

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: Cinq Mars, v1

Alfred de Vigny

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PREFACE

The reputation of Alfred de Vigny has endured extraordinary vicissitudes in France. First he was lauded as the precursor of French romantic poetry and stately prose; then he sank in semi-oblivion, became the curiosity of criticism, died in retirement, and was neglected for a long time, until the last ten years or so produced a marked revolution of taste in France. The supremacy of Victor Hugo has been, if not questioned, at least mitigated; other poets have recovered from their obscurity. Lamartine shines now like a lamp relighted; and the pure, brilliant, and profoundly original genius of Alfred de Vigny now takes, for the first time, its proper place as one of the main illuminating forces of the nineteenth century.

It was not until one hundred years after this poet's birth that it became clearly recognized that he is one of the most important of all the great writers of France, and he is distinguished not only in fiction, but also in poetry and the drama. He is a follower of Andre Chenier, Lamartine, and Victor Hugo, a lyric sun, a philosophic poet, later, perhaps in consequence of the Revolution of 1830, becoming a "Symbolist." He has been held to occupy a middle ground between De Musset and Chenier, but he has also something suggestive of Madame de Stael, and, artistically, he has much in common with Chateaubriand, though he is more coldly impersonal and probably much more sincere in his philosophy. If Sainte-Beuve, however, calls the poet in his *Nouveaux Lundis* a "beautiful angel, who has been drinking vinegar," then the modern reader needs a strong caution against malice and raillery, if not jealousy and perfidy, although the article on De Vigny abounds otherwise with excessive critical cleverness.

At times, indeed, under the cruel deceptions of love, he seemed to lose faith in his idealism; his pessimism, nevertheless, always remained noble, restrained, sympathetic, manifesting itself not in appeals for condolence, but in pitying care for all who were near and dear to him. Yet his lofty prose and poetry, interpenetrated with the stern despair of pessimistic idealism, will always be unintelligible to the many. As a poet, De Vigny appeals to the chosen few alone. In his dramas his genius is more emancipated from himself, in his novels most of all. It is by these that he is most widely known, and by these that he exercised the greatest influence on the literary life of his

generation.

Alfred–Victor, Count de Vigny, was born in Loches, Touraine, March 27, 1797. His father was an army officer, wounded in the Seven Years' War. Alfred, after having been well educated, also selected a military career and received a commission in the "Mousquetaires Rouges," in 1814, when barely seventeen. He served until 1827, "twelve long years of peace," then resigned. Already in 1822 appeared a volume of 'Poemes' which was hardly noticed, although containing poetry since become important to the evolution of French verse: 'La Neige, le Coy, le Deluge, Elva, la Frigate', etc., again collected in 'Poemes antiques et modernes' (1826). Other poems were published after his death in 'Les Destinies' (1864).

Under the influence of Walter Scott, he wrote a historical romance in 1826, 'Cinq–Mars, ou une Conjuraton sans Louis XIII'. It met with the most brilliant and decided success and was crowned by the Academy. Cinq– Mars will always be remembered as the earliest romantic novel in France and the greatest and most dramatic picture of Richelieu now extant. De Vigny was a convinced Anglophile, well acquainted with the writings of Shakespeare and Milton, Byron, Wordsworth, Shelley, Matthew Arnold, and Leopardi. He also married an English lady in 1825 Lydia Bunbury.

Other prose works are 'Stello' (1832), in the manner of Sterne and Diderot, and 'Servitude et Grandeur militaire' (1835), the language of which is as caustic as that of Merimee. As a dramatist, De Vigny produced a translation of 'Othello Le More de Venice' (1829); also 'La Marechale d'Ancre' (1832); both met with moderate success only. But a decided "hit" was 'Chatterton' (1835), an adaption from his prose–work 'Stello, ou les Diables bleus'; it at once established his reputation on the stage; the applause was most prodigious, and in the annals of the French theatre can only be compared with that of 'Le Cid'. It was a great victory for the Romantic School, and the type of Chatterton, the slighted poet, "the marvellous boy, the sleepless soul that perished in his pride," became contagious as erstwhile did the type of Werther.

For twenty years before his death Alfred de Vigny wrote nothing. He lived in retirement, almost a recluse, in La Charente, rarely visiting Paris. Admitted into L'Academie Francaise in 1845, he describes in his 'Journal d'un Poete' his academic visits and the reception held out to him by the members of L'Institut. This work appeared posthumously in 1867.

He died in Paris, September 17, 1863.

CHARLES DE MAZADE
de l'Academie Francaise.

PREFACE (II)

Considering Alfred de Vigny first as a writer, it is evident that he wished the public to regard him as different from the other romanticists of his day; in fact, in many respects, his method presents a striking contrast to theirs. To their brilliant facility, their prodigious abundance, and the dazzling luxury of color in their pictures of life he opposes a style always simple, pure, clear, with delicacy of touch, careful drawing of character, correct locution, and absolute chastity. Yet, even though he had this marked regard for purity in literary style, no writer had more dislike of mere pedantry. His high ideal in literary art and his self–respect inspired him with an invincible repugnance toward the artificialities of style of that period, which the romanticists above all, Chateaubriand, their master had so much abused.

Every one knows of the singular declaration made by Chateaubriand to Joubert, while relating the details of a nocturnal voyage: "The moon shone upon me in a slender crescent, and that prevented me from writing an untruth, for I feel sure that had not the moon been there I should have said in my letter that it was shining, and then you would have convicted me of an error in my almanac!"

This habit of sacrificing truth and exactitude of impression, for the sake of producing a harmonious phrase or a picturesque suggestion, disgusted Alfred de Vigny. "The worst thing about writers is that they care very little whether what they write is true, so long as they only write," we read on one page of his Journal. He adds, "They should seek words only in their own consciences." On another page he says: "The most serious lack in literary work is sincerity. Perceiving clearly that the combination of technical labor and research for effective expression, in producing literary work, often leads us to a paradox, I have resolved to sacrifice all to conviction and truth, so that this precious element of sincerity, complete and profound, shall dominate my books and give to them the sacred character which the divine presence of truth always gives."

Besides sincerity, De Vigny possessed, in a high degree, a gift which was not less rare in that age good taste. He had taste in the art of writing, a fine literary tact, a sense of proportion, a perception of delicate shades of expression, an instinct that told him what to say and what to suppress, to insinuate, or to be left to the understanding. Even in his innovations in form, in his boldness of style, he showed a rare discretion; never did he do violence to the genius of the French language, and one may apply to him without reserve the eulogy that Quintilian pronounced upon Horace: 'Verbis felicissime audax'.

He cherished also a fixed principle that art implied selection. He was neither idealist nor realist, in the exclusive and opposing sense in which we understand these terms; he recommended a scrupulous observance of nature, and that every writer should draw as close to it as possible, but only in order to interpret it, to reveal it with a true feeling, yet without a too intimate analysis, and that no one should attempt to portray it exactly or servilely copy it. "Of what use is art," he says, "if it is only a reduplication of existence? We see around us only too much of the sadness and disenchantment of reality." The three novels that compose the volume 'Servitude et Grandeur militaire' are, in this respect, models of romantic composition that never will be surpassed, bearing witness to the truth of the formula followed by De Vigny in all his literary work: "Art is the chosen truth."

If, as a versifier, Alfred de Vigny does not equal the great poets of his time, if they are his superiors in distinction and brilliancy, in richness of vocabulary, freedom of movement, and variety of rhythm, the cause is to be ascribed less to any lack of poetic genius than to the nature of his inspiration, even to the laws of poesy, and to the secret and irreducible antinomy that exists between art and thought. When, for example, Theophile Gautier reproached him with being too little impressed with the exigencies of rhyme, his criticism was not well grounded, for richness of rhyme, though indispensable in works of descriptive imagination, has no 'raison d'etre' in poems dominated by sentiment and thought. But, having said that, we must recognize in his poetry an element, serious, strong, and impressive, characteristic of itself alone, and admire, in the strophes of 'Mozse', in the imprecations of 'Samson', and in the 'Destinees', the majestic simplicity of the most beautiful Hebraic verse.

Moreover, the true originality of De Vigny does not lie in the manner of composition; it was primarily in the role of precursor that he played his part on the stage of literature. Let us imagine ourselves at the period about the beginning of the year 1822. Of the three poets who, in making their literary debuts, had just published the 'Meditations, Poemes antiques et modernes, and Odes', only one had, at that time, the instinct of renewal in the spirit of French poesy, and a sense of the manner in which this must be accomplished; and that one was not Lamartine, and certainly it was not Victor Hugo.

Sainte-Beuve has said, with authority, that in Lamartine there is something suggestive of Millevoeye, of Voltaire (he of the charming epistles), and of Fontanes; and Victor Hugo wrote with very little variation from the technical form of his predecessors. "But with Alfred de Vigny," he says, "we seek in vain for a resemblance to any French poetry preceding his work. For example, where can we find anything resembling 'Moise, Eloa, Doloeida'? Where did he find his inspiration for style and composition in these poems? If the poets of the Pleiades of the Restoration seem to have found their inspiration within themselves, showing no trace of connection with the literature of the past, thus throwing into confusion old habits of taste and of routine, certain it is that among them Alfred de Vigny should be ranked first."

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Even in the collection that bears the date of 1822, some years before the future author of *Legende des Siecles* had taken up romanticism, Alfred de Vigny had already conceived the idea of setting forth, in a series of little epics, the migrations of the human soul throughout the ages. "One feels," said he in his Preface, "a keen intellectual delight in transporting one's self, by mere force of thought, to a period of antiquity; it resembles the pleasure an old man feels in recalling first his early youth, and then the whole course of his life. In the age of simplicity, poetry was devoted entirely to the beauties of the physical forms of nature and of man; each step in advance that it has made since then toward our own day of civilization and of sadness, seems to have blended it more and more with our arts, and even with the sufferings of our souls. At present, with all the serious solemnity of Religion and of Destiny, it lends to them their chief beauty. Never discouraged, Poetry has followed Man in his long journey through the ages, like a sweet and beautiful companion. I have attempted, in our language, to show some of her beauties, in following her progress toward the present day."

The arrangement of the poems announced in this Preface is tripartite, like that of the '*Legende des Siecles: Poemes antiques, poemes judaiques, poemes modernes. Livre mystique, livre antique, livre moderne*'. But the name of precursor would be a vain title if all that were necessary to merit it was the fact that one had been the first to perceive a new path to literary glory, to salute it from a distance, yet never attempt to make a nearer approach.

In one direction at least, Alfred de Vigny was a true innovator, in the broadest and most meritorious sense of the word: he was the creator of philosophic poetry in France. Until Jocelyn appeared, in 1836, the form of poetic expression was confined chiefly to the ode, the ballad, and the elegy; and no poet, with the exception of the author of '*Moise*' and '*Eloa*', ever dreamed that abstract ideas and themes dealing with the moralities could be expressed in the melody of verse.

To this priority, of which he knew the full value, Alfred de Vigny laid insistent claim. "The only merit," he says in one of his prefaces, "that any one ever has disputed with me in this sort of composition is the honor of having promulgated in France all works of the kind in which philosophic thought is presented in either epic or dramatic form."

But it was not alone priority in the sense of time that gave him right of way over his contemporaries; he was the most distinguished representative of poetic philosophy of his generation. If the phrases of Lamartine seem richer, if his flight is more majestic, De Vigny's range is surer and more powerful. While the philosophy of the creator of '*Les Harmonies*' is uncertain and inconsistent, that of the poet of '*Les Destinees*' is strong and substantial, for the reason that the former inspires more sentiment than ideas, while the latter, soaring far above the narrow sphere of personal emotion, writes of everything that occupies the intellect of man.

Thus, by his vigor and breadth of thought, by his profound understanding of life, by the intensity of his dreams, Alfred de Vigny is superior to Victor Hugo, whose genius was quite different, in his power to portray picturesque scenes, in his remarkable fecundity of imagination, and in his sovereign mastery of technique.

But nowhere in De Vigny's work is that superiority of poetic thought so clearly shown as in those productions wherein the point of departure was farthest from the domain of intellect, and better than any other has he understood that truth proclaimed by Hegel: "The passions of the soul and the affections of the heart are matter for poetic expression only in so far as they are general, solid, and eternal."

De Vigny was also the only one among our poets that had a lofty ideal of woman and of love. And in order to convince one's self of this it is sufficient to reread successively the four great love-poems of that period: '*Le Lac*', '*La Tristesse d'Olympio*', '*Le Souvenir*', and '*La Colere de Samson*'.

Lamartine's conception of love was a sort of mild ecstasy, the sacred rapture in which the senses play no part, and noble emotions that cause neither trouble nor remorse. He ever regarded love as a kind of sublime and passionate religion, of which '*Le Lac*' was the most beautiful hymn, but in which the image of woman is so vague that she

almost seems to be absent.

On the other hand, what is 'La Tristesse d'Olympio' if not an admirable but common poetic rapture, a magnificent summary of the sufferings of the heart a bit of lyric writing equal to the most beautiful canzoni of the Italian masters, but wherein we find no idea of love, because all is artificial and studied; no cry from the soul is heard, no trace of passion appears.

After another fashion the same criticism applies to *Le Souvenir*; it was written under a stress of emotion resulting from too recent events; and the imagination of the author, subservient to a memory relentlessly faithful, as is often the case with those to whom passion is the chief principle of inspiration, was far from fulfilling the duties of his high vocation, which is to purify the passions of the poet from individual and accidental characteristics in order to leave unhampered whatever his work may contain that is powerful and imperishable.

Alfred de Vigny alone, of the poets of his day, in his 'Colere de Samson', has risen to a just appreciation of woman and of love; his ideal is grand and tragic, it is true, and reminds one of that gloomy passage in Ecclesiastes which says: "Woman is more bitter than death, and her arms are like chains."

It is by this character of universality, of which all his writings show striking evidence, that Alfred de Vigny is assured of immortality. A heedless generation neglected him because it preferred to seek subjects in strong contrast to life of its own time. But that which was not appreciated by his contemporaries will be welcomed by posterity. And when, in French literature, there shall remain of true romanticism only a slight trace and the memory of a few great names, the author of the 'Destinees' will still find an echo in all hearts.

No writer, no matter how gifted, immortalizes himself unless he has crystallized into expressive and original phrase the eternal sentiments and yearnings of the human heart. "A man does not deserve the name of poet unless he can express personal feeling and emotion, and only that man is worthy to be called a poet who knows how to assimilate the varied emotions of mankind." If this fine phrase of Goethe's is true, if true poetry is only that which implies a mastery of spiritual things as well as of human emotion, Alfred de Vigny is assuredly one of our greatest poets, for none so well as he has realized a complete vision of the universe, no one has brought before the world with more boldness the problem of the soul and that of humanity. Under the title of poet he belongs not only to our national literature, but occupies a distinctive place in the world of intellect, with Lucretius, Dante, and Goethe, among those inspired beings who transmit throughout succeeding centuries the light of reason and the traditions of the loftiest poetic thought.

Alfred de Vigny was elected to a chair in the French Academy in 1846 and died at Paris, September 17, 1863.

GASTON BOISSIER
Secrétaire Perpetuel de l'Académie Française.

TRUTH IN ART

The study of social progress is to-day not less needed in literature than is the analysis of the human heart. We live in an age of universal investigation, and of exploration of the sources of all movements. France, for example, loves at the same time history and the drama, because the one explores the vast destinies of humanity, and the other the individual lot of man. These embrace the whole of life. But it is the province of religion, of philosophy, of pure poetry only, to go beyond life, beyond time, into eternity.

Of late years (perhaps as a result of our political changes) art has borrowed from history more than ever. All of us have our eyes fixed on our chronicles, as though, having reached manhood while going on toward greater things, we had stopped a moment to cast up the account of our youth and its errors. We have had to double the interest by adding to it recollection.

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As France has carried farther than other nations this love of facts, and as I had chosen a recent and well-remembered epoch, it seemed to me that I ought not to imitate those foreigners who in their pictures barely show in the horizon the men who dominate their history. I placed ours in the foreground of the scene; I made them leading actors in this tragedy, wherever I endeavored to represent the three kinds of ambition by which we are influenced, and with them the beauty of self-sacrifice to a noble ideal. A treatise on the fall of the feudal system; on the position, at home and abroad, of France in the seventeenth century; on foreign alliances; on the justice of parliaments or of secret commissions, or on accusations of sorcery, would not perhaps have been read. But the romance was read.

I do not mean to defend this last form of historical composition, being convinced that the real greatness of a work lies in the substance of the author's ideas and sentiments, and not in the literary form in which they are dressed. The choice of a certain epoch necessitates a certain treatment to another epoch it would be unsuitable; these are mere secrets of the workshop of thought which there is no need of disclosing. What is the use of theorizing as to wherein lies the charm that moves us? We hear the tones of the harp, but its graceful form conceals from us its frame of iron. Nevertheless, since I have been convinced that this book possesses vitality, I can not help throwing out some reflections on the liberty which the imagination should employ in weaving into its tapestry all the leading figures of an age, and, to give more consistency to their acts, in making the reality of fact give way to the idea which each of them should represent in the eyes of posterity; in short, on the difference which I find between Truth in art and the True in fact.

Just as we descend into our consciences to judge of actions which our minds can not weigh, can we not also search in ourselves for the feeling which gives birth to forms of thought, always vague and cloudy? We shall find in our troubled hearts, where discord reigns, two needs which seem at variance, but which merge, as I think, in a common source the love of the true, and the love of the fabulous.

On the day when man told the story of his life to man, history was born. Of what use is the memory of facts, if not to serve as an example of good or of evil? But the examples which the slow train of events presents to us are scattered and incomplete. They lack always a tangible and visible coherence leading straight on to a moral conclusion. The acts of the human race on the world's stage have doubtless a coherent unity, but the meaning of the vast tragedy enacted will be visible only to the eye of God, until the end, which will reveal it perhaps to the last man. All systems of philosophy have sought in vain to explain it, ceaselessly rolling up their rock, which, never reaching the top, falls back upon them each raising its frail structure on the ruins of the others, only to see it fall in its turn.

I think, then, that man, after having satisfied his first longing for facts, wanted something fuller some grouping, some adaptation to his capacity and experience, of the links of this vast chain of events which his sight could not take in. Thus he hoped to find in the historic recital examples which might support the moral truths of which he was conscious. Few single careers could satisfy this longing, being only incomplete parts of the elusive whole of the history of the world; one was a quarter, as it were, the other a half of the proof; imagination did the rest and completed them. From this, without doubt, sprang the fable. Man created it thus, because it was not given him to see more than himself and nature, which surrounds him; but he created it true with a truth all its own.

This Truth, so beautiful, so intellectual, which I feel, I see, and long to define, the name of which I here venture to distinguish from that of the True, that I may the better make myself understood, is the soul of all the arts. It is the selection of the characteristic token in all the beauties and the grandeurs of the visible True; but it is not the thing itself, it is something better: it is an ideal combination of its principal forms, a luminous tint made up of its brightest colors, an intoxicating balm of its purest perfumes, a delicious elixir of its best juices, a perfect harmony of its sweetest sounds in short, it is a concentration of all its good qualities. For this Truth, and nothing else, should strive those works of art which are a moral representation of life-dramatic works. To attain it, the first step is undoubtedly to learn all that is true in fact of every period, to become deeply imbued with its general character and with its details; this involves only a cheap tribute of attention, of patience, and of memory: But then one must

fix upon some chosen centre, and group everything around it; this is the work of imagination, and of that sublime common-sense which is genius itself.

Of what use were the arts if they were only the reproduction and the imitation of life? Good heavens! we see only too clearly about us the sad and disenchanting reality the insupportable lukewarmness of feeble characters, of shallow virtues and vices, of irresolute loves, of tempered hates, of wavering friendships, of unsettled beliefs, of constancy which has its height and its depth, of opinions which evaporate. Let us dream that once upon a time have lived men stronger and greater, who were more determined for good or for evil; that does us good. If the paleness of your True is to follow us into art, we shall close at once the theatre and the book, to avoid meeting it a second time. What is wanted of works which revive the ghosts of human beings is, I repeat, the philosophical spectacle of man deeply wrought upon by the passions of his character and of his epoch; it is, in short, the artistic Truth of that man and that epoch, but both raised to a higher and ideal power, which concentrates all their forces. You recognize this Truth in works of the imagination just as you cry out at the resemblance of a portrait of which you have never seen the original; for true talent paints life rather than the living.

To banish finally the scruples on this point of the consciences of some persons, timorous in literary matters, whom I have seen affected with a personal sorrow on viewing the rashness with which the imagination sports with the most weighty characters of history, I will hazard the assertion that, not throughout this work, I dare not say that, but in many of these pages, and those perhaps not of the least merit, history is a romance of which the people are the authors. The human mind, I believe, cares for the True only in the general character of an epoch. What it values most of all is the sum total of events and the advance of civilization, which carries individuals along with it; but, indifferent to details, it cares less to have them real than noble or, rather, grand and complete.

Examine closely the origin of certain deeds, of certain heroic expressions, which are born one knows not how; you will see them leap out ready-made from hearsay and the murmurs of the crowd, without having in themselves more than a shadow of truth, and, nevertheless, they will remain historical forever. As if by way of pleasantry, and to put a joke upon posterity, the public voice invents sublime utterances to mark, during their lives and under their very eyes, men who, confused, avow themselves as best they may, as not deserving of so much glory

[In our time has not a Russian General denied the fire of Moscow, which we have made heroic, and which will remain so? Has not a French General denied that utterance on the field of Waterloo which will immortalize it? And if I were not withheld by my respect for a sacred event, I might recall that a priest has felt it to be his duty to disavow in public a sublime speech which will remain the noblest that has ever been pronounced on a scaffold: " Son of Saint Louis, rise to heaven!" When I learned not long ago its real author, I was overcome by the destruction of my illusion, but before long I was consoled by a thought that does honor to humanity in my eyes. I feel that France has consecrated this speech, because she felt the need of reestablishing herself in her own eyes, of blinding herself to her awful error, and of believing that then and there an honest man was found who dared to speak aloud.]

and as not being able to support so high renown. In vain; their disclaimers are not received. Let them cry out, let them write, let them print, let them sign they are not listened to. These utterances are inscribed in bronze; the poor fellows remain historical and sublime in spite of themselves. And I do not find that all this is done in the ages of barbarism alone; it is still going on, and it molds the history of yesterday to the taste of public opinion a Muse tyrannical and capricious, which preserves the general purport and scorns detail.

Which of you knows not of such transformation? Do you not see with your own eyes the chrysalis fact assume by degrees the wings of fiction? Half formed by the necessities of the time, a fact is hidden in the ground obscure and incomplete, rough, misshapen, like a block of marble not yet rough-hewn. The first who unearths it, and takes it in

hand, would wish it differently shaped, and pass it, already a little rounded, into other hands; others polish it as they pass it along; in a short time it is exhibited transformed into an immortal statue. We disclaim it; witnesses who have seen and heard pile refutations upon explanations; the learned investigate, pore over books, and write. No one listens to them any more than to the humble heroes who disown it; the torrent rolls on and bears with it the whole thing under the form which it has pleased it to give to these individual actions. What was needed for all this work? A nothing, a word; sometimes the caprice of a journalist out of work. And are we the losers by it? No. The adopted fact is always better composed than the real one, and it is even adopted only because it is better. The human race feels a need that its destinies should afford it a series of lessons; more careless than we think of the reality of facts, it strives to perfect the event in order to give it a great moral significance, feeling sure that the succession of scenes which it plays upon earth is not a comedy, and that since it advances, it marches toward an end, of which the explanation must be sought beyond what is visible.

For my part, I acknowledge my gratitude to the voice of the people for this achievement; for often in the finest life are found strange blemishes and inconsistencies which pain me when I see them. If a man seems to me a perfect model of a grand and noble character, and if some one comes and tells me of a mean trait which disfigures him, I am saddened by it, even though I do not know him, as by a misfortune which affects me in person; and I could almost wish that he had died before the change in his character.

Thus, when the Muse (and I give that name to art as a whole, to everything which belongs to the domain of imagination, almost in the same way as the ancients gave the name of Music to all education), when the Muse has related, in her impassioned manner, the adventures of a character whom I know to have lived; and when she reshapes his experiences into conformity with the strongest idea of vice or virtue which can be conceived of him filling the gaps, veiling the incongruities of his life, and giving him that perfect unity of conduct which we like to see represented even in evil if, in addition to this, she preserves the only thing essential to the instruction of the world, the spirit of the epoch, I know no reason why we should be more exacting with her than with this voice of the people which every day makes every fact undergo so great changes.

The ancients carried this liberty even into history; they wanted to see in it only the general march, and broad movements of peoples and nations; and on these great movements, brought to view in courses very distinct and very clear, they placed a few colossal figures symbols of noble character and of lofty purpose.

One might almost reckon mathematically that, having undergone the double composition of public opinion and of the author, their history reaches us at third hand and is thus separated by two stages from the original fact.

It is because in their eyes history too was a work of art; and in consequence of not having realized that such is its real nature, the whole Christian world still lacks an historical monument like those which dominate antiquity and consecrate the memory of its destinies as its pyramids, its obelisks, its pylons, and its porticos still dominate the earth which was known to them, and thereby commemorate the grandeur of antiquity.

If, then, we find everywhere evidence of this inclination to desert the positive, to bring the ideal even into historic annals, I believe that with greater reason we should be completely indifferent to historical reality in judging the dramatic works, whether poems, romances, or tragedies, which borrow from history celebrated characters. Art ought never to be considered except in its relations with its ideal beauty. Let it be said that what is true in fact is secondary merely; it is only an illusion the more with which it adorns itself one of our prejudices which it respects. It can do without it, for the Truth by which it must live is the truth of observation of human nature, and not authenticity of fact. The names of the characters have nothing to do with the matter. The idea is everything; the proper name is only the example and the proof of the idea.

So much the better for the memory of those who are chosen to represent philosophical or moral ideas; but, once again, that is not the question. The imagination can produce just as fine things without them; it is a power wholly creative; the imaginary beings which it animates are endowed with life as truly as the real beings which it brings

to life again. We believe in Othello as we do in Richard III., whose tomb is in Westminster; in Lovelace and Clarissa as in Paul and Virginia, whose tombs are in the Isle of France. It is with the same eye that we must watch the performance of its characters, and demand of the Muse only her artistic Truth, more lofty than the True whether collecting the traits of a character dispersed among a thousand entire individuals, she composes from them a type whose name alone is imaginary; or whether she goes to their tomb to seek and to touch with her galvanic current the dead whose great deeds are known, forces them to arise again, and drags them dazzled to the light of day, where, in the circle which this fairy has traced, they re-assume unwillingly their passions of other days, and begin again in the sight of their descendants the sad drama of life.

ALFRED DE VIGNY.

1827.

BOOK 1.

CHAPTER I. THE ADIEU

Fare thee well! and if forever,
Still forever fare thee well!

LORD BYRON.

Do you know that charming part of our country which has been called the garden of France that spot where, amid verdant plains watered by wide streams, one inhales the purest air of heaven?

If you have travelled through fair Touraine in summer, you have no doubt followed with enchantment the peaceful Loire; you have regretted the impossibility of determining upon which of its banks you would choose to dwell with your beloved. On its right bank one sees valleys dotted with white houses surrounded by woods, hills yellow with vines or white with the blossoms of the cherry-tree, walls covered with honeysuckles, rose-gardens, from which pointed roofs rise suddenly. Everything reminds the traveller either of the fertility of the land or of the antiquity of its monuments; and everything interests him in the work of its busy inhabitants.

Nothing has proved useless to them; it seems as if in their love for so beautiful a country the only province of France never occupied by foreigners they have determined not to lose the least part of its soil, the smallest grain of its sand. Do you fancy that this ruined tower is inhabited only by hideous night-birds? No; at the sound of your horse's hoofs, the smiling face of a young girl peeps out from the ivy, whitened with the dust from the road. If you climb a hillside covered with vines, a light column of smoke shows you that there is a chimney at your feet; for the very rock is inhabited, and families of vine-dressers breathe in its caverns, sheltered at night by the kindly earth which they laboriously cultivate during the day. The good people of Touraine are as simple as their life, gentle as the air they breathe, and strong as the powerful earth they dig. Their countenances, like their characters, have something of the frankness of the true people of St. Louis; their chestnut locks are still long and curve around their ears, as in the stone statues of our old kings; their language is the purest French, with neither slowness, haste, nor accent the cradle of the language is there, close to the cradle of the monarchy.

But the left bank of the stream has a more serious aspect; in the distance you see Chambord, which, with its blue domes and little cupolas, appears like some great city of the Orient; there is Chanteloup, raising its graceful pagoda in the air. Near these a simpler building attracts the eyes of the traveller by its magnificent situation and imposing size; it is the chateau of Chaumont. Built upon the highest hill of the shore, it frames the broad summit with its lofty walls and its enormous towers; high slate steeples increase their loftiness, and give to the building that conventual air, that religious form of all our old chateaux, which casts an aspect of gravity over the landscape of most of our provinces. Black and tufted trees surround this ancient mansion, resembling from afar the plumes

that encircled the hat of King Henry. At the foot of the hill, connected with the chateau by a narrow path, lies a pretty village, whose white houses seem to have sprung from the golden sand; a chapel stands halfway up the hill; the lords descended and the villagers ascended to its altar—the region of equality, situated like a neutral spot between poverty and riches, which have been too often opposed to each other in bitter conflict.

Here, one morning in the month of June, 1639, the bell of the chateau having, as usual, rung at midday, the dinner-hour of the family, occurrences of an unusual kind were passing in this ancient dwelling. The numerous domestics observed that in repeating the morning prayers before the assembled household, the Marechale d'Effiat had spoken with a broken voice and with tears in her eyes, and that she had appeared in a deeper mourning than was customary. The people of the household and the Italians of the Duchesse de Mantua, who had at that time retired for a while to Chaumont, saw with surprise that sudden preparations were being made for departure. The old domestic of the Marechal d'Effiat (who had been dead six months) had taken again to his travelling-boots, which he had sworn to abandon forever. This brave fellow, named Grandchamp, had followed the chief of the family everywhere in the wars, and in his financial work; he had been his equerry in the former, and his secretary in the latter. He had recently returned from Germany, to inform the mother and the children of the death of the Marechal, whose last sighs he had heard at Luzzelstein. He was one of those faithful servants who are become too rare in France; who suffer with the misfortunes of the family, and rejoice with their joys; who approve of early marriages, that they may have young masters to educate; who scold the children and often the fathers; who risk death for them; who serve without wages in revolutions; who toil for their support; and who in prosperous times follow them everywhere, or exclaim at their return, "Behold our vines!" He had a severe and remarkable face, a coppery complexion, and silver-gray hair, in which, however, some few locks, black as his heavy eyebrows, made him appear harsh at first; but a gentle countenance softened this first impression. At present his voice was loud. He busied himself much that day in hastening the dinner, and ordered about all the servants, who were in mourning like himself.

"Come," said he, "make haste to serve the dinner, while Germain, Louis, and Etienne saddle their horses; Monsieur Henri and I must be far away by eight o'clock this evening. And you, gentlemen, Italians, have you warned your young Princess? I wager that she is gone to read with her ladies at the end of the park, or on the banks of the lake. She always comes in after the first course, and makes every one rise from the table."

"Ah, my good Grandchamp," said in a low voice a young maid servant who was passing, "do not speak of the Duchess; she is very sorrowful, and I believe that she will remain in her apartment. Santa Maria! what a shame to travel to-day! to depart on a Friday, the thirteenth of the month, and the day of Saint Gervais and of Saint-Protais the day of two martyrs! I have been telling my beads all the morning for Monsieur de Cinq-Mars; and I could not help thinking of these things. And my mistress thinks of them too, although she is a great lady; so you need not laugh!"

With these words the young Italian glided like a bird across the large dining-room, and disappeared down a corridor, startled at seeing the great doors of the salon opened.

Grandchamp had hardly heard what she had said, and seemed to have been occupied only with the preparations for dinner; he fulfilled the important duties of major-domo, and cast severe looks at the domestics to see whether they were all at their posts, placing himself behind the chair of the eldest son of the house. Then all the inhabitants of the mansion entered the salon. Eleven persons seated themselves at table. The Marechale came in last, giving her arm to a handsome old man, magnificently dressed, whom she placed upon her left hand. She seated herself in a large gilded arm-chair at the middle of one side of the table, which was oblong in form. Another seat, rather more ornamented, was at her right, but it remained empty. The young Marquis d'Effiat, seated in front of his mother, was to assist her in doing the honors of the table. He was not more than twenty years old, and his countenance was insignificant; much gravity and distinguished manners proclaimed, however, a social nature, but nothing more. His young sister of fourteen, two gentlemen of the province, three young Italian noblemen of the suite of Marie de Gonzaga (Duchesse de Mantua), a lady-in-waiting, the governess of the young daughter of the

Marechale, and an abbe of the neighborhood, old and very deaf, composed the assembly. A seat at the right of the elder son still remained vacant.

The Marechale, before seating herself, made the sign of the cross, and repeated the Benedicite aloud; every one responded by making the complete sign, or upon the breast alone. This custom was preserved in many families in France up to the Revolution of 1789; some still practise it, but more in the provinces than in Paris, and not without some hesitation and some preliminary words upon the weather, accompanied by a deprecatory smile when a stranger is present for it is too true that virtue also has its blush.

The Marechale possessed an imposing figure, and her large blue eyes were remarkably beautiful. She did not appear to have yet attained her forty– fifth year; but, oppressed with sorrow, she walked slowly and spoke with difficulty, closing her eyes, and allowing her head to droop for a moment upon her breast, after she had been obliged to raise her voice. At such efforts her hand pressed to her bosom showed that she experienced sharp pain. She saw therefore with satisfaction that the person who was seated at her left, having at the beginning engrossed the conversation, without having been requested by any one to talk, persisted with an imperturbable coolness in engrossing it to the end of the dinner. This was the old Marechal de Bassompierre; he had preserved with his white locks an air of youth and vivacity curious to see. His noble and polished manners showed a certain gallantry, antiquated like his costume for he wore a ruff in the fashion of Henri IV, and the slashed sleeves fashionable in the former reign, an absurdity which was unpardonable in the eyes of the beaux of the court. This would not have appeared more singular than anything else at present; but it is admitted that in every age we laugh at the costume of our fathers, and, except the Orientals, I know of no people who have not this fault.

One of the Italian gentlemen had hardly finished asking the Marechal what he thought of the way in which the Cardinal treated the daughter of the Duc de Mantua, when he exclaimed, in his familiar language:

"Heavens, man! what are you talking about? what do I comprehend of this new system under which France is living? We old companions–in–arms of his late Majesty can ill understand the language spoken by the new court, and that in its turn does not comprehend ours. But what do I say? We speak no language in this sad country, for all the world is silent before the Cardinal; this haughty little, vassal looks upon us as merely old family portraits, which occasionally he shortens by the head; but happily the motto always remains. Is it not true, my dear Puy–Laurens?"

This guest was about the same age as the Marechal, but, being more grave and cautious, he answered in vague and few words, and made a sign to his contemporary in order to induce him to observe the unpleasant emotions which he had caused the mistress of the house by reminding her of the recent death of her husband and in speaking thus of the minister, his friend. But it was in vain, for Bassompierre, pleased with the sign of half–approval, emptied at one draught a great goblet of wine a remedy which he lauds in his Memoirs as infallible against the plague and against reserve; and leaning back to receive another glass from his esquire, he settled himself more firmly than ever upon his chair, and in his favorite ideas.

"Yes, we are in the way here; I said so the other day to my dear Duc de Guise, whom they have ruined. They count the minutes that we have to live, and shake the hour–glass to hasten the descent of its sands. When Monsieur le Cardinal–Duc observes in a corner three or four of our tall figures, who never quitted the side of the late King, he feels that he is unable to move those statues of iron, and that to do it would require the hand of a great man; he passes quickly by, and dares not meddle with us, who fear him not. He believes that we are always conspiring; and they say at this very moment that there is talk of putting me in the Bastille."

"Eh! Monsieur le Marechal, why do you delay your departure?" said the Italian. "I know of no place, except Flanders, where you can find shelter."

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: Cinq Mars, v1

"Ah, Monsieur! you do not know me. So far from flying, I sought out the King before his departure, and told him that I did so in order to save people the trouble of looking for me; and that if I knew when he wished to send me, I would go myself without being taken. He was as kind as I expected him to be, and said to me, 'What, my old friend, could you have thought that I desired to send you there? You know well that I love you.'"

"Ah, my dear Marechal, let me compliment you," said Madame d'Effiat, in a soft voice. "I recognize the benevolence of the King in these words; he remembers the affection which the King, his father, had toward you. It appears to me that he always accorded to you all that you desired for your friends," she added, with animation, in order to put him into the track of praise, and to beguile him from the discontent which he had so loudly declared.

"Assuredly, Madame," answered he; "no one is more willing to recognize his virtues than Francois de Bassompierre. I shall be faithful to him to the end, because I gave myself, body and fortune, to his father at a ball; and I swear that, with my consent at least, none of my family shall ever fail in their duties toward the King of France. Although the Besteins are foreigners and Lorrains, a shake of the hand from Henri IV gained us forever. My greatest grief has been to see my brother die in the service of Spain; and I have just written to my nephew to say that I shall disinherit him if he has passed over to the Emperor, as report says he has."

One of the gentlemen guests who had as yet been silent, and who was remarkable for the profusion of knots, ribbons, and tags which covered his dress, and for the black cordon of the Order of St. Michael which decorated his neck, bowed, observing that it was thus all faithful subjects ought to speak.

"I' faith, Monsieur de Launay, you deceive yourself very much," said the Marechal, to whom the recollection of his ancestors now occurred; "persons of our blood are subjects only at our own pleasure, for God has caused us to be born as much lords of our lands as the King is of his. When I came to France, I came at my ease, accompanied by my gentlemen and pages. I perceive, however, that the farther we go, the more we lose sight of this idea, especially at the court. But here is a young man who arrives very opportunely to hear me."

The door indeed opened, and a young man of fine form entered. He was pale; his hair was brown, his eyes were black, his expression was sad and reckless. This was Henri d'Effiat, Marquis de Cinq-Mars (a name taken from an estate of his family). His dress and his short cloak were black; a collar of lace fell from his neck halfway down his breast; his stout, small, and very wide-spurred boots made so much noise upon the flags of the salon that his approach was heard at a distance. He walked directly toward the Marechale, bowed low, and kissed her hand.

"Well, Henri," she said, "are your horses ready? At what hour do you depart?"

"Immediately after dinner, Madame, if you will allow me," said he to his mother, with the ceremonious respect of the times; and passing behind her, he saluted M. de Bassompierre before seating himself at the left of his eldest brother.

"Well," said the Marechal, continuing to eat with an excellent appetite, "you are about to depart, my son; you are going to the court a slippery place nowadays. I am sorry for your sake that it is not now what it used to be. In former times, the court was simply the drawing-room of the King, in which he received his natural friends: nobles of great family, his peers, who visited him to show their devotion and their friendship, lost their money with him, and accompanied him in his pleasure parties, but never received anything from him, except permission to bring their vassals with them, to break their heads in his service. The honors a man of quality received did not enrich him, for he paid for them out of his purse. I sold an estate for every grade I received; the title of colonel-general of the Swiss cost me four hundred thousand crowns, and at the baptism of the present King I had to buy a costume that cost me a hundred thousand francs."

"Ah!" said the mistress of the house, smiling, "you must acknowledge for once that you were not obliged to do that. We have all heard of your splendid dress of pearls; but I should be much vexed were it still the custom to

wear such."

"Oh, Madame la Marquise, do not fear, those times of magnificence never will return. We committed follies, no doubt, but they proved our independence; it is clear that it would then have been hard to convert from their allegiance to the King adherents who were attached to him by love alone, and whose coronets contained as many diamonds as his own locked-up crown. It is also certain that ambition could not then attack all classes, since such expenses could come only from rich hands, and since gold comes only from mines. Those great houses, which are being so furiously assailed, were not ambitious, and frequently, desiring no employment from the Government, maintained their places at court by their own weight, existed upon their own foundation, and might say, as one of them did say, 'The Prince condescends not; I am Rohan.' It was the same with every noble family, to which its own nobility sufficed; the King himself expressed it in writing to one of my friends: 'Money is not a common thing between gentlemen like you and me.'"

"But, Monsieur le Marechal," coldly, and with extreme politeness, interrupted M. de Launay, who perhaps intended to anger him, "this independence has produced as many civil wars and revolts as those of Monsieur de Montmorency."

"Monsieur! I can not consent to hear these things spoken," said the fiery Marechal, leaping up in his armchair. "Those revolts and wars had nothing to do with the fundamental laws of the State, and could no more have overturned the throne than a duel could have done so. Of all the great party-chiefs, there was not one who would not have laid his victory at the feet of the King, had he succeeded, knowing well that all the other lords who were as great as himself would have abandoned the enemy of the legitimate sovereign. Arms were taken against a faction, and not against the sovereign authority; and, this destroyed, everything went on again in the old way. But what have you done in crushing us? You have crushed the arm of the throne, and have not put anything in its place. Yes, I no longer doubt that the Cardinal-Duke will wholly accomplish his design; the great nobility will leave and lose their lands, and, ceasing to be great proprietors, they will cease to be a great power. The court is already no more than a palace where people beg; by and by it will become an antechamber, when it will be composed only of those who constitute the suite of the King. Great names will begin by ennobling vile offices; but, by a terrible reaction, those offices will end by rendering great names vile. Estranged from their homes, the nobility will be dependent upon the employments which they shall have received; and if the people, over whom they will no longer have any influence, choose to revolt "

"How gloomy you are to-day, Marechal!" interrupted the Marquise; "I hope that neither I nor my children will ever see that time. I no longer perceive your cheerful disposition, now that you talk like a politician. I expected to hear you give advice to my son. Henri, what troubles you? You seem very absent."

Cinq-Mars, with eyes fixed upon the, great bay window of the dining-room, looked sorrowfully upon the magnificent landscape. The sun shone in full splendor, and colored the sands of the Loire, the trees, and the lawns with gold and emerald. The sky was azure, the waves were of a transparent yellow, the islets of a vivid green; behind their rounded outlines rose the great sails of the merchant-vessels, like a fleet in ambuscade.

"O Nature, Nature!" he mused; "beautiful Nature, farewell! Soon will my heart cease to be of simplicity enough to feel your charm, soon you will no longer please my eyes. This heart is already burned by a deep passion; and the mention of the interests of men stirs it with hitherto unknown agitation. I must, however, enter this labyrinth; I may, perchance, lose myself there, but for Marie "

At this moment, aroused by the words of his mother, and fearing to exhibit a childish regret at leaving his beautiful country and his family, he said:

"I am thinking, Madame, of the road which I shall take to Perpignan, and also of that which shall bring me back to you."

"Do not forget to take that of Poitiers, and to go to Loudun to see your old tutor, our good Abbe Quillet; he will give you useful advice about the court. He is on very good terms with the Duc de Bouillon; and besides, though he may not be very necessary to you, it is a mark of deference which you owe him."

"Is it, then, to the siege of Perpignan that you are going, my boy?" asked the old Marechal, who began to think that he had been silent a long time. "Ah! it is well for you. Plague upon it! a siege! 'tis an excellent opening. I would have given much had I been able to assist the late King at a siege, upon my arrival in his court; it would have been better to be disembowelled then than at a tourney, as I was. But we were at peace; and I was compelled to go and shoot the Turks with the Rosworm of the Hungarians, in order that I might not afflict my family by my idleness. For the rest, may his Majesty receive you as kindly as his father received me! It is true that the King is good and brave; but they have unfortunately taught him that cold Spanish etiquette which arrests all the impulses of the heart. He restrains himself and others by an immovable presence and an icy look; as for me, I confess that I am always waiting for the moment of thaw, but in vain. We were accustomed to other manners from the witty and simple-hearted Henri; and we were at least free to tell him that we loved him."

Cinq-Mars, with eyes fixed upon those of Bassompierre, as if to force himself to attend to his discourse, asked him what was the manner of the late king in conversation.

"Lively and frank," said he. "Some time after my arrival in France, I played with him and with the Duchesse de Beaufort at Fontainebleau; for he wished, he said, to win my gold-pieces, my fine Portugal money. He asked me the reason why I came into this country. 'Truly, Sire,' said I, frankly, 'I came with no intention of enlisting myself in your service, but only to pass some time at your court, and afterward at that of Spain; but you have charmed me so much that, instead of going farther, if you desire my service, I will devote myself to you till death.' Then he embraced me, and assured me that I could not find a better master, or one who would love me more. Alas! I have found it so. And for my part, I sacrificed everything to him, even my love; and I would have done more, had it been possible to do more than renounce Mademoiselle de Montmorency."

The good Marechal had tears in his eyes; but the young Marquis d'Effiat and the Italians, looking at one another, could not help smiling to think that at present the Princesse de Conde was far from young and pretty. Cinq-Mars noticed this interchange of glances, and smiled also, but bitterly.

"Is it true then," he thought, "that the affections meet the same fate as the fashions, and that the lapse of a few years can throw the same ridicule upon a costume and upon love? Happy is he who does not outlive his youth and his illusions, and who carries his treasures with him to the grave!"

But again, with effort breaking the melancholy course of his thoughts, and wishing that the good Marechal should read nothing unpleasant upon the countenances of his hosts, he said:

"People spoke, then, with much freedom to King Henri? Possibly, however, he found it necessary to assume that tone at the beginning of his reign; but when he was master did he change it?"

"Never! no, never, to his last day, did our great King cease to be the same. He did not blush to be a man, and he spoke to men with force and sensibility. Ah! I fancy I see him now, embracing the Duc de Guise in his carriage, on the very day of his death; he had just made one of his lively pleasantries to me, and the Duke said to him, 'You are, in my opinion, one of the most agreeable men in the world, and destiny ordained us for each other. For, had you been but an ordinary man, I should have taken you into my service at whatever price; but since heaven ordained that you should be born a great King, it is inevitable that I belong to you.' Oh, great man!" cried Bassompierre, with tears in his eyes, and perhaps a little excited by the frequent bumpers he had drunk, "you said well, 'When you have lost me you will learn my value.'"

During this interlude, the guests at the table had assumed various attitudes, according to their position in public affairs. One of the Italians pretended to chat and laugh in a subdued manner with the young daughter of the Marechale; the other talked to the deaf old Abbe, who, with one hand behind his ear that he might hear, was the only one who appeared attentive. Cinq-Mars had sunk back into his melancholy abstraction, after throwing a glance at the Marechal, as one looks aside after throwing a tennis-ball until its return; his elder brother did the honors of the table with the same calm. Puy-Laurens observed the mistress of the house with attention; he was devoted to the Duc d'Orleans, and feared the Cardinal. As for the Marechale, she had an anxious and afflicted air. Careless words had often recalled the death of her husband or the departure of her son; and, oftener still, she had feared lest Bassompierre should compromise himself. She had touched him many times, glancing at the same time toward M. de Launay, of whom she knew little, and whom she had reason to believe devoted to the prime minister; but to a man of his character, such warnings were useless. He appeared not to notice them; but, on the contrary, crushing that gentleman with his bold glance and the sound of his voice, he affected to turn himself toward him, and to direct all his conversation to him. M. de Launay assumed an air of indifference and of assenting politeness, which he preserved until the moment when the folding-doors opened, and "Mademoiselle la Duchesse de Mantua" was announced.

The conversation which we have transcribed so lengthily passed, in reality, with rapidity; and the repast was only half over when the arrival of Marie de Gonzaga caused the company to rise. She was small, but very well made, and although her eyes and hair were black, her complexion was as dazzling as the beauty of her skin. The Marechale arose to acknowledge her rank, and kissed her on the forehead, in recognition of her goodness and her charming age.

"We have waited a long time for you to-day, dear Marie," she said, placing the Duchess beside her; "fortunately, you remain with me to replace one of my children, who is about to depart."

The young Duchess blushed, lowered her head and her eyes, in order that no one might see their redness, and said, timidly:

"Madame, that may well be, since you have taken toward me the place of a mother;" and a glance thrown at Cinq-Mars, at the other end of the table, made him turn pale.

This arrival changed the conversation; it ceased to be general, and each guest conversed in a low voice with his neighbor. The Marechal alone continued to utter a few sentences concerning the magnificence of the old court, his wars in Turkey, the tournaments, and the avarice of the new court; but, to his great regret, no one made any reply, and the company were about to leave the table, when, as the clock struck two, five horses appeared in the courtyard. Four were mounted by servants, cloaked and armed; the other horse, black and spirited, was held by old Grandchamp it was his master's steed.

"Ah!" exclaimed Bassompierre; "see, our battlehorses are saddled and bridled. Come, young man, we must say, with our old Marot:

"Adieu la cour, adieu les dames!
Adieu les filles et les femmes!
Adieu vous dy pour quelque temps;
Adieu vos plaisans parse-temps!
Adieu le bal, adieu la dance;
Adieu mesure, adieu cadance,
Tabourins, Hautbois, Violons,
Puisqu'a la guerre nous allons!"

These old verses and the air of the Marechal made all the guests laugh, except three persons.

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: Cinq Mars, v1

"Heavens!" he continued, "it seems to me as if, like him, I were only seventeen years old; he will return to us covered with embroidery. Madame, we must keep his chair vacant for him."

The Marechale suddenly grew pale, and left the table in tears; every one rose with her; she took only two steps, and sank into another chair. Her sons and her daughter and the young Duchess gathered anxiously around her, and heard her say, amid the sighs and tears which she strove to restrain:

"Pardon, my friends! it is foolish of me childish; but I am weak at present, and am not mistress of myself. We were thirteen at table; and you, my dear Duchess, were the cause of it. But it is very wrong of me to show so much weakness before him. Farewell, my child; give me your forehead to kiss, and may God conduct you! Be worthy of your name and of your father."

Then, as Homer says, "smiling under tears," she raised herself, pushed her son from her, and said:

"Come, let me see you on horseback, fair sir!"

The silent traveller kissed the hands of his mother, and made a low bow to her; he bowed also to the Duchess, without raising his eyes. Then, embracing his elder brother, pressing the hand of the Marechal, and kissing the forehead of his young sister almost simultaneously, he went forth, and was on horseback in an instant. Every one went to the windows which overlooked the court, except Madame d'Effiat, who was still seated and suffering.

"He sets off at full gallop. That is a good sign," said the Marechal, laughing.

"Oh, heavens!" cried the young Princess, retiring from the bay-window.

"What is the matter?" said the mother.

"Nothing, nothing!" said M. de Launay. "Your son's horse stumbled under the gateway; but he soon pulled him up. See, he salutes us from the road."

"Another ominous presage!" said the Marquise, upon retiring to her apartments.

Every one imitated her by being silent or speaking low.

The day was sad, and in the evening the supper was silent at the chateau of Chaumont.

At ten o'clock that evening, the old Marechal, conducted by his valet, retired to the northern tower near the gateway, and opposite the river. The heat was extreme; he opened the window, and, enveloping himself in his great silk robe, placed a heavy candlestick upon the table and desired to be left alone. His window looked out upon the plain, which the moon, in her first quarter, indistinctly lighted; the sky was charged with thick clouds, and all things disposed the mind to melancholy. Although Bassompierre had nothing of the dreamer in his character, the tone which the conversation had taken at dinner returned to his memory, and he reconsidered his life, the sad changes which the new reign had wrought in it, a reign which seemed to have breathed upon him a wind of misfortune the death of a cherished sister; the irregularities of the heir of his name; the loss of his lands and of his favor; the recent fate of his friend, the Marechal d'Effiat, whose chambers he now occupied. All these thoughts drew from him an involuntary sigh, and he went to the window to breathe.

At that moment he fancied he heard the tramp of a troop of horse at the side of the wood; but the wind rising made him think that he had been mistaken, and, as the noise suddenly ceased, he forgot it. He still watched for some time all the lights of the chateau, which were successively extinguished, after winding among the windows of the staircases and rambling about the courtyards and the stables. Then, leaning back in his great tapestried

armchair, his elbow resting on the table, he abandoned himself to his reflections. After a while, drawing from his breast a medallion which hung concealed, suspended by a black ribbon, he said:

"Come, my good old master, talk with me as you have so often talked; come, great King, forget your court for the smile of a true friend; come, great man, consult me concerning ambitious Austria; come, inconstant chevalier, speak to me of the lightness of thy love, and of the fidelity of thine inconstancy; come, heroic soldier, complain to me again that I obscure you in combat. Ah, had I only done it in Paris! Had I only received thy wound? With thy blood the world has lost the benefits of thine interrupted reign "

The tears of the Marechal obscured the glass that covered the large medallion, and he was effacing them with respectful kisses, when, his door being roughly opened, he quickly drew his sword.

"Who goes there?" he cried, in his surprise, which was much increased when he saw M. de Launay, who, hat in hand, advanced toward him, and said to him, with embarrassment:

"Monsieur, it is with a heart pierced with grief that I am forced to tell you that the King has commanded me to arrest you. A carriage awaits you at the gate, attended by thirty of the Cardinal–Duke's musketeers."

Bassompierre had not risen: and he still held the medallion in his right hand, and the sword in the other. He tendered it disdainfully to this man, saying:

"Monsieur, I know that I have lived too long, and it is that of which I was thinking; in the name of the great Henri, I restore this sword peacefully to his son. Follow me."

He accompanied these words with a look so firm that De Launay was depressed, and followed him with drooping head, as if he had himself been arrested by the noble old man, who, seizing a flambeau, issued from the court and found all the doors opened by horse–guards, who had terrified the people of the chateau in the name of the King, and commanded silence. The carriage was ready, and departed rapidly, followed by many horses. The Marechal, seated beside M. de Launay, was about to fall asleep, rocked by the movement of the vehicle, when a voice cried to the driver, "Stop!" and, as he continued, a pistol–shot followed. The horses stopped.

"I declare, Monsieur, that this is done without my participation," said Bassompierre. Then, putting his head out at the door, he saw that they were in a little wood, and that the road was too narrow to allow the, horses to pass to either the right or the left of the carriage a great advantage for the aggressors, since the musketeers could not advance. He tried to see what was going on when a cavalier, having in his hand a long sword, with which he parried the strokes of the guard, approached the door, crying:

"Come, come, Monsieur le Marechal!"

"What! is that you, you madcap, Henri, who are playing these pranks? Gentlemen, let him alone; he is a mere boy."

And, as De Launay called to the musketeers to cease, Bassompierre recognized the cavalier.

"And how the devil came you here?" cried Bassompierre. "I thought you were at Tours, or even farther, if you had done your duty; but here you are returned to make a fool of yourself."

"Truly, it was not for you I returned, but for a secret affair," said Cinq–Mars, in a lower tone; "but, as I take it, they are about to introduce you to the Bastille, and I am sure you will not betray me, for that delightful edifice is the very Temple of Discretion. Yet had you thought fit," he continued, aloud, "I should have released you from these gentlemen in the wood here, which is so dense that their horses would not have been able to stir. A peasant

informed me of the insult passed upon us, more than upon you, by this violation of my father's house."

"It is the King's order, my boy, and we must respect his will; reserve your ardor for his service, though I thank you with all my heart. Now farewell, and let me proceed on my agreeable journey."

De Launay interposed, "I may inform you, Monsieur de Cinq-Mars, that I have been desired by the King himself to assure Monsieur le Marechal, that he is deeply afflicted at the step he has found it necessary to take, and that it is solely from an apprehension that Monsieur le Marechal may be led into evil that his Majesty requests him to remain for a few days in the Bastille." [He remained there twelve years.]

Bassompierre turned his head toward Cinq-Mars with a hearty laugh. "You see, my friend, how we young men are placed under guardianship; so take care of yourself."

"I will go, then," said Henri; "this is the last time I shall play the knight-errant for any one against his will;" and, reentering the wood as the carriage dashed off at full speed, he proceeded by narrow paths toward the castle, followed at a short distance by Grandchamp and his small escort.

On arriving at the foot of the western tower, he reined in his horse. He did not alight, but, approaching so near the wall that he could rest his foot upon an abutment, he stood up, and raised the blind of a window on the ground-floor, made in the form of a portcullis, such as is still seen on some ancient buildings.

It was now past midnight, and the moon was hidden behind the clouds. No one but a member of the family could have found his way through darkness so profound. The towers and the roof formed one dark mass, which stood out in indistinct relief against the sky, hardly less dark; no light shone throughout the chateau, wherein all inmates seemed buried in slumber. Cinq-Mars, enveloped in a large cloak, his face hidden under the broad brim of his hat, awaited in suspense a reply to his signal.

It came; a soft voice was heard from within:

"Is that you, Monsieur Cinq-Mars?"

"Alas, who else should it be? Who else would return like a criminal to his paternal house, without entering it, without bidding one more adieu to his mother? Who else would return to complain of the present, without a hope for the future, but I?"

The gentle voice replied, but its tones were agitated, and evidently accompanied with tears: "Alas! Henri, of what do you complain? Have I not already done more, far more than I ought? It is not my fault, but my misfortune, that my father was a sovereign prince. Can one choose one's birthplace or one's rank, and say for example, 'I will be a shepherdess?' How unhappy is the lot of princesses! From the cradle, the sentiments of the heart are prohibited to them; and when they have advanced beyond childhood, they are ceded like a town, and must not even weep. Since I have known you, what have I not done to bring my future life within the reach of happiness, in removing it far from a throne? For two years I have struggled in vain, at once against my evil fortune, that separates me from you, and against you, who estrange me from the duty I owe to my family. I have sought to spread a belief that I was dead; I have almost longed for revolutions. I should have blessed a change which deprived me of my rank, as I thanked Heaven when my father was dethroned; but the court wonders at my absence; the Queen requires me to attend her. Our dreams are at an end, Henri; we have already slumbered too long. Let us awake, be courageous, and think no more of those dear two years forget all in the one recollection of our great resolve. Have but one thought; be ambitious for be ambitious for my sake."

"Must we, then, indeed, forget all, Marie?" murmured Cinq-Mars.

She hesitated.

"Yes, forget all that I myself have forgotten." Then, after a moment's pause, she continued with earnestness: "Yes, forget our happy days together, our long evenings, even our walks by the lake and through the wood; but keep the future ever in mind. Go, Henri; your father was Marechal. Be you more; be you Constable, Prince. Go; you are young, noble, rich, brave, beloved "

"Beloved forever?" said Henri.

"Forever; for life and for eternity."

Cinq-Mars, tremulously extending his hand to the window, exclaimed:

"I swear, Marie, by the Virgin, whose name you bear, that you shall be mine, or my head shall fall on the scaffold!"

"Oh, Heaven! what is it you say?" she cried, seizing his hand in her own. "Swear to me that you will share in no guilty deeds; that you will never forget that the King of France is your master. Love him above all, next to her who will sacrifice all for you, who will await you amid suffering and sorrow. Take this little gold cross and wear it upon your heart; it has often been wet with my tears, and those tears will flow still more bitterly if ever you are faithless to the King. Give me the ring I see on your finger. Oh, heavens, my hand and yours are red with blood!"

"Oh, only a scratch. Did you hear nothing, an hour ago?"

"No; but listen. Do you hear anything now?"

"No, Marie, nothing but some bird of night on the tower."

"I heard whispering near us, I am sure. But whence comes this blood? Tell me, and then depart."

"Yes, I will go, while the clouds are still dark above us. Farewell, sweet soul; in my hour of danger I will invoke thee as a guardian angel. Love has infused the burning poison of ambition into my soul, and for the first time I feel that ambition may be ennobled by its aim. Farewell! I go to accomplish my destiny."

"And forget not mine."

"Can they ever be separated?"

"Never!" exclaimed Marie, "but by death."

"I fear absence still more," said Cinq-Mars.

"Farewell! I tremble; farewell!" repeated the beloved voice, and the window was slowly drawn down, the clasped hands not parting till the last moment.

The black horse had all the while been pawing the earth, tossing his head with impatience, and whinnying. Cinq-Mars, as agitated and restless as his steed, gave it the rein; and the whole party was soon near the city of Tours, which the bells of St. Gatien had announced from afar. To the disappointment of old Grandchamp, Cinq-Mars would not enter the town, but proceeded on his way, and five days later he entered, with his escort, the old city of Loudun in Poitou, after an uneventful journey.

CHAPTER II. THE STREET

Je m'avançais d'un pas penible et mal assure vers le but de ce convoi tragique. NODIER, 'Smarra'.

The reign of which we are about to paint a few years a reign of feebleness, which was like an eclipse of the crown between the splendors of Henri IV and those of Louis le Grand afflicts the eyes which contemplate it with dark stains of blood, and these were not all the work of one man, but were caused by great and grave bodies. It is melancholy to observe that in this age, still full of disorder, the clergy, like a nation, had its populace, as it had its nobility, its ignorant and its criminal prelates, as well as those who were learned and virtuous. Since that time, its remnant of barbarism has been refined away by the long reign of Louis XIV, and its corruptions have been washed out in the blood of the martyrs whom it offered up to the revolution of 1793.

We felt it necessary to pause for a moment to express this reflection before entering upon the recital of the facts presented by the history of this period, and to intimate that, notwithstanding this consolatory reflection, we have found it incumbent upon us to pass over many details too odious to occupy a place in our pages, sighing in spirit at those guilty acts which it was necessary to record, as in relating the life of a virtuous old man, we should lament over the impetuositities of his passionate youth, or over the corrupt tendencies of his riper age.

When the cavalcade entered the narrow streets of Loudun, they heard strange noises all around them. The streets were filled with agitated masses; the bells of the church and of the convent were ringing furiously, as if the town was in flames; and the whole population, without paying any attention to the travellers, was pressing tumultuously toward a large edifice that adjoined the church. Here and there dense crowds were collected, listening in silence to some voice that seemed raised in exhortation, or engaged in emphatic reading; then, furious cries, mingled with pious exclamations, arose from the crowd, which, dispersing, showed the travellers that the orator was some Capuchin or Franciscan friar, who, holding a wooden crucifix in one hand, pointed with the other to the large building which was attracting such universal interest.

"Jesu Maria!" exclaimed an old woman, "who would ever have thought that the Evil Spirit would choose our old town for his abode?"

"Ay, or that the pious Ursulines should be possessed?" said another.

"They say that the demon who torments the Superior is called Legion," cried a third:

"One demon, say you?" interrupted a nun; "there were seven in her poor body, whereunto, doubtless, she had attached too much importance, by reason of its great beauty, though now 'tis but the receptacle of evil spirits. The prior of the Carmelites yesterday expelled the demon Eazas through her mouth; and the reverend Father Lactantius has driven out in like manner the demon Beherit. But the other five will not depart, and when the holy exorcists (whom Heaven support!) summoned them in Latin to withdraw, they replied insolently that they would not go till they had proved their power, to the conviction even of the Huguenots and heretics, who, misbelieving wretches! seem to doubt it. The demon Elimi, the worst of them all, as you know, has threatened to take off Monsieur de Laubardemont's skull-cap to-day, and to dangle it in the air at Miserere."

"Holy Virgin!" rejoined the first speaker, "I'm all of a tremble! And to think that many times I have got this magician Urbain to say masses for me!"

"For myself," exclaimed a girl, crossing herself; "I too confessed to him ten months ago! No doubt I should have been possessed myself, but for the relic of Saint-Genevieve I luckily had about me, and "

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: Cinq Mars, v1

"Luckily, indeed, Martine," interposed a fat gossip; "for no offence! you, as I remember, were long enough with the handsome sorcerer."

"Pshaw!" said a young soldier, who had joined the group, smoking his pipe, "don't you know that pretty Martine was dispossessed a month ago."

The girl blushed, and drew the hood of her black cloak over her face. The elder gossips cast a glance of indignation at the reckless trooper, and finding themselves now close to the door of the building, and thus sure of making their way in among the first when it should be thrown open, sat down upon the stone bench at the side, and, talking of the latest wonders, raised the expectations of all as to the delight they were about to have in being spectators of something marvellous an apparition, perhaps, but at the very least, an administration of the torture.

"Is it true, aunt," asked Martine of the eldest gossip, "that you have heard the demons speak?"

"Yes, child, true as I see you; many and many can say the same; and it was to convince you of it I brought you with me here, that you may see the power of the Evil One."

"What kind of voice has he?" continued the girl, glad to encourage a conversation which diverted from herself the invidious attention procured her by the soldier's raillery.

"Oh, he speaks with a voice like that of the Superior herself, to whom Our Lady be gracious! Poor young woman! I was with her yesterday a long time; it was sad to see her tearing her breast, turning her arms and her legs first one way and then another, and then, all of a sudden, twisting them together behind her back. When the holy Father Lactantius pronounced the name of Urbain Grandier, foam came out of her mouth, and she talked Latin for all the world as if she were reading the Bible. Of course, I did not understand what she said, and all I can remember of it now is, 'Urbanus Magicus rosas diabolica,' which they tell me means that the magician Urbain had bewitched her with some roses the Devil had given him; and so it must have been, for while Father Lactantius spoke, out of her ears and neck came a quantity of flame-colored roses, all smelling of sulphur so strongly that the judge-Advocate called out for every one present to stop their noses and eyes, for that the demons were about to come out."

"Ah, look there now!" exclaimed with shrill voices and a triumphant air the whole bevy of assembled women, turning toward the crowd, and more particularly toward a group of men attired in black, among whom was standing the young soldier who had cut his joke just before so unceremoniously.

"Listen to the noisy old idiots!" exclaimed the soldier. "They think they're at the witches' Sabbath, but I don't see their broomsticks."

"Young man, young man!" said a citizen, with a sad air, "jest not upon such subjects in the open air, or, in such a time as this, the wind may become gushing flames and destroy you."

"Pooh! I laugh at your exorcists!" returned the soldier; "my name is Grand-Ferre, and I've got here a better exorciser than any of you can show."

And significantly grasping the handle of his rapier in one hand, with the other he twisted up his blond moustache, as he looked fiercely around; but meeting no glance which returned the defiance of his own, he slowly withdrew, left foot foremost, and strolled along the dark, narrow streets with all the reckless nonchalance of a young soldier who has just donned his uniform, and a profound contempt for all who wear not a military coat.

In the meantime eight or ten of the more substantial and rational inhabitants traversed in a body, slowly and silently, the agitated throng; they seemed overwhelmed with amazement and distress at the agitation and

excitement they witnessed everywhere, and as each new instance of the popular frenzy appeared, they exchanged glances of wonder and apprehension. Their mute depression communicated itself to the working-people, and to the peasants who had flocked in from the adjacent country, and who, all sought a guide for their opinions in the faces of the principal townsmen, also for the most part proprietors of the surrounding districts. They saw that something calamitous was on foot, and resorted accordingly to the only remedy open to the ignorant and the beguiled apathetic resignation.

Yet, in the character of the French peasant is a certain scoffing finesse of which he makes effective use, sometimes with his equals, and almost invariably with his superiors. He puts questions to power as embarrassing as are those which infancy puts to mature age. He affects excessive humility, in order to confuse him whom he addresses with the very height of his isolated elevation. He exaggerates the awkwardness of his manner and the rudeness of his speech, as a means of covering his real thoughts under the appearance of mere uncouthness; yet, despite all his self-command, there is something in his air, certain fierce expressions which betray him to the close observer, who discerns in his sardonic smile, and in the marked emphasis with which he leans on his long staff, the hopes that secretly nourish his soul, and the aid upon which he ultimately relies.

One of the oldest of the peasants whom we have indicated came on vigorously, followed by ten or twelve young men, his sons and nephews, all wearing the broad-brimmed hat and the blue frock or blouse of the ancient Gauls, which the peasants of France still wear over their other garments, as peculiarly adapted to their humid climate and their laborious habits.

When the old man had reached the group of personages of whom we have just spoken, he took off his hat an example immediately followed by his whole family and showed a face tanned with exposure to the weather, a forehead bald and wrinkled with age, and long, white hair. His shoulders were bent with years and labor, but he was still a hale and sturdy man. He was received with an air of welcome, and even of respect, by one of the gravest of the grave group he had approached, who, without uncovering, however, extended to him his hand.

"What! good Father Guillaume Leroux!" said he, "and have you, too, left our farm of La Chenaie to visit the town, when it's not market-day? Why, 'tis as if your oxen were to unharness themselves and go hunting, leaving their work to see a poor rabbit run down!"

"Faith, Monsieur le Comte du Lude," replied the farmer, "for that matter, sometimes the rabbit runs across our path of itself; but, in truth, I've a notion that some of the people here want to make fools of us, and so I've come to see about it."

"Enough of that, my friend," returned the Count; "here is Monsieur Fournier, the Advocate, who assuredly will not deceive you, for he resigned his office of Attorney-General last night, that he might henceforth devote his eloquence to the service of his own noble thoughts. You will hear him, perhaps, to-day, though truly, I dread his appearing for his own sake as much as I desire it for that of the accused."

"I care not for myself," said Fournier; "truth is with me a passion, and I would have it taught in all times and all places."

He that spoke was a young man, whose face, pallid in the extreme, was full of the noblest expression. His blond hair, his light-blue eyes, his thinness, the delicacy of his frame, made him at first sight seem younger than he was; but his thoughtful and earnest countenance indicated that mental superiority and that precocious maturity of soul which are developed by deep study in youth, combined with natural energy of character. He was attired wholly in black, with a short cloak in the fashion of the day, and carried under his left arm a roll of documents, which, when speaking, he would take in the right hand and grasp convulsively, as a warrior in his anger grasps the pommel of his sword. At one moment it seemed as if he were about to unfurl the scroll, and from it hurl lightning upon those whom he pursued with looks of fiery indignation three Capuchins and a Franciscan, who had just passed.

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: Cinq Mars, v1

"Pere Guillaume," pursued M. du Lude, "how is it you have brought with you only your sons, and they armed with their staves?"

"Faith, Monsieur, I have no desire that our girls should learn to dance of the nuns; and, moreover, just now the lads with their staves may bestir themselves to better purpose than their sisters would."

"Take my advice, my old friend," said the Count, "and don't bestir yourselves at all; rather stand quietly aside to view the procession which you see approaching, and remember that you are seventy years old."

"Ah!" murmured the old man, drawing up his twelve sons in double military rank, "I fought under good King Henriot, and can play at sword and pistol as well as the worthy 'ligueurs';" and shaking his head he leaned against a post, his knotty staff between his crossed legs, his hands clasped on its thick butt-end, and his white, bearded chin resting on his hands. Then, half closing his eyes, he appeared lost in recollections of his youth.

The bystanders observed with interest his dress, slashed in the fashion of Henri IV, and his resemblance to the Bearnese monarch in the latter years of his life, though the King's hair had been prevented by the assassin's blade from acquiring the whiteness which that of the old peasant had peacefully attained. A furious pealing of the bells, however, attracted the general attention to the end of the great street, down which was seen filing a long procession, whose banners and glittering pikes rose above the heads of the crowd, which successively and in silence opened a way for the at once absurd and terrible train.

First, two and two, came a body of archers, with pointed beards and large plumed hats, armed with long halberds, who, ranging in a single file on each side of the middle of the street, formed an avenue along which marched in solemn order a procession of Gray Penitents men attired in long, gray robes, the hoods of which entirely covered their heads; masks of the same stuff terminated below their chins in points, like beards, each having three holes for the eyes and nose. Even at the present day we see these costumes at funerals, more especially in the Pyrenees. The Penitents of Loudun carried enormous wax candles, and their slow, uniform movement, and their eyes, which seemed to glitter under their masks, gave them the appearance of phantoms.

The people expressed their various feelings in an undertone:

"There's many a rascal hidden under those masks," said a citizen.

"Ay, and with a face uglier than the mask itself," added a young man.

"They make me afraid," tremulously exclaimed a girl.

"I'm only afraid for my purse," said the first speaker.

"Ah, heaven! there are our holy brethren, the Penitents," cried an old woman, throwing back her hood, the better to look at them. "See the banner they bear! Ah, neighbors, 'tis a joyful thing to have it among us! Beyond a doubt it will save us; see, it shows the devil in flames, and a monk fastening a chain round his neck, to keep him in hell. Ah, here come the judges noble gentlemen! dear gentlemen! Look at their red robes; how beautiful! Blessed be the Virgin, they've been well chosen!"

"Every man of them is a personal enemy of the Cure," whispered the Count du Lude to the advocate Fournier, who took a note of the information.

"Don't you know them, neighbors?" pursued the shrill, sharp voice of the old woman, as she elbowed one and pinched another of those near her to attract their attention to the objects of her admiration; "see, there's excellent Monsieur Mignon, whispering to Messieurs the Counsellors of the Court of Poitiers; Heaven bless them all, say

I!"

"Yes, there are Roatin, Richard, and Chevalier the very men who tried to have him dismissed a year ago," continued M. du Lude, in undertones, to the young advocate, who, surrounded and hidden from public observation by the group of dark-clad citizens, was writing down his observations in a note-book under his cloak.

"Here; look, look!" screamed the woman. "Make way! here's Monsieur Barre, the Cure of Saint-Jacques at Chinon."

"A saint!" murmured one bystander.

"A hypocrite!" exclaimed a manly voice.

"See how thin he is with fasting!"

"See how pale he is with remorse!"

"He's the man to drive away devils!"

"Yes, but not till he's done with them for his own purposes."

The dialogue was interrupted by the general exclamation, "How beautiful she is!"

The Superior of the Ursulines advanced, followed by all her nuns. Her white veil was raised; in order that the people might see the features of the possessed ones, it had been ordered that it should be thus with her and six of the sisterhood. Her attire had no distinguishing feature, except a large rosary extending from her neck nearly to her feet, from which hung a gold cross; but the dazzling pallor of her face, rendered still more conspicuous by the dark hue of her capuchon, at once fixed the general gaze upon her. Her brilliant, dark eyes, which bore the impress of some deep and burning passion, were crowned with eyebrows so perfectly arched that Nature herself seemed to have taken as much pains to form them as the Circassian women to pencil theirs artistically; but between them a slight fold revealed the powerful agitation within. In her movements, however, and throughout her whole bearing, she affected perfect calm; her steps were slow and measured, and her beautiful hands were crossed on her bosom, as white and motionless as those of the marble statues joined in eternal prayer.

"See, aunt," ejaculated Martine, "see how Sister Agnes and Sister Claire are weeping, next to the Superior!"

"Ay, niece, they weep because they are the prey of the demon."

"Or rather," interposed the same manly voice that spoke before, "because they repent of having mocked Heaven."

A deep silence now pervaded the multitude; not a word was heard, not a movement, hardly a breath. Every one seemed paralyzed by some sudden enchantment, when, following the nuns, among four Penitents who held him in chains, appeared the Cure of the Church of Ste. Croix, attired in his pastor's robe. His was a noble, fine face, with grandeur in its whole expression, and gentleness in every feature. Affecting no scornful indifference to his position, he looked calmly and kindly around, as if he sought on his dark path the affectionate glances of those who loved him. Nor did he seek in vain; here and there he encountered those glances, and joyfully returned them. He even heard sobs, and he saw hands extended toward him, many of which grasped weapons. But no gesture of his encouraged these mute offers of aid; he lowered his eyes and went on, careful not to compromise those who so trusted in him, or to involve them in his own misfortunes. This was Urbain Grandier.

Suddenly the procession stopped, at a sign from the man who walked apart, and who seemed to command its progress. He was tall, thin, sallow; he wore a long black robe, with a cap of the same material and color; he had the face of a Don Basilio, with the eye of Nero. He motioned the guards to surround him more closely, when he saw with affright the dark group we have mentioned, and the strong-limbed and resolute peasants who seemed in attendance upon them. Then, advancing somewhat before the Canons and Capuchins who were with him, he pronounced, in a shrill voice, this singular decree:

"We, Sieur de Laubardemont, referendary, being delegated and invested with discretionary power in the matter of the trial of the magician Urbain Grandier, upon the various articles of accusation brought against him, assisted by the reverend Fathers Mignon, canon, Barre, cure of St. Jacques at Chinon, Father Lactantius, and all the other judges appointed to try the said magician, have decreed as follows:

"Primo: the factitious assembly of proprietors, noble citizens of this town and its environs, is dissolved, as tending to popular sedition; its proceedings are declared null, and its letter to the King, against us, the judges, which has been intercepted, shall be publicly burned in the marketplace as calumniating the good Ursulines and the reverend fathers and judges.

"Secundo: it is forbidden to say, publicly or in private, that the said nuns are not possessed by the Evil Spirit, or to doubt of the power of the exorcists, under pain of a fine of twenty thousand livres, and corporal punishment.

"Let the bailiffs and sheriffs obey this. Given the eighteenth of June, in the year of grace 1639."

Before he had well finished reading the decree, the discordant blare of trumpets, bursting forth at a prearranged signal, drowned, to a certain extent, the murmurs that followed its proclamation, amid which Laubardemont urged forward the procession, which entered the great building already referred to an ancient convent, whose interior had crumbled away, its walls now forming one vast hall, well adapted for the purpose to which it was about to be applied. Laubardemont did not deem himself safe until he was within the building and had heard the heavy, double doors creak on their hinges as, closing, they excluded the furious crowd without.

CHAPTER III. THE GOOD PRIEST

L'homme de paix me parla ainsi. VICAIRE SAVOYARD.

Now that the diabolical procession is in the arena destined for its spectacle, and is arranging its sanguinary representation, let us see what Cinq-Mars had been doing amid the agitated throng. He was naturally endowed with great tact, and he felt that it would be no easy matter for him to attain his object of seeing the Abbe Quillet, at a time when public excitement was at its height. He therefore remained on horseback with his four servants in a small, dark street that led into the main thoroughfare, whence he could see all that passed. No one at first paid any attention to him; but when public curiosity had no other aliment, he became an object of general interest. Weary of so many strange scenes, the inhabitants looked upon him with some exasperation, and whispered to one another, asking whether this was another exorcist come among them. Feeling that it was time to take a decided course, he advanced with his attendants, hat in hand, toward the group in black of whom we have spoken, and addressing him who appeared its chief member, said, "Monsieur, where can I find Monsieur l'Abbe Quillet?"

At this name, all regarded him with an air of terror, as if he had pronounced that of Lucifer. Yet no anger was shown; on the contrary, it seemed that the question had favorably changed for him the minds of all who heard him. Moreover, chance had served him well in his choice; the Comte du Lude came up to his horse, and saluting

him, said, "Dismount, Monsieur, and I will give you some useful information concerning him."

After speaking a while in whispers, the two gentlemen separated with all the ceremonious courtesy of the time. Cinq-Mars remounted his black horse, and passing through numerous narrow streets, was soon out of the crowd with his retinue.

"How happy I am!" he soliloquized, as he went his way; "I shall, at all events, for a moment see the good and kind clergyman who brought me up; even now I recall his features, his calm air, his voice so full of gentleness."

As these tender thoughts filled his mind, he found himself in the small, dark street which had been indicated to him; it was so narrow that the knee-pieces of his boots touched the wall on each side. At the end of the street he came to a one-storied wooden house, and in his eagerness knocked at the door with repeated strokes.

"Who is there?" cried a furious voice within; and at the same moment, the door opening revealed a little short, fat man, with a very red face, dressed in black, with a large white ruff, and riding-boots which engulfed his short legs in their vast depths. In his hands were a pair of horse-pistols.

"I will sell my life dearly!" he cried; "and "

"Softly, Abbe, softly," said his pupil, taking his arm; "we are friends."

"Ah, my son, is it you?" said the good man, letting fall his pistols, which were picked up by a domestic, also armed to the teeth. "What do you here? The abomination has entered the town, and I only await the night to depart. Make haste within, my dear boy, with your people. I took you for the archers of Laubardemont, and, faith, I intended to take a part somewhat out of my line. You see the horses in the courtyard there; they will convey me to Italy, where I shall rejoin our friend, the Duc de Bouillon. Jean! Jean! hasten and close the great gate after Monsieur's domestics, and recommend them not to make too much noise, although for that matter we have no habitation near us."

Grandchamp obeyed the intrepid little Abbe, who then embraced Cinq-Mars four consecutive times, raising himself on the points of his boots, so as to attain the middle of his pupil's breast. He then hurried him into a small room, which looked like a deserted granary; and seating him beside himself upon a black leather trunk, he said, warmly:

"Well, my son, whither go you? How came Madame la Marechale to allow you to come here? Do you not see what they are doing against an unhappy man, whose death alone will content them? Alas, merciful Heaven! is this the first spectacle my dear pupil is to see? And you at that delightful period of life when friendship, love, confidence, should alone encompass you; when all around you should give you a favorable opinion of your species, at your very entry into the great world! How unfortunate! alas, why did you come?"

When the good Abbe had followed up this lamentation by pressing affectionately both hands of the young traveller in his own, so red and wrinkled, the latter answered:

"Can you not guess, my dear Abbe, that I came to Loudun because you are here? As to the spectacle you speak of, it appears to me simply ridiculous; and I swear that I do not a whit the less on its account love that human race of which your virtues and your good lessons have given me an excellent idea. As to the five or six mad women who "

"Let us not lose time; I will explain to you all that matter; but answer me, whither go you, and for what?"

"I am going to Perpignan, where the Cardinal-Duke is to present me to the King."

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: Cinq Mars, v1

At this the worthy but hasty Abbe rose from his box, and walked, or rather ran, to and fro, stamping. "The Cardinal! the Cardinal!" he repeated, almost choking, his face becoming scarlet, and the tears rising to his eyes; "My poor child! they will destroy him! Ah, mon Dieu! what part would they have him play there? What would they do with him? Ah, who will protect thee, my son, in that dangerous place?" he continued, reseating himself, and again taking his pupil's hands in his own with a paternal solicitude, as he endeavored to read his thoughts in his countenance.

"Why, I do not exactly know," said Cinq-Mars, looking up at the ceiling; "but I suppose it will be the Cardinal de Richelieu, who was the friend of my father."

"Ah, my dear Henri, you make me tremble; he will ruin you unless you become his docile instrument. Alas, why can not I go with you? Why must I act the young man of twenty in this unfortunate affair? Alas, I should be perilous to you; I must, on the contrary, conceal myself. But you will have Monsieur de Thou near you, my son, will you not?" said he, trying to reassure himself; "he was your friend in childhood, though somewhat older than yourself. Heed his counsels, my child, he is a wise young man of mature reflection and solid ideas."

"Oh, yes, my dear Abbe, you may depend upon my tender attachment for him; I never have ceased to love him."

"But you have ceased to write to him, have you not?" asked the good Abbe, half smilingly.

"I beg your pardon, my dear Abbe, I wrote to him once, and again yesterday, to inform him that the Cardinal has invited me to court."

"How! has he himself desired your presence?"

Cinq-Mars hereupon showed the letter of the Cardinal-Duke to his mother, and his old preceptor grew gradually calmer.

"Ah, well!" said he to himself, "this is not so bad, perhaps, after all. It looks promising; a captain of the guards at twenty that sounds well!" and the worthy Abbe's face became all smiles.

The young man, delighted to see these smiles, which so harmonized with his own thoughts, fell upon the neck of the Abbe and embraced him, as if the good man had thus assured to him a futurity of pleasure, glory, and love.

But the good Abbe, with difficulty disengaging himself from this warm embrace, resumed his walk, his reflections, and his gravity. He coughed often and shook his head; and Cinq-Mars, not venturing to pursue the conversation, watched him, and became sad as he saw him become serious.

The old man at last sat down, and in a mournful tone addressed his pupil:

"My friend, my son, I have for a moment yielded like a father to your hopes; but I must tell you, and it is not to afflict you, that they appear to me excessive and unnatural. If the Cardinal's sole aim were to show attachment and gratitude toward your family, he would not have carried his favors so far; no, the extreme probability is that he has designs upon you. From what has been told him, he thinks you adapted to play some part, as yet impossible for us to divine, but which he himself has traced out in the deepest recesses of his mind. He wishes to educate you for this; he wishes to drill you into it. Allow me the expression in consideration of its accuracy, and think seriously of it when the time shall come. But I am inclined to believe that, as matters are, you would do well to follow up this vein in the great mine of State; in this way high fortunes have begun. You must only take heed not to be blinded and led at will. Let not favors dazzle you, my poor child, and let not elevation turn your head. Be not so indignant at the suggestion; the thing has happened to older men than yourself. Write to me often, as well as to your mother; see Monsieur de Thou, and together we will try to keep you in good counsel. Now, my son, be kind

enough to close that window through which the wind comes upon my head, and I will tell you what has been going on here."

Henri, trusting that the moral part of the discourse was over, and anticipating nothing in the second part but a narrative more or less interesting, closed the old casement, festooned with cobwebs, and resumed his seat without speaking.

"Now that I reflect further," continued the Abbe, "I think it will not perhaps be unprofitable for you to have passed through this place, although it be a sad experience you shall have acquired; but it will supply what I may not have formerly told you of the wickedness of men. I hope, moreover, that the result will not be fatal, and that the letter we have written to the King will arrive in time."

"I heard that it had been intercepted," interposed Cinq-Mars.

"Then all is over," said the Abbe Quillet; "the Cure is lost. But listen. God forbid, my son, that I, your old tutor, should seek to assail my own work, and attempt to weaken your faith! Preserve ever and everywhere that simple creed of which your noble family has given you the example, which our fathers possessed in a still higher degree than we, and of which the greatest captains of our time are not ashamed. Always, while you wear a sword, remember that you hold it for the service of God. But at the same time, when you are among men, avoid being deceived by the hypocrite. He will encompass you, my son; he will assail you on the vulnerable side of your ingenuous heart, in addressing your religion; and seeing the extravagance of his affected zeal, you will fancy yourself lukewarm as compared with him. You will think that your conscience cries out against you; but it will not be the voice of conscience that you hear. And what cries would not that conscience send forth, how fiercely would it not rise upon you, did you contribute to the destruction of innocence by invoking Heaven itself as a false witness against it?"

"Oh, my father! can such things be possible?" exclaimed Henri d'Effiat, clasping his hands.

"It is but too true," continued the Abbe; "you saw a partial execution of it this morning. God grant you may not witness still greater horrors! But listen! whatever you may see, whatever crime they dare to commit, I conjure you, in the name of your mother and of all that you hold dear, say not a word; make not a gesture that may indicate any opinion whatever. I know the impetuous character that you derive from the Marechal, your father; curb it, or you are lost. These little ebullitions of passion give but slight satisfaction, and bring about great misfortunes. I have observed you give way to them too much. Oh, did you but know the advantage that a calm temper gives one over men! The ancients stamped it on the forehead of the divinity as his finest attribute, since it shows that he is superior to our fears and to our hopes, to our pleasures and to our pains. Therefore, my dear child, remain passive in the scenes you are about to witness; but see them you must. Be present at this sad trial; for me, I must suffer the consequences of my schoolboy folly. I will relate it to you; it will prove to you that with a bald head one may be as much a child as with your fine chestnut curls."

And the excellent old Abbe, taking his pupil's head affectionately between his hands, continued:

"Like other people, my dear son, I was curious to see the devils of the Ursulines; and knowing that they professed to speak all languages, I was so imprudent as to cease speaking Latin and to question them in Greek. The Superior is very pretty, but she does not know Greek! Duncan, the physician, observed aloud that it was surprising that the demon, who knew everything, should commit barbarisms and solecisms in Latin, and not be able to answer in Greek. The young Superior, who was then upon her bed, turned toward the wall to weep, and said in an undertone to Father Barre, 'I can not go on with this, father.' I repeated her words aloud, and infuriated all the exorcists; they cried out that I ought to know that there are demons more ignorant than peasants, and said that as to their power and physical strength, it could not be doubted, since the spirits named Gresil des Trones, Aman des Puissance, and Asmodeus, had promised to carry off the calotte of Monsieur de Laubardemont. They were preparing for this,

when the physician Duncan, a learned and upright man, but somewhat of a scoffer, took it into his head to pull a cord he discovered fastened to a column like a bell-rope, and which hung down just close to the referendary's head; whereupon they called him a Huguenot, and I am satisfied that if Marechal de Breze were not his protector, it would have gone ill with him. The Comte du Lude then came forward with his customary 'sang-froid', and begged the exorcists to perform before him. Father Lactantius, the Capuchin with the dark visage and hard look, proceeded with Sister Agnes and Sister Claire; he raised both his hands, looking at them as a serpent would look at two dogs, and cried in a terrible voice, 'Quis to misit, Diabole?' and the two sisters answered, as with one voice, 'Urbanus.' He was about to continue, when Monsieur du Lude, taking out of his pocket, with an air of veneration, a small gold box, said that he had in it a relic left by his ancestors, and that though not doubting the fact of the possession, he wished to test it. Father Lactantius seized the box with delight, and hardly had he touched the foreheads of the two sisters with it when they made great leaps and twisted about their hands and feet. Lactantius shouted forth his exorcisms; Barre threw himself upon his knees with all the old women; and Mignon and the judges applauded. The impassible Laubardemont made the sign of the cross, without being struck dead for it! When Monsieur du Lude took back his box the nuns became still. 'I think,' said Lactantius, insolently, 'that you will not question your relics now.' 'No more than I do the possession,' answered Monsieur du Lude, opening his box and showing that it was empty. 'Monsieur, you mock us,' said Lactantius. I was indignant at these mummeries, and said to him, 'Yes, Monsieur, as you mock God and men.' And this, my dear friend, is the reason why you see me in my seven-league boots, so heavy that they hurt my legs, and with pistols; for our friend Laubardemont has ordered my person to be seized, and I don't choose it to be seized, old as it is."

"What, is he so powerful, then?" cried Cinq-Mars.

"More so than is supposed more so than could be believed. I know that the possessed Abbess is his niece, and that he is provided with an order in council directing him to judge, without being deterred by any appeals lodged in Parliament, the Cardinal having prohibited the latter from taking cognizance of the matter of Urbain Grandier."

"And what are his offences?" asked the young man, already deeply interested.

"Those of a strong mind and of a great genius, an inflexible will which has irritated power against him, and a profound passion which has driven his heart and him to commit the only mortal sin with which I believe he can be reproached; and it was only by violating the sanctity of his private papers, which they tore from Jeanne d'Estievre, his mother, an old woman of eighty, that they discovered his love for the beautiful Madeleine de Brou. This girl had refused to marry, and wished to take the veil. May that veil have concealed from her the spectacle of this day! The eloquence of Grandier and his angelic beauty drove the women half mad; they came miles and miles to hear him. I have seen them swoon during his sermons; they declared him an angel, and touched his garment and kissed his hands when he descended from the pulpit. It is certain that, unless it be his beauty, nothing could equal the sublimity of his discourses, ever full of inspiration. The pure honey of the gospel combined on his lips with the flashing flame of the prophecies; and one recognized in the sound of his voice a heart overflowing with holy pity for the evils to which mankind are subject, and filled with tears, ready to flow for us."

The good priest paused, for his own voice and eyes were filled with tears; his round and naturally Joyous face was more touching than a graver one under the same circumstances, for it seemed as if it bade defiance to sadness. Cinq-Mars, even more moved, pressed his hand without speaking, fearful of interrupting him. The Abbe took out a red handkerchief, wiped his eyes, and continued:

"This is the second attack upon Urbain by his combined enemies. He had already been accused of bewitching the nuns; but, examined by holy prelates, by enlightened magistrates, and learned physicians, he was immediately acquitted, and the judges indignantly imposed silence upon these devils in human form. The good and pious Archbishop of Bordeaux, who had himself chosen the examiners of these pretended exorcists, drove the prophets away and shut up their hell. But, humiliated by the publicity of the result, annoyed at seeing Grandier kindly received by our good King when he threw himself at his feet at Paris, they saw that if he triumphed they were lost,

and would be universally regarded as impostors. Already the convent of the Ursulines was looked upon only as a theatre for disgraceful comedies, and the nuns themselves as shameless actresses. More than a hundred persons, furious against the Cure, had compromised themselves in the hope of destroying him. Their plot, instead of being abandoned, has gained strength by its first check; and here are the means that have been set to work by his implacable enemies.

"Do you know a man called 'L'Eminence Grise', that formidable Capuchin whom the Cardinal employs in all things, consults upon some, and always despises? It was to him that the Capuchins of Loudun addressed themselves. A woman of this place, of low birth, named Hamon, having been so fortunate as to please the Queen when she passed through Loudun, was taken into her service. You know the hatred that separates her court from that of the Cardinal; you know that Anne of Austria and Monsieur de Richelieu have for some time disputed for the King's favor, and that, of her two sons, France never knew in the evening which would rise next morning. During a temporary eclipse of the Cardinal, a satire appeared, issuing from the planetary system of the Queen; it was called, 'La cordonniere de la seine-mere'. Its tone and language were vulgar; but it contained things so insulting about the birth and person of the Cardinal that the enemies of the minister took it up and gave it a publicity which irritated him. It revealed, it is said, many intrigues and mysteries which he had deemed impenetrable. He read this anonymous work, and desired to know its author. It was just at this time that the Capuchins of this town wrote to Father Joseph that a constant correspondence between Grandier and La Hamon left no doubt in their minds as to his being the author of this diatribe. It was in vain that he had previously published religious books, prayers, and meditations, the style of which alone ought to have absolved him from having put his hand to a libel written in the language of the marketplace; the Cardinal, long since prejudiced against Urbain, was determined to fix upon him as the culprit. He remembered that when he was only prior of Coussay, Grandier disputed precedence with him and gained it; I fear this achievement of precedence in life will make poor Grandier precede the Cardinal in death also."

A melancholy smile played upon the lips of the good Abbe as he uttered this involuntary pun.

"What! do you think this matter will go so far as death?"

"Ay, my son, even to death; they have already taken away all the documents connected with his former absolution that might have served for his defence, despite the opposition of his poor mother, who preserved them as her son's license to live. Even now they affect to regard a work against the celibacy of priests, found among his papers, as destined to propagate schism. It is a culpable production, doubtless, and the love which dictated it, however pure it may be, is an enormous sin in a man consecrated to God alone; but this poor priest was far from wishing to encourage heresy, and it was simply, they say, to appease the remorse of Mademoiselle de Brou that he composed the work. It was so evident that his real faults would not suffice to condemn him to death that they have revived the accusation of sorcery, long since disposed of; but, feigning to believe this, the Cardinal has established a new tribunal in this town, and has placed Laubardemont at its head, a sure sign of death. Heaven grant that you never become acquainted with what the corruption of governments call coups-d'etat!"

At this moment a terrible shriek sounded from beyond the wall of the courtyard; the Abbe arose in terror, as did Cinq-Mars.

"It is the cry of a woman," said the old man.

"'Tis heartrending!" exclaimed Cinq-Mars. "What is it?" he asked his people, who had all rushed out into the courtyard.

They answered that they heard nothing further.

"Well, well," said the Abbe, "make no noise." He then shut the window, and put his hands before his eyes.

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: Cinq Mars, v1

"Ah, what a cry was that, my son!" he said, with his face of an ashy paleness "what a cry! It pierced my very soul; some calamity has happened. Ah, holy Virgin! it has so agitated me that I can talk with you no more. Why did I hear it, just as I was speaking to you of your future career? My dear child, may God bless you! Kneel!"

Cinq-Mars did as he was desired, and knew by a kiss upon his head that he had been blessed by the old man, who then raised him, saying:

"Go, my son, the time is advancing; they might find you with me. Go, leave your people and horses here; wrap yourself in a cloak, and go; I have much to write ere the hour when darkness shall allow me to depart for Italy."

They embraced once more, promising to write to each other, and Henri quitted the house. The Abby, still following him with his eyes from the window, cried:

"Be prudent, whatever may happen," and sent him with his hands one more paternal blessing, saying, "Poor child! poor child!"

CHAPTER IV. THE TRIAL

Oh, vendetta di Dio, quanto to dei
Esser temuta da ciascun che legge
Cio, che fu manifesto agli occhi miei. DANTE.

Notwithstanding the custom of having secret trials, freely countenanced by Richelieu, the judges of the Cure of Loudun had resolved that the court should be open to the public; but they soon repented this measure. They were all interested in the destruction of Urbain Grandier; but they desired that the indignation of the country should in some degree sanction the sentence of death they had received orders to pass and to carry into effect.

Laubardemont was a kind of bird of prey, whom the Cardinal always let loose when he required a prompt and sure agent for his vengeance; and on this occasion he fully justified the choice that had been made of him. He committed but one error that of allowing a public trial, contrary to the usual custom; his object had been to intimidate and to dismay. He dismayed, indeed, but he created also a feeling of indignant horror.

The throng without the gates had waited there two hours, during which time the sound of hammers indicated that within the great hall they were hastily completing their mysterious preparations. At length the archers laboriously turned upon their hinges the heavy gates opening into the street, and the crowd eagerly rushed in. The young Cinq-Mars was carried along with the second enormous wave, and, placed behind a thick column, stood there, so as to be able to see without being seen. He observed with vexation that the group of dark-clad citizens was near him; but the great gates, closing, left the part of the court where the people stood in such darkness that there was no likelihood of his being recognized. Although it was only midday, the hall was lighted with torches; but they were nearly all placed at the farther end, where rose the judges' bench behind a long table. The chairs, tables, and steps were all covered with black cloth, and cast a livid hue over the faces of those near them. A seat reserved for the prisoner was placed upon the left, and on the crape robe which covered him flames were represented in gold embroidery to indicate the nature of the offence. Here sat the accused, surrounded by archers, with his hands still bound in chains, held by two monks, who, with simulated terror, affected to start from him at his slightest motion, as if they held a tiger or enraged wolf, or as if the flames depicted on his robe could communicate themselves to their clothing. They also carefully kept his face from being seen in the least degree by the people.

The impassible countenance of M. de Laubardemont was there to dominate the judges of his choice; almost a head taller than any of them, he sat upon a seat higher than theirs, and each of his glassy and uneasy glances seemed to convey a command. He wore a long, full scarlet robe, and a black cap covered his head; he seemed occupied in arranging papers, which he then passed to the judges. The accusers, all ecclesiastics, sat upon the

right hand of the judges; they wore their albs and stoles. Father Lactantius was distinguishable among them by his simple Capuchin habit, his tonsure, and the extreme hardness of his features. In a side gallery sat the Bishop of Poitiers, hidden from view; other galleries were filled with veiled women. Below the bench of judges a group of men and women, the dregs of the populace, stood behind six young Ursuline nuns, who seemed full of disgust at their proximity; these were the witnesses.

The rest of the hall was filled with an enormous crowd, gloomy and silent, clinging to the arches, the gates, and the beams, and full of a terror which communicated itself to the judges, for it arose from an interest in the accused. Numerous archers, armed with long pikes, formed an appropriate frame for this lugubrious picture.

At a sign from the President, the witnesses withdrew through a narrow door opened for them by an usher. As the Superior of the Ursulines passed M. de Laubardemont she was heard to say to him, "You have deceived me, Monsieur." He remained immovable, and she went on. A profound silence reigned throughout the whole assembly.

Rising with all the gravity he could assume, but still with visible agitation, one of the judges, named Houmain, judge-Advocate of Orleans, read a sort of indictment in a voice so low and hoarse that it was impossible to follow it. He made himself heard only when what he had to say was intended to impose upon the minds of the people. He divided the evidence into two classes: one, the depositions of seventy-two witnesses; the other, more convincing, that resulting from "the exorcisms of the reverend fathers here present," said he, crossing himself.

Fathers Lactantius, Barre, and Mignon bowed low, repeating the sacred sign.

"Yes, my lords," said Houmain, addressing the judges, "this bouquet of white roses and this manuscript, signed with the blood of the magician, a counterpart of the contract he has made with Lucifer, and which he was obliged to carry about him in order to preserve his power, have been recognized and brought before you. We read with horror these words written at the bottom of the parchment: 'The original is in hell, in Lucifer's private cabinet.'"

A roar of laughter, which seemed to come from stentorian lungs, was heard in the throng. The president reddened, and made a sign to the archers, who in vain endeavored to discover the disturber. The judge-Advocate continued:

"The demons have been forced to declare their names by the mouths of their victims. Their names and deeds are deposited upon this table. They are called Astaroth, of the order of Seraphim; Eazas, Celsus, Acaos, Cedron, Asmodeus, of the order of Thrones; Alex, Zebulon, Cham, Uriel, and Achas, of the order of Principalities, and so on, for their number is infinite. For their actions, who among us has not been a witness of them?"

A prolonged murmur arose from the gathering, but, upon some halberdiers advancing, all became silent.

"We have seen, with grief, the young and respectable Superior of the Ursulines tear her bosom with her own hands and grovel in the dust; we have seen the sisters, Agnes, Claire, and others, deviate from the modesty of their sex by impassioned gestures and unseemly laughter. When impious men have inclined to doubt the presence of the demons, and we ourselves felt our convictions shaken, because they refused to answer to unknown questions in Greek or Arabic, the reverend fathers have, to establish our belief, deigned to explain to us that the malignity of evil spirits being extreme, it was not surprising that they should feign this ignorance in order that they might be less pressed with questions; and that in their answers they had committed various solecisms and other grammatical faults in order to bring contempt upon themselves, so that out of this disdain the holy doctors might leave them in quiet. Their hatred is so inveterate that just before performing one of their miraculous feats, they suspended a rope from a beam in order to involve the reverend personages in a suspicion of fraud, whereas it has been deposed on oath by credible people that there never had been a cord in that place.

"But, my lords, while Heaven was thus miraculously explaining itself by the mouths of its holy interpreters, another light has just been thrown upon us. At the very time the judges were absorbed in profound meditation, a loud cry was heard near the hall of council; and upon going to the spot, we found the body of a young lady of high birth. She had just exhaled her last breath in the public street, in the arms of the reverend Father Mignon, Canon; and we learned from the said father here present, and from several other grave personages, that, suspecting the young lady to be possessed, by reason of the current rumor for some time past of the admiration Urbain Grandier had for her, an idea of testing it happily occurred to the Canon, who suddenly said, approaching her, 'Grandier has just been put to death,' whereat she uttered one loud scream and fell dead, deprived by the demon of the time necessary for giving her the assistance of our holy Mother, the Catholic Church."

A murmur of indignation arose from the crowd, among whom the word "Assassin" was loudly reechoed; the halberdiers commanded silence with a loud voice, but it was obtained rather by the judge resuming his address, the general curiosity triumphing.

"Oh, infamy!" he continued, seeking to fortify himself by exclamations; "upon her person was found this work, written by the hand of Urbain Grandier," and he took from among his papers a book bound in parchment.

"Heavens!" cried Urbain from his seat.

"Look to your prisoner!" cried the judge to the archers who surrounded him.

"No doubt the demon is about to manifest himself," said Father Lactantius, in a sombre voice; "tighten his bonds." He was obeyed.

The judge—Advocate continued, "Her name was Madeleine de Brou, aged nineteen."

"O God! this is too much!" cried the accused, as he fell fainting on the ground.

The assembly was deeply agitated; for a moment there was an absolute tumult.

"Poor fellow! he loved her," said some.

"So good a lady!" cried the women.

Pity began to predominate. Cold water was thrown upon Grandier, without his being taken from the court, and he was tied to his seat. The Judge—Advocate went on:

"We are directed to read the beginning of this book to the court," and he read as follows:

"It is for thee, dear and gentle Madeleine, in order to set at rest thy troubled conscience, that I have described in this book one thought of my soul. All those thoughts tend to thee, celestial creature, because in thee they return to the aim and object of my whole existence; but the thought I send thee, as 'twere a flower, comes from thee, exists only in thee, and returns to thee alone.

"Be not sad because thou lovest me; be not afflicted because I adore thee. The angels of heaven, what is it that they do? The souls of the blessed, what is it that is promised them? Are we less pure than the angels? Are our souls less separated from the earth than they will be after death? Oh, Madeleine, what is there in us wherewith the Lord can be displeased? Can it be that we pray together, that with faces prostrate in the dust before His altars, we ask for early death to take us while yet youth and love are ours?

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: Cinq Mars, v1

Or that, musing together beneath the funereal trees of the churchyard, we yearned for one grave, smiling at the idea of death, and weeping at life? Or that, when thou kneelest before me at the tribunal of penitence, and, speaking in the presence of God, canst find naught of evil to reveal to me, so wholly have I kept thy soul in the pure regions of heaven? What, then, could offend our Creator? Perhaps yes! perhaps some spirit of heaven may have envied me my happiness when on Easter morn I saw thee kneeling before me, purified by long austerities from the slight stain which original sin had left in thee! Beautiful, indeed, wert thou! Thy glance sought thy God in heaven, and my trembling hand held His image to thy pure lips, which human lip had never dared to breathe upon. Angelic being! I alone participated in the secret of the Lord, in the one secret of the entire purity of thy soul; I it was that united thee to thy Creator, who at that moment descended also into my bosom. Ineffable espousals, of which the Eternal himself was the priest, you alone were permitted between the virgin and her pastor! the sole joy of each was to see eternal happiness beginning for the other, to inhale together the perfumes of heaven, to drink in already the harmony of the spheres, and to feel assured that our souls, unveiled to God and to ourselves alone, were worthy together to adore Him.

"What scruple still weighs upon thy soul, O my sister? Dost thou think I have offered too high a worship to thy virtue? Fearest thou so pure an admiration should deter me from that of the Lord?"

Houmain had reached this point when the door through which the witnesses had withdrawn suddenly opened. The judges anxiously whispered together. Laubardemont, uncertain as to the meaning of this, signed to the fathers to let him know whether this was some scene executed by their orders; but, seated at some distance from him, and themselves taken by surprise, they could not make him understand that they had not prepared this interruption. Besides, ere they could exchange looks, to the amazement of the assembly, three women, 'en chemise', with naked feet, each with a cord round her neck and a wax taper in her hand, came through the door and advanced to the middle of the platform. It was the Superior of the Ursulines, followed by Sisters Agnes and Claire. Both the latter were weeping; the Superior was very pale, but her bearing was firm, and her eyes were fixed and tearless. She knelt; her companions followed her example. Everything was in such confusion that no one thought of checking them; and in a clear, firm voice she pronounced these words, which resounded in every corner of the hall:

"In the name of the Holy Trinity, I, Jeanne de Belfiel, daughter of the Baron de Cose, I, the unworthy Superior of the Convent of the Ursulines of Loudun, ask pardon of God and man for the crime I have committed in accusing the innocent Urbain Grandier. My possession was feigned, my words were dictated; remorse overwhelms me."

"Bravo!" cried the spectators, clapping their hands. The judges arose; the archers, in doubt, looked at the president; he shook in every limb, but did not change countenance.

"Let all be silent," he said, in a sharp voice; "archers, do your duty."

This man felt himself supported by so strong a hand that nothing could affright him for no thought of Heaven ever visited him.

"What think you, my fathers?" said he, making a sign to the monks.

"That the demon seeks to save his friend. Obmutesce, Satanas!" cried Father Lactantius, in a terrible voice, affecting to exorcise the Superior.

Never did fire applied to gunpowder produce an effect more instantaneous than did these two words. Jeanne de Belfiel started up in all the beauty of twenty, which her awful nudity served to augment; she seemed a soul escaped from hell appearing to, her seducer. With her dark eyes she cast fierce glances upon the monks; Lactantius lowered his beneath that look. She took two steps toward him with her bare feet, beneath which the scaffolding rung, so energetic was her movement; the taper seemed, in her hand, the sword of the avenging angel.

"Silence, impostor!" she cried, with warmth; "the demon who possessed me was yourself. You deceived me; you said he was not to be tried. To-day, for the first time, I know that he is to be tried; to-day, for the first time, I know that he is to be murdered. And I will speak!"

"Woman, the demon bewilders thee."

"Say, rather, that repentance enlightens me. Daughters, miserable as myself, arise; is he not innocent?"

"We swear he is," said the two young lay sisters, still kneeling and weeping, for they were not animated with so strong a resolution as that of the Superior.

Agnes, indeed, had hardly uttered these words when turning toward the people, she cried, "Help me! they will punish me; they will kill me!" And hurrying away her companion, she drew her into the crowd, who affectionately received them. A thousand voices swore to protect them. Imprecations arose; the men struck their staves against the floor; the officials dared not prevent the people from passing the sisters on from one to another into the street.

During this strange scene the amazed and panic-struck judges whispered; M. Laubardemont looked at the archers, indicating to them the points they were especially to watch, among which, more particularly, was that occupied by the group in black. The accusers looked toward the gallery of the Bishop of Poitiers, but discovered no expression in his dull countenance. He was one of those old men of whom death appears to take possession ten years before all motion entirely ceases in them. His eyes seemed veiled by a half sleep; his gaping mouth mumbled a few vague and habitual words of prayer without meaning or application; the entire amount of intelligence he retained was the ability to distinguish the man who had most power, and him he obeyed, regardless at what price. He had accordingly signed the sentence of the doctors of the Sorbonne which declared the nuns possessed, without even deducing thence the consequence of the death of Urbain; the rest seemed to him one of those more or less lengthy ceremonies, to which he paid not the slightest attention accustomed as he was to see and live among them, himself an indispensable part and parcel of them. He therefore gave no sign of life on this occasion, merely preserving an air at once perfectly noble and expressionless.

Meanwhile, Father Lactantius, having had a moment to recover from the sudden attack made upon him, turned toward the president and said:

"Here is a clear proof, sent us by Heaven, of the possession, for the Superior never before has forgotten the modesty and severity of her order."

"Would that all the world were here to see me!"

said Jeanne de Belfiel, firm as ever. "I can not be sufficiently humiliated upon earth, and Heaven will reject me, for I have been your accomplice."

Perspiration appeared upon the forehead of Laubardemont, but he tried to recover his composure. "What absurd tale is this, Sister; what has influenced you herein?"

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The voice of the girl became sepulchral; she collected all her strength, pressed her hand upon her heart as if she desired to stay its throbbing, and, looking at Urbain Grandier, answered, "Love."

A shudder ran through the assembly. Urbain, who since he had fainted had remained with his head hanging down as if dead, slowly raised his eyes toward her, and returned entirely to life only to undergo a fresh sorrow. The young penitent continued:

"Yes, the love which he rejected, which he never fully knew, which I have breathed in his discourses, which my eyes drew in from his celestial countenance, which his very counsels against it have increased.

Yes, Urbain is pure as an angel, but good as a man who has loved. I knew not that he had loved! It is you," she said more energetically, pointing to Lactantius, Barre, and Mignon, and changing her passionate accents for those of indignation "it is you who told me that he loved; you, who this morning have too cruelly avenged me by killing my rival with a word. Alas, I only sought to separate them! It was a crime; but, by my mother, I am an Italian! I burned with love, with jealousy; you allowed me to see Urbain, to have him as a friend, to see him daily." She was silent for a moment, then exclaimed, "People, he is innocent! Martyr, pardon me, I embrace thy feet!"

She prostrated herself before Urbain and burst into a torrent of tears.

Urbain raised his closely bound hands, and giving her his benediction, said, gently:

"Go, Sister; I pardon thee in the name of Him whom I shall soon see. I have before said to you, and you now see, that the passions work much evil, unless we seek to turn them toward heaven."

The blood rose a second time to Laubardemont's forehead. "Miscreant!" he exclaimed, "darest thou pronounce the words of the Church?"

"I have not quitted her bosom," said Urbain.

"Remove the girl," said the President.

When the archers went to obey, they found that she had tightened the cord round her neck with such force that she was of a livid hue and almost lifeless. Fear had driven all the women from the assembly; many had been carried out fainting, but the hall was no less crowded. The ranks thickened, for the men out of the streets poured in.

The judges arose in terror, and the president attempted to have the hall cleared; but the people, putting on their hats, stood in alarming immobility. The archers were not numerous enough to repel them. It became necessary to yield; and accordingly Laubardemont in an agitated voice announced that the council would retire for half an hour. He broke up the sitting; the people remained gloomily, each man fixed firmly to his place.