DUMAS ALEXANDRE

THE ROYAL LIFE GUARD; OR, THE FLIGHT OF THE ROYAL FAMILY.

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CHAPTER I.
A NEW LEASE OF LIFE

France had been changed to a limited monarchy from an absolute one, and King Louis XVI. had solemnly sworn to defend the new Constitution. But it had been remarked by shrewd observers that he had not attended the Te Deum at the Paris Cathedral, with the members of the National Assembly: that is, he would tell a lie but not commit perjury.

The people were therefore on their guard against him, while they felt that his Queen, Marie Antoinette, the daughter of Austria, was ever their foe.

But the murders by the rabble had frightened all property

holders and when the court bought Mirabeau, the popular orator, over to its cause by paying his debts and a monthly salary the majority of the better classes, who had not fled from France in terror, thought the Royal Family would yet regain their own.

In point of fact, Mirabeau had obtained from the House of Representatives that the King should have the right to rule the army and direct it and propose war, which the Assembly would only have the sanction of. He would have obtained more in the reaction after the Taking of the Bastile but for an unknown hand having distributed full particulars of his purchase by the royalists in a broadside given away by thousands in the streets.

Hence he retired from the senate broken by his victory, though carrying himself proudly.

In face of danger the strong athlete thought of the antagonist, not of his powers.

On going home, he flung himself on the floor, rolling on flowers. He had two passionate loves: for the fair sex, because he was an ugly though robust man, and for flowers.

This time he felt so exhausted that he resisted his attendant feebly, who wanted to send for a doctor, when "Dr. Gilbert" was announced.

A man still young though with a grave expression like one tried in the furnace of personal and political heats, entered the room. He was clothed in the wholly black suit which he introduced from America, where it was popular among Republicans, for he was a friend of Washington and Marquis Lafayette, who like him

had returned to make a sister Republic of France to that of the Thirteen United States.

Dr. Gilbert was a friend of Mirabeau, for he wished to preserve the King at the head of the State though he knew it was but the gilded figurehead without which, if knocked off in the tempest, the Ship rights itself and lives through all without feeling the loss.

Nevertheless, Gilbert, who was one of the Invisibles, that Secret Society which worked for years to bring about the downfall of monarchy in Europe, had been warned by its Chief, the Grand Copt Cagliostro, *alias* Balsamo the Mesmerist, *alias* Baron Zannone – since he had escaped from the Papal dungeons under cover of his being supposed dead and buried there – that the Queen cajoled him and that royalty was doomed.

"I have come to congratulate you, my dear count," said the doctor to the orator, "you promised us a victory, and you have borne away a triumph."

"A Pyrrhic one – another such and we are lost. I am very ill of it. Oh, doctor, tell me of something, not to keep me alive but to give me force while I do live."

"How can I advise for a constitution like yours," said the physician, after feeling the nobleman's pulse: "you do not heed my advice. I told you not to have flowers in the room as they spoil the air, and you are smothered in them. As for the ladies, I bade you beware and you answer that you would rather die than be reft of their society."

"Never mind that. I suffer too much to think of aught but myself. I sometimes think that as I am slandered so that the Queen hesitated to trust me, so have I been physically done to death. Do you believe in the famous poisons which slay without knowing they are used until too late?"

"Yes; I believe," for Gilbert frowned as he remembered that his secret brotherhood was allowed to use the Aqua Tofana where an enemy could not be otherwise reached: "but in your case it is the sword wearing out its sheath. The electric spark will explode the crystal chamber in which it is confined. Still I can help you."

He drew from his pocket a phial holding about a couple of thimblefuls of a green liquid.

"One of my friends – whom I would were yours – deeply versed in natural and occult sciences, gave me the recipe of this brew as a sovereign elixir of life. I have often taken it to cure what the English call the blue devils. And I am bound to say that the effect was instant and salutary. Will you taste it?"

"I will take anything from your hand, my dear doctor."

A servant was rung up, who brought a spoon and a little brandy in a glass.

"Brandy to mollify it," said Mirabeau: "it must be liquid fire, then!"

Gilbert added the same quantity of his elixir to the half-dozen drops of eau-de-vie and the two fluids mixed to the color of wormwood bitters, which the exhausted man drank off.

Immediately he was invigorated and sprang up, saying:

"Doctor, I will pay a diamond a drop for that liquor, for it would make me feel invincible."

"Count, promise me that you will take it only each three days, and I will leave you a phial every week."

"Give it, and I promise everything."

"Now, I have come for another matter. I want you to come out of town for carriage exercise and at the same time to select a residence there."

"It chances that I was looking for one, and my man found a nice house at Argenteuil, recommended by a fellow countryman of his, one Fritz, whose master, a foreign banker, had lived in it. It is delightful and being vacant could be moved into at once. My father had a house out there, whence he drove me with his cane."

"Let us go to Argenteuil, then," said Gilbert; "your health is so valuable that we must study everything bearing upon it."

Mirabeau had no establishment and a hack had to be called for the gentlemen. In this they proceeded to the village where, a hundred paces on the Besons Road, they saw a house buried in the trees. It was called the Marsh House.

On the right of the road was a humble cottage, in front of which sat a woman on a stool, holding a child in her arms who seemed devoured with fever.

"Doctor," said the orator, fixing his eyes on the sad sight, "I am as superstitious as an ancient. If that child dies, I would not live in this house. Just see what you think of the case."

Gilbert got down while the carriage went on.

A gardener was keeping the house which he showed to the inquirer. It belonged to St. Denis Abbey and was for sale under the decree confiscating Church property. Over against the gardener's lodge was another, a summerhouse simply overgrown with flowers. Mirabeau's passion for them made this sufficient lure; for this alone he would have taken the house.

"Is this little cottage, this Temple of Flora, on the property?" he asked.

"Yes, sir: it belongs to the big house but it is at present occupied by a lady with her child, a pretty lady, but of course she will have to go if the house and estate are bought."

"A lovely neighbor does no harm," said the count: "Let me see the interior of the house."

The rooms were lofty and elegant, the furniture fine and stylish. In the main room Mirabeau opened a window to look out and it commanded a view of the summerhouse. What was more, he had a view of a lady, sewing, half reclining, while a child of five or six played on the lawn among flowering shrubs.

It was the lady tenant.

It was not only such a pretty woman as one might imagine a Queen among the roses, but it was the living likeness of Queen Marie Antoinette and to accentuate the resemblance the boy was about the age of the Prince Royal.

Suddenly the beautiful stranger perceived that she was under observation for she uttered a faint scream of surprise, rose, called her son, and drew him inside by the hand, but not without looking

back two or three times.

At this same moment Mirabeau started, for a hand was laid on his shoulder. It was the doctor who reported that the peasant's child had caught swamp fever from being set down beside a stagnant pool while the mother reaped the grass. The disease was deadly but the doctor hoped to save the sufferer by Jesuit's Bark, as quinine was still styled at this date.

But he warned his friend against this House in the Marsh, where the air might be as fatal to him as that of the senate house, where bad ventilation made the atmosphere mephitic.

"I am sorry the air is not good, for the house suits me wonderfully."

"What an eternal enemy you are to yourself? If you mean to obey the orders of the Faculty, begin by renouncing the idea of taking this residence. You will find fifty around Paris better placed."

Perhaps Mirabeau, yielding to Reason's voice, would have promised; but suddenly, in the first shades of evening, behind a screen of flowers, appeared the head of a woman in white and pink flounces: he fancied that she smiled on him. He had no time to assure himself as Gilbert dragged him away, suspecting something was going on.

"My dear doctor," said the orator, "remember that I said to the Queen when she gave me her hand to kiss on our interview for reconciliation: 'By this token, the Monarchy is saved.' I took a heavy engagement that time, especially if they whom I defend

plot against me; but I shall hold to it, though suicide may be the only way for me to get honorably out of it."

In a day Mirabeau bought the Marsh House.

CHAPTER II.
THE FEDERATION OF FRANCE

All the realm had bound itself together in the girdle of Federation, one which preceded the United Europe of later utopists.

Mirabeau had favored the movement, thinking that the King would gain by the country people coming to Paris, where they might overpower the citizens. He deluded himself into the belief that the sight of royalty would result in an alliance which no plot could break.

Men of genius sometimes have these sublime but foolish ideas at which the tyros in politics may well laugh.

There was a great stir in the Congress when the proposition was brought forward for this Federation ceremony at Paris which the provinces demanded. It was disapproved by the two parties dividing the House, the Jacobins (So called from the old Monastery of Jacobins where they met) and the royalists. The former dreaded the union more than their foes from not knowing the effect Louis XVI. might have on the masses.

The King's-men feared that a great riot would destroy the royal family as one had destroyed the Bastile.

But there was no means to oppose the movement which had not its like since the Crusades.

The Assembly did its utmost to impede it, particularly by resolving that the delegates must come at their own expense; this was aimed at the distant provinces. But the politicians had no conception of the extent of the desire: all doors opened along the roads for these pilgrims of liberty and the guides of the long procession were all the discontented – soldiers and under-officers who had been kept down that aristocrats should have all the high offices; seamen who had won the Indies and were left poor: shattered waifs to whom the storms had left stranded. They found the strength of their youth to lead their friends to the capitol.

Hope marched before them.

All the pilgrims sang the same song: "It must go on!" that is, the Revolution. The Angel of Renovation had taught it to all as it hovered over the country.

To receive the five hundred thousand of the city and country, a gigantic area was required: the field of Mars did for that, while the surrounding hills would hold the spectators; but as it was flat it had to be excavated.

Fifteen thousand regular workmen, that is, of the kind who loudly complain that they have no work to do and under their breath thank heaven when they do not find it – started in on the task converting the flat into the pit of an amphitheatre. At the rate they worked they would be three months at it, while it was promised for the Fourteenth of July, the Anniversary of the Taking of the Bastile.

Thereupon a miracle occurred by which one may judge the enthusiasm of the masses.

Paris volunteered to work the night after the regular excavators had gone off. Each brought his own tools: some rolled casks of refreshing drink, others food; all ages and both sexes, all conditions from the scholar to the carter; children carried torches; musicians played all kinds of instruments to cheer the multitude, and from one hundred thousand workers sounded the song "It shall go on!"

Among the most enfevered toilers might be remarked two who had been among the first to arrive; they were in National Guards uniform. One was a gloomy-faced man of forty, with robust and thickset frame; the other a youth of twenty.

The former did not sing and spoke seldom.

The latter had blue eyes in a frank and open countenance, with white teeth and light hair; he stood solidly on long legs and large feet. With his full-sized hands he lifted heavy weights, rolling dirt carts and pulling hurdles without rest. He was always singing, while watching his comrade out of the corner of the eye, saying joking words to which he did not reply, bringing him a glass of wine which he refused, returning to his place with sorrow, but falling to work again like ten men, and singing like twenty.

These two men, newly elected Representatives by the Aisne District, ten miles from Paris, having heard that hands were wanted, ran in hot haste to offer one his silent co-operation, the other his merry and noisy assistance.

Their names were François Billet and Ange Pitou. The first was a wealthy farmer, whose land was owned by Dr. Gilbert, and the second a boy of the district who had been the schoolmate of Gilbert's son Sebastian.

Thanks to their help, with that of others as energetic and patriotically inspired, the enormous works were finished on the Thirteenth of July 1790.

To make sure of having places next day, many workers slept on the battlefield.

Billet and Pitou were to officiate in the ceremonies and they went to join their companions on the main street. Hotel-keepers had lowered their prices and many houses were open to their brothers from the country. The farther they came the more kindly they were treated, if any distinction was made.

On its part the Assembly had received a portion of the shock. A few days before, it had abolished hereditary nobility, on the motion of Marquis Lafayette.

Contrarily, the influence of Mirabeau was felt daily. A place was assigned in the Federation to him as Orator. Thanks to so mighty a champion, the court won partisans in the opposition ranks. The Assembly had voted liberal sums to the King for his civil list and for the Queen, so that they lost nothing by pensioning Mirabeau.

The fact was, he seemed quite right in appealing to the rustics; the Federalists whom the King welcomed seemed to bring love for royalty along with enthusiasm for the National Assembly.

Unhappily the King, dull and neither poetical nor chivalric, met the cheers coolly.

Unfortunately, also, the Queen, too much of a Lorrainer to love the French and too proud to greet common people, did not properly value these outbursts of the heart.

Besides, poor woman, she had a spot on her sun: one of those gloomy fits which clouded her mind.

She had long loved Count Charny, lieutenant of the Royal Lifeguards, but his loyalty to the King, who had treated him like a brother in times of danger, had rendered him invulnerable to the woman's wiles.

Marie Antoinette was no longer a young woman and sorrow had touched her head with her wing, which was making the threads of silver appear in the blonde tresses – but she was fair enough to bewitch a Mirabeau and might have enthralled George Charny.

But, married to save the Queen's reputation to a lady of the court, Andrea de Taverney, he was falling in love with her, she having loved him at first sight, and this love naturally fortified his tacit pledge never to wrong his sovereign.

Hence the Queen was miserable, and all the more as Charny had departed on some errand for the King of which he had not told her the nature.

Probably this was why she had played the flirt with Mirabeau. The genius had flattered her by kneeling at her feet. But she too soon compared the bloated, heavy, leonine man with Charny.

George Charny was elegance itself, the noble and the courtier and yet more a seaman, who had saved a war-ship by nailing the colors to the mast and bidding the crew fight on.

In his brilliant uniform he looked like a prince of battles, while Mirabeau, in his black suit, resembled a canon of the church.

The fourteenth of July came impassibly, draped in clouds and promising rain and a gale when it ought to have illumined a splendid day.

But the French laugh even on a rainy day.

Though drenched with rain and dying of hunger, the country delegates and National Guards, ranked along the main street, made merry and sang. But the population, while unable to keep the wet off them, were not going to let them starve. Food and drink were lowered by ropes out of the windows. Similar offerings were made in all the thoroughfares they passed through.

During their march, a hundred and fifty thousand people took places on the edges of the Field of Mars, and as many stood behind them. It was not possible to estimate the number on the surrounding hills.

Never had such a sight struck the eye of man.

The Field was changed in a twinkling of the plain into a pit, with the auditorium holding three hundred thousand.

In the midst was the Altar of the Country, to which led four staircases, corresponding with the faces of the obelisk which overtowered it.

At each corner smoked incense dishes – incense being decreed

henceforth to be used only in offerings to God.

Inscriptions heralded that the French People were free, and invited all nations to the feast of Freedom.

One grand stand was reserved for the Queen, the court and the Assembly. It was draped with the Red, White and Blue which she abhorred, since she had seen it flaunt above her own, the Austrian black.

For this day only the King was appointed Commander-in-chief, but he had transferred his command to Lafayette who ruled six millions of armed men in the National Guards of France.

The tricolor surmounted everything – even to the distinctive banners of each body of delegates.

At the same time as the President of the Assembly took his seat, the King and the Queen took theirs.

Alas, poor Queen! her court was meager: her best friends had fled in fright: perhaps some would have returned if they knew what money Mirabeau had obtained for her; but they were ignorant.

She knew that Charny, whom she vainly looked for, would not be attracted by the power or by gold.

She looked for his younger brother, Isidore, wondering why all the Queen's defenders seemed absent from their post.

Nobody knew where he was. At this hour he was conducting his sweetheart, Catherine, daughter of the gloomy farmer Billet, to a house in Bellevue, Paris, for refuge from the contumely of her sisters in the village and the wrath of her father.

Who knows, though, but that the heiress to the throne of the Caesars would have consented to be an obscure peasant girl to be loved by George again as Isidore loved the farmer's daughter.

She was no doubt revolving such ideas when Mirabeau, who saw her with glances, half thunderous weather, half sunshine, and could not help exclaiming:

"Of what is the royal enchantress thinking?"

She was brooding over the absence of Charny and his love died out.

The mass was said by Talleyrand, the French "Vicar of Bray," who swore allegiance to all manner of Constitutions himself. It must have been of evil augury. The storm redoubled as though protesting against the false priest who burlesqued the service.

Here followed the ceremony of taking the oath. Lafayette was the first, binding the National Guards. The Assembly Speaker swore for France; and the King in his own name.

When the vows were made in deep silence, a hundred pieces of artillery burst into flame at once and bellowed the signal to the surrounding country.

From every fortified place an immense flame issued, followed by the menacing thunder invented by man and eclipsing that of heaven if superiority is to be measured by disasters. So the circle enlarged until the warning reached the frontier and surpassed it.

When the King rose to declare his purpose the clouds parted and the sun peered out like the Eye of God.

"I, King of the French," he said, "swear to employ all the

power delegated to me by the Constitutional Law of the State to maintain the Constitution."

Why had he not eluded the solemn pledge as before; for his next step, flight from the kingdom, was to be the key to the enigma set that day. But, true or false, the cannon-fire none the less roared the oath to the confines. It took the warning to the monarchs:

"Take heed! France is afoot, wishing to be free, and she is ready like the Roman envoy to shake peace or war, as you like it, from the folds of her dress."

CHAPTER III.
WHERE THE BASTILE STOOD

Night came: the morning festival had been on the great parade ground; the night rejoicing was to be on the site where the Bastile had stood.

Eighty-three trees, one for each department of France, were stuck up to show the space occupied by the infamous states-prison, on whose foundation these trees of liberty were planted. Strings of lamps ran from tree to tree. In the midst rose a large pole, with a flag lettered: "Freedom!"

Near the moats, in a grave left open on purpose were flung the old chains, fetters, instruments of torture found in it, and its clock with chained captives the supporters. The dungeons were left open and lighted ghastly, where so many tears and groans had been vainly expanded.

Lastly, in the inmost courtyard, a ballroom had been set up and as the music pealed, the couples could be seen promenading. The prediction of Cagliostro was fulfilled that the Bastile should be a public strolling-ground.

At one of the thousand tables set up around the Bastile, under the shadow of the trees outlining the site of the old fortress, two men were repairing their strength exhausted by the day's marching, and other military manœuvres. Before them was a

huge sausage, a four-pound loaf, and two bottles of wine.

"By all that is blue," said the younger, who wore the National Guards captain's uniform, "it is a fine thing to eat when you are hungry and drink when a-thirst." He paused. "But you do not seem to be hungry or thirsty, Father Billet."

"I have had all I want, and only thirst for one thing – "

"What is that?"

"I will tell you Pitou, when the time for me to sit at my feast shall come."

Pitou did not see the drift of the reply.

Pitou was a lover of Catherine Billet, but he self-acknowledged that he could have no chance against the young nobleman who had captivated the rustic maid. When her father tried to shoot the gallant, he had – while not shielding her or her lover, helped her to conceal herself from Billet.

It was not he, however, but Isidore who had brought the girl to Paris, after she had given birth to a boy. This occurred in the absence of Billet and Pitou, both of whom were ignorant of the removal.

Pitou had housed her in a quiet corner, and he went to Paris without anything arising to cause him sadness.

He had found Dr. Gilbert, to whom he had to report that with money he had given, Captain Pitou had equipped his Guards at Haramont in uniform which was the admiration of the county.

The doctor gave him five-and-twenty more gold pieces to be applied to maintaining the company at its present state of

efficiency.

"While I am talking with Billet," said Gilbert, "who has much to tell me, would you not like to see Sebastian?"

"I should think I do," answered the peasant, "but I did not like to ask your permission."

After meditating a few instants, Gilbert wrote several words on a paper which he folded up like a letter and addressed to his son.

"Take a hack and go find him," he said. "Probably from what I have written, he will want to pay a visit; take him thither and wait at the door. He may keep you an hour or so, but I know how obliging you are; you will not find the time hang heavy when you know you are doing me a kindness."

"Do not bother about that," responded the honest fellow; "I never feel dull; besides, I will get in a supply of something to feed on and I will kill time by eating."

"A good method," laughed Gilbert; "only you must not eat dry bread as a matter of health, but wash it down with good wine."

"I will get a bottle, and some head cheese, too," replied Pitou.

"Bravo!" exclaimed the physician.

Pitou found Sebastian in the Louis-the-Great College, in the gardens. He was a winsome young man of eighteen, or less, with handsome chestnut curls enframing his melancholy and thoughtful face and blue eyes darting juvenile glances like a Spring sun.

In him were combined the lofty aspirations of two

aristocracies: that of the intellect, as embodied in his father, and of race, personified in Andrea Countess of Charny, who had become his mother while unconscious in a mesmeric sleep, induced by Balsamo-Cagliostro, but perceived by Gilbert, who had not in his wild passion for the beauty been able to shrink from profiting by the trance.

It was to the countess's that Gilbert had suggested his son should go.

On the way Pitou laid in the provisions to fill up time if he had to wait any great while in the hack for the youth to come out of his mother's.

As the countess was at home, the janitor made no opposition to a well-dressed young gentleman entering.

Five minutes after, while Pitou was slicing up his loaf and sausage and taking a pull at his wine, a footman came out to say:

"Her ladyship, the countess of Charny, prays Captain Pitou to do her the honor to step inside instead of awaiting Master Sebastian in a hired conveyance."

The Assembly had abolished titles but the servants of the titled had not yet obeyed.

Pitou had to wipe his mouth, pack up in paper the uneaten comestibles, with a sigh, and follow the man in a maze. His astonishment doubled when he saw a lovely lady who held Sebastian in her arms and who said, as she put out her hand to the new-comer:

"Captain Pitou, you give me such great and unhoped-for joy

in bringing Sebastian to me that I wanted to thank you myself."

Pitou stared, and stammered, but let the hand remain untaken.

"Take and kiss the lady's hand," prompted Sebastian: "it is my mother."

"Your mother? oh, Gemini!" exclaimed the peasant, while the other young man nodded.

"Yes, his mother," said Andrea with her glance beaming with delight: "you bring him to me after nine months' parting, and then I had only seen him once before: in the hope you will again bring him, I wish to have no secrets from you, though it would be my ruin if revealed."

Every time the heart and trust of our rural friend was appealed to, one might be sure that he would lose his hesitation and dismay.

"Oh, my lady, be you easy, your secret is here," he responded, grasping her hand and kissing it, before laying his own with some dignity on his heart.

"My son tells me, Captain Pitou, that you have not breakfasted," went on the countess; "pray step into the dining-room, and you can make up for lost time while I speak with my boy."

Soon, on the board were arrayed two cutlets, a cold fowl, and a pot of preserves, near a bottle of Bordeaux, a fine Venice glass and a pile of china plates. But for all the elegance of the set out edibles, Pitou rather deplored the head cheese, bread and common wine in the cab.

As he was attacking the chicken after having put away the

cutlets, the door opened and a young gentleman appeared, meaning to cross the room. But as Pitou lifted his head, they both recognized each other, and uttered a simultaneous cry:

"Viscount Charny!"

"Ange Pitou!"

The peasant sprang up; his heart was violently throbbing; the sight of the patrician aroused his most painful memories.

Not only was this his rival but his successful rival and the man who had wronged Catherine Billet and caused her to lose her father's respect and her place at her mother's side in the farmhouse. Isidore only knew that Catherine was under obligations to this country lad; he had no idea of the latter's profound love for his mistress: love out of which Pitou drew his devotedness.

Consequently he walked right up to the other, in whom, spite of the uniform, he only saw still the poacher and farm boy of Haramont.

"Oh, you here, Pitou," said he: "delighted to meet you to thank you for all the services you have done us."

"My lord viscount, I did all for Miss Catherine alone," returned the young man, in a firm voice though all his frame thrilled.

"That was all well up to your knowing that I loved her; then, I was bound to take my share in the gratitude and as you must have gone to some outlay, say for the letters transmitted to her – "

He clapped his hand to his pocket to prick Pitou's conscience.

But the other stopped him, saying, with the dignity sometimes astonishing to appear in him:

"My lord, I do services when I can but not for pay. Besides, I repeat, these were for Miss Catherine solely. She is my friend; if she believes she is in any way indebted to me, she will regulate the account. But you, my lord, owe me nothing; for I did all for her, and not a stroke for you. So you have to offer me nothing."

These words, but especially the tone, struck the hearer; perhaps it was only then that he noticed that the speaker was dressed as a captain in the new army.

"Excuse me, Captain Pitou," said Isidore, slightly bowing: "I do owe you something, and that is my thanks, and I offer you my hand; I hope you will do me the pleasure of accepting one and the honor of accepting the other."

There was such grandeur in the speech and the gesture in company with it, that vanquished Pitou held out his hand and with the fingers' ends touched Isidore's.

At this juncture Countess Charny appeared on the threshold.

"You asked for me, my lord," she said; "I am here."

Isidore saluted the peasant and walked into the next room; he swung the door to behind him but the countess caught it and checked it so that it remained ajar. Pitou understood that he was allowed, nay, invited to hear what was spoken. He remarked that on the other side of the sitting room was another door, leading into a bedroom; if Sebastian was there, he could hear on that side as well as the captain on this other.

"My lady," began Isidore, "I had news yesterday from my brother George; as in other letters, he begs me to ask you to remember him. He does not yet know when he is to return, and will be happy to have news from you either by letter or by your charging me."

"I could not answer the letter he sent me from want of an address; but I will profit by your intermediation to have the duty of a submissive and respectful wife presented him. If you will take charge of a letter for my lord, one shall be ready on the morrow."

"Have it ready," said Isidore; "but I cannot call for it till some five or six days as I have a mission to carry out, a journey of necessity, of unknown duration, but I will come here at once on my return and take your message."

As he passed through the dining-room he saw that Pitou was spooning deeply into the preserves. He had finished when the countess came in, with Sebastian.

It was difficult to recognize the grave Countess Charny in this radiant young mother whom two hours of chat with her son had transformed. The hand which she gave to Pitou seemed to be of marble still, but mollified and warmed.

Sebastian embraced his mother with the ardor he infused in all he did.

Pitou took leave without putting a question, and was silent on the way to the college, absorbing the rest of his head cheese, bread and wine. There was nothing in this incident to spoil his

appetite.

But he was chilled to see how gloomy Farmer Billet was.

He resolved to dissipate this sadness.

"I say, Father Billet," he resumed, after preparing his stock of words as a sharpshooter makes a provision of cartridges, "who the devil could have guessed, in a year and two days, that since Miss Catherine received me on the farm, so many events should have taken place."

"Nobody," rejoined Billet whose terrible glance at the mention of Catherine had not been remarked.

"The idea of the pair of us taking the Bastile," continued he, like the sharpshooter having reloaded his gun.

"Nobody," replied the farmer mechanically.

"Plague on it, he has made up his mind not to talk," thought the younger man. "Who would think that I should become a captain and you a Federalist, and we both be taking supper under an arbor in the very spot where the old prison stood?"

"Nobody," said Billet for the third time, with a more sombre look than before.

The younger man saw that there was no inducing the other to speak but he found comfort in the thought that this ought not to alienate his right. So he continued, leaving Billet the right to speak if he chose.

"I suppose, like the Bastile, all whom we knew, have become dust, as the Scriptures foretold. To think that we stormed the Bastile, on your saying so, as if it were a chicken-house, and that

here we sit where it used to be, drinking merrily! oh, the racket we kicked up that day. Talking of racket," he interrupted himself, "what is this rumpus all about?"

The uproar was caused by the passing of a man who had the rare privilege of creating noise wherever he walked: it was Mirabeau, who, with a lady on his arm, was visiting the Bastile site.

Another than he would have shrank from the cheers in which were mingled some sullen murmurs; but he was the bird of the storm and he smiled amid the thunderous tempest, while supporting the woman, who shivered under her veil at the simoon of such dreadful popularity.

Pitou jumped upon a chair and waved his cocked hat on the tip of his sword as he shouted:

"Long live Mirabeau!"

Billet let escape no token of feelings either way; he folded his arms on his burly chest and muttered in a hollow voice:

"It is said he betrays the people."

"Pooh, that has been said of all great men, from antiquity down," replied his friend.

In his excitement he only now noticed that a third chair, drawn up to their table, was occupied by a stranger who seemed about to accost them.

To be sure it was a day of fraternity, and familiarity was allowable among fellow-citizens, but Pitou, who had not finished his repast, thought it going too far. The stranger did not apologize

but eyed the pair with a jeering manner apparently habitual to him.

Billet was no doubt in no mood to support being "quizzed," as the current word ran, for he turned on the new-comer; but the latter made a sign before he was addressed which drew another from Billet.

The two did not know each other, but they were brothers.

Like Billet, he was clad like one of the delegates to the Federation. But he had a change of attire which reminded Billet that so were dressed the party with Anacharsis Clootz, the German anarchist, representing Mankind.

CHAPTER IV.
THE LODGE OF THE INVISIBLES

"You do not know me, brothers," said the stranger, when Billet had nodded and Pitou smiled condescendingly, "but I know you both. You are Captain Pitou, and you, Farmer Billet. Why are you so gloomy? because, though you were the first to enter the Bastile, they have forgotten to hang at your buttonhole the medal for the Conquerors of the Bastile and to do you the honors accorded to others this day?"

"Did you really know me, brother," replied the farmer with scorn, "you would know that such trifles do not affect a heart like mine."

"Is it because you found your fields unproductive when you returned home in October?"

"I am rich – a harvest lost little worries me."

"Then, it must be," said the stranger, looking him hard in the face, "that something has happened to your daughter Catherine – "

"Silence," said the farmer, clutching the speaker's arm, "let us not speak of that matter."

"Why not if I speak in order that you may be revenged?"

"Then that is another thing – speak of it," said the other, turning pale but smiling at the same time.

Pitou thought no more of eating or drinking, but stared at their new acquaintance as at a wizard.

"But what do you understand by revenge?" went on he with a smile: "tell me. In a paltry manner, by killing one individual, as you tried to do?"

Billet blanched like a corpse: Pitou shuddered all over.

"Or by pursuing a whole class?"

"By hunting down a whole caste," said Billet, "for of such are the crimes of all his like. When I mourned before my friend Dr. Gilbert, he said: 'Poor Billet, what has befallen you has already happened to a hundred thousand fathers; what would the young noblemen have in the way of pastime if they did not steal away the poor man's daughter, and the old ones steal away the King's money?'"

"Oh, Gilbert said that, did he?"

"Do you know him?"

"I know all men," replied the stranger, smiling: "as I know you two, and Viscount Charny, Isidore, Lord of Boursonnes; as I know Catherine, the prettiest girl of the county."

"I bade you not speak her name, for she is no more – she is dead."

"Why, no, Father Billet," broke in Pitou, "for she – "

He was no doubt going to say that he saw her daily, but the farmer repeated in a voice admitting of no reply,

"She is dead."

Pitou hung his head for he understood.

"Ha, ha," said the stranger: "if I were my friend Diogenes, I should put out my lantern, for I believe I have found an honest man." Rising, he offered his arms to Billet, saying: "Brother, come and take a stroll with me, while this good fellow finishes the eatables."

"Willingly," returned Billet, "for I begin to understand to what feast you invite me. Wait for me here," he added to his friend; "I shall return."

The stranger seemed to know the gastronomical taste of Pitou for he sent by the waiter some more delicacies, which he was still discussing, while wondering, when Billet reappeared. His brow was illumined with something like pleasure.

"Anything new, Father Billet?" asked the captain.

"Only that you will start for home to-morrow while I remain."

This is what Billet remained for.

A week after, he might have been seen, in the dress of a well-to-do farmer, in Plastriere Street. Two thirds up the thoroughfare was blocked by a crowd around a ballad singer with a fiddler to accompany him, who was singing a lampoon at the characters of the day.

Billet paused only an instant to listen to the strain, in which, from the Assembly being on the site of the old Horse-training ground, the attributes of horses were given to the members, as "the Roarer," to Mirabeau, etc.

Slipping in at an alleyway at the back of the throng, he came to a low doorway, over which was scrawled in red chalk – symbols

effaced each time of usage:

"L. P. D."

This was the way down into a subterranean passage. Billet could not read but he may have understood that these letters were a token, He took the underground road with boldness.

At its end a pale light glimmered, by which a seated man was reading or pretending to read a newspaper, as is the custom of the Paris janitor of an evening.

At the sound of steps he got up and with a finger touching his breast waited. Billet presented his forefinger bent and laid it like the ring of a padlock on his lips. This was probably the sign of recognition expected by the door-guard, for he opened a door on his right which was wholly invisible when shut, and pointed out to the adventurer a narrow and steep flight of steps going down into the earth.

When Billet entered, the door shut behind him swiftly and silently. He counted seventeen steps, and though he was not talkative could not help saying: "Good, I am going right."

Before a door floated tapestry: he went straight to it, lifted it and was within a large circular hall where some fifty persons were gathered. The walls were hung with red and white cloth, on which were traced the Square, the Compass and the Level. A single lamp, hung from the center of the ceiling, cast a wan light insufficient to define those who preferred to stand out of its direct beams.

A rostrum up which four steps led, awaited orators or new

members, and on this platform, next the wall, a desk and chair stood for the chairman.

In a few minutes the hall filled so that there was no moving about. The men were of all conditions and sorts from the peasant to the prince, arriving like Billet solitarily, and standing wherever they liked, without knowing or being known to each other. Each wore under his overcoat the masonic apron if only a mason, or the scarf of the Illuminati, if affiliated to the Grand Mystery. Only three restricted themselves to the masonic apron.

One was Billet; another a young man, and the third a man of forty-two who appeared by his bearing to belong to the highest upper class.

Some seconds after he had arrived, though no more noticed than the meanest, a second panel opened and the chairman appeared, wearing the insignia of the Grand Orient and the Grand Copt.

Billet uttered faintly his astonishment, for the Master was the man who had accosted him at the Bastile.

He mounted the dais and turning to the assembly, said:

"Brothers, we have two pieces of business to do this day: I have to receive three new candidates; and I have to render account of how the Work has gone on: for as it grows harder and harder, it is meet that you should know if I am ever worthy of your trust and that I should know if I still deserve it. It is only by receiving light from you and imparting it that I can walk in the dark way. Let the chiefs alone stay in the lodge to receive or reject the

applicants. They dealt with, all are to return into session, from the first to the last, for it is in the presence of all and not only within the Supreme Circle, I wish to lay bare my conduct and receive censure or ask for recompense."

At these words a door flew open opposite that he had come in by; vast vaulted depths were beheld, as the crypt of an ancient basilica.

The arcades were feebly lighted by brass lamps hung so as to make darkness visible.

Only three remained, the novices. Chance fixed it that they should be standing up by the wall at nearly regular distances. They looked at each other with astonishment, only thus and now learning that they were the heroes of the occasion.

At this instant the door by which the chairman had come, opened to admit six masked men who came to place themselves beside the Master, three on each hand.

"Let Numbers Two and Three disappear for the time," said the Master; "none but the supreme chiefs must know the secrets of the reception or refusal of a would-be mason in the Order of the Illuminated."

The young man and the high-born one retired by the lobby by which they had come, leaving Billet alone.

"Draw nearer," said the chairman. "What is your name among the profane?" he demanded when obeyed.

"François Billet, and it is Strength, among the elect."

"Where did you first see the Light?"

"In the lodge of the Soissons Friends of Truth."

"How old are you?"

"Seven years," replied Billet, making the sign to show what rank he had attained in the order.

"Why do you want to rise a step and be received among us?"

"Because I am told that it is a step nearer the Universal Light."

"Have you supporters?"

"I have no one to speak for me save him who came to me and offered to have me welcomed." He looked fixedly at the chairman.

"With what feelings would you walk in the way which we may open unto you?"

"With hate of the powerful and love for equality."

"What answers for these feelings?"

"The pledge of a man who has never broken his word."

"What inspired your wish for equality?"

"The inferior condition in which I was born."

"What the hatred of those above you?"

"That is my secret; yet it is known to you; why do you want me to say aloud what I hesitate to say in a whisper to myself?"

"Will you walk in the way to Equality and with you lead all those whom you can control?"

"Yes."

"As far as your will and strength can go, will you overthrow all obstacles opposing the freedom of France and the emancipation of the world?"

"I will."

"Are you free from any anterior engagement or if made will you break it if contrary to this new pledge?"

"I am ready."

Turning to the chiefs, the Master said:

"Brothers, this man speaks the truth. I invited him to be one of ours. A great grief binds him to our cause by the ties of hatred. He has already done much for the Revolution and may do more. I propose him, and answer for him in the past, the present and the future."

"Receive him," said all the six.

The presiding officer raised his hand and said in a slow and solemn voice:

"In the name of the Architect of the Universe, swear to break all carnal bonds still binding you to parents, sister, brother, wife, kinsmen, mistress, kings, benefactors, and to whomsoever you have promised faith, obedience, service or gratitude."

Billet repeated in a voice as firm as the speaker's.

"Good! henceforth you are freed from the so-called oath of allegiance made to the country and the laws. Swear therefore to reveal to your new chief what you see and do, hear or learn, read or divine, and moreover to seek out and find which is not offered to the sight."

"I swear," said Billet.

"Swear to honor and respect steel, fire and poison as sure and prompt means necessary to purge the world by the death of those

who try to lessen truth or snatch it from our hands.

"Swear to avoid Naples, Rome, Spain and all accursed places. To shun the temptation of revealing anything seen and heard in our meetings, for the lightning is not swifter to strike than our invisible and inevitable knife, wherever you may hide. And now, live in the Name of the Three!"

A brother hidden in the crypt, opened the door where the inferior members were strolling till the initiation was over. The Master waved Billet to go there, and, bowing, he went to join those whom the dreadful words he had uttered made his associates.

The second candidate was the famous St. Just, the Revolutionist whom Robespierre sent to the guillotine. He was initiated in the same terms as Billet and similarly joined the band.

The third candidate was Louis Philippe, Duke of Orleans whom hatred of his relatives had induced to take this step to have the aid of powerful partners in his attempt to seize the throne. He was already at the degree of Rose-Croix. He took the oath which was administered in a different order from before in order to test him at the outset, and instead of saying, Yes, he repeated the very words of the section binding him to break all ties, of affection or allegiance to royalty.

When he darted into the crypt he exclaimed:

"At last I shall have my revenge!"

CHAPTER V.
THE CONSPIRATORS ACCOUNT

On being left together, the six masked men and the chairman whispered among themselves.

"Let all come in," said Cagliostro, for he was the Master; "I am ready to make the report I promised."

The door was instantly opened: the members of the league walked in; to crowd the hall once more.

Hardly was the door closed behind the last before the Master said holding up his hand quickly like one who knew the value of time, and wished not to lose a second:

"Brothers, there may be some here who were present at a meeting held just twenty years ago, a couple of miles from Danenfels, in a cavern of Thunder Mountain, five miles from the Rhine; if so, let the venerable upholders of the Great Cause which we have embraced, signify the same by holding up the hand, saying: 'I was there!'"

Five or six hands were held above the throng and as many voices cried: "I was there."

"So far good," continued the speaker; "the others are in the Temple above, or scattered over the earth, working at the common and holy work, for it is that of all mankind. Twenty years ago, this work which we have pursued in its different

periods was scarce commenced. The light was at its dawning and the steadiest eyes beheld the future only through the cloud which none but the eyes of the chosen could pierce. At that meeting, I explained by what miracle death did not exist for me, it being merely for man forgetfulness of the past, or rather how, during twenty centuries, I had dwelt in succeeding bodies for my immortal soul. Slowly I saw peoples pass from slavery to serfdom, from serfdom to the state of those aspirations for freedom which precede it. Like the stars of the night hinting what a sun can be, we have seen the republics try their rules, at Genoa, Venice, Switzerland; but this is not what we needed.

"A great country was wanted to give the impetus, a wheel in which should be cogged all the others, a planet which should illumine the world."

A cheering murmur ran through the audience and Cagliostro proceeded with an inspired air:

"Heaven indicated to me, France. Indeed, having tried all systems, she appeared likely to suit our purpose, and we decided on her being first freed. But look back on France twenty years ago, and grant that it was great boldness or rather sublime faith to undertake such a task. In Louis XV.'s hands so weakly, it was still the realm of Louis XIV., an aristocratic kingdom, where the nobles had all the rights and the rich all the privileges. At the head was a man who represented at once the lowest and the loftiest, the grandest and the paltriest, heaven and the masses. With a word he could make you wealthy or a beggar, happy or miserable, free

or captive, keep you living or send you to death.

"He had three grandsons, young princes called to succeed him. Chance had it that he whom nature designated was also the choice of the people, if the people had any choice at the epoch. He was accounted kind, just, honest, learned, almost a lover of wisdom. In order to quench the wars which the fatal succession of Charles II. enkindled, the daughter of Maria Theresa was chosen for his wife: the two nations were to be indissolubly united which are the counterbalances west and east of Europe, France and Austria. So calculated Maria Theresa the foremost politician of Europe.

"It was at this period, none the less, when France, supported on Austria, Spain and Italy, was to enter on a new and desired reign that we determined – not that she should be the chief of kingdoms but that the French should be the first people free.

"It was demanded who would be the new Theseus to rush into the den of this Minotaur, thread the innumerable turnings of the maze while guided by the light of Truth, and face the royal monster. I replied it should be me. Some eager spirits, uneasy characters, wanted to know how long a time it would take to accomplish the first period of my enterprise, divided into three portions, and I required twenty years. They cried out against that. Can you understand this? man had been serf or slave for twenty centuries, and he mocked at me because I wanted twenty years to make him free!"

He looked upon the meeting, where his last words had provoked ironical smiles.

"In short, I obtained the twenty years. I gave my brothers the famous device: 'Lilia Pedibus Destrue – the Lilies shall be trodden underfoot!' and I set to work, urging all to do likewise. I entered France under arches of triumph; the rose and the laurel made the road from Strasburg to Paris one trellis garlanded with flowers. Everybody was shouting: 'Long live the Dauphiness! our future Queen!' Now, far from me to take credit to myself for the initiative or the merit of events; the Builder had planned all this and He laid each stone well and truly. He allowed this humble mason who officiates in this fane to see the Hand divinely wielding the Line and the Level and, praise unto Him! I have done some levelling: the rocks have been removed off the way, the bridge has been thrown over the flood, and the gulfs have been filled up so that the car has rolled smoothly. List brothers, to what has been performed in a score of years.

"Parliaments broken up: Louis XV., called once the Well-Beloved, dies amid general scorn! The Queen, after seven years, unfruitful wedlock, gives birth to children whose paternity is contested, so that she is defamed as mother of the Crown Prince, and dishonored as a woman in the case of the Diamond Necklace.

"The new King consecrated under the name of Louis the Desired, impotent in politics as in love, tries one utopia after another, until he reaches national bankruptcy, and has all kinds of ministers down to a Calonne. The Assembly of Worthies decrees the States General Congress, which appointed by universal

suffrage, declares itself the National Assembly. The clergy and nobility are overcome by the other classes; the Bastile is stormed and the foreign troops driven out of the capital; the night of Aug. 4th, 1789, shows the aristocracy that they are reduced to nothing; on the 5th and 6th October, the King and Queen are shown that royalty is nothing; on the 14th of July, 1790, the unity of France is shown to the world.

"The princes are deprived of popularity by their absconding; the King's brother loses his hold by the Favras conspiracy showing that he casts off his friends to save his neck. Lastly, the Constitution is sworn unto, on the Altar of the Country; the Speaker of the House of Representatives sits on a chair on the level with the King's; it is the Law and the Nation sitting side by side; attentive Europe leans towards us, silently watching – all who do not applaud are trembling. Now, is not France the cornerstone on which Free Europe shall be laid, the wheel which turns all the machine, the sun which shall illuminate the Old World?"

"Yea, yea, yea!" shouted all voices.

"But, brothers," continued the magician, "do you believe the work is so far advanced that we may leave it to get on by itself? Although the Constitution has been sworn to, can we trust to the royal vow?"

"Nay, nay, nay," cried every voice.

"Then we begin the second stage of the revolutionary work," pursued Cagliostro. "As your eyes see, I perceive with delight

that the Federation of 1790 is not the goal but a halting-place: after the repose the court will recommence the task of counter-revolution: let us also gird up our loins and start afresh. No doubt for timid hearts there will be hours of weakening and of distrust; often the beam from the All-seeing Eye will seem to be eclipsed – the Hand that beckons us will cease to be seen. More than once during the second period, the cause will appear injured, even lost, by some unforeseen and fortuitous accident; all will seem to show that we are wrong; circumstances will look as if unfavorable; our enemies will have some triumph, our fellow-citizens will be ungrateful. After many real fatigues and apparent uselessness, many will ask themselves if they have not gone astray on the bad path.

"No, brothers, no; I tell you at this hour for the words to ring everlastingly in your ears, in victory as a blast of trumpets, in defeat as the rallying cry – No! leading races have their providential mission which must be unerringly accomplished. The Arch-Designer laid down the road and found it true and straight; His mysterious goal cannot be revealed until it is attained in its full splendor; the cloud may obscure it and we think it gone; an idea may recoil but, like the old-time knights, it is but to set the lance in rest and rush forward to hurl over the dragon.

"Brothers, brothers, our goal is the bonfire on the high mount, believed extinct because the ridge concealed it as we sank in the vale: then the weaklings muttered as they halted and whined: 'We have no beacon – we are blundering in the dark: let us stay where

we are; what is the good of getting lost?' But the strong hearts keep right on confidently smiling, and soon will the light on the height reappear, albeit it may disappear again, but each time it is brighter and clearer because it is more near!

"Thus will it be with the chosen band who, struggling, pressing on, persevering and above all believing in the Republic to be, arrive at the foot of the lighthouse of which the radiance will join that cast across the Atlantic by the Republic which we have also helped to throw off the tyrant's yoke. Let us swear, brothers, for ourselves and our descendants, since the eternal idea and principle serves many a generation, never to stop until we establish on this temple of the Architect the holy device of which we have conquered one portion: 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.'"

The speech was hailed with uproarious approbation.

"But do not confine it to France solely: inscribe it on the banner of mankind as the whole world's motto. And now, brothers, go out upon your task, which is great, so great that, through whatever vale of tears and of the shadow of death you must pass, your descendants will envy the holy errand you shall have accomplished, and like the crusaders who became more and more numerous and eager as their foregoers were slain, they march over the road whitened by the bones of their fathers. Be of good cheer, apostles; courage, pilgrims of freedom; courage, soldiers, Apostles, converts! pilgrims, march on! soldiers, fight!"

Cagliostro stopped, but that would have happened from the

applause. Three times the cheering rose and was extinguished in the gloomy vaults like an earthquake's rumbling. Then the six masked men bowed to him one after another, kissed his hand and retired. Each of the brothers, bowing unto the platform where the new Peter the Hermit preached the renewal of the political crusade, passed out, repeating the motto:

"We shall Trample the Lilies under."

As the last went forth, the lamps were extinguished.

Alone remained the Arch-Revolutionist, buried in the bowels of the earth, lost in silence and darkness like those divinities of the Indies, into whose mysteries he asserted himself to have been initiated two thousand years before.

CHAPTER VI.
WOMEN AND FLOWERS

Some months after recorded events, about the end of March, 1791, Dr. Gilbert was hurriedly called to his friend Mirabeau, by the latter's faithful servant Deutsch, who had been alarmed.

Mirabeau had spoken in the House on the question of Mines, the interests of owners and of the State not being very clearly defined. To celebrate his victory, he gave a supper to some friends and was prostrated by internal pains.

Gilbert was too skillful a physician not to see how grave the invalid was. He bled him and the black blood relieved the sufferer.

"You are a downright great man," said he.

"And you a great blockhead to risk a life so precious to your friends for a few hours of fictitious pleasure," retorted his deliverer.

The orator smiled almost ironically, in melancholy.

"I think you exaggerate and that my friends and France do not hold me so dear."

"Upon my honor," replied Gilbert laughing, "great men complain of ingratitude and they are really the ungrateful ones. If it were a most serious malady of yours, all Paris would flock under your window; were you to die, all France would come to

your obsequies."

"What you say is very consoling, let me tell you," said the other, merrily.

"It is just because you can see one without risking the other that I say it, and indeed, you need a great public demonstration to restore your morale. Let me take you to Paris within a couple of hours, my dear count; let me tell the first man on the street corner that you are ailing and you will see the excitement."

"I would go if you put off the departure till this evening, and let me meet you at my house in Paris at eleven."

Gilbert looked at his patient and the latter saw that he was seen through.

"My dear count, I noticed flowers on the Dining-room table," said he: "it was not merely a supper to friends."

"You know that I cannot do without flowers; they are my craze."

"But they were not alone."

"If they are a necessity I must suffer from the consequences they entail."

"Count, the consequences will kill you."

"Confess, doctor, that it will be a delightful kind of suicide."

"I will not leave you this day."

"Doctor, I have pledged my word and you would not make me fail in that."

"I shall see you this night, though?"

"Yes, really I feel better."

"You mean you drive me away?"

"The idea of such a thing."

"I shall be in town; I am on duty at the palace."

"Then you will see the Queen," said Mirabeau, becoming gloomy once more.

"Probably; have you any message for her?"

Mirabeau smiled bitterly.

"I should not take such a liberty, doctor; do not even say that you have seen me: for she will ask if I have saved the monarchy, as I promised, and you will be obliged to answer No! It is true," he added with a nervous laugh, "that the fault is as much hers as mine."

"You do not want me to tell her that your excess of exertions in the tribune is killing you."

"Nay, you may tell her that," he replied after brief meditation: "you may make me out as worse than I am, to test her feelings."

"I promise you that, and to repeat her own words."

"It is well: I thank you, doctor – adieu!"

"What are you prescribing?"

"Warm drinks, soothing, strict diet and – no nurse-woman less than fifty – "

"Rather than infringe the regulation I would take two of twenty-five!"

At the door Gilbert met Deutsch, who was in tears.

"All this through a woman – just because she looks like the Queen," said the man; "how stupid of a genius, as they say he is."

He let out Gilbert who stepped into his carriage, muttering:

"What does he mean by a woman like the Queen?"

He thought of asking Deutsch, but it was the count's secret, and he ordered his coachman to drive to town.

On the way he met Camille Desmoulins, the living newspaper of the day, to whom he told the truth of the illness because it was the truth.

When he announced the news to the King, the latter inquired if the count had lost his appetite.

"Yes, Sire," was the doctor's reply.

"Then it is a bad case," sighed the monarch, shifting the subject.

When the same words were repeated to the daughter of Maria Theresa, her forehead darkened.

"Why was he not so stricken on the day of his panegyric on the tricolor flag?" she sneered. "Never mind," she went on, as if repenting the expression of her hatred before a Frenchman, "it would be very unfortunate for France if this malady makes progress. Doctor, I rely on your keeping me informed about it."

At the appointed hour, Gilbert called on his patient at his town house. His eyes caught sight of a lady's scarf on a chair.

"Glad to see you," said Mirabeau, quickly as though to divert his attention from it, "I have learnt that you kept half your promise. Deutsch has been busy answering friendly inquiries from our arrival. Are you true to the second part? have you been to the palace and seen the King and Queen?"

"Yes; and told them you were unwell. The King sincerely condoled when he heard that you had lost your appetite. The Queen was sorry and bade me keep her informed."

"But I want the words she used."

"Well, she said that it was a pity you were not ill when you praised the new flag of the country."

He wished to judge of the Queen's influence over the orator.

He started on the easy chair as if receiving the discharge of a galvanic battery.

"Ingratitude of monarchs," he muttered. "That speech of mine blotted out remembrance of the rich Civil List and the dower I obtained for her. This Queen must be ignorant that I was compelled to regain the popularity I lost for her sake; but she no more remembers it than my proposing the adjournment of the annexation of Avignon to France in order to please the King's religious scruples. But these and other faults of mine I have dearly paid for," continued Mirabeau. "Not that these faults will ruin them, but there are times when ruin must come, whether faults help them forward or not. The Queen does not wish to be saved but to be revenged; hence she relishes no reasonable ideas.

"I have tried to save liberty and royalty at the same time; but I am not fighting against men, or tigers, but an element – it is submerging me like the sea: yesterday up to the knee, today up to the waist, to-morrow I shall be struggling with it up to my neck. I must be open with you, doctor; I felt chagrin first, then disgust. I dreamt of being the arbiter between the Revolution and

monarchy. I believed I should have an ascendancy over the Queen as a man, and some day when she was going under the flood, I meant to leap in and rescue her. But, no! they would not honestly take me; they try to destroy my popularity, ruin me, annihilate me, and make me powerless to do either good or evil. So, now that I have done my best, I tell you, doctor, that the best thing I can do is die in the nick of time; fall artistically like the Dying Gladiator, and offer my throat to be cut with gracefulness; yield up the ghost with decency."

He sank back on the reclining chair and bit the pillow savagely. Gilbert knew what he sought, on what Mirabeau's life depended.

"What will you say if the King or the Queen should send to inquire after your health?" he asked.

"The Queen will not do it – she will not stoop so low."

"I do not believe, but I suppose, I presume – "

"I will wait till to-morrow night."

"And then?"

"If she sends a confidential man I will say you are right and I wrong. But if on the contrary none come, then it will be the other way."

"Keep tranquil till then. But this scarf?"

"I shall not see her, on my honor," he said, smiling.

"Good, try to get a good quiet night, and I will answer for you," said Gilbert, going out.

"Your master is better, my honest Deutsch," said he to the attendant at the door.

The old valet shook his head sadly.

"Do you doubt my word?"

"I doubt everything since his bad angel will be beside him."

He sighed as he left the doctor on the gloomy stairs. At the landing corner Gilbert saw a veiled shadow which seemed waiting: on perceiving him, it uttered a low scream and disappeared so quickly by a partly opened door that it resembled a flight.

"Who is that woman?" questioned the doctor.

"The one who looks like the Queen," responded Deutsch.

For the second time Gilbert was struck by the same idea on hearing this phrase: he took a couple of steps as though to chase the phantom, but he checked himself, saying,

"It cannot be."

He continued his way, leaving the old domestic in despair that this learned man could not conjure away the demon whom he believed the agent of the Inferno.

Next day all Paris called to inquire after the invalid orator. The crowd in the street would not believe Deutsch's encouraging report but forced all vehicles to turn into the side streets so that their idol should not be disturbed by their noise.

Mirabeau got up and went to the window to wave a greeting to these worshipers, who shouted their wishes for his long life.

But he was thinking of the haughty woman who did not trouble her head about him, and his eyes wandered over the mob to see if any servants in the royal blue livery were not trying to make

their way through the mass. By evening his impatience changed into gloomy bitterness.

Still he waited for the almost promised token of interest, and still it did not come.

At eleven, Gilbert came; he had written his best wishes during the day: he came in smiling, but he was daunted by the expression on Mirabeau's face, faithful mirror of his soul's perturbations.

"Nobody has come," said he. "Will you tell me what you have done this day?"

"Why, the same as usual – "

"No, doctor and I saw what happened and will tell you the same as though present. You called on the Queen and told her how ill I was: she said she would send to ask the latest news, and you went away, happy and satisfied, relying on the royal word. She was left laughing, bitter and haughty, ignorant that a royal word must not be broken – mocking at your credulity."

"Truly, had you been there, you could not have seen and heard more clearly," said Gilbert.

"What numbskulls they are," exclaimed Mirabeau. "I told you they never did a thing at the right time. Men in the royal livery coming to my door would have wrung shouts of 'Long live the King!' from the multitude and given them popularity for a year."

He shook his head with grief.

"What is the matter, count?" asked Gilbert.

"Nothing."

"Have you had anything to eat?"

"Not since two o'clock."

"Then take a bath and have a meal."

"A capital idea!"

Mirabeau listened in the bath until he heard the street door close after the doctor.

Then he rang for his servant, not Deutsch but another, to have the table in his room decked with flowers, and "Madam Oliva" invited to sup with him.

He closed all the doors of the supper-room except that to the rooms of the strange woman whom the old German called his bad angel.

At about four in the morning, Deutsch who sat up, heard a violent ring of the room bell. He and another servant rushed to the supper-room, but all the doors were fastened so that they had to go round by the strange lady's rooms. There they found her in the arms of their master, who had tried to prevent her giving the alarm. She had rung the table-bell from inability to get at the bell pull.

She was screaming as much for her own relief as her lover's, as he was suffocating her in his convulsive embrace.

It seemed to be Death trying to drag her into the grave.

Jean ran to rouse Dr. Gilbert while Deutsch got his master to a couch. In ten minutes the doctor drove up.

"What is it now?" he asked of Deutsch, in the hall.

"That woman again and the cursed flowers! Come and see."

At this moment something like a sob was heard; Gilbert, ran

up the stairs at the top step of which a door opened, and a woman in a white wrapper ran out suddenly and fell at the doctor's feet.

"Oh, Gilbert," she screamed, "save him!"

"Nicole Legay," cried the doctor; "was it you, wretch, who have killed him?" A dreadful thought overwhelmed him. "I saw her bully Beausire selling broadsides against Mirabeau, and she became his mistress. He is undoubtedly lost, for Cagliostro set himself against him."

He turned back into his patient's room, fully aware that no time was to be lost. Indeed, he was too versed in secrets of his craft still to hope, far less to preserve any doubt. In the body before his eyes, it was impossible to see the living Mirabeau. From that time, his face assumed the solemn cast of great men dying.

Meanwhile the news had spread that there was a relapse and that the doom impended. Then could it be judged what a gigantic place one man may fill among his fellows. The entire city was stirred as on great calamities. The door was besieged by persons of all opinions as though everybody knew they had something to lose by his loss.

He caused the window to be opened that he might be soothed by the hum of the multitude beneath.

"Oh, good people," he murmured: "slandered, despised and insulted like me, it is right that those Royals should forget me and the Plebes bear me in mind."

Night drew near.

"My dear doctor," he said to him who would not leave him, "this is my dying day. At this point nothing is to be done but embalm my corpse and strew flowers roundabout."

Scarcely had Jean, to whom everybody rushed at the door for news, said he wanted flowers for his master, than all the windows opened, and flowers were offered from conservatories and gardens of the rarest sorts. By nine in the morning the room was transformed into a bower of bloom.

"My dear doctor, I beg a quarter of an hour to say good-bye to a person who ought to quit the house before I go. I ask you to protect her in case they hoot her."

"I leave you alone," said Gilbert, understanding.

"Before going, kindly hand me the little casket in the secretary."

Gilbert did as requested; the money-box was heavy enough to be full of gold.

At the end of half an hour, spent by Gilbert in giving news to the inquirers, Jean ushered a veiled lady out to a hackney-carriage at the door.

Gilbert ran to his patient.

"Put the casket back," said he in a faint voice. "Odd, is it not?" he continued, seeing how astonished the doctor looked at its being as heavy as before, "but where the deuce will disinterestedness next have a nest?"

Near the bed, Gilbert picked up a lace handkerchief wet with tears.

"Ah, she would take nothing away – but she left something," remarked Mirabeau.

Feeling it was damp he pressed it to his forehead.

"Tears? is she the only one who has a heart?" he murmured.

He fell back on the bed, with closed eyes; he might have been believed dead or swooning but for the death-rattle in his breast.

How came it that this man of athletic, herculean build should die?

Was it not because he had held out his hand to stay the tumbling throne from toppling over? Was it not because he had offered his arm to that woman of misfortune known as Marie Antoinette?

Had not Cagliostro predicted some such fate to Gilbert for Mirabeau? and the two strange creatures – one, Beausire, blasting the reputation, the other, Nicole, blasting the health of the great orator who had become the supporter of the monarchy – were they not for him, Gilbert, a proof that all things which were obstacles to this man – or rather the idea he stood for – must go down before him as the Bastile had done?

Nevertheless he was going to try upon him the elixir of life which he owed to Cagliostro; it was irony to save his victim with his own remedy.

The patient had opened his eyes.

"Nay," said he, "a few drops will be vain. You must give me the whole phial. I had the stuff analyzed and found it was Indian hemp; I had some compounded for myself and I have been taking

it copiously not to live but to dream."

"Unhappy man that I am," sighed Gilbert; "he has led to my dealing out poison to my friend."

"A sweet poison, by which I have lengthened out the last moments of my life a hundredfold. In my dream I have enjoyed what has really escaped me, riches, power, and love. I do not know whether I ought to thank God for my life, but I thank you, doctor, for your drug. Fill up the glass and let me have it."

Gilbert presented the extract which the patient absorbed with gusto.

"Ah, doctor," he said after a short pause, as if the veil of the future were raised at the approach of eternity; "blessed are those who die in this year, 1791! for they will have seen the sunny side of the Revolution. Never has a great one cost so little bloodshed up to now, because it is the mind that was conquered: but on the morrow the war will be upon facts and in things. Perhaps you believe that the tenants of the Tuileries will mourn for me? not at all. My death rids them of an engagement. With me, they had to rule in a certain way: I was less support than hindrance. *She* excused herself for leaning on me, to her brother: 'Mirabeau believes that he is advising me – I am only amusing myself with him.' That is why I wished that woman, her likeness, to be my mistress, and not my Queen.

"What a fine part he shall play in History who undertook to sustain the young nation with one hand and the old monarchy in the other, forcing them to tread the same goal – the happiness

of the governed and the respect of the governors. It might have been possible and might be but a dream; but I am convinced that I alone could have realized the dream. My sorrow is not in dying, but in dying with work unfinished. Who will glorify my idea left mangled, an abortion? What will be known of me will be the part that should be buried in oblivion – my wild, reckless, rakish life and my obscene writings.

"I shall be blamed for having made a bond with the court out of which comes gain for no man; I shall be judged, dying at forty-two, like one who lived man's full age. They will take me to task as if instead of trying to walk on the waters in a storm, I had trodden a broad way paved with laws, statutes, and regulations. To whom shall I league my memory to be cleansed and be an honor to my country?

"But I could do nothing without her, and she would not take my helping hand. I pledged myself like a fool, while she remained unfettered. But it is so – all is for the best; and if you will promise one thing, no regret will trouble my last breath."

"Good God, what would I not promise?"

"If my passing from life is tedious, make it easy? I ask the aid not only of the doctor but of the man and the philosopher – promise to aid me. I do not wish to die dead, – but living, and the last step will not be hard to take."

The doctor bent his head towards the speaker.

"I promised not to leave you, my friend; if heaven hath condemned you – though I hope we have not come to that

point – leave to my affection at the supreme instant the care of accomplishing what I ought to do. If death comes, I shall be at hand also."

"Thanks," said the dying one as if this were all he awaited.

The abundant dose of cannabis indicus had restored speech to the doomed one: but this vitality of the mind vanished and for three hours the cold hand remained in the doctor's without a throb. Suddenly he felt a start: the awakening had come.

"It will be a dreadful struggle," he thought.

Such was the agony in which the strong frame wrestled that Gilbert forgot that he had promised to second death, not to oppose it. But, reminded of his pledge, he seized the pen to write a prescription for an opiate. Scarcely had he written the last words than Mirabeau rose on the pillow and asked for the pen. With his hand clenched by death he scrawled:

"Flee, flee, flee!"

He tried to sign but could only trace four letters of his name.

"For her," he gasped, holding out his convulsed arm towards his companion.

He fell back without breath, movement or look – he was dead.

Gilbert turned to the spectators of this scene and said:

"Mirabeau is no more."

Taking the paper whose destination he alone might divine, he rapidly departed from the death chamber.

Some seconds after the doctor's going, a great clamor arose in the street and was prolonged throughout Paris.

The grief was intense and wide. The Assembly voted a public funeral, and the Pantheon, formerly Church of St. Genevieve, was selected for the great man's resting-place. Three years subsequently the Convention sent the coffin to the Clamart Cemetery to be bundled among the corpses of the publicly executed.

Petion claimed to have discovered a contra-revolutionary plot written in the hand of Mirabeau, and Congress reversed its previous judgment and declared that genius could not condone corruption.

CHAPTER VII.
THE KING'S MESSENGER

On the morning of the second of April, an hour before Mirabeau yielded up his last breath, a superior officer of the navy, wearing his full dress uniform of captain, entered the Tuileries Palace like one to whom the ways were familiar.

He took the private stairs to the King's apartments, where, by the study, a valet saw him and uttered a cry of surprise.

"Hue," he said, laying a finger on his lips, "can the King receive me?"

"His Majesty gave word that you were to be shown in whenever you arrived."

He opened a door and as a proof that the King was alone, he called out:

"The Count of Charny!"

"Let him enter," said the King; "I have been expecting him since yesterday."

Charny entered quickly and said as he went up to his royal master with respectful eagerness:

"Sire, I am a few hours behindhand, but I hope to be forgiven when your Majesty hears the reasons for the delay."

"Come, come, my lord; I awaited you with impatience, it is true; but I was of your opinion beforehand that an important

cause alone could delay your journey. You have come, and you are welcome."

He held out his hand which the courier kissed with reverence.

"Sire, I received your order early the day before yesterday and I started at three A. M. yesterday from Montmedy by the post."

"That explains the few hours delay," observed the sovereign, smiling.

"Sire," went on the count, "I might have dashed on and made better speed but I wanted to study the road as it is generally used so as to remark the posting-houses where the work is well or ill done; I wished to jot the time down by the minute. I have noted everything and am consequently in a position to answer on any point."

"Bravo, my lord," cried the King. "You are a first-rate servitor; but let me begin by showing how we stand here; you can give me the news of the position out there afterwards."

"Things are going badly, if I may guess by what I have heard," observed Charny.

"To such a degree that I am a prisoner in the place, my dear count. I was just saying to General Lafayette that I would rather be King at Metz than over France; but never mind, you have returned. You know my aunts have taken to flight? it is very plain why. You know the Assembly will allow no priests to officiate at the altar unless they take oaths to the country. The poor souls became frightened as Easter came near, thinking they risked damnation by confessing to a priest who had sworn to the

Constitution, and I must confess, it was on my advice that they went to Rome. No law opposes their journey and no one can think two poor women will much strengthen the party of the fugitive nobility. They charged Narbonne with getting them off; but I do not know how the movement was guessed. A visit of the same nature as we experienced at Versailles in October was projected upon them, but they happily got out by one door while the mob rushed in by another. Just think of the crosses! not a vehicle was at hand though three had been ordered to be ready. They had to go to Meudon from Bellevue on foot.

"They found carriages there and made the start. Three hours afterwards, tremendous uproar in Paris: those who went to stop the flight found the nest warm but empty. Next day the press fairly howled: Marat said that they were carrying away millions; Desmoulins that they were taking the Dauphin. Nothing of the sort: the two poor ladies had a few hundred thousand francs in their purses, and had enough to take care of without burdening themselves with a boy who might bring about their recognition. The proof was that they were recognized, without him, first at a place where they were let go through, and then at Arnay, where they were arrested. I had to write to the Assembly to get them passed, and spite of my letter the Assembly debated all day. However, they were authorized to continue their journey but on condition that the committee of the House should present a bill against quitting the kingdom."

"Yes," said Charny, "but I understood, that, in spite of a

magnificent speech from Mirabeau, the Assembly rejected the proposition."

"True, it was thrown out: but beside this slight triumph was great humiliation for me. When the excitement was noticed over the departure of the two ladies, a few devoted friends, more than you may believe being left to me, count – some hundreds of noblemen hastened to the Tuileries and offered me their lives. The report was immediately spread that a conspiracy was discovered to spirit me away. Lafayette, who had been gulled into going to the Bastile under a story that an attempt to rebuild it was under way, came back here furious at the hoax, and entered with sword and bayonet! – my poor friends were seized and disarmed. Pistols were found on some, stilettos on others, each having snatched up at home any weapon handy. But the day is written down in history as that of the Knights of the Dagger!"

"Oh, Sire, in what dreadful times do we live," said Charny, shaking his head.

"Yes, and Mirabeau perhaps dying, maybe dead at present speaking."

"The more reason to hasten out of this cauldron."

"Just what we have decided on. Have you arranged with Bouille? I hope he is strong enough now. The opportunity was presented and I reinforced him."

"Yes, Sire: but the War Minister has crossed your orders; the Saxon Hussars have drawn from him, and the Swiss regiments refused. He had trouble to keep the Bouillon Foot at Montmedy

Fort."

"Does he doubt now?"

"No Sire, but there are so many chances less. What matters? in these dashes one must reckon on luck, and we still have ninety per cent of chances. The question is if your Majesty holds to the Chalons Route although the posting at Varennes is doubtful?"

"Bouille already knows my reasons for the preference."

"That is why I have minutely mapped out the route."

"The route-chart is a marvel of clearness, my dear count. I know the road as though I had myself travelled it."

"I have the following directions to add – "

"Let me look at them by the map." And he unfolded on the table a map drawn by hand with every natural feature laid in. It was a work of eight months. The two stooped over the paper.

"Sire, the real danger begins at St. Menehould and ceases at Stenay. On those eighteen leagues must be stationed the soldiers."

"Could they not be brought nearer Paris – say, up to Chalons?"

"It is difficult," was the response. "Chalons is too strong a place for even a hundred men to do anything efficacious to your safety if menaced. Besides, Bouille does not answer for anything beyond St. Menehould. All he can do is set his first troops at Sommevelle Bridge. That is the first post beyond Chalons."

"What time will it take?"

"The King can go from Paris to Montmedy in thirty-six hours."

"What have you decided about the relay of horses at Varennes? where we must be certain not to want for them; it is most important."

"I have investigated the spot and decided to place the horses on the other side of the little town. It will be better to dash through, coming full speed from Clermont, and change horses five hundred paces from the bridge, guarded and defended if signalled by three or four men."

Charny gave the King a paper.

It was Bouille's arrangement of the stations of the troops along the road for the royal escape. The cover would be that the soldiers were waiting to convoy some money sent by the War Minister.

"Everything has been foreseen," said the King delightedly. "But talking of money, do you know whether Bouille has received the million I sent him?"

"Yes, but as assignats are below par, he would lose twenty per cent on the gross amount, only for a faithful subject of your Majesty who cashed, as if gold, a hundred thousand crowns' worth."

"And the rest?" inquired the King, eyeing the speaker.

"Count Bouille got his banker to take it; so that there will be no lack of the sinews of war."

"I thank you, my lord count," said the sovereign. "I should like to know the name of the faithful servitor who perhaps lessened his cash by giving the sum to Bouille."

"He is rich and consequently there was no merit in what he

did. The only condition he put in doing the act was to have his name kept back."

"Still you know him?"

"Yes, I know who it is."

"Then, Lord Charny," said the monarch with the hearty dignity which he sometimes showed, as he took a ring off his finger, "here is a jewel very dear to me. I took it off the finger of my dying father when his hand was chill in death. Its value is therefore that which I attach to it; it has no other; but for a soul which understands me, it will be more precious than the finest diamond. Repeat to the faithful servitor what I say, my lord, and give him this gem from me."

Charny's bosom heaved as he dropped on one knee to receive the ring from the royal hand.

At this juncture the door opened. The King turned sharply, for a door to open thus was worse than infraction of etiquette; it was an insult only to be excused by great necessity.

It was the Queen, pale and holding a paper. She let it drop with a cry of astonishment at seeing Count Charny at the feet of her consort. The noble rose and saluted the lady, who faltered:

"Charny here, in the King's rooms, in the Tuileries!" And she said to herself: "Without my knowing it!"

There was such sorrow in the tone that Charny guessed the reason and took two steps towards her.

"I have just arrived and I was going to crave the King's permission for me to pay my respects to your Majesty," he said.

The blood reappeared on her cheeks; she had not heard that voice for a long while and the sweet tone charmed her ears. She held out both hands towards him but brought back one upon her heart from its beating too violently. Charny noticed all this although in the short space required for the King to pick up the paper, which the draft from the door had floated to the side of the room.

The King read without understanding.

"What is the meaning of the word 'Flee' three times written, and the fragment of a signature?" inquired he.

"Sire, it seems that Mirabeau died ten minutes ago, and that is the advice he sends you."

"It is good advice," returned the King, "and this time the instant to put it into execution has come."

The Queen looked at them both, and said to the count:

"Follow me, my lord."

CHAPTER VIII.
THE HUSBAND'S PROMISE

The Queen sank upon a divan when she had arrived within her own apartments, making a sign for Charny to close the door.

Scarcely was she seated before her heart overflowed and she burst into sobs. They were so sincere and forcible that they went down into the depths of Charny's heart and sought for his former love. Such passions burning in a man never completely die out unless from one of those dreadful shocks which turn love to loathing.

He was in that strange dilemma which they will appreciate who have stood in the same: between old love and the new.

He loved his wife with all the pity in his bosom and he pitied the Queen with all his soul. He could not help feeling regret and giving words of consolation.

But he saw that reproach pierced through this sobbing; that recrimination came to light among the tears, reminding him of the exactions of this love, the absolute will, the regal despotism mingled with the expressions of tenderness and proofs of passion; he steeled himself against the exactions and took up arms against the despotism, entering into the strife against the will. He compared all this with Andrea's sweet, unalterable countenance, and preferred the statue, though he believed it to

be of snow, to this glowing bronze, heated from the furnace, ever ready to dart from its eyes the lightnings of love, pride and jealousy.

This time the Queen wept without saying anything.

It was more than eight months since she had seen him. Before this, for two or three years she had believed that they could not separate without their hearts breaking. Her only consolation had been that he was working for her sake in doing some deed for the King.

But it was a weak consolation.

She wept for the sake of relief, for her pent-up tears would have choked her if she had not poured them forth. Was it joy or pain that held her silent? both, perhaps, for many mighty emotions dissolve in tears.

With more love even than respect, Charny went up to her, took one of her hands away from her face and said as he applied his lips to it:

"Madam, I am proud and happy to say that not an hour has been without toil for you since I went hence."

"Oh, Charny," retorted the Queen, "there was a time when you might have been less busy on my account but you would have thought the more of me."

"I was charged by the King with grave responsibility, which imposed the more strict silence until the business was accomplished. It is done at present. I can see and speak with you now, but I might not write a letter up to this period."

"It is a fine sample of loyalty, and I regret that it should be performed at the expense of another sentiment, George," she said with melancholy.

She pressed his hand tenderly, while eyeing him with that gaze for which once he would have flung away the life still at her service.

She noticed that he was not the courier dusty and bloody from spurring, but the courtier spic and span according to the rules of the Royal Household. This complete attire visibly fretted the woman while it must have satisfied the exacting Queen.

"Where do you come from?" she asked.

"Montmedy, in postchaise."

"Half across the kingdom, and you are spruce, brushed and dandified like one of Lafayette's aid-de-camps. Were the news you brought so unimportant as to let you dally at the toilet table?"

"Very important; but I feared that if I stepped out of the mud be-splattered postchaise in the palace yard, all disordered with travel, suspicion would be roused; the King had told me that you are closely guarded, and that made me congratulate myself on walking in, clad in my naval uniform like an officer coming to present his devoirs after a week or two on leave."

She squeezed his hand convulsively, having a question to put the harder to frame as it appeared so far from important.

"I forgot that you had a Paris house. Of course you dropped in at Coq-Heron Street, where the countess is keeping house?"

Charny was ready to spring away like a high-mettled steed

spurred in the raw; but there was so much hesitation and pain in her words that he had to pity one so haughty for suffering so much and for showing her feelings though she was so strong-minded.

"Madam," he replied, with profound sadness not wholly caused by her pain, "I thought I had stated before my departure that the Countess of Charny's residence is not mine. I stopped at my brother Isidore's to change my dress."

The Queen uttered a cry of joy and slid down on her knees, carrying his hand to her lips, but he caught her up in both arms and exclaimed:

"Oh, what are you doing?"

"I thank you – ask me not for what! do you ask me for what? for the only moment of thorough delight I have felt since your departure. God knows this is folly, and foolish jealousy, but it is most worthy of pity. You were jealous once, though you forget it. Oh, you men are happy when you are jealous, because you can fight with your rivals and kill or be slain; but we women can only weep, though we perceive that our tears are useless if not dangerous. For our tears part us from our beloved rather than wash us nearer; our grief is the vertigo of love – it hurls us towards the abyss which we see without avail. I thank you again, George; you see that I am happy anew and weep no more."

She tried to laugh; but in her repining she had forgotten how to be merry, and the tone was so sad and doleful that the count shuddered.

"Be blessed, O God!" she said, "for he would not have the

power to love me from the day when he pities me."

Charny felt he was dragged down a steep where in time he would be in the impossibility of checking himself. He made an effort to stop, like those skaters who lean back on their heels at the risk of breaking through the ice.

"Will you not permit me to offer the fruit of my long absence by explaining what I have been happy to do for your sake?" he said.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.