sure as I'm the Crab that Casque de Lune is a bull, and we must get out of here sharp."

There was a commotion, but before going the ruffians held a short council; then the Crab ran out of the tavern first and started in pursuit of Francette, whom he could see racing along in the shadows. How she ran! Her breath came in gasps as she rushed to the nearest telephone.

Ah! *mon Dieu!* suppose she could not get the communication! If they should suspect her at the telephone booth and make difficulties! No! No! she would explain, she would tip them and tell them that some one was dying. If necessary she would even say that she was employed by the police.

She ran on through the fog, scenting her way more than she could see it, stumbling against stones and trees. She took the Rue de Meudon and turned toward the river, still keeping up her pace. In full daylight the distance would have taken two minutes. It took her ten. Fortunately she was able to use

the phone. The coffee-house had been left in the care of a servant, the landlord and his wife had gone out. The girl took her into the little telephone-box. She grasped the receiver and began to call weakly:

"Hello! hello! give me——"

Oh! the number—she had forgotten the number! but fortunately she had jotted it down on her clean cuffs. There it was—she read it quickly. But when she took up the receiver again the operator had gone. For five minutes she had to wait. She stamped with rage. These men down there at the tavern would begin to wonder where she was and come to look for her. Perhaps the Crab was already suspicious. He had given her such a look a few minutes ago. She thought it would be better to put off the arrest until to-morrow, and arrange to meet the man elsewhere. But just then the operator replied to her call.

"Ah! there you are at last," cried Francette; "so you thought you'd have a nap, did you? Give me 1900-05, and hurry up. It's important."

Another wait. Then confused voices on the wire.

"Hello! hello! M. Mirande? Is this M. Mirande?" she called impatiently.

When at last she heard her master's voice, she blurted out without waiting for a reply.

"I've got him! I've got him! Come quick. He's at Billancourt now, while I'm here. It's a dirty hole in the Rue Nationale! Yes, it's the only one open—just near the square. Yes, sure! I'll try to keep him. But if I can't? All right, I'll bring him down the Rue de Meudon, then along the Seine to the left. Sure! he'll come. He'll follow me like a dog. Bring the police. Why not the police? Nitaud? You've got him; he's with you now? Ah, that's good! Listen! Come down by the quays as far as the Rue de Meudon. Like that we're sure. Good-by, good-by."

Then she added in reply to another voice:

"Yes! yes! bring as many men as you can. Come quick, M. Nitaud!"

Ouf! they were all coming! They were going to arrest the Crab, and M. Lacaze would be saved, and Mlle. Jeanne—ah, Mlle. Jeanne would be happy at last! Everybody she loved was going to be happy!

She hung up the receiver. At this moment she heard a noise in the next room, as though some one was hurrying out and moving the chairs in the dark, but she paid no attention to it. Perhaps it

was a dog. She was in a hurry to get back to the tavern, and to serve the men a story in her own fashion. She had to make up something to explain why she had been away so long. She gave twenty cents to the servant and went out into the street, sniffed the fog, turned round to the right along the quays, and kept to the road so as to be able to run faster. She had not gone ten yards before she heard a step behind her. In astonishment she turned and looked over her shoulder, but kept up her pace. But the footsteps followed her and drew nearer. Then she stopped in terror.

"Go on! Get along on your way," she stammered to a dark form that almost touched her.

"Ah! it is you, Casque de Lune?"

Then she recognized the voice.

"The Crab," she said.

"Yes, my little chicken. It's the Crab." He hissed an oath.

She understood. Terrified, she tried to escape him, but the monster's claws had already seized her throat. A violent blow in the chest threw her to the ground. She wanted to cry, to call out, but she couldn't. She seemed stifling. At the same time she seemed to feel something drawn out from her

left side—a hard point, it seemed to her—then, for a moment, she suffered agony. Then she knew that a man was running away from her, and that she was alone on the road, in the fog, unable to move, and that the automobiles would come along and crush her.

Ah! the coffee grounds had been all wrong.

Then she felt cold. All sensation went from her in the infinite hopelessness that she would never see her little master again. Then she sank slowly—softly into oblivion.

A quarter of an hour passed. The river close by had already spread a shroud of mist over Francette. Yet the great round of a lantern pierced the dense fog. At ten yards from the body a brake scraped on the road.

“What’s the matter?” some one asked.

“There is a woman lying there.”

“Let us see, M. Nitaud.”

Two men jumped from the car. Mirande took down the lantern and threw the light on the body.

“Francette! my poor Francette,” he cried with a catch in his voice.

“She’s done for,” said the detective, who had knelt down beside the body.

"Is she dead?"

"I am afraid so. She is not breathing, and her heart is not beating."

Gabriel guessed how the crime had come about, but he did not stop to discuss it, neither did he want to follow the apache now, which, besides, was impracticable. He could only think of Francette. Perhaps she was not dead. Doisteau's theory flashed across his mind. Perhaps Francette was in that transitory state where the flame of life vacillates before going out. If he could keep her in this state until he could get her to the surgeon he might be able to save her, and snatch her back from death.

"I will take her with me," he said quickly to the detective.

"Where?"

"To a hospital—a sanatorium where a surgeon, a friend of mine, operates."

Nitaud shrugged his shoulders. What good was it? Even if the girl was still alive the last spark would go out if they moved her. Why torture her last moments!

Nitaud bent over her again. Then he got up.

"Perhaps, after all, you are right," he said; "any-

way, we cannot leave her here on the road. We shall have to inform the police, and there'll be all sorts of inquiries and complications. One can expect anything from them. If you know of a good surgeon, evidently the best way will be for you to take her to him. I won't go along, for I must watch for my men. They will be here soon."

Aided by the chauffeur, they placed Francette gently in the car. Mirande took his seat beside her after he had given the chauffeur an address in the Rue de Sergent, in the Ternes quarter, where Doisteau performed his operations.

What a sinister return! this watch beside Francette's lifeless body, the head moving at each jerk, the arms hanging down the length of the body, which at times seemed to move by the shaking of the car. And this sensation of cold humidity—this blood in the night. On Mirande's hand there was a dark stain. His hand had been smeared with blood when he placed it on Francette's breast to find out if her heart was still beating. Poor little Francette!

Then other anxieties came to add to his misery. If she were dead, if her lips were sealed forever, what could they do now? Scarcely had they found

the thread than it was suddenly broken. The plot had to be put together again, and under what difficult conditions!

Now they would be hunting for a criminal who knew that they were on his track, and who, perhaps in his turn, would put Castillan on his guard. And they did not yet know the man's name.

The auto sped down the deserted streets without slackening speed. Each turn of the wheel added a chance of saving Francette. At last the car turned into the Rue Demours and stopped. They had arrived. ,

"Fetch Dr. Doisteau!" Mirande cried to the chauffeur. "I'll call him up on the phone and tell him you're coming."

Mirande had to wake up the inmates of the house. The director came down to the door still half asleep, and the nurses in their night-ropes. Mirande at once put all these sleeping energies into motion. He gave his orders clearly and quickly. It was a relief to his anguished mind to be occupied. Francette was lifted out of the car and carried into the operating-room. Her cold body was then warmed and the instruments were laid out in readiness for the surgeon.

Ten minutes later, when Doisteau appeared, Francette was stretched out on the operating-table ready for the surgeon to try his skill upon her if he found it could be done. A powerful two hundred candle-power electric light, thrown by the reflectors, lit up her bare throat and the milky grain of her skin, which contrasted strongly with the warm red gold of her hair and the clotted blood on her wound.

She was resplendent on her altar, decked out with white linen. She looked like one of these expiatory human victims of ancient legend.

The surgeon examined his patient very carefully. He lifted up the eyelids and looked at the pupils. He placed his ear to the heart. Then he straightened up. A shrug of his shoulders, a slight grimace, expressed his opinions.

"Well?" questioned Gabriel eagerly.

"Very little hope. The stab was given full in the heart. The pupil doesn't react. I am afraid—and yet——"

"Yet?"

"I seem to catch a vibration, but so feeble—so very feeble."

"Oh! Doisteau, try—even if you think it is useless! Try the impossible!" Mirande implored.

"You have said the word," said the surgeon grimly; "the impossible."

While he slipped on a white blouse and went to the taps to wash his hands and arms he continued talking to Mirande.

"Gabriel, my friend," he explained, "you must know that we cannot suture a wound in the heart like a wound in any other part. The heart is so delicate, it is too dangerous!

"However," he said, although he shook his head, "we will try."

He tried. Ah! the great attempt! the incomparable audacity! Gabriel was rooted to the spot with a horrible fascination as the surgeon, seizing his scalpel, began his fight against death by making a large gash.

Then Mirande turned away from the operating-table, not wishing to witness the sight; but the force of his anguish brought him back again to watch the progress of the terrible mutilation. Under the sharp and quick movements of the instruments, he saw flesh removed, bones broken, and deft fingers doing as much work as the instruments.

But what he saw above all—what made him feel such respect, such fervor, that he could have knelt in veneration—was the deep, ardent flame, this reflection of an interior power of will, of energy, which shone in the surgeon's eye as he bent over the body.

From time to time a brief order fell from his lips: "Diastasis! Pincers! Scissors! Wipe that!"—Orders that were instantly obeyed by his assistant.

Four ribs had sprung up, making a noise like the breaking of wood. Then he announced:

"The pericardium!"

It was the sheath in which the heart beat. Doisteau opened it. Then all his faculties were concentrated on the minute examination of the heart, which he held in his hand with precaution.

Then he got up and looked round at his help. His eyes shone with triumph.

"My friends," he said, "I have the wound here, and the organ still works. Ah! who knows?"

He bent down again over his work. Now came the great moment—the moment to suture the perforated heart and set it in motion. Wind up the

clock, which had been giving its last oscillations, and start it going again.

“Catgut! Prepare the induction apparatus and the serum!”

The rest of the work had not the same terrible interest for Mirande. The words “Who knows?” that the surgeon had uttered had made him feel weak. There was hope now—the suspense was over. Mirande sank into a chair. He felt giddy. After a few minutes he was able to watch the process of the electrification of the heart and the propulsion of the serum in Francette’s side.

And when at last the surgeon had finished dressing the wound, and the body that still seemed like a corpse was carried away, then his emotion overcame him, and the warm tears rushed to his eyes. How he venerated all that they carried of tenderness, of virtue, of bravery in this poor little body!

The little white face with the tilted nose outside the coverlet still kept, even in the clasp of death, the contrast of Francette’s oddity and her heroism.

CHAPTER XI

A ROUND OF CALLS

Two men sat majestically enthroned before a little table, which was covered with a green cloth, in the center of a large and gloomy vestibule.

Mirande, seated on a bench, was killing time by observing them. They had just received him with the haughtiness inherent to their position. He had brandished before their eyes the letter granting him an audience with the new keeper of the seals, M. Raucourt, but it had not appeared to dazzle these austere guardians. They sat like two sphinxes, guarding the riddle of justice.

The attack upon Francette, whose life, after two days, still hung in the balance, had decided him to take this step.

Until now Castillan's secret thoughts had only revealed the existence of the ruffian who had executed the murder for him. He could not prove what he had learned to any one. But this man had

now attempted another murder; he could now be sought for openly by the police.

Poor little Francette! Even on her bed of agony she still served him.

He looked at his watch. Four o'clock. He wanted to be in the full power of his divination when he should meet Raucourt, so as to know at each moment the minister's state of mind and to be certain whether he would gain his cause or not. Not knowing how long he would have to wait, he had given himself an injection of the serum an hour before entering the ministry, so as to be ready at all hazards.

He was astonished that he did not feel the first effects of the serum—the mental rumor which usually came upon him little by little. Yet he ought to be able to catch the thoughts of these two solemn officials. Perhaps something had happened, and the talisman was losing its power. The liquid might be changing. Perhaps now he was becoming insensible to its effects.

He began to get anxious. Without his marvelous clairvoyance he would be nothing but a timid solicitor in the minister's presence. It would be a useless step; it would even be a step backward,

for he would lose the little prestige that he had flattered himself that he had acquired in the eyes of Raucourt. And if now he could not be sure of his power, if he could not use his weapon, he would be utterly weak and discouraged. He would be unable to achieve the work that he had undertaken.

At this moment a door suddenly opened and a young man, very short, wearing an exceptionally high collar and high heels, crossed the room, throwing a haughty glance at Mirande as he passed.

Then at once the savant received the clash of his thoughts.

"Another idiot waiting for an audience with the boss. How we overawe him. My! Poor fellow."

Mirande smiled at this naïve reflection. He did not feel hurt. On the contrary, he was pleased to get it, for it proved to him that he was now under the spell of the serum. But the foolish young man disappeared, and the mental silence fell again, but yet—he was not alone. The two sphinxes sat in dignified silence before the little green table. Then suddenly Mirande understood. *The minister's doorkeepers did not think!*

Soon after a bell rang and the savant was shown

into a large, severely furnished room, where Raucourt sat behind the desk. The minister shook hands with him and pointed to a seat.

Mirande briefly told about the Lacaze affair and the attempted murder of his servant.

"I have every reason to believe," he said, "that the two crimes were committed by the same man, so you can understand the importance that I attach to his arrest."

The minister had shown only a half-interest in what Mirande had to say. At first he had thought that the young savant had come to induce him to use his influence in favor of a red ribbon. He was relieved to find that it was for a judicial error. Mirande read his thoughts clearly. The minister was drawing an ironical comparison. It seemed to him much easier to pull a man from prison than to decorate one with the Legion of Honor. But the thought of a press campaign made him reflect.

"Already complications and stories! To hear them, there could not be a single guilty person in prison."

His faith in the law was strengthened since he had presided at its destinies. And, besides, he did not think the two crimes had any relation whatever.

Mirande caught his thoughts clearly, and he could not resist crying out:

“Ah, you do not believe me!”

Raucourt was astonished at his visitor's perception. He flattered himself that he was able to hide his opinions. It was a political habit.

“I did not say so,” he protested; “I shall have to look into the affair.”

But Mirande did not wish that a preconceived false idea should take root in the minister's mind. He replied with more force: “I see that you do not believe what I affirm, but I *must* convince you. Since Henri Lacaze was arrested I have given up my entire time to find out the truth. I cannot give you the details of my researches—the means I have adopted to carry on this investigation. But, believe me, my friend is innocent, and the man who committed that murder has committed another crime.”

Mirande's words took effect. Raucourt thought: “It is possible, after all,” and “What shall I gain from this?” and “What steps ought I to take?”

To hide his calculations he said gravely: “You must know that the procedure of a revision has to

be carried out according to precise rules. No one can change its course."

Mirande read the hesitations of the ambitious politician, and, sure of touching a sensitive cord, he said quickly:

"But you can hasten or retard it. And, let me say again, this revision will surely take place, believe me. If you are against it future events will show that you are in the wrong, and too late you will regret not having listened to me; for neither your enemies nor your friends will pardon that error. If you show yourself favorable to it you will reap all the honor; you will have seen clearly that a judicial error had been made, and you would have preceded justice on the right road. And you will come out still greater——"

The minister interrupted him with a modest gesture.

"Leave out personal consideration," he said; "it is sufficient that the cause be just for me to interest myself in it."

And he thought: "Yes, but there—*is* it just? If I were only sure I'd take it up at once."

Now was the moment for Mirande to state the real object of his visit.

“Put some men on the case and get this man arrested,” he said, “and he himself will give you all the proofs. Once taken, he will speak. Only now it is a very commonplace crime—a poor working girl stabbed on the outskirts of Paris! It is not a crime to excite zeal; but you can simulate zeal, you can see that the police treat this attack on a poor girl as a real tragedy, and give as much attention and ardor to it as they do to more important crimes. Do it, I beg of you. With the same stroke you will show your foresight in the most remarkable manner, and the glory will fall upon you!”

Raucourt made a few quick notes. Then he got up.

“Very well. I’ll do everything that is in my power in this matter.”

He was sincere. His words were in accord with his thoughts. In leaving him Mirande again experienced an impression that no human being had known before him. He was precisely edified on the exact nature and the value of the promises that he had carried away. In the porch he met Dutoit, the prosecuting magistrate.

This was the first time that he had seen him since Lambrine’s reception, when he had felt dis-

armed through the absence of the serum. His spite rose up against the judge who had condemned Lacaze, but the happy result of his talk with the minister and the certitude he had to be able at last to read his man's thoughts incited him to leniency. He bowed to him affably.

The judge kept his impressive good nature, which never left him except in the court-room. But inwardly he was uneasy. Why the deuce was this young man interfering with justice? Probably it was still about that Lacaze affair. To find out his business at the ministry and to dazzle him with his own importance, he said: "I have an appointment with the minister."

"Oh, I have just left him," replied Mirande frankly.

Dutoit was alarmed. Then it was getting serious. But he said carelessly:

"Indeed, do you know him very well, then?"

Mirande took keen pleasure in tormenting this merciless judge.

"He has no secrets from me," he answered, playing on the words.

The judge's anxiety increased. This young savant must bear him malice because he had con-

demned his friend, and because he had made it so warm for him when he was on the witness-stand. So he had been to see the minister, and was going to have his revenge. The election of a counselor—how keenly he coveted this position, and perhaps now it would slip from him.

Ah! ah! Dutoit was going to ask a favor; he wanted to be promoted.

Mirande congratulated himself that he had learned it. So now he knew how to manage him. For the judge might be dangerous. If he spoke incidentally of the Lacaze affair with the minister he might undo what he, Mirande, had just accomplished. Raucourt's opinion was none too firm, and Dutoit might weaken it with a few words.

"Just a word of advice," said Mirande in a peremptory tone; "avoid as much as possible to speak to Raucourt of M. Gagny's murder. Better not mention Lacaze to him; you are not of his way of thinking, and you will run the risk of going against his opinions and of annoying him. You know, as well as I do, what these short interviews are. It is a question of briefly stating one's wish and then leaving the minister under a good impression. So

you will have nothing to gain there, and you might lose. *Adieu.*"

The judge resolved to keep silent on the matter.

For some hours more Mirande would still be under the influence of the serum. He decided to go quickly to the offices of the *Lumière* to see if he could have as successful an interview with Favery as he had had with Raucourt. The press is often a second conscience for a minister, and a difference of opinion might affect Raucourt's views.

On the first floor of the *Lumière* he found some officials who looked almost as solemn as the sphinxes of justice. But he had not time to pry into their minds, for it was a fine afternoon and the waiting-room was crowded. There was the young beginner who brought his first article, the novelist who launches his first book, the peevish man who has come to insist upon a correction, and the little actress who would exchange a smile for three lines of advertisement.

All were thinking over the speech which would impress the director. Only the fear that they might not be able to see him traversed their thoughts. What a burning desire they all had to meet the all-powerful Favery!

The doorkeeper who had announced Mirande now came and asked him to pass into a reception-room which was reserved for favored visitors. There two middle-aged men, both decorated, were sitting on a sofa, talking in a low voice. One of them, in a lounge-coat, had a cigar in his mouth and seemed to be quite at home. He was evidently one of the chiefs of the newspaper. He appeared to be listening. The other man, fashionably dressed and well groomed, was talking rapidly.

Suddenly Mirande caught the name of Quatrefin, the financier. What did they want with him? Habituated now to unravel the double cord of discourse and reflection, he followed the one and the other.

Aloud, the loquacious person criticized the banker with moderation.

"A most intelligent man, very enterprising, very daring. But he wants all. He has launched this affair of wires and electric cables, which, if well directed, would have the most brilliant future, thanks to the development of power transmission and the growing use of water-power. He ought to stop there and be contented. But now he wants the supply of the military aëroplanes. He wants to

found a society, of which all the small constructors would be tributaries, and centralize the orders in his hands—all the inconveniences of monopoly without the advantages. That is too much! That man will end by breaking our banks. In the interest of the army alone he should be stopped.”

And the inward voice:

“Ah, how much I want this enormous supply for myself! Quatrefin is in my way. He ought to disappear. He is supported in this wire and cable business, and I’ve got to stop it. I must trick him. I will buy through an intermediary all the shares I can, and control the market. After that his days are numbered.”

Mirande was beginning to be disgusted at the vile thoughts that so often fill men’s minds. So they were trying to ruin Quatrefin. What was to be done? Should he warn the banker or let him be ruined? A door opened and Favery, well groomed and looking astonishingly young, came to meet him.

The two men on the sofa continued to talk in low voices, and Mirande passed into the director’s private office. A second time he recounted what he could of the two crimes, striving to impose his conviction, and boasting of the advantage of a cam-

paign, the successful result of which was already assured.

Like Raucourt, Favery appeared attentive, but at times he was absent-minded. All the time, while nodding his head gravely in sign of acquiescence, he was noticing that Mirande had shaved himself, for on his neck he had left a few hairs; and he thought the shape of his collar was becoming, and decided to get that make for himself. But, unlike the minister, he allowed himself to be won over to the cause without offering resistance. His conversion was rapid and complete.

"It is understood," he said, getting up from his chair. "I will put you in touch with one of my reporters who occupies himself with these matters. It is a man whom we ourselves pulled out of prison, and we had a hard fight to get him out; and then, although his innocence was established, he found it hard to get employment, so I took him on my newspaper. You see, this man knows everything about judicial errors!"

He certainly knew a great deal about them. Mirande soon gave the journalist all the details concerning the murder of M. Gagny and the trial that followed. He promised to follow the plan that

Favery had traced. He would excite the public curiosity by stating but half the truth, and give out innuendos to stimulate the zeal of the police. But inwardly he rebelled. Mirande penetrated his inmost thoughts, and he was more difficult to convince than either Favery or Raucourt.

It was strange that a man who himself had been unjustly condemned did not believe that another man, accused of a crime, could be innocent.

Once outside the office, Mirande recalled what he had heard about Quatrefin. For Mirande, this was no chance acquaintance whose downfall or whose success he could look upon with an indifferent eye. It was the man who secretly loved Mme. Castellan, the one who had caused him a pang of jealousy which had spoiled his pleasure on seeing Simone again. But then it was also the man who, among so few, had had the courage to stand up and speak for Lacaze, and who had been ready to help him with his money.

Why should he occupy himself with these strifes which occur so frequently between men of wealth? Quatrefin would fall from his height for a time and would cease to cause him jealousy. That would deliver him at least from one anxiety.

Should he let him be ruined when a word from him might save him? Through pure personal interest should he let this man be crushed after he had held out his hand to save Lacaze? Mirande's better nature won.

Ten minutes later he walked into the banker's office. Quatrefin gave him a cordial handshake, and, after a few words of greeting, he said:

"Well, have you seen our friend, Mme. Castil-lan?"

And Mirande, who still retained his power, perceived all the pleasure that Quatrefin felt in talking of Simone, yet mastered his jealousy and would not allow it to turn him from his purpose.

Not being able to explain how he had learned the truth, he told the banker that he had overheard a conversation in one of the rooms at the *Lumière*. And he disclosed to the banker his enemy's plan.

"*Parbleu!*" cried Quatrefin; "it is that beast of a Charlin. I knew he wanted the cake for himself!"

Then he thanked Mirande with a burst of gratitude which Mirande knew was sincere.

"Ah!" he cried; "you have done me a great service. In the business world one man warned is worth one hundred not warned. Now that I know

this in time I can parry the blow; had I remained ignorant, I should not have been able to weather the storm. But, of course—now that I think of it—you must profit by your information. If you wish, I shall be only too happy.”

Mirande flushed. Did Quatrefin think that he wanted to gain something? No, he read the banker's thoughts. He sincerely wished to prove his gratitude in his own manner, as one ready to enter the lists, and who wanted also to speculate in the game. When he saw how sincere the banker was, Mirande hesitated a moment. He was tempted. But he still had the greater part of the sum left that he had won at the Dorville casino, and he hoped to have achieved his task before he had exhausted his reserves.

“No, thanks,” he said; “it would take away all the pleasure I've had in warning you.”

He walked slowly back to the Rue Monge, through the crowded streets which were brilliantly lit up and decorated for the end of the year. The action of the serum, of which he had moderated the dose, was passing off; an impression of serenity had succeeded the excitement and the vertigo that his divining faculty had caused. He went over

these few hours that had passed while under the prodigious influence. What would not another, more ambitious, more rapacious, have accomplished with such a talisman?

How he would have increased his power! In an instant he would have made a fortune on the Bourse. He would have discovered the blemishes hidden in human lives, and have held at his mercy those whose secret shame he had caught.

And if he had disobeyed Brion's last wish, and let the world guess his power, little by little—the man who can read into the depth of hearts! How men would have trembled! How men would have knelt before him!

Yet would this equal the obscure joy of obtaining a little justice?

CHAPTER XII

DROPPING THE MASK

Warmly wrapped in a big coat, Dr. Castillan came down the steps from the hospital, crossed the yard, and went out of the iron gate. His chauffeur had already caught sight of him, and was putting his motor in readiness to start.

But, at the moment when the physician was stepping into his limousine, a harsh voice whispered behind him:

“Pardon, sir, pardon; just two words.”

The physician started and turned round to see who it was. He recognized with as much anxiety as disdain the ruffian who had murdered M. Gagny. Since the day when he had indicated what he required done, he had not seen the man. He thought he had got rid of him forever. And now, the murderer had suddenly sprung up, and had even come forward to speak to him! It was annoying.

Not wishing to show him too much kindness for

fear he might become bold, nor to irritate him with too much severity, he said:

"Well, what do you want?"

"It's about that business—you know. I think the police are trailing me—even some women are mixed up in it now. Two days ago I had to knife a girl. She was from the police. A little more and I'd have been nabbed. She was already hanging over the telephone in a bar by the river. If I hadn't got her it would have been all up. She was yelling out all the time for a M. Maran—Miron——"

"Mirande!" cried Castillan in spite of himself.

"Yes, that's the name—Mirande. Sure, some one who belongs to the police. Do you know him?"

"No, no; I don't know him," Castillan replied quickly. "Well, and what then?"

"Well, you needn't worry, doc; she'll never talk again."

"Dead?" asked Castillan with a gasp.

"As a door-nail. I thought you'd better know about it. But don't you worry. I don't know anything. On my oath! I'm all respect and gratitude—I am."

Castillan bowed his head gravely. He was embarrassed by the presence of his chauffeur and his

colleagues who could see him from the hospital. But very often the poor patients came back to see him, and even spoke to him in the street.

"Very well," he said.

Already he was getting into his car. Then he turned round.

"Where can you be found, if you are wanted?" he asked.

"I've moved," said the fellow, drawing nearer, "because Billancourt, you see, smelt bad for me. My name is Forteau, or the Crab. A letter can be sent to the Deux Goujons, at Charenton."

Castillan dismissed him with a look, then said to his chauffeur:

"Home."

He threw himself back on the cushions and closed his eyes. In spite of this brute's oath, a terrible agony oppressed him. Mirande, then, was on the man's track. Did he suspect the plot that had been hatched against Lacaze? What chimeras! His accomplice and he were the only ones in the world who knew the truth. And neither one nor the other had spoken. But who was the woman? How did she know Mirande? He could easily get information about her. He would find out through the po-

lice who the victim was that they had found two days before, stabbed, on the quays on the outskirts of the city.

The auto stopped. His face regained its smiling indifference. As he went into his office Simone met him.

“Do you know,” she asked, “that Francette has not yet come back? Don’t you think it is time we informed the police?”

Then suddenly a suspicion came into his mind. The maid had disappeared two days ago. Perhaps she had been placed there to spy upon him. Perhaps she was the girl whom the apache had killed. At first he had not attached much importance to her disappearance. This Francette seemed to have absurd ways. He had thought she was rather capricious, and that perhaps she had a love affair. He had expected her to return from hour to hour.

Now various indications came back to his memory—papers upset, drawers opened. He had only thought this vulgar curiosity, such as servants often show; but perhaps it was a sign of something worse.

His resolution was quickly taken.

“You are right,” he said to his wife: “I will in-

form the police at once that this girl is missing, but first I will see if she has left anything in her room that might help them to find her."

Refusing aid, he took a hammer and some tweezers and went up the servants' staircase to Francette's room. He began at once to attack the trunk, her poor shabby trunk which served her for cupboard, writing-desk, and safe. With three blows the weak lock gave way.

He feverishly scattered over the room the neatly folded clothes and the small piles of underlinen. There was nothing in particular. Already his hand touched the bottom of the trunk. He was despairing of finding any clue, when suddenly he came across a piece of paper cut out of a journal. It was the portrait of Gabriel Mirande.

It was a good likeness that had probably been published at the time when Brion died, and a careful hand had cut it out with the scissors.

Castillan's face wore an ugly sneer. Ah, he had not made a mistake then? This girl knew Mirande. She even kept his portrait so that she could look at it in secret as though it were something she prized. Yet he must not get on a false track. She might, perhaps, have been in his service years before, and,

seeing her late master's portrait in the newspaper, had simply cut it out. But he must find out if she still had any relations with him.

He emptied the trunk, strewing all the contents on the floor, but he found nothing else of interest. The portrait was sufficient. Gabriel Mirande and his wife's maid knew one another. He was giving a last look around the room when he saw on the dressing-table a pair of cuffs that the maid had worn and had evidently taken off just before she had left. He seemed to discern the figures written in lead-pencil on the linen.

He went over to the dresser and read: "1326-21 and 1900-05."

The first was the telephone number of the Brion institute; they often asked for it at the hospital to get serums. The other he did not know. That was evidently a private telephone at Mirande's home. He must have had it put in. This young savant was branching out since his old master had died.

He took note of the number, went down-stairs, and looked it up in the directory. It was as he thought. The girl wanted to have the numbers always under her eyes so that she could communicate with him either at his laboratory or at his home.

So they were spying on his movements. They had been watching him from the shadows. But he was not the man to give himself up without a fight. After all, of what was he afraid? Who could prove that he had anything to do with the murder? The other man would never speak even if his head were on the block!

How much did this Mirande know and just what was he wanting to find out? Castillan came to a decision. He would face the enemy. He would take the offensive—that was always the secret of victory. Under pretext of demanding an account of the savant's spying, he would learn his intentions, and what information he already had and his suspicions. This was the only way to put a stop to his spying in the future.

Early the next morning Castillan called at the Brion institute. Mirande read with amazement the name on the card that the porter brought to him. He felt uneasy. Whatever could he want? He regretted that he was not armed with this power that had given him all the advantage in his interviews with Favery and Raucourt. If the serum had acted instantly how quickly he would have had recourse

to the divine power. At once he would have unmasked and foiled the plans of this scoundrel.

He received his visitor in his late master's laboratory. Very much at ease, Castillan sat down on the sofa where the dying chemist had revealed to his pupil his incredible discovery. He placed his arms across the cushions, crossed his legs, and carelessly swung the point of his shoe to and fro.

"My friend," he began, "I want to ask you something—some information about a servant. A short time ago my wife engaged a maid—a girl named Francette. Three days ago she disappeared from the house. Yesterday, before notifying the police that she was missing, I wanted to see myself if I could find out anything from the things that she had left in her room. Among her belongings I found your portrait——"

"My portrait!"

Poor little Francette, how like her!

"Yes," continued Castillan, "your portrait. Oh, it was simply a print cut out of a newspaper. I thought at once that this girl had been in your service, and that being proud—and with every good reason—of her late master, she had cut it out of

some newspaper for herself. I have not made a mistake, I presume?"

Was he mocking him? Was he sincere? Gabriel dug his nails into the palms of his hands. Oh, if he could know the real thoughts of this man!

Mirande thought it would be better to tell the truth, for probably Castillan had something in reserve for him that would stupefy him.

"My sister and I did have a servant of that name," he said.

"And she left you recently?" continued Castillan. "You must pardon me for asking these questions, which seem almost to take the form of an investigation, but you will understand from what point of view I look at this matter. It is for the poor girl's interest. Perhaps you may know her family or some one belonging to her; perhaps she came occasionally to see your sister after she left your employ. Perhaps you, yourself, have not broken all relations with her?"

Mirande could bear it no longer. This time he was obliged to lie.

"No, no. We have not seen her since she left here," he said.

Castillan got up to go. With a sneer on his face, he said insolently:

"Why did I find your telephone number and the number of the Brion institute written on the cuffs that she had just taken off? Was that also a tender memory? A testimony of love like the portrait? Throw aside your mask, M. Mirande. I know. You placed that girl in my house to spy upon me. I have the right to ask why you did that. Speak!"

Mirande also had risen from his seat. How he would like to throw all that he knew in this villain's face, but he could not until they had caught the murderer, his accomplice. But it was impossible for him to hide his contempt any longer.

"And it is you who ask me that?" he said in a penetrating voice.

"*Parbleu!* Yes, it is I who ask you," said Castillan, "and I insist. I will not permit any one to meddle in my affairs. I see I was mistaken—I thought you were a straightforward young man. How convenient! You win your servant's affection, and then send her to act as a spy in a friend's house!"

The wretch!—to cast a slur on poor little Fran-

cette whom Doisteau seemed to despair of saving! The scoundrel must believe that he was not suspected, or he would not dare to push his audacity so far.

Mirande tried hard to control his temper.

"For you are one of our friends," continued Castellan. "I do not forget that it was you who saved my wife; and I am most grateful to you, although, when I think it over, I cannot understand why, in the middle of the night, you were leaning over her grave, so near as to be able to hear her moans. A jealous husband might think it odd that a friend of her childhood should suffer so much at her death. But from you—well, nothing astonishes me now—and you are quite capable, after having been friendly with the maid, to employ her to help you with other love affairs——"

Dare to smirch Simone! That, never! Anything but that!

"Silence! silence!" cried Mirande with flashing eyes. "Do not try me too far. You can see how difficult it is for me to control myself. You can see how much I despise you; what contempt I have for you, you blackguard! I know you—understand—I know you!"

“Bah!” said Castillan with a sneering smile; “that is jealousy, and the lowest kind of jealousy. The rage of a little fellow who has been jilted, and who sees his ideal in the arms of another. But you will not have her. I know how to keep her.”

This was too much. Mirande burst out:

“Yes, by burying her alive, I suppose.”

Castillan, still impassive, said:

“Aha, and who told you that?”

“I know it. You wanted to kill her, the same as you killed M. Gagny, and for the same reason that you are sending Lacaze to the galleys, so as to get all the money—all the money to give to that woman Lambrine!”

He stopped, afraid of having betrayed himself. But he hoped that at last he had crushed this man. But, no; very calm, with a half smile on his face, Castillan bowed.

“Is that all?” he asked. “Have I not committed still some more crimes? It must be the atmosphere of this laboratory—you have become like old Brion, because, between ourselves, at the end of his life he was slightly demented. This pessimism, this misanthropy, that one finds in his last days, testifies to senile decay. But you, at least, are not waiting for

old age. You will have to be careful, you know. One does not throw accusations like this in a man's face without being able to prove them."

Mirande did not reply. He must not say more or he would betray himself. Castillan took his silk hat from the table and brushed it carelessly with the back of his sleeve.

"Understand," he said, "I am not angry. I am only anxious about you. For you know that this game that you are playing can easily put you into a strait-jacket."

Mirande let the insult pass in silence. He had already said far too much, but happily he had been able to keep the secret of his power. And the anxiety not to let it be snatched from him sealed his lips.

"Go! go!" he muttered between his set teeth.

"That is the first sensible word that you have uttered," said Castillan dryly. "Yes, I think that it is just as well that I do go, for if I stay longer my presence would only excite you more. But now," he added in a severe tone and shaking his finger threateningly, "mind you remember my advice. If you don't want to get yourself into trouble, you had better not repeat your absurd accusations unless you

can prove them; and I defy you to prove them—I defy you!”

He placed his hat on his head at a tilted angle, then he went out of the room, smiling and repeating the words:

“I defy you—I defy you!”

CHAPTER XIII

AS BRION HAD FORETOLD

Leaning against the balustrades of the grand staircase of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mirande watched the guests arriving. It was a diplomatic reception in all its gorgeous splendor. Black dress-suits, brilliant uniforms, and beautiful gowns spread out along the steps their polychrome stream. An usher stationed near a doorway listened attentively to the titles and the names, and called them out in a lusty voice. Farther along stood the minister and his wife, bowing slightly to some, more impressively to others, shaking hands with a continual good grace and a fixed smile.

Mirande was waiting for Raucourt to arrive. He had seized this occasion to meet him so that he would not be obliged to ask for another interview. He wanted to keep the minister to his promise and stimulate his zeal. Castillan's arrogance and cynicism when he had called upon him at the institute had added another spur to Mirande's impatience to show up the hypocrite. But the "Incorruptible" did

not appear. Perhaps he would not condescend to attend his colleague's reception. While waiting, Mirande caught the thoughts of the crowd, for he was again under the influence of the serum.

Most of the people were bored; some wanted to make a show. A little Balkan attaché wore a tight-fitting suit all in gold; he was worrying because he had not received his pay; an austere ambassador was composing an enticing *billet-doux*; a Russian soldier, with a beard shaped like a fan, a sword clanking by his side, was longing for the champagne on the buffet; a Japanese was thinking with regret of his gardens where the leaves of the lotus slept; an influential, vigorous American was despising the anemic races of the Old World.

"His excellency, the ambassador of Italy!" announced the usher.

Gabriel looked curiously at the little bald man. His presence at this function was particularly significant at this moment when France and Italy were disputing the power in Tripoli under the eye of Turkey. The relations of the two nations, after having been strained to the extreme, were softening at last. His excellency seemed to carry in his short person all the benevolence and good-will of a

conciliator. The minister shook him warmly by the hand. He took him into the salon which was reserved for the diplomats; here they talked together amiably, apparently in accord with one another.

The staircase was now crowded with officials decorated with various orders. Lovely women looked discreetly for the homage that was due to their beauty. A group of professors passed; Mirande was surprised that their thoughts were foreign to arts and sciences. Here and there were mothers with daughters dressed in dainty, girlish frocks. The same anxiety occupied each mother. Would they be able to find a husband?

Mirande recognized in the distance Favery, Delacoste, and Dutoit, whose ferreting eye-glasses came up as far as his neighbor's shoulder. Dutoit, eager for prestige, regretted that the councilors of the court—he had just been elected—could not wear their gowns at the official receptions.

In the hall an orchestra was playing a waltz. Gabriel listened dreamily, seeking in the voice of the music a diversion from all these human voices. Was it another effect of the serum, or really a brusque reaction?—the contrast between this gorgeous function and his life of tragedy. But, under

the almost painful influence of a keen sensibility, the harmony stretched his nerves and ran like a shudder all over his body.

He left the balustrades and sauntered into the salons. Everywhere they were dancing. He made his way with difficulty, for the couples knocked up against him at every turn, and, at the same moment, he received the involuntary confidence. Anxiety to keep step, anxiety to find a subject of conversation, tender wishes, gallant desires, confessions that the lips dared not utter, bubbled up and spun round under the unseeing eyes of the mothers who were dreaming of the blessedness of sleep.

But the kaleidoscope changed. Mirande was weary. He glanced again toward the entrance. Raucourt had not come, unless he were in the diplomatic salon, access to which was forbidden to the profane.

He stopped modestly on the threshold. No Raucourt. But their excellencies were busily talking and complimenting themselves.

What were they hiding under their grave foreheads? Mirande fixed his mind upon them, but, to his amazement, he only caught but a strange cacophony. There was such a jumble, it was scarcely

comprehensible. What was the matter? Was his prodigious faculty all muddled? It was working abnormally. He again concentrated his attention, but the waves remained untranslatable. Then, in a flash, he understood.

These people are thinking in their own language. It was the Tower of Babel!

Yet, just now, on the staircase, he had caught the thoughts of the little attaché in gold, the booted Russian, and the genial American. Why, of course! They had become Parisians. The sons of the Balkans had studied in Paris, the American lived in the capital eight months out of the year, and the Russian passed all his time there. Their thoughts were crystallized in the language of adoption.

Mirande deplored his ignorance. Apart from Italian, which he had studied for some time when he was traveling with Brion, he was ignorant of all the foreign dialects. To possess absolute power, the holder of the serum ought to be a polyglot.

His interest was concentrated on the Italian ambassador. He was more comprehensible to him, and also nearer to him. At this moment he was conversing with a dowager with a white wig; he confirmed the conciliating rôle that he was playing in

the affairs of Tripoli. In every respect, he admitted that a conflict would have been disastrous for the two nations.

But, now, what a shock for Mirande—what emotion for his humanity! This man lied! He lied with superb satisfaction, with secret pleasure. He had learned the same evening, by special courier, the determination of his king to land at Tripoli and plant his dominating heel on the ancient African soil.

Mirande was astounded. All his horror of war surged up. Quick! He must prevent this terrible catastrophe!

He must act quickly; but where should he go? Whom should he inform? Raucourt! Yes, he was the most influential man that he knew; and, besides, he was an active man and ambitious, and he would grasp this opportunity to save his country from a war, or from humiliation. Ah, how thankful they would be to the one who had brought them this providential news!

Mirande hurried out, knocking the people aside as he passed. Outside, the weather was bitterly cold. It was freezing.

"To the Minister of Justice, Place Vendôme," he said to the cabman. "Go quickly!"

They drove down the streets that were almost deserted. The few automobiles going along on the frozen ground showed visions of luxury—a sleeping couple returning from a dinner, a woman nestling among her furs.

The Place Vendôme was deserted. At the threshold of the ministry two guards were warming themselves by stamping about. Mirande forged into the entrance.

"Where are you going?" cried a concierge, running out of his lodge.

"I want to see the minister."

"At this hour! Is he expecting you?"

"No, but I must speak to him. I have something to communicate to him—something very serious—and I must——"

He stopped. He saw the man looking at him anxiously.

"Another madman," thought the concierge; "they have been coming quick lately."

Forcing himself to be calm, Mirande continued in a complacent tone:

"Yes, I am afraid you must find my act unusual

at this hour; but give my card to the minister with these few words—I know him.”

He drew out his note-book and prepared to scribble a few words.

“It is useless, sir,” interrupted the concierge. “No one can see the minister without a letter of audience. He would not receive you. Write to-morrow!”

“His secretary, then. I will explain to him, and I am sure——”

“But the secretary is not there at this hour!”

“Is there no one in the office?”

“No one.”

Gabriel had a bright idea.

“Listen to me,” he said. “See, here is a louis—here are five—here are ten, if you can arrange that I see the minister at once.”

He felt that he had made a good move, for the money sorely tempted the man. Yet, no; he would not risk his place for so little.

“It is impossible,” he said.

Mirande became angry. After all, a minister should be accessible to every one, and when great interests were at stake, when, through some news

learned on that same evening, the fate of the whole country depended!

They should let him pass; no one should prevent him from speaking to the minister.

"Go to bed—that will be better for you," said the concierge soothingly.

"I tell you I will see him!" cried Gabriel, overcome with rage. "I'd rather strangle you than not speak to him to-night."

That was enough. The concierge dodged, then rushed at the intruder, and grabbed him by the collar and carried him outside.

Mirande struggled vainly. The two guards ran up and used their fists freely, and soon overcame his resistance. Then what a painful sight—an individual in evening suit showing a broad expanse of white shirt, no hat on his head, shouting and struggling between two gendarmes who were dragging him along to the nearest police station.

As they passed down the street, Mirande caught the thoughts of pity or blame from passers-by.

"It is a madman," said some. "He is drunk," said others.

"I am neither drunk nor mad—help me!" implored Mirande, his voice choking with rage. But

the police gravely shook their heads and continued on their way.

At the station-house they threw him down on a bench. The action of the serum had almost passed off. He only caught weak rumors from the nearest officers. Now that he was calm, he was able to look the situation clearly in the face. It did not appear to him hopeless. They could not accuse him of any crime; he had simply tried to defend himself. The police were in the wrong. The moment he explained he would be given his liberty. There would then be time to act.

The magistrate soon arrived. He was a pompous, zealous official. He acknowledged the military salute from the underlings and passed into his office. He listened, first of all, to the concierge's report, then to the guards who had arrested him; then he ordered the prisoner to be brought in.

"Sit down there on that seat," he said.

From the severe tone in which these few words were uttered, Gabriel understood that the magistrate intended to take the matter seriously. He felt weak before this authority. His timidity, which had been driven back under the effects of the serum, came over him again.

"I want to speak to you alone," he said.

"Tell me what it is about," he said curtly.

Ah, this accursed timidity! At each phrase Gabriel lost ground. Stammering, searching for his words, he told as well as he could what had happened—how he had overheard a diplomatic secret, and had thought that he should bring it at once to the minister whom he knew.

"You were in the salon reserved for the diplomats?"

"No—near the door."

"And who were the persons who were discussing these affairs?"

"The ambassador of a neighboring country and an old lady."

"French?"

"I don't know."

"Was the conversation in French?"

"I think so."

"You think—— And what was this secret?"

"It concerns the safety of our country—the peace of Europe. You understand why I wish only to confide such a secret to the minister himself. You must pardon me if I am not able to tell it to you."

"As you like; but I must tell you that your story seems incredible."

"Incredible, and why?"

"This secret that, according to you, was revealed by an ambassador to an old lady, you do not even know in what language it was spoken?"

"It was in Italian, naturally. I did not quite understand your question," said Gabriel, trying to straighten matters. But he felt, nevertheless, that he was injuring himself still more. The magistrate, however, seemed to be satisfied with this explanation.

"Very well," he continued; "but still there is something that is astonishing in what you tell me. It seems strange that you were standing near the door, and that you were able to hear a conversation that must have been carried on in low voices because of its serious character. And you heard it in spite of all the talk that was going on in that crowded room. Is that possible?"

"Certainly, because I did hear it."

"He was shouting his secret, your ambassador? The old lady must have been deaf."

"No, she was not deaf. They simply did not imagine that they were overheard."

"Well, I cannot understand how their words could have reached your ears."

Mirande began to get annoyed.

"What does it matter how I heard it? I beg you, in the name of your patriotism, in your own interest, to give me my liberty, and help me to get to M. Raucourt."

The magistrate threw up his arms.

"Your liberty! How you talk! Just think for a moment how extraordinary your conduct is!"

Mirande suddenly made up his mind. He would confide the secret to the magistrate. He got up from his seat and took a step toward the magistrate, but the police quickly took hold of him.

"Let him go—he is not dangerous," said the magistrate.

Gabriel started.

"Dangerous! What do you mean by that? Do you take me for a madman?"

"No, no! If I did, I should not be listening to you."

"Well, this is what I heard this evening."

And he leaned over the desk, putting his face close to the magistrate's and whispered his secret—the quarrel of the two countries revived, the seiz-

ure of Tripoli. The magistrate appeared to listen with gravity, even with anguish.

"That is indeed very serious," he murmured.

Gabriel was elated.

"And you will help me now?"

"Certainly."

"At last!"

The magistrate wrote a few words quickly and gave it to his secretary, who, without more explanation, withdrew. Then very benevolently he said: "Ah, well, we will arrange that. I am going to send you to your minister, but you must be patient for a moment. They have gone to order a carriage."

"For such a short distance?" asked Gabriel in surprise.

"M. Raucourt has his private abode. He does not sleep at the ministry," explained the magistrate.

Then he also left the room, leaving the prisoner alone with the two guards. For a quarter of an hour Mirande waited. How he chafed at this cruel delay! At last the rumbling of a taxi told him that they had not forgotten him. The secretary returned at the same time and handed him his opera hat that they had picked up in the street.

"I will accompany you to the ministry," he said.

Too late Mirande saw the horrible position that he was in.

It was when the cab stopped and the dim light from a street lamp showed a dismal building a *gendarme* seized him by the arm and drew him through a low door. There was a brief conversation, a clink of keys, the corridors—a cell!

CHAPTER XIV

CASTILLAN PLAYS A TRUMP

When Mirande stood face to face with the little bald-headed, black-bearded man in the black frock coat decorated with a rosette, he knew at once that he was before the official medical expert of the Paris police.

At last he would be able to explain! He was sure that he could convince the doctor that there had been a misunderstanding. His plan was all traced out. He had thought deeply during his sleepless hours. He had resolved not to get into a rage again, and he would be ready for the traps that they would certainly lay for him. He looked at his inquisitor. Two deep lines marked his cheeks down to his beard. His look was straight and sharp, but the ensemble was loyal, almost sympathetic.

Mirande had seen his face before; he remembered having seen his portrait in various publications. He had certainly heard of his reputation. He searched

his memory for a moment, then suddenly he remembered. It was Brimmel, the alienist.

He quietly allowed him to make his examination. He placed himself willingly in the light, as he was asked to do. He replied calmly to the questions put to him. Still, Mirande had the annoyance of seeing that Brimmel had begun his examination with preconceived ideas of his insanity.

The doctor showed that indulgence and affability that one uses with persons whom it is unwise to contradict and whose confidence one wishes to gain.

"Look here, doctor," Mirande protested; "don't use any tricks with me, I beg of you."

"Doctor! Who said I was a doctor?" said the pseudo-judge in astonishment.

"I know that you are an alienist, that you are here to examine my mental condition; but your interrogation takes an absurd trend, at least to one who is sound of mind. Now, I ask you—would a judge have placed me in the full light, as you have done, to examine the equality of the pupils of my eyes? Would he have questioned me as one questions a person of deranged mind—using flattery to make me talk? Now I am going, if you will per-

mit me, to furnish you at once with the elementary tests. Let us commence by the reflex."

Methodically, he crossed his limbs. He knocked his knee, giving a sharp rap on the tendon, which joins the knee-cap to the shin. His limb, at this provocation, sprang forward with a quick start which showed that he possessed a normal nervous system.

"You have studied medicine, *monsieur?*" asked the doctor in surprise.

"I have frequently visited the wards in the sanatorium where persons of unsound mind are guarded—notably the wards at Bicêtre and Salpêtrière."

The alienist made a vague gesture which Gabriel interpreted at once.

"Yes, I see—you are thinking that many irresponsible persons escape detection. Well, so be it. Let us discuss those ideas which obsess me the most—speak of my life, my work. Now we will see if my faculties are going to get confused."

For the first time, Brimmel found himself before a subject who discussed his own case, and who put questions which he, himself, ought to have put. He was quite disarmed. But insanity wore so many

peculiar aspects, and showed so much apparent logic, that he was not yet convinced.

"All the charges against my mentality are summed up in this," continued Mirande: "I have given as to the origin of a certain momentous secret a suspicious explanation to the police. But suppose, for instance, that I got this secret information from a person whom I cannot name; or suppose that I was fortunate enough to discover it in a way which I cannot possibly divulge; it is only logical that I should improvise a story. I have made a blundering mess of it; otherwise, I should not be standing here before you now. That is all there is to the affair. Have I explained it like a madman?"

"Decidedly not."

Gabriel saw that he had almost won his point.

"Besides," he continued, "on such slight testimony they do not deliberately shut up a man, even if he be a maniac, providing he does not offer any menace to public security. I am not dangerous; and the decision that you might take against me could be severely censured by the press."

This insinuation was the strongest argument that Mirande could use.

"Yes, the press is not always obliging," the alien-

ist replied, stretching out his hand toward the inkstand.

He was on the point of signing a favorable report which would give the prisoner his freedom, when a warden entered and said a few words to him. Brimmel got up hastily.

"Wait for me, and take heart," he said as he left the room.

Mirande would not have had that look of pleasure in his eyes if he had known that Castillan had called to see the alienist; they were talking together on the other side of the partition.

A brief paragraph that had been published at the last moment in the early morning papers had informed Castillan of his enemy's adventure. What luck! The young savant represented a constant danger, a living menace for him. He knew! How he knew, Castillan was unable to explain, but he was positive that he knew of his crime. Since their last interview, Castillan had been trying to devise some means to get rid of his enemy and silence him once for all. And now, this short paragraph in the paper had caught his eye. Once again Fate was tempting him.

He knew the hour that the alienist was to make

his examination. He arrived at the right moment. He greeted Dr. Brimmel cordially. He had known him for a long time. They frequently met at stag-dinners given by a society of which Castillan was president. Here all serious questions were rigorously banished. The sympathies and friendships were soldered by the warmth of fine wines.

As they were shaking hands, Castillan looked toward the office and said:

"You have a case?"

"Yes, I am examining Mirande—you know, the young savant, one of Brion's followers."

"Mirande arrested!" exclaimed Castillan. He was thoughtful for a moment, then he said slowly: "It is no more than I expected."

"Why! What do you mean?"

"He is mad."

"He does not appear so to me. In fact, I was just going to make out a favorable report of his case."

"Be very careful, my dear fellow."

His voice, his expression, denoted such conviction that Brimmel began to get anxious.

"You know something, then?"

"Oh, no," said Castillan, holding out his hand

at the same moment to say good-by. He seemed to know something, but deemed it more cautious to remain silent. Brimmel held him by the button of his coat.

"You know something; I can tell it by your action. Tell me; what is it?"

"Yes; but what about professional secrets?"

"What—between us?"

Castillan hesitated, then generously said: "No; it would not be charitable. I could not."

Again he tried to free himself from Brimmel, but the alienist held him and begged him to speak, urging their good relations, the services that medical men owed to one another, and his fear of another scandal with those accursed newspapers.

"Ah, well," said Castillan reluctantly; "for a long time I have known about that poor young fellow. In my opinion, he should have been put into a cell long ago. I consider he is a most dangerous case. Just imagine, I myself was almost one of his victims."

"You?"

Castillan shrugged his shoulders.

"He made some ridiculous charges; but it is not worth speaking of them."

"Yes, tell me," Brimmel insisted.

"Well, we came into some money through my wife's cousin, and he pretended that I had had this cousin murdered; that, in order to profit alone by this inheritance, I had put my wife into a trance and had her buried alive; and another accusation, even more absurd—ideas that could only germinate in a deranged mind."

"*Sapristi!* What a good thing you have told me; and I was just going to give him his freedom."

"It is safer to keep him under your eye, at least for a few days," advised Castillan; "so that you can watch him."

Then, before leaving, he courteously proposed to wait for Brimmel. He had his car outside, and he would put him down at his home after he had finished with the young savant. As the alienist hesitated, fearing that he might be some time longer, Castillan insisted.

"Yes, yes, come; we get so few opportunities to chat together."

"Very well; just wait for me and I'll be back soon," said Brimmel.

When Mirande saw him enter the room, he knew

at once that his opinion had changed. He had come back to him—his judge!

“Well, I am sorry, I find I shall be obliged to keep you.”

He was overwhelmed with despair. Through all the fog he had seen a ray of hope. Now they were going to condemn him. What could he do? How could he get his liberty?

There was only one way out of it. He would have to tell the alienist about Brion's discovery. But his old master had exhorted him to keep it a secret. It would be a sacrilege to divulge it. He reasoned with himself quickly. Evidently, in enjoining him to keep silent, the old chemist had not foreseen that there might be complications. He had been generous and good, and he would have bowed before the force of circumstances. And it seemed to Mirande that he was in communication with the great searcher in the other world, and that he said to him: “Speak; I permit you.”

There was a look of agony on his face as he turned, half dazed, toward the alienist.

“Pardon me, doctor,” he said in a halting voice. “I have not told you the entire truth. You are urging me to make a confession that costs me a

great deal—a very great deal—but I owe it to you. You shall know it.”

What emotion, what sadness and solemnity, Mirande felt when at last he dared to reveal the great discovery! Alas! and all for what? A smile of compassion. Brimmel did not believe him. He bent his head in pitying skepticism.

Then the unfortunate prisoner launched forth in a theoretic explanation of the serum—for, to convince the doctor, he must have recourse to scientific statements. But it was useless. Brimmel was not even listening; he had taken a pencil and was absently tracing some lines on a piece of paper. Then he pushed aside his sketch and looked at his note-book.

This gesture gave Mirande an inspiration. For half an hour he had tried to convince the doctor. Why had he not thought of the decisive testimony? He carried the proof on him. It was there in his pocket.

“I see that you do not believe me, doctor,” he said.

“Yes, I do.”

“No, you do not believe me. But I am going to force you to do so. Consent only to call me in an

hour, the time the serum takes to act—so that I shall be fully impregnated with it—and then not one of your thoughts will escape me. I will tell them all to you—all. And, at last, I shall be able to vindicate myself, and those who want to overthrow me will be convinced.”

The alienist looked up, interested.

“My faith—I am curious to see that.”

Buoyed up with a new hope, Gabriel took out his case that fortunately they had left him. He opened it. But, at the same time, he gave a cry of despair.

“Ah, the wretches! The wretches!”

“What is it now?” questioned Brimmel.

“They have broken the glass receptacle.”

“That is a great pity. But surely you have some more?”

The question restored Mirande. To show this interest Brimmel must believe him. At least, he must have shaken his skepticism.

In truth, Brimmel’s doubts were shaken. This thing, although it might seem incredible, was not impossible. Brion had such a wonderful brain, so powerful, so prolific. Twenty years ago wouldn’t a man have been considered a lunatic if he had said that he would fly in a machine heavier than air, or

telegraph without wires, or take a photograph of the skeleton through the thickness of the flesh? And, besides, prudence had now become Brimmel's dominating virtue.

"Yes, certainly I have more," replied Mirande; "I possess a quantity, and you can easily find them, also the formula and the physiological observations concerning the serum. They are in a safe in my own laboratory."

"Rue Mechain? I know. And the safe?"

"You cannot make a mistake. It is built in the wall near the fireplace."

Mirande detached one of the keys from a ring.

"This is the key," he said.

He hesitated still, for one moment, as though loath to give up the key. He seemed to want to fathom with a look the doctor's soul. He thought he saw loyalty there.

"I swore that I would never be separated from this key," he said in a low voice; "but circumstances are too much for me. And I have faith in you, doctor. I confide it to you and I trust that no other person will open the safe—and that once your investigation is made——"

"You have my word," said the alienist, slipping

the little key into his waistcoat pocket and closing his register.

"Out of consideration for you," he added, "I will put off giving in my report until later. I hope that it will be favorable. But, as I cannot draw any conclusions, you understand that I must keep you here until I have verified what you tell me."

"If it must be——"

Brimmel left the room.

"And this poor fellow?" asked Castillan.

Brimmel related what had happened when he returned to his office, the extraordinary confession, the story of the key, the serum, and the safe walled in the laboratory.

Castillan listened eagerly. What a revelation! All was clear now! This explained Mirande's attitude and his accusations. How could he have known the truth about Simone and about Gagny if he had not possessed a supernatural power. He believed in this discovery! Indeed, he, Castillan, believed all these affirmations that Brimmel related so skeptically. While speaking, Brimmel had instinctively taken the key from his waistcoat pocket. He showed it in support of his story.

"Is that the key to the famous safe?" asked Castillan.

"Well, that is the one that he gave me as such."

"Show it to me."

Castillan took it, threw it up in the air, caught it and threw it up again.

And still playing with the key, throwing it up and catching it at hazard, and his manner gay and grave by turns, he talked to Brimmel. He tried to demolish, word by word, the alienist's already shaking faith. What was he, Brimmel, going to do in this laboratory? Verify the ravings of a maniac? Lose an hour of his precious time through this huge joke? Why, Mirande was mad, quite mad; and he should be kept behind the bars of a cell.

He slipped the ring of the key on his little finger with a sort of voluptuous pleasure.

"I don't have to tell you," he continued, "that there are among us quite a category of poor lunatics, who go through life dragging along their malady. They are harmless so long as circumstances are not against them, but they are capable at any moment of being overcome with a morbid impulse which makes them dangerous for people at large. One cannot punish them. They need care."

"Yet, Brion's discovery!"

"But Brion was one of these superior degenerates, whose brain is shared by genius and lunacy—and this Mirande has gone the same way as his master. Have you not, yourself, in your last work, considered these phenomena of alienation, which are somewhat contagious—dual lunacy?"

He had touched the right spot. This allusion to his work flattered Brimmel. He felt puffed up with pride. He began to dream of his near promotion at the Academy of Medicine. Castillan profited by this pleasant reverie to close his hand entirely over the key.

Brimmel had forgotten it.

"I am pleased to know that you think so highly of it," said Brimmel; "but to come back to Mirande—it seems to me that it is a matter of duty for me to carry this investigation to the limit. My conscience tells me to do so."

"Your conscience! I admire you for listening to what your conscience tells you. But, at the same time, one must consider that one might become an object of ridicule."

The automobile stopped.

"Here you are at your home," said Castillan.

Brimmel jumped out of the car, said good-by, and thanked Castillan, then went under the gateway of his house.

"Home," said Castillan to his chauffeur.

The machine moved. The doctor threw himself back in the depths of the car, his heart beating violently, his fingers clasping the key.

"I have it! Now I hold her! I hold all!" he breathed in mad delirium.

Then he sneered: "Ah, poor fool Brimmel—you'll be lucky if you find me to-day."

What was the matter? The car had scarcely started than it was pulling up. Castillan leaned out and saw Brimmel with arms raised running toward him.

"The key," he said breathlessly: "you did not give me back my key."

"Ah, pardon—here it is."

Castillan, disarmed, cursed softly; then uttered an exclamation of satisfaction. Already he could see the great claws of Crab, the apache, forcing the safe and uncovering its mystery.

CHAPTER XV

THE INSANE ASYLUM

Jeanne rang the bell of the large iron gate at the entrance. The site was not gloomy as she had feared it might be, but, on the contrary, the surroundings were rather pleasant. The park was on a gentle hill. Here and there were winding alleys and gravel foot-paths. On the lawns, which were still green, the shrubs were carefully covered with straw for the winter. The great trees spread out their branches with a gesture of protection. To the right and to the left could be seen some pretty pavilions of brick and stone. The principal building, of Greek design, was surrounded by trees. A pale wintry sun filtered through the bare branches, but the birds were happy and kept up their incessant song.

Jeanne thought how charming this spot would be in the spring and the summer, but why must it be profaned by the gold-lettered inscription displayed

on the front of the gate: "Sanatorium"—refuge for deranged minds, a beautiful tomb.

Her brother had been brought to this asylum the night before.

A concierge appeared in answer to her ring. His face was fat and genial; he took off his cap and gave her the information she wanted. Then he opened a little door in the big iron gate and rang a bell to announce her visit.

"You must see the director first," he said, kindly.

"Yes, I know. Will you take me to him?"

They walked toward the imposing building.

"Do you know the patients at all?" she asked.

"My brother came here yesterday."

"A new one. Yes, I know him."

"How is he—better?"

"Evidently; they let him walk alone in the park. He looks very gentle, poor man."

Jeanne breathed. A weight seemed lifted from her chest. She passed some patients. They seemed inoffensive, although the keepers walked beside them. They looked at her calmly. Some were talking in quiet voices. There were no signs of fetters; nor anything to terrify one. She heard no

cries or shrieks. It was nothing like what she had feared.

The director was polite and sympathetic.

"Is he worse?" the girl asked.

"Not at all," replied the doctor, "but I find him very gloomy. I have tried to get him interested in some work, but in vain. I have taken him my own books to read, but it is useless. To vindicate himself and go from here—that is his fixed idea. Perhaps you will have more luck than I."

"I can see him?"

"Why certainly. I am even going to leave you alone with him; but be careful to stand within reach of the bell."

"You terrify me, doctor," cried Jeanne. "It is not that I fear for myself, but for him. Oh! I beg of you tell me the truth. Must he stay here long?"

The doctor became more reserved.

"Wait! wait! We do not know yet. I was examining him at the moment when you arrived. Mental pathology is so complicated, so obscure. Give me some days to form my opinion. I will tell you frankly then, I promise you. Now," he added, "will you follow me?"

They passed down a passage with rooms on either

side, and arranged in such a way that one keeper could watch the entire length of it. It was like the corridor of a hotel. The doctor, after having knocked on one of the doors, went into a room and reappeared immediately.

"I have told him that you are here," he said; "he is waiting for you. I can give you half an hour, or a little more. I will come back for you."

Without fear, but not without emotion, Jeanne entered the room. Gabriel held out his arms to her.

"Jeannot! At last, my Jeannot!"

"Gabriel!"

Brother and sister were locked in each other's arms. She kissed him and stroked his cheek and murmured words as one does to a little child to calm its fears.

"Jeannot, my little sister—my own little sister, I knew that nothing would prevent you from coming. I was so sure that I would see you to-day. Ah, little Jeannot, how I have wanted you!"

Then he drew back a step.

"At least you do not believe that I have lost my reason," he questioned; "you know that I am all right?"

"Yes, dearest, of course."

But he must have penetrated her doubt. His tone changed suddenly, and he said almost brusquely: "Sit down. They will probably only let you stay a short time. They are afraid of tiring me. How long have they told you you can be with me?"

"A half hour."

"That is sufficient for a man who still knows how to collect his ideas, no matter what they say about him. Listen attentively to all I say."

Clearly and logically he told her the truth. He had been obliged to confess it to Brimmel, so why should he hide it from his sister? He told her all that had happened from the night when he had exhumed Simone, up to the evening when he had been thrown into a cell.

Jeanne was dazed. What a revelation! There was the certitude of her fiancé's innocence, that Castellan was a scoundrel of the deepest dye! There were crimes and mysteries. She was afraid. All this—was it not the dream of a muddled brain?

Then, with all the clearness of a firm logic, she examined the facts. Evidently, a miracle only could explain them.

Without a marvelous power of divination how could Gabriel have heard Simone through the stones

of her grave? How could he have discovered the crimes that Castillan alone knew? Throughout everything there were facts to certify the miracle.

She looked perplexed and shook her head.

"You don't believe me, either," her brother cried.

"Yes, I believe you; indeed I do," she answered.

"But help me to disperse a last doubt. This plot that you learned from the ambassador—why has it not materialized? Why has not his king already landed in Africa?"

"I have thought of that often," replied Gabriel, quickly; "that has not been my least worry during the last two days. Are there no rumors of war? No talk of anything?"

"Nothing at all."

"Then it is as I thought," he continued; "first I must tell you that I confided to the magistrate what the king intended to do. He did not believe it. Very well. But at all events, he evidently informed his chiefs, and thereby showed our diplomacy. And the newspapers—was there anything in them about the incident of the Place Vendôme?"

"A few words in the latest news—a veiled allusion——"

"That is sufficient for the Italian embassy. They

could read between the lines. They would think that some spy had betrayed them. Briefly, the mine was discovered. They abandoned it. Are you convinced now?"

"Yes, yes, I have faith in you," she said earnestly, "absolute faith. I understand all. To me all is clear. Now, the time is passing. Tell me at once what I shall do."

What a relief it was after these three days of torture to hear a trusting voice, and to speak to some one at last who did not think that he was mad!

"You must help me to get out of here as quickly as possible," he replied. "If we wait for you to take proper legal steps it will be too late. My task is not yet accomplished. Castillan is free. He is watching, he is acting. I am even astonished that he has not been here to see if it were possible to tighten my chains. I feel that he is at the back of everything."

"Speak! Tell me what to do," she said resolutely.

She did not forget that in saving her brother she was also helping to save her fiancé.

"Go and find Quatrefin. He alone is able to get me out of this place. He is energetic. He is richer

and more powerful than ever. I have just explained to you how I saved him from ruin and perhaps from suicide. He has been trying to find an opportunity to prove his gratitude. He will seize this occasion. Go to him and tell him that I must be got out of here as quickly as possible. Never mind how he does it, he can go about it any way he likes, it does not matter to me, so long as he will act quickly. With energy and decision, and, above all, with money, he will succeed."

At this moment a ring of the bell announced another visitor. Mirande glanced out of the window.

"Castillan!" he exclaimed in rage and fear.

It was Castillan walking slowly the path toward the house. His eyes were fixed on the ground. He seemed deep in thought.

"You see," said Mirande, "I thought so. He is following me, step by step. He could not have any other reason for coming here. He is going to work on the director's mind and put him against me. He has already called me a madman—the time when I threw his crimes in his face. He is playing a fine game, Jeanne. You must get me out of here at once. You must go and see Quatrefin to-day, at his bank, at his house, at the Bourse—no matter

where. Now, the half hour is up. The doctor will come and fetch you as soon as he has spoken to Castillan."

His face clouded.

"Unless they come in together," he added, "that rogue might start something again here. One can expect anything from him. Listen! I have a key here that I gave to Brimmel, the specialist. He has returned it to me. He did not wish to use it. I will tell you all about that later. All you need know is, that this key opens the safe that contains the serum at the laboratory. I think that it is more prudent that I do not keep it in my possession—on account of Castillan. You never know. You take this key, and don't give it up on any account. You understand?—not at any price."

"One more word, Jeanne. Castillan will certainly try to speak to you. If you need any one connected with the law, go to Dutoit."

"That man!" cried Jeanne. "He was our worst enemy during the trial. What are you thinking of, Gabriel?"

"I have thought the matter over carefully. At the Foreign Ministry the other night, I read him. Above all, he is most eager for prestige. If La-

caze's innocence is capable of proof, Dutoit will help you. He will have made an error; it is a stain on his career, and he will be eager to efface it, and the one who will most want to help you."

The director entered. He was alone.

"It is time for you to leave," he said to Jeanne; "you have been here longer than we allow."

For the last time the brother and sister embraced. Then, playing her part, Jeanne said, gently. "Good-by, take great care of yourself, and rest well. I will come again and see you soon."

Mirande had not made a mistake. As soon as Jeanne got outside the door, she saw Castillan watching for her in the corridor. He took off his hat with a great flourish and stepped before her. She pretended not to notice his intention and tried to pass with a slight bow. But the director joined him.

"What, you don't know one another?" he exclaimed. "Let me have the pleasure——"

"In truth, we don't know each other," said Castillan; "but my wife has often spoken of you to me, mademoiselle, and one day or other we were bound to meet. I cannot express what regret, what

grief I feel that it is under such painful circumstances."

If she had not been warned, Jeanne would have been deceived by Castillan's sorrowful voice and respectful attitude. She was silent, trembling with indignant contempt.

"It was very sad," he continued, in a voice still more sympathetic, "that such a wonderful brain, so precious to science, should give way suddenly. This attack is so unexpected, that is why it is all so strange. How can one explain it?"

"We have had so much to bear lately," replied Jeanne. "You have heard what trouble we have had, what anxieties?"

"I have heard enough to share them with you."

"Then," she said, "you can understand that all these trials have shaken his intelligence. Do you think he will ever be cured?"

"Certainly," said both doctors together.

She was pleased that she had deceived them by her manner. On the steps Castillan deliberately took leave of the doctor, who wanted to accompany them through the grounds.

"That's all right," he said gallantly; "I'll escort mademoiselle as far as the gate."

She wanted to escape from him, but she felt that in these few steps she might find out what he intended to do. She walked beside him.

"From your manner you seem to doubt that your brother can be cured, Mlle. Mirande," insinuated Castillan. "I have more hope than you. Are you so convinced of his insanity?"

"Alas!" she said; "he spoke so incoherently just now when I was with him."

"Ah, what did he say?"

But Jeanne did not reply. She bent her head as though she were heartbroken by the pain she felt at seeing her brother in such a sad plight.

Castillan insisted more directly this time.

"Did he speak to you of a wonderful serum?"

"You know, then?" answered Jeanne with a frightened look in her eyes.

What! Castillan knew of Brion's discovery? Gabriel did not know that. He had only confided his secret to the alienist. She feared that Castillan had noticed her emotion. She controlled herself, and said: "It was Dr. Brimmel then."

Castillan nodded lightly.

"Yes, it was Brimmel who told me about it," he replied; "and I should not have attached any im-

portance to his words if I had not been struck—forcibly struck—by hearing of this discovery. It interested me personally.”

“Personally?”

“Without a doubt. Have you forgotten that Simone returned from the dead? Surely, you must have wondered, the same as I did, how it was possible for your brother to hear her through so many obstacles. This phenomenon, which could not be explained except by a supernatural influence, worried me, and gave me doubts as to your brother’s sanity.”

Jeanne shook her head incredulously.

“I also at first could not believe this miracle,” said Castillan quickly; “but I think differently now, and I ask myself if it is not my turn to save your brother the same as he saved Simone.”

She did not look at him. She felt that he was leaning nearer to her, compassionate and persuasive. She felt that if she had lifted her eyes to him she could not have resisted telling him what a scoundrel he was, and that he was now plotting something against her brother. But she had her part to play and she waited for him to speak more openly.

“I think the moment has come for me to acquit

this debt of gratitude," he continued; "I think that Brimmel has acted very wrongly in refusing to confirm the information that your brother gave him. And this is what I propose doing—find the serum and experiment before Brimmel and some skilful colleagues, celebrated men; and that will show him what an unpardonable error he has made."

"Alas! it would be useless," murmured Jeanne.

"You can help me, mademoiselle."

"I! How?"

"You can help me to try and make this experiment. I must have the serum. Your brother has undoubtedly hidden it away carefully; it must be under lock and key. Perhaps you know where this key is?"

"Oh, no! I don't know," said Jeanne hopelessly.

Taken in by her manner, Castillan stopped abruptly in his walk and spoke to her in an authoritative tone. "Well, then, go back to him at once," he said. "Question him cleverly. Try to get the key from him, but be careful that he does not suspect your motive. For, in the state that he is in now, he will distrust those who most wish to save him."

"Alas! doctor; he distrusts me more than any one," sighed Jeanne.

Wishing to deceive him still more, she raised a grief-stricken face to him. They had now reached the entrance gate.

"And," she continued, "how could I tell what was the truth and what was not in so much confused talk? Believe me, his insanity is unfortunately a fact; your generous offer would not be able to save him. But I thank you all the same for your kindness."

She bowed, and went out of the little gate onto the road. She felt that she was escaping from a wild beast. How had she been able to refrain from showing him her hatred and contempt? But she knew now what the wretch wanted.

He was plotting to get the serum that was locked up in the safe in the laboratory. He would try to get possession of it.

But how? Alone?

Would he have an accomplice?

Ah, she knew—she knew!

CHAPTER XVI

A TERRIBLE NEMESIS

"Is it you, my prince?" whispered a voice in the shadows of the porch.

"Yes, it is I."

"Come on, then."

"Where? I can't see very clearly."

"To the right. I've got the door open."

"You haven't a lantern?"

"Yes; what do you want it for?"

"*Parbleu!*—to light up, of course."

"Better not, my prince; better not. Watchman about—asleep; warm in his bed, but if we disturb him we'd soon have to make him still and cold. No use for that if we can get along without. Where are you?"

"Here."

"Don't make a noise. Bend down as we go past his shanty. Then keep straight on—can't make a mistake."

Holding their breath and crouching like two animals, they moved along the dark archway. A carriage drove up the Rue Mechain and held them in suspense for some minutes. But it soon rumbled away in the distance. As they reached the porter's lodge another alarm put them on the alert. The bag of tools that the burglar carried on his shoulder knocked against the wall and made a rattling noise. The ruffian stifled an oath and felt for his knife. But there was no cause for alarm. The placid porter continued to sleep.

They crawled along a few more paces.

"Don't move. We're there. I'll open it."

The Crab got up, and, moving his hand over the door, he found the lock. When he had the handle in his hand he turned it very cautiously. The hinges did not grate; they might have been greased for the occasion.

"Fine! It wasn't locked, that one! We're on velvet, we are!"

The bright reflection from the Paris boulevards, which in winter spreads a half-light over the sky, enabled them to see the central path in the garden. On either side were trees with the snow melting beneath them. At the end of the garden, standing

out clearly, was the institute. They almost ran up the damp and shining gravel-path.

"Let us take breath," said Castillan at last. "Shall we stop a minute?"

He sat down on the steps. The Crab familiarly sat down beside him. It was the halt before the assault.

"I see," said the apache with a grin, "you ain't got the habit. Robbery's a trade that every one can't pick up so easy. Got to have heart. I've got one, my prince. I never forget them as has been good to me. I'm the Crab. I can twist a coin like paper. You cured my liver. I'm your pal for life. You've seen that to-night, eh? I came along. I didn't hang back."

While speaking he spread out his claws, then closed them again. One could imagine in the night how murderous they could be.

Castillan shuddered. And it was not with the cold, although he was beginning to feel the dampness of his seat. He drew the light overcoat tighter around him.

"This time," said Castillan, "there is something in it for you. I want you to open a safe. It contains something that I require."

"Money?"

"No, a chemical product that I need very much, and I can only get it here."

"It is some poison then," affirmed the Crab ingeniously.

"No, it is not. It is a medicine. But your help is as precious to me as though we were after a great treasure. It is only fair that I recompense you. Here, take this."

He felt in his pocket. In the silence the rustle of a crisp bank-note could be heard.

"Keep it," growled the Crab.

"No, take it."

"You don't know me yet!"

"You refuse?"

"Sure, until I croak. I'm the Crab. That's the same as saying honor and gratitude. I'm not on the make. I'm yours forever, my prince."

The doctor could not understand such unusual gratitude. This vagabond refused a thousand francs. A thousand francs for this apache was like a million francs for some people. And he himself could not imagine refusing such a sum!

"All right, I won't insist," he replied, putting the note back in his pocket. "Now, let us hurry."

They were at the door of the institute. The Crab fumbled in his bag, pulled out a skeleton key, and slipped it into the lock. He probed it with the delicacy of a surgeon. Then he pushed. The door opened. The burglar passed in first and then closed it after the doctor had entered.

"Are you sure no one's here?" whispered the man.

"No one but an old woman who sleeps on the second floor."

"If she disturbs us she'll be choked. Now for the light."

He lit his lantern and threw a blade of light around the hall. A hat-stand on which the white blouses belonging to the pupils hung, a table, the staircase at the end of the room, could be seen in the shadows.

"Which way do we go?"

"The second floor."

They were at last in Mirande's own laboratory. Castillan knew it. The night before, under pretext of requiring a product, he had studied the position. Under the short light thrown from the lantern, the place appeared to him even more solemn than in the daytime. The instruments, microscopes,

furnaces, pans, retorts—all the chemical apparatus of the modern chemist—darted upon the intruders their sharp, bright reflections, as though disturbed in their repose. There was no sound but the regular ticking of the clock. From the long curtains which fell to the floor there was not a waver.

“Wait a minute while I look round,” whispered Castillan; “the safe is by the fireplace on the right, built in the wall, and enameled white. It is on this side.”

He drew Forteau along. Then, taking the lantern from him, he lifted it above his head and surveyed the laboratory.

“There it is!”

He turned to the robber, delighted with the facility of his adventure.

“That is what you have to open. Can you do it?” he asked in an excited whisper.

“Do it? Sure!”

“Get to work; I’ll light you.”

With evident pleasure, the man spat into his hands. He put his bag on the floor and rummaged through it. He took out some pincers, a gimlet, a squat hammer, a long pair of clippers, and a screw-

driver. With a sharp knock he tested the door of the safe.

"Steel," he said. "Never mind, it won't take long."

He took the lantern and carefully examined the lock. Then he began his work. He pierced, contracted, and turned first in one direction, then in another. Now and again he stopped. He listened. The clock struck the half-hour; he looked up, on the alert. Then he set to work again, with a tenacity more cautious as he attacked the hinges.

"Don't hurry. Don't make any noise. We have all night before us," whispered Castillan. Yet he was writhing with impatience. Each movement of the man, each bite of the file, brought him nearer to the possession of the world!

Ah, this serum—he would know how to profit by it! And, above all, above everything, he would be able to hold Lambrine, at last, chained and conquered, a prisoner in a cage of gold and diamonds!

The Crab, with a last grip of his pincers, grunted mightily. The door was yielding. They had to use their united efforts to prevent it from falling. They lifted it off and laid it carefully on the floor.

"A neat job, my prince!" said the Crab proudly,

as he wiped his forehead with the back of his sleeve.

"Splendid! You are an expert!"

Feverishly Castillan threw the light on the inside of the safe. His eyes first caught some rows of bottles bearing red labels. He seized the first bottle, and held it up to read the inscription. A subtle perfume of bitter almonds emanated from it.

"'Prussic acid,'" he read in a low voice.

He put the dangerous liquid back in its place.

"No, the vials can only contain poison. The serum is certainly put up in sealed ampullæ, and kept closed in some box. Now for the upper shelf."

He raised himself on tiptoe, moved aside more bottles, and looked at the back of the safe.

Suddenly his eyes gleamed.

A box. That is the serum. Yes, there is some writing. The notes, the formula!

"Pass me a chair," he cried, drunk with the near possession of the coveted treasure.

Why did Forteau take such a time to get him the chair? Why did the Crab suddenly dig his claws into his arm and close them upon it, enough to crush it?

"Don't move. There's somebody. Put out the light!"

But Castillan had not the time. The full electric light was suddenly turned on. The entire laboratory was lit up. From the vast fireplace, where she had hidden, a woman stepped out.

"*Casque de Lune!*" gasped the apache hoarsely.

"Why, yes, old pal, it's *Casque de Lune!*"

Very pale under the smears of soot which streaked her face, but with eyes still full of mischief, Francette turned to the doctor.

"Why, yes, M. Castillan; I am your maid, who's come back to life to see what fine work you can do."

A burst of laughter showed her strong, white teeth.

Forteau's hand closed lingeringly over the sharp knife in his pocket.

"Let me jaw, old pal," she went on; "you needn't think that you can do for me. I'm made of iron, I am. And do you know how I found out you were working here to-night, my old Crab? It was a letter from this doctor that I read before the Maggot gave it to you."

But Forteau's knife was gleaming. Terrible, his

face distorted, he rushed at Francette with raised arm.

She sprang to the window and jerked the long curtain aside. Four policemen with revolvers in their hands, a magistrate, and Judge Dutoit rushed forward.

"Ah, Crab; not this time," cried Francette.

Four revolvers were leveled upon him.

"I'm done for," growled the ruffian, letting his knife fall. He held out his claws for the handcuffs. Castillan was livid, his eyes starting out of their sockets. He looked at the group of men. Then he recovered himself. In a moment he summed up his position. What a fall at the very moment of his triumph; at the very moment when his hand was stretched out to take the serum! What an overthrow of his great dreams! All was finished. No subterfuge, no explanation was possible. For these witnesses, hidden behind the curtains, the complicity was undeniable. He was caught red-handed. They would demand an account of his crimes.

What a scandal! Castillan caught in the act of robbing, convicted of murder, and taken to trial. And Lambrine, who had led him to this crime—

Lambrine would pass into other arms. Lambrine was lost forever!

No, not that! Better end it all now, rather than that. They should not take him. He would have the laugh of them to the last.

They had finished handcuffing his companion. He drew himself up straight and held up his splendid dark head. Then, quickly, he took a bottle from the safe—the bottle whose label he had just read. He uncorked it. The subtle odor of bitter almonds assailed his nostrils. For one second he held it up before him, in a graceful attitude, as if proposing a toast.

Then, throwing a look of disdain on the men present, he carried it to his lips before they had time to dash it from his hands. In a moment they were upon him. But it was too late.

“Game to the end,” said Dutoit.

“Ah, well, we’re not sorry. He has saved us the trouble.”

Meanwhile Francette, with hands clenched, was leaning against the window-sill. She was weak and trembling. Her strength had all gone. She had begged so earnestly to come and help, and she had got up from her bed in spite of what the good doc-

tor had said. Her heart was still weak. She sank upon a chair. But, mischievous to the end, she murmured, while they took Forteau and carried away Castillan's corpse: "Yes, but how about my three top ribs?"