Mlle de Scudéri

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A Tale of the Times of Louis the Fourteenth

Magdaleine de Scudéri, so famous for her charming poetical and other writings, lived in a small mansion in the Rue St. Honoré, by favour of Louis the XIVth and Madame de Maintenon.

Late one night—about midnight—in the autumn of the year 1680, there came a knocking at the door of this house, so loud and violent that it shook the very ground. Baptiste, who filled the offices of cook, butler and doorkeeper in the lady's modest establishment, had gone, by her leave, to the country to his sister's wedding, so that La Martinière, the femme de chambre, was the only person still awake in the house. She heard this knocking, which went on without ceasing almost, and she remembered that, as Baptiste was away, she and her mistress were alone and unprotected. She thought of the housebreakings, robberies and murders which were so frequent in Paris at that time, and felt convinced that some of the numerous bands of malefactors, knowing the defenceless state of the house that night, were raising this alarm at the door, and would commit some outrage if it were opened; so she remained in her room, trembling and terrified, anathematising Baptiste, and his sister's marriage into the bargain.

Meantime the thundering knocking went on at the door, and she thought she heard a voice calling in the intervals, "Open, for the love of Christ Open!—open!" At last, her alarm increasing, she took her candle and ran out on to the landing, where she distinctly heard the voice crying, "Open the door, for the love of Christ!"

"After all," she said to herself, "one knows that a robber would not be crying out in that way. Perhaps it is somebody who is being pursued and is come to my lady for refuge. She is known to be always ready to do a kind action—but we must be very careful!"

She opened a window and called down into the street, asking who it was who was making such a tremendous thundering at the door at that time of the night, rousing everybody from their sleep. This she did in a voice which she tried to make as like a man's as she could. By the glimmer of the moon, which was beginning to break through dark clouds, she could make out a tall figure in a long grey cloak, with a broad hat drawn down over his forehead.

Then she cried, in a loud voice, so that this person in the street should hear, "Baptiste! Claude! Pierre! Get up, and see who this rascal is who is trying to get in at this time of night."

But a gentle, entreating voice spoke from beneath, saying, "Ah, La Martinière, I know it is you, you kind soul, though you are trying to alter your voice; and I know well enough that Baptiste is away in the country, and that there is nobody in the house but your mistress and yourself. Let me in. I must speak with your lady this instant."

"Do you imagine," asked La Martinière, "that my lady is going to speak to you in the middle of the night? Can't you understand that she has been in bed ever so long, and that it is as much as my place is worth to awaken her out of her first sweet sleep, which is so precious to a person at her time of life?"

"I know," answered the person beneath, "that she has just this moment put away the manuscript of the novel Clelia, at which she is working so hard, and is writing some verses which she means to read tomorrow at Madame de Maintenon's. I implore you, Madame La Martinière, be so compassionate as to open the door. Upon your doing so depends the escape of an unfortunate creature from destruction. Nay, honour, freedom, a human life, depend on this moment in which I must speak with your lady. Remember, her anger will rest upon you for ever when she comes to know that it was you who cruelly drove away from her door the unfortunate wretch who came to beg for her help."

"But why should you come for her help at such an extraordinary time of the night?" asked La Martinière. "Come back in the morning at a reasonable hour." But the reply came up, "Does destiny, when it strikes like the destroying lightning, consider hours and times? When there is but one moment when rescue is possible, is help to be put off? Open the door to me. Have no fear of a wretched being who is without defence, hunted, hard pressed by a terrible fate, and flies to your lady for succour from the most imminent peril."

La Martinière heard the stranger moaning and groaning as he uttered those words in the deepest sorrow. The tone of his voice was that of a youth, soft and gentle, and most touching to the heart; and so, deeply moved. she went without much more hesitation and fetched the key.

As soon as she opened the door, the form shrouded in the mantle burst violently in and, passing La Martinière, cried in a wild voice, "Take me to your lady!" La Martinière held up the light which she was carrying, and the glimmer fell on the face of a very young man, distorted and frightfully drawn, and as pale as death. She almost fell down on the landing for terror when he opened his cloak and showed the glittering hilt of a stiletto sticking out of his doublet. He flashed his gleaming eyes at her, and cried, more wildly than before, "Take me to your lady, I tell you."

La Martinière saw that her mistress was in the utmost danger. All her affection for her, who was to her as the kindest of mothers, flamed up and created a courage which she herself would scarcely have thought herself capable of. She quickly closed the door of her room, moved rapidly in front of it, and said in a brave, firm voice, "Your furious behaviour, now that you have got into the house, is very different from what I should have expected from the way you spoke down in the street. I see now that I had pity on you a little too easily. You shall not see or speak with my lady at this hour. If you have no bad designs, and are not afraid to show yourself in daylight, come and tell her your business tomorrow; but take yourself off out of this house now."

He heaved a hollow sigh, glared at La Martinière with a terrible expression, and grasped his dagger. She silently commended her soul to God, but stood firm and looked him straight in the face, pressing herself more firmly against the door through which he would have to pass in order to reach her mistress.

"Let me get to your lady, I tell you!" he cried once more.

"Do what you will," said La Martinière, "I shall not move from this spot. Complete the crime which you have begun. A shameful death on the Place de la Grève will overtake you, as it has your accursed comrades in wickedness."

"Ha! you are right, La Martinière," he cried. "I am armed, and I look as if I were an accursed robber and murderer. But my comrades are not executed—are not executed," and he drew his dagger, advancing with poisonous looks towards the terrified woman.

"Jesus!" she cried, expecting her death−wound; but at that moment there came up from the street below the clatter and the ring of arms, and the hoof−tread of horses.

"La Marechausée! La Marechausée! Help! help!" she cried.

"Wretched woman, you will be my destruction," he cried. "All is over now—all over! Here, take it; take it. Give this to your lady now, or tomorrow if you like it better." As he said this in a whisper, he took the candelabra from her, blew out the tapers, and placed a casket in her hands. "As you prize your eternal salvation," he cried, "give this to your lady." He dashed out of the door, and was gone.

La Martinière had sunk to the floor. She raised herself with difficulty, and groped her way back in the darkness to her room, where she fell into an arm−chair, wholly overcome and unable to utter a sound. Presently she heard the rattling of the bolts, which she had left unfastened when she closed the house door. The house was therefore now shut up, and soft unsteady steps were approaching her room. Like one under a spell, unable to move, she was preparing for the very worst, when to her inexpressible joy the door opened, and by the pale light of the night−lamp she saw it was Baptiste. He was deadly pale, and much upset.

"For the love of all the saints," he exclaimed, "tell me what has happened! Oh, what a state I am in. Something—don't know what it was—told me to come away from the wedding yesterday—forced me to come away. So when I got to this street, I thought, Madame Martinière isn't a heavy sleeper; she'll hear me if I knock quietly at the door, and let me in. Then up came a strong patrol, horsemen and foot, armed to the teeth. They stopped me, and wouldn't let me go. Luckily Desgrais was there, the lieutenant of the Marechaussée. He knows me, and as they were holding their lanterns under my nose, he said, 'Ho, Baptiste! How come you here in the streets at this time of the night? You ought to be at home, taking care of the house. This is not a very safe spot just at this moment. We're expecting to make a fine haul, and important arrest, tonight.' You can't think, Madame La Martinière, how I felt when he said that. And when I got to the door, lo! and behold! a man in a cloak comes bursting out with a drawn dagger in his hand, dodges me, and makes off. The door was open, the keys in the lock. What, in the name of all that's holy, is the meaning of it all?"

La Martinière, relieved from her alarm, told him all that had happened, and both she and he went back to the hall; and there they found the candelabra on the floor, where the stranger had thrown it on taking his flight. "There can't be the slightest doubt that our mistress was within an ace of being robbed, and murdered too very likely," Baptiste said. "According to what you say, the scoundrel knew well enough that there was nobody in the house but her and you, and even that she was still sitting up at her writing. Of course he was one of those infernal blackguards who pry into folks' houses and spy out everything that can be of use to them in their devilish designs. And the little casket, Madame Martinière, that I think we'll throw into the Seine where it's deepest. Who shall be our warrant that some monster or other isn't lying in wait for our mistress's life? Very likely, if she opens the casket, she may tumble down dead, as the old Marquis de Tournay did when he opened a letter which came to him, he didn't know where from."

After a long consultation, they came to the conclusion that next morning they would tell their lady everything that had happened, and even hand her the mysterious casket, which might, perhaps, be opened if proper precautions were taken. On carefully weighing all the circumstances connected with the appearance of the stranger, they thought that there must be some special secret or mystery involved in the affair, which they were not in a position to unravel, but must leave to be elucidated by their superiors.

There were good grounds for Baptiste's fears. Paris, at the time in question, was the scene of atrocious deeds of violence, and that just at a period when the most diabolical inventions of hell provided the most facile means for their execution.

Glaser, a German apothecary, the most learned chemist of his day, occupied himself—as people who cultivate his science often do—with alchemical researches and experiments. He had set himself the task of discovering the philosopher's stone. An Italian of the name of Exili associated himself with him; but to him the art of goldmaking formed a mere pretext. What he aimed at mastering was the blending, preparation, and sublimation of the various poisonous substances which Glaser hoped would give him the results he was in search of; and at length Exili discovered how to prepare that delicate poison which has no odour nor taste, and which, killing either slowly or in

a moment, leaves not the slightest trace in the human organism, and baffles the utmost skill of the physician who, not suspecting poison as the means of death, ascribes it to natural causes. But cautiously as Exili went about this, he fell under suspicion of dealing with poisons, and was thrown into the Bastille.

In the same cell with him there was presently quartered an officer of the name of Godin de Sainte−Croix, who had long lived in relations with the Marquise de Brinvilliers; which brought shame upon all her family, till at length, as her husband cared nothing about her conduct, her father (Dreux d'Aubray, Civil Lieutenant of Paris) had to part the guilty pair by means of a lettre de cachet against Sainte−Croix. The captain was a passionate man without character or religion, a hypocrite given to all manner of vice from his youth. What is more, he was addicted to the most furious jealousy and envy. So nothing could be more welcome to him than Exili's devilish secret, which gave him the power of destroying all his enemies. He became Exili's assiduous pupil, and soon equalled his instructor; so that when he was released from prison he was in a position to carry on operations by himself on his own account.

La Brinvilliers was a depraved woman, and Sainte−Croix made her a monster. She managed, by degrees, to poison first her own father (with whom she was living in the hypocritical presence of taking care of him in his declining years), next her two brothers, and then her sister; the father out of revenge, and the others for their fortunes. The histories of more than one poisoner bear terrible evidence that crimes of this description assume the form of an irresistible passion. Just as a chemist makes experiments for the pleasure and the interest of watching them, poisoners have often, without the smallest ulterior object, killed persons whose living or dying was to them a matter of complete indifference. The sudden deaths of a number of paupers, patients at the Hôtel Dieu, a little time after the events just alluded to, led to suspicion that the bread which La Brinvilliers was in the habit of giving them every week (so as to appear a model of piety and benevolence) was poisoned. And it is certain that she poisoned pigeon pasties which were served up to her own invited guests. The Chevalier du Guet, and many more, were the victims of those diabolical entertainments. Sainte−Croix, his accomplice La Chaussée, and La Brinvilliers, managed to hide their crimes for a long while under a veil of impenetrable secrecy. But, however the wicked may brazen matters out, there comes a time when the Eternal Power of Heaven punishes the criminal, even here on earth.

The poisons which Sainte−Croix prepared were so marvellously delicate that if the powder (which the Parisians appositely named "poudre de succession") were uncovered while being made, a single inhalation of it was sufficient to cause immediate death. Therefore Sainte−Croix always wore a glass mask when at work. This mask fell off one day just as he was shaking a finished powder into a phial, and, having inhaled some of the powder, he fell dead in an instant. As he had no heirs, the law courts at once placed his property under seal, when the whole diabolical arsenal of murder which had been at the villain's disposal was discovered, and also the letters of Madame de Brinvilliers, which left no doubt as to her crimes. She fled to a convent at Liège. Desgrais, an officer of the Marechaussée, was sent after her. Disguised as a priest, he got admitted into the convent, and succeeded in involving the terrible woman in a love−affair, and in getting her to grant him a clandestine meeting in a sequestered garden outside the town. When she arrived there she found herself surrounded by Desgrais' myrmidons; and her ecclesiastical gallant speedily transformed himself into the officer of the Marechaussée. He compelled her to get into the carriage which was waiting outside the garden, and drove straight away to Paris, surrounded by an ample guard. La Chaussée had been beheaded previously to this, and La Brinvilliers suffered the same death. Her body was burnt, and its ashes scattered to the winds.

The Parisians breathed freely again when the world was freed from the presence of this monster, who had so long wielded with impunity the weapon of secret murder against friend and foe. But it soon became bruited abroad that the terrible art of the accursed La Croix had been, somehow, handed down to a successor, who was carrying it on triumphantly. Murder came gliding like an invisible, capricious spectre into the narrowest and most intimate circles of relationship, love and friendship, pouncing securely and swiftly upon its unhappy victims. Men who today, were seen in robust health, were tottering about on the morrow feeble and sick; and no skill of physicians could restore them. Wealth, a good appointment or office, a nice−looking wife, perhaps a little too young for her

husband, were ample reasons for a man's being dogged to death. The most frightful mistrust snapped the most sacred ties. The husband trembled before his wife; the father dreaded the son; the sister the brother. When your friend asked you to dinner, you carefully avoided tasting the dishes and wines which he set before you; and where joy and merriment used to reign, there were now nothing but wild looks, watching to detect the secret murderer. Fathers of families were to be seen with anxious faces, buying supplies of food in out−of−the−way places where they were not known, and cooking them themselves in dirty cook−shops, for dread of treason in their own homes. And yet often the most careful and ingenious precautions were unavailing.

For the repression of this ever−increasing disorder the King constituted a fresh tribunal, to which he entrusted the special investigation and punishment of those secret crimes. This was the Chambre Ardente, which held its sittings near the Bastille. La Regnie was its president. For a considerable time La Regnie's efforts, assiduous as they were, were unsuccessful, and it was the lot of the much overworked Desgrais to discover the most secret den of that foul crime.

In the Faubourg Saint−Germain there lived an old woman, named La Voisin, who followed the calling of teller of fortunes and summoner of spirits, and she, assisted by her accomplices Le Sage and Le Vigoureux, managed to alarm and astonish people who were by no means to be considered weak or superstitious. But she did more than this. She was, like La Croix, a pupil of Exili's and, like him, prepared the delicate, traceless poison, which helped wicked sons to speedy inheritances and unprincipled wives to other, younger husbands. Desgrais fathomed her secrets; she made full confession; the Chambre Ardente sentenced her to be burned, and the sentence was carried out on the Place de la Grève. Amongst her effects was found a list of those who had availed themselves of her services; whence it followed, not only that execution succeeded execution, but that strong suspicion fell on persons in important positions. Thus it was believed that Cardinal Bonzy had obtained from La Voisin the means of disembarrassing himself of all the persons to whom, in his capacity of Archbishop of Narbonne, he was bound to pay pensions. Similarly, the Duchess de Bouillon and the Countess de Soissons (their names having been found in La Voisin's list) were accused of having had relations with her; and even François Henri de Montmorenci−Boudebelle, Duc de Luxembourg, Peer and Marshal of the realm, did not escape arraignment before the Chambre Ardente. He surrendered himself to imprisonment in the Bastille, where the hatred of Louvois and La Regnie immured him in a cell only six feet long. Months elapsed before it was proved that his offences did not deserve so severe a punishment. He had once gone to La Voisin to have his horoscope drawn.

What is certain is that an excess of inconsiderate zeal led President La Regnie into violently illegal and barbarous measures. His Court assumed the character of the Inquisition. The very slightest suspicion rendered any one liable to severe imprisonment, and the establishment of the innocence of a person tried for his life was often only a matter of the merest chance. Besides, La Regnie was repulsive to behold, and of malicious disposition, so that he excited the hatred of those whose avenger or protector he was called upon to be. When he asked the Duchess de Bouillon if she had ever seen the devil, she answered, "I think I see him at this moment."

Whilst now, on the Place de la Grève, the blood of the guilty and of the merely suspected was flowing in streams, and secret deaths by poison were, at last, becoming more and more rare, a trouble of another description showed itself, spreading abroad fresh consternation. It seemed that a gang of robbers had made up their minds to possess themselves of all the jewels in the city. Whenever a valuable set of ornaments was bought, it disappeared in an inexplicable manner, however carefully preserved and protected. And everybody who dared to wear precious stones in the evening was certain to be robbed, either in the public streets or in the dark passages of houses. Very often they were not only robbed, but murdered. Such of them as escaped with their lives said they had been felled by the blow of a clenched fist on the head, which came on them like a thunderbolt. And when they recovered their senses they found that they had been robbed, and were in a totally different place from where they had been knocked down.

Those who were murdered—and they were found nearly every morning lying in the streets or in houses—had all the selfsame mortal wound—a dagger−thrust, right through the heart, which the surgeons said must have been

delivered with such swiftness and certainty that the victim would have fallen dead without the power of uttering a sound. Now who, in all the luxurious Court of Louis Quatorze, was there who was not implicated in some secret love−affair and, consequently, often gliding about the streets late at night with valuable presents in his pockets? Just as if this robber−gang were in intercourse with spirits, they always knew perfectly well when anything of this kind was going on. Often the fortunate lover wouldn't reach the house where his lady was expecting him; often he would fall at her threshold, at her very door, where, to her horror, she would discover his bleeding body lying.

It was in vain that Argenson, the Minister of Police, arrested every individual, in all Paris, who seemed to be touched by the very faintest suspicion; in vain La Regnie raged, striving to compel confession; in vain were guards and patrols reinforced. Not a trace of the perpetrators of those outrages was to be discovered. The only thing which was of a certain degree of use was to go about armed to the teeth, and have a light carried before you; and yet there were cases in which the servant who carried the light had his attention occupied by having stones thrown at him, whilst at that very instant his master was being robbed and murdered.

It was a remarkable feature of this business that, notwithstanding all search and investigation in every quarter where there seemed to be any chance of dealing in jewels going on, not a trace of even the smallest of the plundered precious stones ever came to light.

Desgrais foamed in fury that even his acumen and skill were powerless to prevent the escape of those scoundrels. Whatever part of the town he happened to be in was let alone for the time, whilst in some other quarter robbery and murder were lying in wait for their rich prey.

Desgrais hit upon the clever idea of setting several facsimiles of himself on foot—various Desgrais, exactly alike in gait, speech, figure, face, etc.; so that his own men could not tell the one of them from the other, or say which was the real Desgrais. Meanwhile, at the risk of his life, he watched alone in the most secret hiding−places, and followed, at a distance, this or the other person who seemed, by the looks of him, to be likely to have jewels about him. But those whom he was watching were unharmed, so that this artifice of his was as well known to the culprits as everything else seemed to be. Desgrais was in utter despair.

One morning he came to President La Regnie, pale, strained, almost out of his mind.

"What is it—what news? Have you come upon the clue?" the President cried to him as he came in.

"Ah, Monsieur!" said Desgrais, stammering in fury, "last night, near the Louvre, the Marquis de la Fare was set upon under my very nose!"

"Heaven and earth!" cried La Regnie, overjoyed, "we have got them!"

"Wait a moment, listen," said Desgrais, with a bitter smile. "I was standing near the Louvre, watching and waiting, with hell itself in my heart, for those devils who have been baffling me for such a length of time. There came a figure close by me—not seeing me—with uncertain steps, always looking behind him. By the moonlight I recognised the Marquis de la Fare. I expected that he would be passing. I knew where he was gliding to. Scarcely had he got ten or twelve paces beyond me when, out of the ground apparently, springs a figure, dashes the Marquis to the ground, falls down upon him. Losing my self−control at this occurrence, which seemed to be likely to deliver the murderer into my hands, I cried out aloud, and meant to spring from my hiding−place with a great bound and seize hold of him. But I tripped up on my cloak and fell down. I saw the fellow flee away as if on the wings of the wind. I picked myself up, and made off after him as fast as I could. As I ran, I sounded my horn. Out of the distance the whistles of my men answered me. Things grew lively—clatter of arms, tramp of horses on all sides. 'Here!—come to me!—Desgrais!' I cried, till the streets re−echoed. All the time I saw the man before me in the bright moonlight, turning off right—left—to get away from me. We came to the Rue Niçaise. There his strength seemed to begin to fail. I gathered mine up. He was not more than fifteen paces ahead of me."

"You got hold of him!—your men came up!" cried La Regnie, with flashing eyes, grasping Desgrais by the arm as if he were the fleeing murderer himself.

"Fifteen paces ahead of me," said Desgrais, in a hollow voice, and drawing his breath hard, "this fellow, before my eyes, dodged to one side, and vanished through the wall."

"Vanished!—through the wall! Are you out of your senses?" La Regnie cried, taking three steps backwards, and striking his hands together.

"Call me as great a madman as you please, Monsieur," said Desgrais, rubbing his forehead like one tortured by evil thoughts. "Call me a madman, or a fool that sees spooks; but what I have told you is the literal truth. I stood staring at the wall, while several of my men came up out of breath, and with them the Marquis de la Fare (who had picked himself up), with his drawn sword in his hand. We lighted torches, we examined the wall all over. There was not the trace of a door, a window, any opening. It is the strong stone wall of a courtyard, belonging to a house in which people are living—against whom there is not the slightest suspicion. I have looked into the whole thing again this morning in broad daylight. It must be the very devil himself who is at work befooling us in the matter."

This story got bruited abroad through Paris, where all heads were full of the sorceries, callings up of spirits and pacts with the devil indulged in by La Voisin, Le Vigoureux, and the wicked priest Le Sage; and as it lies in our eternal nature that the bent towards the supernatural and the marvellous overpasses all reason, people soon positively believed what Desgrais had only said in his impatience—that the very devil himself must protect the rascals, and that they had sold their souls to him. We can readily understand that Desgrais' story soon received many absurd embellishments. It was printed, and hawked about the town, with a woodcut at the top representing a horrible figure of the devil sinking into the ground before the terrified Desgrais. Quite enough to frighten the people, and so terrify Desgrais' men that they lost all courage, and went about the streets behung with amulets, and sprinkled with holy water.

Seeing that the Chambre Ardente was unsuccessful, Argenson applied to the King to constitute—with special reference to this novel description of crime a tribunal armed with greater powers for tracking and punishing offenders. The King, thinking he had already given too ample powers to the Chambre Ardente, and shocked at the horrors of the numberless executions carried out by the bloodthirsty La Regnie, refused.

Then another method of influencing His Majesty was devised.

In the apartments of Madame de Maintenon −− where the King was in the habit of spending much of his time in the afternoons −− and also, very often, would be at work with his Ministers till late at night −− a poetical petition was laid before him, on the part of the "Endangered Lovers," who complained that when "galanterie" rendered it incumbent on them to be the bearers of some valuable present to the ladies of their hearts, they had always to do it at the risk of their lives. They said that, of course, it was honour and delight to pour out their blood for the lady of their heart in knightly encounter, but that the treacherous attack of the assassin, against which it was impossible to guard, was quite a different matter. They expressed their hope that Louis, the bright pole−star of love and gallantry, might deign—arising end staining in fullest splendour—to dispel the darkness of night, and thus reveal the black mysteries hidden thereby; that the God−like hero, who had hurled his foes to the dust, would now once more wave his flashing falchion and, as did Hercules in the case of the Laernean Hydra, and Theseus in that of the Minotaur, vanquish the threatening monster who was consuming all the delights of love, and darkening all joy into deep sorrow and inconsolable mourning.

Serious as the subject was, this poem was not deficient in most wittily−turned phrases, particularly where it described the state of watchful anxiety in which lovers had to glide to their mistresses, and how this mental strain necessarily destroyed all the delights of love, and nipped all adventures of "galanterie" in the very bud. And, as it

wound up with a high−flown panegyric of Louis XIV, the King could not but read it with visible satisfaction. When he had perused it, he turned to Madame de Maintenon—without taking his eyes from it—read it again—aloud this time—and then asked, with a pleased smile, what she thought of the petition of the "Endangered Lovers."

Madame de Maintenon, faithful to her serious turn, and ever wearing the garb of a certain piousness, answered that secret and forbidden practices did not deserve much in the form of protection, but that the criminals probably did require special laws for their punishment. The King, not satisfied with this answer, folded the paper up, and was going back to the Secretary of State, who was at work in the ante−room, when, happening to glance sideways, his eyes rested on Mademoiselle de Scudéri who was present, seated in a little arm−chair. He went straight to her and the pleased smile which had at first been playing about his mouth and cheeks—but had disappeared—resumed the ascendency again. Standing close before her, with his face unwrinkling itself, he said—

"The Marquise does not know, and has no desire to learn, anything about the 'galanteries' of our enamoured gentlemen, and evades the subject in ways which are nothing less than forbidden. But, Mademoiselle, what do you think of this poetical petition?"

Mademoiselle de Scudéri rose from her chair; a transient blush, like the purple of the evening sky, passed across her pale cheeks and, gently bending forward, she answered with downcast eyes:

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"Un amant qui craint les voleurs
N'est point digne d'amour."
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The King, surprised, and struck with admiration at the chivalrous spirit of those few words—which completely took the wind out of the sails of the poem, with all its lengthy tirades—cried, with flashing eyes: "By Saint Denis, you are right, Mademoiselle! No blind laws, touching the innocent and the guilty alike, shall shelter cowardice. Argenson and La Regnie must do their best."

Next morning La Martinière enlarged upon the terrors of the time, painting them in glowing colours to her lady, when she told her all that had happened the previous night, and handed her the mysterious casket, with much fear and trembling. Both she and Baptiste (who stood in the corner as white as a sheet, kneading his cap in his hand from agitation and anxiety) implored her, in the name of all the saints, to take the greatest precautions in opening it.

Weighing and examining the unopened mystery in her hand, she said with a smile, "You are a couple of bogies! The wicked scoundrels outside who, as you say yourselves, spy out all that goes on in every house know, no doubt, quite as well as you and I do, that I am not rich, and that there are no treasures in this house worth committing a murder for. Is my life in danger, do you think? Who could have any interest in the death of an old woman of seventy−three, who never persecuted any evildoers except those in her own novels; who writes mediocre poetry, incapable of exciting anyone's envy; who has nothing to leave behind her but the belongings of an old maid who sometimes goes to Court, and two or three dozen handsomely−bound books with gilt edges. And, alarming as your account is, La Martinière, of this man's appearance, I cannot believe that he meant me any harm, so ____"

La Martinière sprang three paces backwards, and Baptiste fell on one knee with a hollow, "Ah!" as Mademoiselle de Scudéri pressed a projecting steel knob, and the lid of the casket flew open with a certain amount of noise.

Great was her surprise to see that it contained a pair of bracelets, and a necklace richly set in jewels. She took them out and, as she spoke in admiration of the marvellous workmanship of the necklace, La Martinière cast glances of wonder at the bracelets, and cried, again and again, that Madame de Montespan herself did not possess

such jewellery.

"But why is it brought to me?" cried Mademoiselle de Scudéri. "What can this mean?" She saw, however, a little folded note at the bottom of the casket, and in this she rightly thought she would find the key to the mystery. When she had read what was written in the note, it fell from her trembling hands; she raised an appealing look to heaven, and then sank down half fainting in her chair. Baptiste and La Martinière hurried to her, in alarm.

"Oh!" she cried, in a voice stifled by tears, "the mortification! The deep humiliation! Has it been reserved for me to undergo this in my old age? Have I ever been frivolous, like some of the foolish young creatures; are words, spoken half in jest, to be found capable of such a terrible interpretation? Am I, who have been faithful to all that is pure and good from my childhood, to be made virtually an accomplice in the crimes of this terrible confederation ."

She held her handkerchief to her eyes, so that Baptiste and La Martinière, altogether at sea in their anxious conjectures, felt powerless to set about helping her who was so dear to them, as the best and kindest of mistresses, in her bitter affliction.

La Martinière picked up the paper from the floor. On it was written:

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"'Un amant qui craint les voleurs
N'est point digne d'amour.'
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"Your brilliant intellect, most honoured lady, has delivered us, who exercise on weakness and cowardice the rights of the stronger, and possess ourselves of treasures which would otherwise be unworthily wasted, from much bitter persecution. As a proof of our gratitude, be pleased kindly to accept this set of ornaments. It is the most valuable that we have been enabled to lay hands on for many a day. Although far more beautiful and precious jewels should adorn you, yet we pray you not to deprive us of your future protection and remembrance.—THE INVISIBLES."

"Is it possible," cried Mademoiselle de Scudéri, when she had partially recovered herself, "that shameless wickedness and abandoned insult can be carried further by human beings?"

The sun was shining brightly through the window curtains of crimson silk, and consequently the brilliants, which were lying on the table beside the open casket, were flashing a rosy radiance. Looking at them, Mademoiselle de Scudéri covered her face in horror, and ordered La Martinière instantly to take those terrible jewels away, steeped, as they seemed to be, in the blood of the murdered. La Martinière, having at once put the necklace and bracelets back into their case, thought the best thing to do would be to give them to the Minister of Police, and tell him all that had happened.

Mademoiselle de Scudéri rose, and walked up and down slowly and in silence, as if considering what it was best to do. Then she told Baptiste to bring a sedan chair, and La Martinière to dress her, as she was going straight to the Marquise de Maintenon.

She repaired thither at the hour when she knew Madame de Maintenon would be alone, taking the casket and jewels with her.

Madame de Maintenon might well wonder to see this dear old lady (who was always kindness, sweetness and amiability personified), pale, distressed, upset, coming in with uncertain steps. "In heaven's name, what has happened to you?" she cried to her visitor, who was scarcely able to stand upright, striving to reach the chair which the Marquise drew forward for her. At last, when she could find words, she told her what a deep, irremediable insult and outrage the thoughtless speech which she had made in reply to the King had brought upon

her.

Madame de Maintenon, when she had heard the whole affair properly related, thought Mademoiselle de Scudéri was taking it far too much to heart, strange as the occurrence was—that the insult of a pack of wretched rabble could not hurt an upright, noble heart; and finally begged that she might see the ornaments.

Mademoiselle de Scudéri handed her the open casket, and when she saw the splendid and valuable stones and the workmanship of them she could not repress a loud expression of admiration. She took the bracelets and necklace to the window, letting the sunlight play on the jewels, and holding the beautiful goldsmith's work close to her eyes so as to see with what wonderful skill each little link of the chains was formed.

She turned suddenly to Mademoiselle de Scudéri, and cried, "Do you know, there is only one man who can have done this work—and that is René Cardillac."

René Cardillac was then the cleverest worker in gold in all Paris, one of the most artistic, and at the same time extraordinary men of his day. Short rather than tall, but broad−shouldered and of strong and muscular build, Cardillac, now over fifty, had still the strength and activity of a youth. To this vigour, which was to be called unusual, testified also his thick, curling, reddish hair and his massive, shining face. Had he not been known to be the most upright and honourable of men, unselfish, open, without reserve, always ready to help, his altogether peculiar glance out of his grimly sparkling eyes might have brought him under suspicion of being secretly ill−tempered and wicked. In his art he was the most skilful worker, not only in Paris, but probably in the world at that time. Intimately acquainted with every kind of precious stones, versed in all their special peculiarities, he could so handle and treat them that ornaments which at a first glance promised to be poor and insignificant, came from his workshop brilliant and splendid. He accepted every commission with burning eagerness, and charged prices so moderate as to seem out of all proportion to the work. And the work left him no rest. Day and night he was to be heard hammering in his shop; and often, when a job was nearly finished, he would suddenly be dissatisfied with the form—would have doubts whether some of the settings were delicate enough; some little link would not be quite to his mind—in fine, the whole affair would be thrown into the melting−pot, and begun all over again. Thus every one of his works was a real, unsurpassable chef−d'¦uvre, which sent the person who had ordered it into amazement.

But then, it was hardly possible to get the finished work out of his hands. He would put the customer off from one week to another by a thousand excuses—even from month to month. He might be offered twice the price he had agreed upon, but it was useless; he would take no more; and when, ultimately, he was obliged to yield to the customer's remonstrances, and deliver the work, he could not conceal the vexation—nay, the rage—which seethed within him. If he had to deliver some specially valuable and unusually rich piece of workmanship, worth perhaps several thousand francs, he would get into such a condition that he ran up and down like one demented, cursing himself, his work, and every thing and person about him; but should, then, someone come running up behind him, crying, "René Cardillac, would you be so kind as to make me a beautiful necklace for the lady I am going to marry?" or "a pair of bracelets for my girl?" or the like, he would stop in a moment, flash his small eyes upon the speaker, and say, "Let me see what you have got." The latter would take out a little case and say "Here are jewels; they are not worth much; only every−day affairs, but in your hands " Cardillac would interrupt him, snatch the casket from his hands, take out the stones (really not very valuable) hold them up to the light, and cry, "Ho! ho! common stones, you say! Nothing of the kind!—very fine, splendid stones! Just see what I shall make of them; and if a handful of Louis are no object to you, I will put two or three others along with them which will shine in your eyes like the sun himself!" The customer would say: "I leave the matter entirely in your hands, Master René; make what change you please." Whether the customer were a rich burgher or a gallant of quality, Cardillac would then throw himself violently on his neck, embrace him and kiss him, and say he was perfectly happy again, and that the work would be ready in eight days' time. Then he would run home as fast as he could to his workshop, where he would set to work hammering away; and in eight days' time there would be a masterpiece ready.

But as soon as the customer arrived, glad to pay the moderate price demanded and take away his prize, Cardillac would become morose, ill−tempered, rude and insolent. "But consider, Master Cardillac," the customer would say, "tomorrow is my wedding−day." "What do I care?, Cardillac would answer; "what is your wedding−day to me? Come back in a fortnight." "But it is finished!—here is the money; I must have it." "And I tell you that there are many alterations which I must make before I let it leave my hands, and I am not going to let you have it today." "And I tell you, that if you don't give me my jewels—which I am ready to pay you for—quietly, you will see me come back with a file of D'Argenson's men." "Now, may the devil seize you with a hundred red−hot pincers, and hang three hundredweight on to the necklace, that it may throttle your bride!" With which he would cram the work into the customer's breast−pocket, seize him by the arm, push him out of the door, so that he would go stumbling all the way downstairs. Then he would laugh like a fiend, out of the window, when he saw the poor wretch go limping out, holding his handkerchief to his bleeding nose. It was not easy to explain either why, when Cardillac had undertaken a commission with alacrity and enthusiasm, he would sometimes suddenly implore the customer, with every sign of the deepest emotion—with the most moving adjurations, even with sobs and tears—not to ask him to go on with it. Many persons, amongst those most highly considered by the King and nation, had in vain offered large sums for the smallest specimen of Cardillac's work. He threw himself at the King's feet, and begged him, of his mercy, not to command him to work for him; and he declined all orders of Madame de Maintenon's; once, when she wished him to make a little ring, with emblems of the arts on it, which she wanted to give to Racine, he refused with expressions of abhorrence and terror.

"I would wager, therefore," said Madame de Maintenon, "that even if I were to send for Cardillac, to find out, at least, for whom he had made those ornaments, he would somehow avoid coming, for fear that I should give him an order; nothing will induce him to work for me. Yet he does seem to have been rather less obstinate of late, for I hear he is working more than ever, and allows his customers to take away their jewellery at once, though he does so with deep annoyance, and turns away his face when he hands them over."

Mademoiselle de Scudéri, who was exceedingly anxious that the jewels which came into her possession in such an extraordinary manner should be restored to their owner as speedily as possible, thought that this wondrous René Cardillac should be informed at once that no work was required of him, but simply his opinion as to certain stones. The Marquise agreed to this; he was sent for, and he came into the room in a very brief space, almost as if he had been on the way when sent for.

When he saw Mademoiselle de Scudéri, he appeared perplexed, like one confronted with the unexpected, who for the time loses sight of the demands of courtesy; he first of all made a profound reverence to her, and then turned, in the second place, to the Marquise. Madame de Maintenon impetuously asked him if the jewelled ornaments—to which she pointed as they lay sparkling on the dark−green cover of the table—were of his workmanship. Cardillac scarcely glanced at them but, fixedly staring in her face, he hastily packed the necklace and bracelets into their case, and shoved them away with some violence.

Then with an evil smile gleaming on his red face, he said, "The truth is, Madame la Marquise, that one must know René Cardillac's handiwork very little to suppose, even for a moment, that any other goldsmith in the world made those. Of course, I made them."

"Then," continued the Marquise, "say whom you made them for."

"For myself alone," he answered. "You may think this strange," he continued, as they both gazed at him with amazement, Madame de Maintenon incredulous, and Mademoiselle de Scudéri all anxiety as to how the matter was going to turn out, "but I tell you the truth, Madame la Marquise. Merely for the sake of the beauty of the work, I collected some of my finest stones together, and worked for the enjoyment of so doing, more carefully and diligently than usual. Those ornaments disappeared from my workshop a short time since, in an incomprehensible manner."

"Heaven be thanked!" cried Mademoiselle de Scudéri, her eyes sparkling with joy. With a smile she sprang up from her seat and, going up to Cardillac quickly and actively as a young girl, she laid her hands on his shoulder, saying, "Take back your treasure, Master René, which the villains have robbed you of!" And she circumstantially related how the ornaments had come into her possession.

Cardillac listened in silence, with downcast eyes, merely from time to time uttering a scarcely audible "Hm! Indeed! Ah! Ho, ho!", sometimes placing his hands behind his back, or again stroking his chin and cheeks. When she had ended, he appeared to be struggling with strange thoughts which had come to him during her story, and seemed unable to come to any decision satisfactory to himself. He rubbed his brow, sighed, passed his hand over his eyes—perhaps to keep back tears. At last he seized the casket (which Mademoiselle de Scudéri had been holding out to him), sank slowly on one knee, and said: "Esteemed lady! Fate destined this casket for you; and I now feel, for the first time, that I was thinking of you when I was at work upon it—nay, was making it expressly for you. Do not disdain to accept this work, and to wear it; it is the best I have done for a very long time."

"Ah! Master René," said Mademoiselle de Scudéri, jesting pleasantly, "how think you it would become me at my age to bedeck myself with those beautiful jewels?—and what should put it in your mind to make me such a valuable present? Come, come! If I were as beautiful and as rich as the Marquise de Fontange, I should certainly not let them out of my hands. But what have my withered arms, and my wrinkled neck, to do with all that splendour?"

Cardillac had risen, and said with wild looks, like a man beside himself, still holding the casket out towards her, "Do me the kindness to take it, Mademoiselle! You have no notion how profound a reverence I bear in my heart for your virtues and your high deserts. Do but accept my little offering, as an attempt, on my part, to prove to you the warmth of my regard."

As Mademoiselle de Scudéri was still hesitating, Madame de Maintenon took the casket from Cardillac's hands, saying, "Now, by heaven, Mademoiselle, you are always talking of your great age What have you and I to do with years and their burden? You are like some bashful young thing who would gladly reach out for forbidden fruit, if she could gather it without hands or fingers. Do not hesitate to accept good Master René's present, which thousands of others could not obtain for money or entreaty."

As she spoke she continued to press the casket on Mademoiselle de Scudéri; and now Cardillac sank again on his knees, kissed her dress, her hands, sighed, wept, sobbed, sprang up, and ran off in frantic haste, upsetting chairs and tables, so that the glass and porcelain crashed and clattered together.

"In the name of all the saints, what is the matter with the man?" cried Mademoiselle de Scudéri in great alarm.

But the Marquise, in particularly happy temper, laughed aloud, saying, "What is it, Mademoiselle? That Master René is over head and ears in love with you and, according to the laws of galanterie, begins to lay siege to your heart with a valuable present."

She carried this jest further, begging Mademoiselle de Scudéri not to be too obdurate towards this despairing lover of hers; and Mademoiselle de Scudéri, in her turn, borne away on a current of merry fancies, said that if it were so, she would not be able to refrain from delighting the world with the unprecedented spectacle of a goldsmith's bride of three−and−seventy summers and unexceptionable descent. Madame de Maintenon offered to twine the bridal wreath herself, and give her a few hints as to the duties of a housewife, a subject on which such a poor inexperienced little chit could not be expected to know very much.

But, notwithstanding all the jesting and the laughter, when Mademoiselle de Scudéri rose to depart, she became very grave again as her hand rested upon the jewel casket. "Whatever happens," she said, "I shall never be able to bring myself to wear these ornaments. They have, in any event, been in the hands of one of those diabolical men,

who rob and slay with the audacity of the evil one himself and are very probably in league with him. I shudder at the thought of the blood which seems to cling to those glittering stones—even Cardillac's behaviour had something about it which struck me as singularly wild and strange. I cannot drive away from me a gloomy foreboding that there is some terrible and frightful mystery hidden behind all this; and yet, when I bring the whole affair, with all the circumstances of it, as clearly as I can before my mental vision, I cannot form the slightest idea what that mystery can be—and, above all, how the good, honourable Master René—the very model of all a good, well−behaved citizen ought to be—can have anything to do with what is wicked or guilty. But at all events, I distinctly feel that I never can wear those jewels "

The Marquise considered that this was carrying scruples rather too far; yet, when Mademoiselle de Scudéri asked her to say, on her honour, what she would do in her place, she replied, firmly and earnestly, "Far rather throw them into the Seine than ever put them on."

The scene with Master René inspired Mademoiselle de Scudéri to write some pleasant verses, which she read to the King the following evening at Madame de Maintenon's. Perhaps it was the thought of Master René carrying off a bride of seventy−three of unimpeachable quarterings—that enabled her to conquer her evil forebodings; but conquer them she did, completely—and the King laughed with all his heart, vowing that Boileau Despreaux had met with his master. So de Scudéri's poem was reckoned the very wittiest that ever was written.

Several months had elapsed, when chance so willed it that Mademoiselle de Scudéri was crossing the Pont Neuf in the glass coach of the Duchesse de Montpensier. The invention of those delightful glass coaches was then so recent that the people came together in crowds whenever one of them made its appearance in the streets. Consequently a gaping crowd gathered about the Duchesse's carriage on the Pont Neuf, so that the horses could hardly make their way along. Suddenly Mademoiselle de Scudéri heard a sound of quarrelling and curses, and saw a man making a way for himself through the crowd, by means of fisticuffs and blows in the ribs; and as he came near they were struck by the piercing eyes of a young face, deadly pale, and drawn by sorrow. This young man, gazing fixedly upon them, vigorously fought his way to them by help of fists and elbows, till he reached the carriage door, threw it open with much violence, and flung a note into Mademoiselle de Scudéri's lap; after which, he disappeared as he had come, distributing and receiving blows and fisticuffs.

La Martinière, who was with her mistress, fell back fainting in the carriage with a shriek of terror, as soon as she saw the young man. In vain Mademoiselle de Scudéri pulled the string, and called out to the driver. As if urged by the foul fiend, he kept lashing his horses till, scattering the foam from their nostrils, they kicked, plunged and reared, finally thundering over the bridge at a rapid trot. Mademoiselle de Scudéri emptied the contents of her smelling−bottle over the fainting La Martinière, who at last opened her eyes and, shuddering and quaking, clinging convulsively to her mistress, with fear and horror in her pale face, groaned out with difficulty, "For the love of the Virgin, what did that terrible man want? It was he who brought you the jewels on that awful night." Mademoiselle de Scudéri calmed her, pointing out that nothing very dreadful had happened after all, and that the immediate business in hand was to ascertain the contents of the letter. She opened it, and read as follows:

"A dark and cruel fatality, which you could dispel, is driving me into an abyss. I conjure you—as a son would a mother, in the glow of filial affection—to send the necklace and bracelets to Master René Cardillac, on some pretence or other—say, to have something altered or improved. Your welfare, your very life—depend on your doing this. If you do not comply before the day after tomorrow, I will force my way into your house, and kill myself before your eyes."

"Thus much is certain, at all events," said Mademoiselle de Scudéri, when she had read this letter, "whether this mysterious man belongs to be band of robbers and murderers or not, he has no very evil designs against me. If he had been able to see me and speak to me on that night, who knows what strange events, what dark concatenation of circumstances, would have been made known to me, of which, at present, I seek, in my soul, the very faintest inkling in vain. But, be the matter as it may, that which I am enjoined in this letter to do, I certainly shall do, were

it only to be rid of those fatal jewels, which seem to me as if they must be some diabolical talisman of the Prince of Darkness's very own. Cardillac is not very likely to let them out of his hands again, if once he gets hold of them."

She intended to take them to him next day; but it seemed as if all the beaux esprits of Paris had entered into a league to assail and besiege her with verses, dramas and anecdotes. Scarce had La Chapelle finished reading the scenes of a tragedy, and declared that he considered he had now vanquished Racine, when the latter himself came in, and discomfited him with the pathetic speech of one of his kings, until Boileau sent some of his fireballs soaring up into the dark sky of the tragedies, by way of changing the subject from that eternal one of the colonnade of the Louvre, to which the architectural Dr. Perrault was shackling him.

When high noon arrived, Mademoiselle de Scudéri had to go to Madame de Montansier; so the visit to René Cardillac had to be put off till the following day.

But the young man was always present to her mind, and a species of dim remembrance seemed to be trying to arise in the depths of her being that she had, somehow and at some time, seen that face and those features before. Troubled dreams disturbed her broken slumbers. It seemed to her that she had acted thoughtlessly, and was to blame for her delay in grasping the hands which the unfortunate man was holding out to her for help. She felt, in fact, as if it had depended on her to prevent some atrocious crime. As soon as it was fairly light, she had herself dressed and set off to the goldsmith's with the jewels in her hand.

A crowd was streaming towards the Rue Niçaise (where Cardillac lived), trooping together at the door, shouting, raging, surging, striving to storm into the house, kept back with difficulty by the Marechaussée, who were guarding the place. Amid the wild distracted uproar, voices were heard crying, "Tear him in pieces! Drag him limb from limb, the accursed murderer!" At length Desgrais came up, with a number of his men, and formed a lane through the thickest of the crowd. The door flew open, and a man loaded with irons was brought out, and marched off amid the most frightful imprecations of the raging populace. At the moment when Mademoiselle de Scudéri, half dead with terror and gloomy foreboding, caught sight of him, a piercing shriek of lamentation struck upon her ears.

"Go forward!" she cried to the coachman and, with a clever, rapid turn of his horses, he scattered the thick masses of the crowd aside, and pulled up close to René Cardillac's door. Desgrais was there, and at his feet a young girl, beautiful as the day, half−dressed, with her hair dishevelled and wild inconsolable despair in her face, clinging to his knees, and crying in tones of the bitterest and profoundest anguish, "He is innocent! He is innocent!"

Desgrais and his men tried in vain to shake her off and raise her from the ground, till at length a rough, powerful fellow, gripping her arms with his strong hands, dragged her away from Desgrais by sheer force. Stumbling awkwardly, he let the girl go, and she went rolling down the stone steps, and lay like one dead on the pavement.

Mademoiselle de Scudéri could contain herself no longer. "In Christ's name!" she cried, "what has happened? What is going forward here?" She hastily opened the carriage−door and stepped out. The crowd made way for her deferentially; and when she saw that one or two compassionate women had lifted the girl up, laid her on the steps, and were rubbing her brow with strong waters, she went up to Desgrais, and angrily repeated her question.

"A terrible thing has happened," said Desgrais. "René Cardillac was found this morning, killed by a dagger−thrust. His journeyman, Olivier, is the murderer, and has just been taken to prison."

"And the girl− "

"Is Madelon," interrupted Desgrais, "Cardillac's daughter. The wretched culprit was her sweetheart, and now she is crying and howling, and screaming over and over again that Olivier is innocent—quite innocent; but she knows

all about this crime, and I must have her taken to prison too."

As he spoke he cast one of his baleful, malignant looks at the girl, which made Mademoiselle de Scudéri shudder. The girl was now beginning to revive, and breathe again faintly, though still incapable of speech or motion. There she lay with closed eyes, and people did not know what to do, whether to take her indoors, or leave her where she was a little longer till she recovered. Deeply moved, Mademoiselle de Scudéri looked upon this innocent creature, with tears in her eyes. She felt a horror of Desgrais and his men. Presently heavy footsteps came downstairs, those of the men bearing Cardillac's body.

Coming to a rapid decision, Mademoiselle de Scudéri cried out, "I shall take this girl home with me. What you do next is up to you, Desgrais."

A murmur of approval ran through the crowd. The women raised the girl; everyone crowded up; a hundred hands were proffered to help, and she was borne lightly to the carriage, whilst from every lip broke blessings on the kind lady who had saved her from arrest and criminal trial.

Madelon lay for many hours in a deep swoon, but at length the efforts of Seron—then the most celebrated physician in Paris—were successful in restoring her. Mademoiselle de Scudéri completed what Seron had begun, by letting the gentle rays of hope stream into the girl's heart; till at length a violent flood of tears, which started to her eyes, brought her relief, and she was able to tell her story, with only occasional interruptions when the overmastering might of her sorrow turned her words into sobbing.

She had been awakened at midnight by a soft knocking at her door, and had recognised the voice of Olivier, imploring her to get up at once, as her father lay dying. She sprang up, terrified, and opened the door. Olivier, pale, strained and bathed in perspiration, led the way, with tottering steps, to the workshop; she followed. There was her father lying with his eyes glazed, and the death−rattle in his throat. She threw herself upon him, weeping wildly, and then observed that his shirt was covered with blood. Olivier gently lifted her away, and busied himself in bathing a wound on her father's left breast with balsam, and bandaging it. As he was doing so, her father's consciousness came back; the rattle in his throat ceased and, looking first on her and then on Olivier with most expressive glances, he took her hand and placed it in Olivier's, pressing them both together. The pair of them were kneeling beside her father's bed when he raised himself with a piercing cry, but immediately fell back again, and with a deep sigh departed this life. On this they both wept and lamented.

Olivier told her how her father had been murdered in his presence during an expedition on which he had accompanied him that night by his order, and how he had with the utmost difficulty carried him home, not supposing him to be mortally wounded. As soon as it was day, the people of the house—who had heard the sounds of their footsteps and of the weeping and lamenting during the night—came up, and found them still kneeling, inconsolable by the goldsmith's body. Then an uproar began, the Marechaussée broke in, and Olivier was taken to prison as her father's murderer. Madelon added the most touching account of Olivier's virtues, goodness, piety and sincerity, telling how he had honoured his master as if he had been his own father, and how the latter returned his affection in the fullest measure, choosing him for his son−in−law in spite of his poverty, because his skill and fidelity were equal to the nobility of his heart. All this Madelon saw out of the fulness of her love, and added that if Olivier had thrust a dagger into her father's heart before her very eyes, she would rather have thought it a delusion of Satan's than have believed Olivier capable of such a terrible crime.

Most deeply touched by Madelon's unspeakable sufferings, and quite disposed to believe in poor Olivier's innocence, Mademoiselle de Scudéri made inquiries, and found everything confirmed which Madelon had said as to the domestic relations between the master and his workman. The people of the house and the neighbours all spoke of Olivier as the very model of good, steady, exemplary behaviour. No one knew anything whatever against him, and yet, when the crime was alluded to, every one shrugged his shoulders, and thought there was something incomprehensible about it.

Olivier, brought before the Chambre Ardente, most steadfastly denied—as Mademoiselle de Scudéri learned—the crime of which he was accused, and maintained that his master had been attacked in the street in his presence, and borne down, and that he had carried him home still alive, although he did not long survive. This agreed with Madelon's statement.

Over and over again Mademoiselle de Scudéri had the very minutest circumstances of the awful event related to her. She specially inquired if there had ever been any quarrel between Olivier and the father, whether Olivier was altogether exempt from that propensity to hastiness which often attacks the best tempered people like a blind madness, and leads them to commit deeds which seem to exclude all freewill; but the more enthusiastically Madelon spoke of the peaceful home−life which the three had led together, united in the most sincere affection, the more did every vestige of suspicion against Olivier disappear from her mind. Closely examining and considering everything, starting from the assumption that, notwithstanding all that spoke so loudly for his innocence, Olivier yet had been Cardillac's murderer, Mademoiselle de Scudéri could find, in all the realm of possibility, no motive for the terrible deed, which, in any case, was bound to destroy his happiness. Poor though skilful, he succeeds in gaining the good will of the most renowned of masters; he loves the daughter—his master favours his love. Happiness, good fortune for the rest of his life are laid open before him. Supposing, then, that—God knows on what impulse—in an outburst of anger, he should have made this murderous attack on his master, what diabolical hypocrisy it required to behave as he had done after the deed! With the firmest conviction of his innocence, Mademoiselle de Scudéri resolved to save Olivier at whatever cost.

It seemed to her most advisable, before perhaps appealing to the King in person, to go to the President La Regnie, point out for his consideration all the circumstances which made for Olivier's innocence, and so, perhaps, kindle in his mind a conviction favourable to the accused, which might communicate itself beneficially to the judges.

La Regnie received her with all the consideration which was the due of a lady of her worth, held in high esteem by His Majesty himself. He listened in silence to all she had to say concerning Olivier's circumstances, relationships and character; and also concerning the crime itself. A delicate, almost malignant, smile, however, was all the token he gave that her adjurations, her reminders (accompanied by plentiful tears) that a judge ought to be, not the enemy of the accused, but ready to listen, also, to whatever spoke in his favour, were not falling upon deaf ears. When at length Mademoiselle de Scudéri concluded, quite exhausted and wiping the tears from her cheeks, La Regnie began:

"It is quite characteristic of your excellent heart, Mademoiselle," he said, that, moved by the tears of a young girl in love, you should credit all she says; nay, be incapable of grasping the idea of a fearful crime such as this. But it is otherwise with the Judge, who is accustomed to tear off the mask from vile and unblushing hypocrisy and deception. It is, of course, not incumbent on me to disclose the course of a criminal trial to everyone who chooses to inquire. I do my duty, Mademoiselle! The world's opinion troubles me not at all. Evildoers should tremble before the Chambre Ardente, which knows no punishments save blood and fire. But by you, Mademoiselle, I would not be looked upon as a monster of severity and barbarism; therefore, permit me briefly to present to you the evidence of this young criminal's guilt. Heaven be thanked that vengeance has fallen upon him. With your acute intelligence, you will then disown your kindly and generous feelings, which do honour to you, but in me would be out of place.

"Eh bien! this morning René Cardillac is found murdered by a dagger thrust, no one is by him except his workman, Olivier Brusson, and the daughter. In Olivier's room there is found, amongst other things, a dagger covered with fresh blood which exactly fits into the wound. Olivier says, 'Cardillac was attacked in the street before my eyes' 'Was the intention to rob him?' 'I do not know.' 'You were walking with him and you could not drive off the murderer or detain him?' 'My master was walking fifteen or perhaps sixteen paces in front of me; I was following him.' 'Why, in all the world, so far behind?' 'My master wished it so.' 'And what had Master Cardillac to do in the streets so late?' 'That I cannot say.' 'But he was never in the habit of being out after nine o'clock at other times, was he?' At this Olivier hesitates, becomes confused, sighs, sheds tears, vows by all that is

sacred that Cardillac did go out that night, and met with his death.

"Now observe, Mademoiselle, it is proved with the most absolute certainty that Cardillac did not leave the house that night; consequently Olivier's assertion that he went with him is a barefaced falsehood. The street door of the house fastens with a heavy lock, which makes a piercing noise in opening and closing, also the door itself creaks and groans on its hinges, so that, as experiments have proved, the noise is heard quite distinctly in the upper stories of the house. Now, there lives in the lower story, that is to say, close to the street door, old Maître Claude Patru with his housekeeper, a person of nearly eighty years of age, but still hale and active. Both of them heard Cardillac come downstairs at nine o"clock exactly, according to his usual custom, close and bolt the door with a great deal of noise, go upstairs again, read the evening prayer, and then (as was to be presumed by the shutting of the door) go into his bedroom.

"Maître Claude suffers from sleeplessness like many other old people; and on the night in question he could not close an eye. Therefore, about half−past nine the housekeeper struck a light in the kitchen, which she reached by crossing the passage, and sat down at the table beside her master with an old chronicle−book, from which she read aloud, whilst the old man, fixing his thoughts on the reading, sometimes sat in his arm−chair, sometimes walked slowly up and down the room to try and bring on sleepiness. All was silence in the house till nearly midnight; but then they heard overhead rapid footsteps, a heavy fall, as of something on to the floor, and immediately after that a hollow groaning. They were both struck by a peculiar alarm and anxiety, the horror of the terrible deed which had just been committed seemed to sweep over them. When day came what had been done in the darkness was brought clearly to light."

"But, in the name of all the Saints," cried Mademoiselle de Scudéri, "considering all the circumstances which I have told you at such length, can you think of any motive for this diabolical deed?"

"Hm!" answered La Regnie. "Cardillac was anything but a poor man. He had valuable jewels in his possession."

"But all he had would go to the daughter! You forget that Olivier was to be Cardillac's son−in−law."

"Perhaps he was compelled to share with others," said La Regnie, "or to do the deed wholly for them!"

"Share!—murder for others," cried Mademoiselle de Scudéri, in utter amazement.

"You must learn, Mademoiselle," continued La Regnie, "that Olivier's blood would have been flowing on the Place de la Grève before this time, but that his crime is connected with that deeply−hidden mystery which has so long brooded over Paris. It is clear that Olivier belongs to that infamous band which, baffling all our attempts at observation or discovery, carries on its nefarious practices with perfect immunity. Through him everything will, must be, discovered. Cardillac's wound is precisely the same as those of all the persons who have been robbed and murdered in the streets and houses; and most conclusive of all since Olivier's arrest, the robberies and murders have ceased, the streets are as safe by night as by day. Proof enough that Olivier was most probably the chief of the band. As yet he will not confess, but there are means of making him speak against his will."

"And Madelon!" cried Mademoiselle de Scudéri, "that truthful innocent creature."

"Ah!" cried La Regnie, with one of his venomous smiles, "who will answer to me that she is not in the plot, too? She does not care so very much about her father. Her tears are all for the young murderer "

"What?" cried Mademoiselle de Scudéri, "not for her father?—that girl—impossible!"

"Oh!" continued La Regnie, "remember la Brinvilliers! You must pardon me, if by−and−by I have to carry off your protégée, and put her in the Conciergerie."

Mademoiselle de Scudéri shuddered at this grisly notion. It seemed to her that no truth or virtue could endure before this terrible man; as if he spied out murder and dark−guilt in the deepest and most hidden thoughts of people's hearts. She rose. "Be human!" was all that she was able, with difficulty, to say in her state of anxiety and oppression. As she was just going to descend the stairs, to which the President had attended her with ceremonious courtesy, a strange idea came to her—she knew not how.

"Might I be allowed to see this unfortunate Olivier Brusson?" she inquired, turning round sharply.

He scrutinised her face thoughtfully, and then distorted his features into the repulsive smile which was characteristic of him.

"Doubtless, Mademoiselle," he said, your idea is that, trusting your own feelings −− the inward voice more than what happened before our eyes, you would like to examine into Olivier's guilt or innocence for yourself. If you do not fear that gloomy abode of crime if it is not hateful to you to see those types of depravity in all their gradations—the doors of the Conciergerie shall be opened to you in two hours" time. Olivier, whose fate excites your sympathy, shall be brought to you."

In truth, Mademoiselle de Scudéri could not bring herself to believe in Olivier's guilt. Everything spoke against him. Indeed, no judge in the world would have thought otherwise than La Regnie, in the face of what had happened. But the picture of domestic happiness which Madelon had called before her eyes in such vivid colours, outweighed and outshone all suspicion, so that she preferred to adopt the hypothesis of some inscrutable mystery rather than believe what her whole nature revolted against.

She thought she would hear Olivier's narrative of the events of that night of mystery, and in this manner, possibly, penetrate farther into a secret which the judges, perhaps, did not see into, because they thought it unworthy of investigation.

Arrived at the Conciergerie, she was taken into a large, well−lighted room. Presently she heard the ring of fetters. Olivier Brusson was brought in; but as soon as she saw him she fell down fainting. When she recovered, he was gone. She demanded impetuously to be taken to her carriage; she would not remain another moment in that place of crime and wickedness. Alas! at the first glance she had recognised in Olivier Brusson the young man who had thrown the letter into her carriage on the Pont Neuf, and who had brought her the casket with the jewels. Now all doubt was gone, La Regnie's terrible suspicions completely justified. Olivier belonged to the atrocious band, and had, doubtless, murdered his master!

And Madelon! Never before so bitterly deceived by her kind feelings, Mademoiselle de Scudéri, under this deadly attack upon her by the power of the evil one here below—in whose very existence she had not believed—doubted if there was such a thing as truth. She gave admittance to the fearful suspicion that Madelon, too, was forsworn, and might have had a hand in the bloody deed. And as it is the nature of the human mind that, when an idea has dawned upon it, it eagerly seeks, and finds, colours in which to paint that idea more and more vividly; as she weighed and considered all the circumstances of the crime along with Madelon's behaviour, she found a very great deal to nourish suspicion. Many things which had hitherto been considered proofs of innocence and purity now became evidences of studied hypocrisy and deep, corrupt wickedness. Those heartrending cries of sorrow and bitter tears might well have been caused by the deathly dread of her lover's bleeding—nay, of her own falling into the executioner's hands.

With a resolve at once to cast away the serpent she had been cherishing, Mademoiselle de Scudéri alighted from her carriage. Madelon threw herself at her feet Her heavenly eyes—as candid as an angel's—raised to her, her hands pressed to her heaving breast, she wept, imploring help and consolation. Controlling herself with difficulty and speaking with as much calmness and gravity as she could, Mademoiselle de Scudéri said, "Go! go!—be thankful that the murderer awaits the just punishment of his crime. May the Holy Virgin grant that guilt does not

weigh heavily on your own head also." With a bitter cry of "Alas! then all is over!" Madelon fell fainting to the ground. Mademoiselle de Scudéri left her to the care of La Martinière and went to another room.

Much distressed and estranged from all earthly things, she longed to depart from a world filled with diabolical treachery and falsehood. She complained of the destiny which had granted her so many years in which to strengthen her belief in truth and virtue, only to shatter in her old age the beautiful fancies which had illumined her path.

She heard Madelon, as La Martinière was leading her away, murmur in broken accents, "Her, too, have the terrible men deceived. Ah! wretched me!—miserable Olivier!" The tones of her voice went to her heart, and again there dawned within her a belief in the existence of some mystery, in Olivier's innocence. Torn by the most contradictory feelings, she cried, "What spirit of the pit has mixed me up in this terrible story, which will be my very death!"

At this moment Baptiste came in, pale and terrified, to say that Desgrais was at the door. Since the dreadful La Voisin trial the appearance of Desgrais in a house was the sure precursor of some criminal accusation. Hence Baptiste's terror, as to which his mistress asked him with a gentle smile, "What is the matter, Baptiste? Has the name of Scudéri been found in La Voisin's lists?"

"Ah! For Christ's sake," cried Baptiste, trembling in every limb, "how can you say such a thing? But Desgrais—the horrible Desgrais—is looking so mysterious, and is so insistent—he seems hardly able to wait till he can see you."

"Well. Baptiste," she said, "bring him in at once, this gentleman who so frightens you. To me, at all events, he can cause no anxiety."

"President La Regnie sends me to you, Mademoiselle," said Desgrais, when he entered, "with a request which he scarce would dare to make if he did not know your goodness and bravery, and if the last hope of bringing to light an atrocious deed of blood did not lie in your hands; had you not already taken such interest (as well as bearing a part) in this case, which is keeping the Chambre Ardente, and all of us, in a state of such breathless suspense. Since he saw you, Olivier Brusson has been almost out of his mind. He still swears by all that is sacred, that he is completely innocent of René Cardillac's death, though he is ready to suffer the punishment he has deserved. Observe, Mademoiselle, that the latter admission clearly refers to other crimes of which he has been guilty. But all attempts to get him to utter anything further have been vain. He begs and implores to be allowed to have an interview with you. To you alone will he divulge everything. Vouchsafe then, Mademoiselle, to listen to Brusson's confession."

"What?" cried Mademoiselle de Scudéri, in indignation, "I become an organ of the criminal court, and abuse the confidence of this unfortunate fellow to bring him to the scaffold! No, Desgrais! Ruffian and murderer though he may be, I could never deceive and betray him thus villainously. I will have nothing to do with his avowal. If I did, it would be locked up in my heart, as if made to a priest under the seal of the confessional."

"Perhaps, Mademoiselle," said Desgrais, with a subtle smile, "you might alter your opinion after hearing Brusson. Did you not beg the President to be human? This he is, in yielding to Brusson's foolish desire, and thus trying one more expedient—the last—before resorting to the rack, for which Brusson is long since ripe."

Mademoiselle de Scudéri shuddered involuntarily.

"Understand, Mademoiselle," he continued, "you would by no means be expected to revisit those gloomy dungeons, which lately inspired you with such horror and loathing. Olivier would be brought to your own house, in the night, like a free man; what he should say would not be listened to; though, of course, there would be a

proper guard with him. He could thus tell you freely and unconstrainedly all he had to say. As regards any risk which you might run in seeing the wretched being, my life shall answer for that. He speaks of you with the deepest veneration; he vows that it is the dark mystery that prevented him seeing you earlier which has brought him to destruction. Moreover, it would rest with you entirely to repeat as much or as little as you pleased of what Brusson confessed to you. How could you be constrained to more?"

Mademoiselle de Scudéri sat with eyes fixed on the ground, in deep reflection. It seemed to her that she could not but obey that Higher Power which demanded of her the clearing up of this mystery—as if there were no escape for her from the wondrous toils in which she had become enmeshed against her will.

Coming to a rapid decision, she solemnly replied, "God will give me self−command and firm resolution. Bring Brusson here; I will see him."

As on the night when the jewel−casket had been brought, so now at midnight there came a knocking at the door. Baptiste, duly instructed, opened. Mademoiselle de Scudéri's blood ran cold when she heard the heavy tread of the guards who had brought Brusson stationing themselves about the passages.

At length the door opened, Desgrais came in, and after him Olivier Brusson, without irons, and respectably dressed.

"Here is Brusson, Mademoiselle," said Desgrais, bowing courteously; he then departed at once.

Brusson sank down on both knees before Mademoiselle de Scudéri. The pure, clear expression of a most truthful soul beamed from his face, though it was drawn and distorted by terror and bitter pain. The longer she looked at him, the more vivid became a remembrance of some well−loved person—she could not say whom. When the first feeling of shuddering left her, she forgot that Cardillac's murderer was kneeling before her and, speaking in the pleasant tone of quiet goodwill which was natural to her, said: "Now, Brusson, what have you to say to me?"

He—still on his knees—sighed deeply, from profound sorrow, and then said: "Oh, Mademoiselle, you whom I so honour and worship, is there no trace of recollection of me left in your mind?"

Still looking at him attentively, she answered that she had certainly detected in his face a likeness to someone whom she had held in affection, and it was to this that he owed it that she had overcome her profound horror of a murderer so far as to be able to listen to him quietly. Much pained by her words, Brusson rose quickly, and stepped backwards a pace, with his gloomy glance fixed on the ground.

Then, in a hollow voice, he said: "Have you quite forgotten Anne Guiot? Her son, Olivier, the boy whom you used to dandle on your knee, is he who is now before you."

"Oh! For the love of all the Saints!" she cried, covering her face with both hands and sinking back in her chair. She had reason for being thus horrified. Anne Guiot, the daughter of a citizen who had fallen into poverty, had lived with Mademoiselle de Scudéri from her childhood; she had brought her up like a daughter, with all affection and care. When she grew up, a handsome, well−conducted young man named Claude Bresson fell in love with her. Being a first−rate workman at his trade of a watchmaker, sure to make a capital living in Paris and Anne being very fond of him, Mademoiselle de Scudéri saw no reason to object to their marrying. They set up house accordingly, lived a most quiet and happy domestic life, and the bond between them was knitted more closely still by the birth of a most beautiful boy, the image of his pretty mother.

Mademoiselle de Scudéri made an idol of little Olivier, whom she would take away from his mother for hours and days, to pet him and kiss him. Hence he attached himself to her, and was as pleased to be with her as with his mother. When three years had passed, the depressed state of Brusson's trade brought it about that job−work was

scarcer every day, so that at last it was all he could do to get bread to eat. In addition to this came home−sickness for his beautiful native Geneva so the little household went there, in spite of Mademoiselle de Scudéri's dissuasions and promises of all needful assistance. Anne wrote once or twice to her foster−mother, and then ceased; so that Mademoiselle de Scudéri thought she was forgotten in the happiness of the Brussons' life.

It was now just three and twenty years since the Brussons had left Paris for Geneva.

"Horrible!" cried Mademoiselle de Scudéri, when she had to some extent recovered herself, "You, Olivier! the son of my Anne! And now!"

"Mademoiselle!" said Olivier, quietly and composedly, "doubtless you never thought that the boy whom you cherished like the tenderest of mothers, whom you dandled on your knee, and to whom you gave sweetmeats, would when grown to manhood stand before you accused of a terrible murder. I am completely innocent! The Chambre Ardente charges me with a crime; but, as I hope to die a Christian's death, though it may be by the executioner's hand—I am free from all guilt. Not by my hand—not by any crime of my committing, was it that the unfortunate Cardillac came to his end."

As he said this, Olivier began to tremble and shake so, that Mademoiselle de Scudéri motioned him to a little seat which was near him.

"I have had sufficient time," he went on, "to prepare myself for this interview with you—which I look upon as the last favour of a merciful Heaven—and to acquire as much calmness and self−control as are necessary to tell you the story of my terrible, unheard−of misfortunes. Be so compassionate as to listen to me calmly, whatever may be your horror at the disclosure of a mystery of which you certainly have not the smallest inkling. Ah! would to Heaven my poor father had never left Paris! As far as my recollections of Geneva carry me, I remember only the tears of my inconsolable parents and my own tears at the sight of their lamentations, which I was unable to understand. Later, there came to me a clear sense a full comprehension—of the bitterest and most grinding poverty, want and privation in which they were living. My father was deceived in all his expectations; bowed down and broken with sorrow, he died, just when he had managed to place me as apprentice with a goldsmith. My mother spoke much of you; she longed to tell you all her misfortunes, but the despondency which springs from poverty prevented her. That, and also, no doubt, false modesty, which often gnaws at a mortally wounded heart, kept her from carrying out her idea. She followed my father to the grave a few months after his death."

"Poor Anne! Poor Anne!" said Mademoiselle de Scudéri, overwhelmed by sorrow.

"I thank and praise the Eternal Power that she has gone where she cannot see her beloved son fall, branded with disgrace, by the hand of the executioner," cried Olivier loudly, raising a wild and terrible glance to the skies. Outside there was a sudden agitation; a sound of people moving about made itself heard. "Ho, ho!" said he, with a bitter laugh, "Desgrais is waking up his people, as if I could possibly escape. But, let me go on. My master treated me harshly, though I was very soon one of the best of workmen and, indeed, much better than himself. Once a stranger came to our workshop to buy some of our work.

"When he saw a necklace of my making, he patted my shoulder in a kind way, and said, looking at the necklace with admiration, 'Ah, ha! my young friend, this is really first−class work. I don't know anybody who could beat it but René Cardillac, who is the greatest of all goldsmiths, of course. You ought to go to him; he would be delighted to get hold of you, for there's nobody but yourself who would be of such use to him; and again, there's nobody but he who can teach you anything.'

"The words of this stranger sunk deep into my heart. There was no more peace for me Geneva. I was powerfully impelled to leave it, and at length I succeeded in getting free from my master. I came to Paris, where René Cardillac received me coldly and harshly. But I stuck to my point. He was obliged to give me something to try my

hand at, however trifling. So I got a ring to finish. When I took it back to him finished, he gazed at me with those sparkling eyes of his, as if he would look me through and through. Then he said, 'You are a first−rate man—a splendid fellow; you may come and work with me. I'll pay you well; you'll be satisfied with me.' And he kept his word. I had been several weeks with him before I saw Madelon who, I think, had been visiting an aunt of his in the country. At last she came home. O eternal power of Heaven, how was it with me when I saw that angelic creature! Has ever a man so loved as I! And now! Oh Madelon!"

Olivier could speak no more for sorrow. He held both hands over his face, and sobbed violently. At last he conquered the wild pain with a mighty effort, and went on:

"Madelon looked on me with favour, and came oftener and oftener into the workshop. Her father watched closely but many a stolen hand−clasp marked our covenant. Cardillac did not seem to notice. My idea was, that if I could gain his good−will and attain Master's rank, I should ask his consent to our marriage. One morning, when I was going in to begin work, he came to me with anger and contempt in his face.

"'I don't want any more of your work,' he said. 'Get out of this house, and don't let my eyes ever rest on you again. I have no need to tell you the reason. The dainty fruit you are trying to gather is beyond the reach of a beggar like you!'

"I tried to speak, but he seized me and pitched me out of the door with such violence that I fell, and hurt my head and my arm. Furious, and smarting with the pain, I went off, and at last found a kindhearted acquaintance in the Faubourg St. Germain, who gave me quarters in his garret. I had no peace nor rest. At night I wandered round Cardillac's house, hoping that Madelon would hear my sighs and lamentations, and perhaps manage to speak to me at the window, undiscovered. All sorts of desperate plans, to which I thought I might persuade her, jostled each other in my brain. Cardillac's house in the Rue Niçaise abuts on to a high wall with niches, containing old, partly−broken statues.

"One night I was standing close to one of those figures, looking up at the windows of the house which open on the courtyard which the wall encloses. Suddenly I saw a light in Cardillac's workshop. It was midnight, and he was never awake at that time, as he always went to bed exactly at nine. My heart beat anxiously: I thought something might be going on which would let me get into the house. But the light disappeared again immediately. I pressed myself closely into the niche, and against the statue; but I started back in alarm, feeling a return of my pressure, as if the statue had come to life. In the faint moonlight I saw that the stone was slowly turning, and behind it appeared a dark form, which crept softly out and went down the street with stealthy tread. I sprang to the statue: it was standing close to the wall again, as before. Involuntarily, as if impelled by some power within me, I followed the receding dark figure. In passing an image of the Virgin, this figure looked round, the light of the lamp before the image falling upon his face. It was Cardillac! An indescribable fear fell upon me; an eerie shudder came over me.

"As if driven by some spell, I felt I must follow this spectre−like sleep−walker—for that was what I thought my master was, though it was not full moon, the time when that kind of impulse falls upon sleepers. At length Cardillac disappeared in a deep shadow; but by a certain easily distinguishable sound I knew that he had gone into the entry of a house. What was the meaning of this? I asked myself in amazement; what was he going to do? I pressed myself close to the wall. Presently there came up a gentleman, trilling and singing, with a white plume distinct in the darkness, and clanking spurs. Cardillac darted out upon him from the darkness, like a tiger on his prey; the man fell to the ground gasping. I rushed up with a cry of terror. Cardillac was leaning over him as he lay on the ground.

"'Master Cardillac, what are you about?' I cried aloud. 'Curses upon you!' he cried and, running by me with lightning speed, disappeared. Quite out of my senses—scarcely able to walk a step—I went up to the gentleman on the ground, and knelt down beside him, thinking it might still be possible to save him. But there was no trace

of life left in him. In my alarm I scarcely noticed that the Marechaussée had come up and surrounded me.

"'Another one laid low by the demons!' they cried, all speaking at once. 'Ah! ha! youngster! what are you doing here?—are you one of the band?' and they seized me. I stammered out in the best way I could that I was incapable of such a terrible deed, and that they must let me go. Then one of them held a lantern to my face, and said, with a laugh: 'This is Olivier Brusson; the goldsmith who works with our worthy Master René Cardillac. He murder folks in the street!—very likely story! Who ever heard of a murderer lamenting over the body, and letting himself be nabbed? Tell us all about it, my lad; out with it straight.'

"'Right before my eyes,' I said, 'someone sprang out upon this man, stabbed him and ran off like lightning. I cried as loud as I could. I tried to see if he could be saved.'

"'No, my son,' cried one of those who had lifted up the body, 'he's done for!—the dagger−stab right through his heart, as usual.' 'The deuce!' said another; 'just too late again, as we were the day before yesterday.' And they went away with the body.

"What I thought of all this I really cannot tell you. I pinched myself, to see if I were not in some horrible dream. I felt as if I must wake up directly, and marvel at the absurdity of what I had been dreaming. Cardillac—my Madelon's father—an atrocious murderer! I had sunk down powerless on the stone steps of a house; the daylight was growing brighter and brighter. An officer's hat with a fine plume was lying before me on the pavement. Cardillac's deed of blood, committed on the spot, came clearly back to my mental vision. I ran away in horror.

"With my mind in a whirl, almost unconscious, I was sitting in my garret, when the door opened, and René Cardillac came in. 'For Christ's sake! what do you want?' I cried. Paying no heed to this, however, he came up smiling with a calmness and urbanity which increased my inward horror. He drew forward an old rickety stool, and sat down beside me; for I was unable to rise from my straw bed, where I had thrown myself. 'Well, Olivier,' he began, 'how is it with you, my poor boy? I really was too hasty in turning you out of doors. l miss you at every turn. Just now I nave a job in hand which 1 shall never be able to finish without you; won't you come back and work with me? You don't answer. Yes, I know very well I insulted you. I won't pretend that I was not angry about your making up to my Madelon; but I have been thinking matters well over, and I see that I couldn't have a better son−in−law than you, with your abilities, your skill, diligence and trustworthiness. Come back with me, and see how soon you and Madelon can make a match of it.'

"His words pierced my heart; I shuddered at his wickedness; I could not utter a syllable.

"'You hesitate,' he said sharply, while his sparkling eyes transfixed me. 'Perhaps you can't come today. You have other things to do. Perhaps you want to go and see Desgrais, or have an interview with D'Argenson or La Regnie. Take care, my boy, that the talons you are thinking of calling down on others, don't tear you.' At this my sorely tried spirit found vent.

"'Those,' I said, 'who are conscious of horrible crimes may dread the names which you have mentioned, but I do not. I have nothing to do with them.'

"'Remember, Olivier,' he resumed, 'that it is an honour to you to work with me—the most renowned Master of his time everywhere highly esteemed for his truth and goodness; any foul calumny would fall back on the head of its originator. As to Madelon, I must tell you that it is her alone whom you have to thank for my yielding. She loves you with a devotion that I should never have believed her capable of. As soon as you were gone, she fell at my feet, clasped my knees and vowed with copious tears, that she could never live without you. I thought this was mere imagination, for those young things always think they're going to die of love whenever a young wheyface looks at them a little kindly. But my Madelon really did fall quite sick and ill; and when I tried to talk her out of the silly nonsense, she called out your name a thousand times. Last evening I told her I gave in and agreed to

everything, and would go to fetch you today; so this morning she is blooming again like any rose, and waiting for you, quite beside herself with longing.'

"May the eternal power of Heaven forgive me, but—I don't know how it came about—I suddenly found myself in Cardillac's house, where Madelon, with loud cries of 'Olivier!—my Olivier!—my beloved! my husband!' clasped both her arms about me, and pressed me to her heart; whilst I, in the plenitude of my bliss, swore by the Virgin and all the Saints never, never to leave her."

Overcome by the remembrance of this decisive moment, Olivier was obliged to pause. Horrified at the crime of a man whom she had looked on as the incarnation of probity and goodness, Mademoiselle de Scudéri cried: "Dreadful!—René Cardillac a member of that band of murderers who have so long made Paris into a robbers' den!"

"A member of the band, do you say, Mademoiselle?" said Olivier. "There never was any band; it was René Cardillac alone who sought and found his victims with such diabolical ingenuity and activity. It was in the fact of his being alone that his impunity lay—the practical impossibility of coming upon the murderer's track. But let me go on. What is coming will clear up the mystery, and reveal the secrets of the wickedest and at the same time most wretched of all mankind. You at once see the position in which I now stood towards my master. The step was taken, and I could not go back. At times it seemed to me that I had rendered myself Cardillac's accomplice in murder, and it was only in Madelon's love that I temporarily forgot the inward pain which tortured me; only in her society could I drive away all outward traces of the nameless horror. When I was at work with the old man in the workshop, I could not look him in the face could—scarcely speak a word—for the horror which pervaded me in the presence of this terrible being, who fulfilled all the duties of the tender father and the good citizen, while the night shrouded his atrocities. Madelon, pure and pious as an angel, hung upon him with the most idolatrous affection. It pierced my heart when I thought that, if ever vengeance should overtake this masked criminal she would be the victim of the most terrible despair. That, of itself closed my lips, though the consequence of my silence should be a criminal's death for myself. Although much was to be gathered from what the Marechaussée had said, still Cardillac's crimes, their motive and the manner in which he carried them out, were a riddle to me. The solution of it soon came.

One day Cardillac—who usually excited my horror by laughing and jesting during our work, in the highest of spirits—was very grave and thoughtful. Suddenly he threw the piece of work he was engaged on aside, so that the pearls and other stones rolled about the floor, started to his feet, and said: 'Olivier! things cannot go on between us like this; the situation is unendurable What the ablest and most ingenious efforts of Desgrais and his myrmidons failed to find out, chance has thrown into your hands. You saw me at my nocturnal work, to which my Evil Star compels me, so that no resistance is possible for me; and it was your own Evil Star, moreover which led you to follow me; which wrapped and hid you in an impenetrable mantle; which gave that lightness to your footfall that enabled you to move along with the noiselessness of the smaller animals, so that I—who see clear by night, as doth the tiger, and hear the smallest sound, the humming of the gnats, streets away—did not observe you. Your Evil Star brought you to me, my comrade—my accomplice! You see, now, that you can't betray me; therefore you shall know all."

"I would have cried out: 'Never, never shall I be your comrade your accomplice, you atrocious miscreant.' But the inward horror which I felt at his words paralysed my tongue. Instead of words I could only utter an unintelligible noise. Cardillac sat down in his working chair again, wiped the perspiration from his brow, and seemed to find it difficult to pull himself together, hard beset by the recollection of the past. At length he began: 'Wise men have much to say of the strange impulses which come to women when they are enceinte, and the strange influence which those vivid, involuntary impulses exercise upon the child. A wonderful tale is told of my mother. When she was a month gone with me she was looking on, with other women, at a court pageant at the Trianon, and saw a certain cavalier in Spanish dress, with a glittering chain of jewels about his neck, from which she could not remove her eyes. Her whole being longed for those sparkling stones, which seemed to her more than earthly. This

same cavalier had at a previous time, before my mother was married, had designs on her virtue, which she rejected with indignation. She recognised him, but now, irradiated by the light of the gems, he seemed to her a creature of a higher sphere, the very incarnation of beauty. The cavalier noticed the longing, fiery looks which she was bending on him, and thought he was in better luck now than of old.

"'He managed to get near her, to separate her from her companions, and entice her to a lonely place. There he clasped her eagerly in his arms. My mother grasped at the beautiful chain; but at that moment he fell down, dragging her with him. Whether it was apoplexy, or what, I do not know; but he was dead. My mother struggled in vain to free herself from the clasp of the arms, stiffened as they were in death. With the hollow eyes, whence vision had departed, fixed on her, the corpse rolled with her to the ground. Her shrieks at length reached people who were passing at some distance; they hastened to her, and rescued her from the embrace of this gruesome lover.

"'Her fright laid her on a bed of dangerous sickness. Her life was despaired of as well as mine; but she recovered, and her confinement was more prosperous than had been thought possible. But the terrors of that awful moment had set their mark on me. My Evil Star had risen, and darted into me those rays which kindled in me one of the strangest and most fatal of passions. Even in my earliest childhood I thought there was nothing to compare with glittering diamonds in golden settings. This was looked upon as a childish fancy; but it was otherwise, for as a boy I stole gold and jewels wherever I could lay hands on them, and I knew the difference between good ones and bad, instinctively, like the most accomplished connoisseur. Only the pure and valuable attracted me; I would not touch alloyed or coined gold. Those inborn cravings were kept in check by my father's severe chastisements; but, so that I might always have to do with gold and precious stones, I took up the goldsmith's calling. I worked at it with passion, and soon became the first living master of that art. Then began a period when the natural bent within me, so long restrained, shot forth in power, and waxed with might, bearing everything away before it. As soon as I finished a piece of work and delivered it, I fell into a state of restlessness and disconsolateness which prevented my sleeping, ruined my health, and left me no enjoyment in my life. The person for whom I made the work haunted me day and night like a spectre. I saw that person continually before my mental vision, with my beautiful jewels on, and a voice kept whispering to me: "They belong to you! take them; what's the use of diamonds to the dead?" At last I betook myself to thieving. I had access to the houses of the great; I took advantage quickly of every opportunity. No locks withstood my skill, and I soon had my work back in my hands again. But this was not enough to calm my unrest. That mysterious voice made itself heard again, jeering at me, and saying: "Ho, ho! one of the dead is wearing your jewels." I did not know whence it came, but I had an indescribable hatred for all those for whom I made jewellery. More than that, in the depths of my heart I began to long to kill them; this frightened me. Just then I bought this house. I had concluded the bargain with the owner: here in this very room we were sitting, drinking a bottle of wine in honour of the transaction.

"'Night had come on, he was going to leave when he said to me: "Look here, Maître René before I go I must let you into a secret about this house." He opened that cupboard, which is built into the wall there, and pushed the back of it in; this let him into a little closet, where he bowed down and raised a trap−door. This showed us a steep, narrow stair, which we went down, and at the bottom of it was a little narrow door, which let us out into the open courtyard. There he went up to the wall, pushed a piece of iron which projected a very little, and immediately a piece of the wall turned round, so that a person could get out through the opening into the street. You must see this contrivance sometime, Olivier; the sly old monks of the convent, which this house once was, must have had it made so as to be able to slip in and out secretly. It is wood but covered with lime and mortar on the outside. and to the outer side of it is fitted a statue, also of wood, through looking exactly like stone, which turns on wooden hinges. When I saw this arrangement, dark ideas surged up in my mind; it seemed to me that deeds, as yet mysterious to myself, were here prearranged for.

"'I had just finished a splendid set of ornaments for a gentleman of the court who, I knew, was going to give them to an opera dancer. Soon my deadly torture was on me; the spectre dogged my steps, the whispering devil was at my ear. I went back into the house, bathed in a sweat of agony; I rolled about on my bed, sleepless. In my mind's

eye I saw the man riding to his dancer with my beautiful jewels. Full of fury I sprang up, threw my cloak round me, went down the secret stair, out through the wall into the Rue Niçaise. He came, I fell upon him, he cried out; but, seizing him from behind, I plunged my dagger into his heart. The jewels were mine. When this was done, I felt a peace, a contentment within me which I had never known before. The spectre had vanished—the voice of the demon was still. Now I knew what was the behest of my Evil Star, which I had to obey, or perish.

"'You know all now, Olivier. Don't think that, because I must do that which I cannot avoid, I have clean renounced all sense of that mercy or kindly feeling which is the portion of all humanity, and inherent in man's nature. You know how hard I find it to let any of my work go out of my hands, many there are to whom I would not bring death, and for them nothing will induce me to work; indeed, in cases when I feel that my spectre will have to be exorcised with blood on the morrow, I settle the business that day by a smashing blow, which lays the holder of my jewels on the ground, so that I get them back into my own hands.'

"Having said all this, Cardillac took me into his secret strong−room and showed me his collection of jewels; the King does not possess its equal. To each ornament was fastened a small label stating for whom it had been made, and when taken back—by theft, robbery, or murder.

"'On your wedding day, Olivier,' he said, in a solemn tone, 'you will swear me a solemn oath, with your hand on the crucifix, that as soon as I am dead you will at once convert all these treasures into dust by a process which I will tell you of. I will not have any human being, least of all Madelon and you, come into possession of those stones that have been bought with blood.'

"Shut up in this labyrinth of crime, torn in twain by love and abhorrence, I was like one of the damned to whom a glorified angel points, with gentle smile, the upward way, whilst Satan holds him down with red−hot talons, and the angel's loving smile, reflecting all the bliss of paradise, becomes, to him, the very keenest of his tortures I thought of flight, even of suicide, but Madelon! Blame me, blame me, Mademoiselle, for having been too weak to overcome a passion which fettered me to my destruction. I shall be atoning for my weakness by a shameful death. One day Cardillac came in in unusually fine spirits. He kissed and caressed Madelon, cast most affectionate looks at me, drank a bottle of good wine at table, which he only did on high−days and holidays, sang and made merry. Madelon had left us and I was going to the workshop.

"'Sit still, lad,' cried Cardillac, 'no more work today; let's drink the health of the most worthy and charming lady in all Paris.'

"When we had clinked our glasses, and he had emptied a bumper, he said: 'Tell me, Olivier, how do you like these lines?

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"Un amant qui craint les voleurs
N'est point digne d'amour."'
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"And he told me what had transpired between you and the King in Madame de Maintenon's salon, adding that he had always respected you more than any other human being, and that his reverence and esteem for your qualities was such that his Evil Star paled before you," and he would have no fear that, were you to wear the finest piece of his work that ever he made, the spectre would ever prompt him to thoughts of murder.

"'Listen, Olivier,' he said, 'to what I am going to do. A considerable time ago I had to make a necklace and bracelets for Henrietta of England, supplying the stones myself. I made of this the best piece of work that ever I turned out, and it broke my heart to part with the ornaments, which had become the very treasures of my soul. You know of her unfortunate death by assassination. The things remained with me, and now I shall send them to Mademoiselle de Scudéri, in the name of the dreaded band, as a token of respect and gratitude. Besides its being an unmistakable mark of her triumph, it will be a richly deserted sign of my contempt for Desgrais and his men.

You shall take her the jewels.'

"When he mentioned your name, Mademoiselle, dark veils seemed to be lifted, revealing the bright memory of my happy childhood, which rose again in glowing colours before me. A wonderful comfort came into my soul, a ray of hope, driving the dark shadows away. Cardillac saw the effect his words had produced upon me, and gave it his own interpretation. 'My idea seems to please you,' he said. 'I must declare that a deep inward voice, very unlike that which cries for blood like a raving wild beast, commanded me to do this thing. Many times I feel the strangest ideas come into my mind—an inward fear, the dread of something terrible, the awe whereof seems to come breathing into this present time from some distant other world, seizes powerfully upon me. I even feel, at such times, that the deeds which my Evil Star has committed by means of me may be charged to the account of my immortal soul, though it has no part in them. In one of those moods I determined that I would make a beautiful diamond crown for the Virgin in the Church of St. Eustache. But the indescribable dread always came upon me, stronger than ever, when I set to work at it, so that I have abandoned it altogether. Now it seems to me that in presenting Mademoiselle de Scudéri with the finest work I have ever turned out, I am offering a humble sacrifice to goodness and virtue personified, and imploring their powerful intercession.'

"Cardillac, well acquainted with all the minutiae of your manner of life told me how and when to take the ornaments to you. My whole being rejoiced, for Heaven seemed to be showing me, through the atrocious Cardillac, the way to escape from the hell in which I was being tortured. Quite contrary to Cardillac's wish, I resolved that I would get access to you and speak with you. As Anne Brusson's son and your former pet, I thought I would throw myself at your feet and tell you everything. I knew that you would keep the secret, out of consideration for the unheard−of misery which its disclosure would bring upon Madelon, but that your grand and brilliant intellect would be sure to find means to put an end to Cardillac's wickedness without disclosing it. Do not ask me what those means were to have been; I cannot tell. But that you would rescue Madelon and me I believed as firmly as I do in the intercession of the Holy Virgin. You know, Mademoiselle, that my intention was frustrated that night; but I did not lose hope of being more fortunate another time.

"By−and−by Cardillac suddenly lost all his good spirits; he crept moodily about, uttered unintelligible words, and worked his arms as if warding off something hostile. His mind seemed full of evil thoughts. For a whole morning he had been going on in this way. At last he sat down at the worktable, sprang up again angrily, looked out of window, and then said gravely and gloomily: 'I wish Henrietta of England had had my jewels.' Those words filled me with terror. I knew that his diseased mind was again possessed by a terrible lust for murder, that the voice of the demon was again loud in his ears. I saw your life threatened by that dread spirit of murder. If Cardillac could get his jewels back again into his hands you were safe. The danger grew greater every instant. I met you on the Pont Neuf, made my way to your carriage, threw you the note which implored you to give the jewels back to Cardillac immediately. You did not come. My fear became despair, when next day Cardillac spoke of nothing but the priceless jewels he had seen last night in his dreams. I could only suppose that this referred to your jewels, and I felt sure he was brooding over some murderous attack, which he had determined to carry out that night. Save you I must, should it cost Cardillac's life.

"After the evening prayer when he had shut himself up in his room as usual, I got into the courtyard through a window, slipped out through the opening of the wall, and stationed myself close at hand, in the deepest shadow. Very soon Cardillac came out, and went gliding softly down the street. I followed him. He took the direction of the Rue St. Honoré. My heart beat fast. All at once he disappeared from me. I determined to place myself at your door. Just as fate had ordered matters on the first occasion of my witnessing one of his crimes, there came along past me an officer, trilling and singing; he did not see me. Instantly a dark form sprang out and attacked him. Cardillac! I determined to prevent this murder. I gave a loud shout, and was on the spot in a couple of paces. Not the officer, but Cardillac, fell gasping to the ground, mortally wounded. The officer let his dagger fall, drew his sword, and stood on the defensive, thinking I was the murderer's accomplice. But he hastened away when he saw that, instead of concerning myself about him, I was examining the fallen man. Cardillac was still alive. I took up the dagger dropped by the officer, stuck it in my belt and, lifting Cardillac on to my shoulders, carried him with

difficulty to the house, and up the secret stair to the workshop. The rest you know.

"You perceive, Mademoiselle, that my only crime was that I refrained from giving Madelon's father up to justice, thereby making an end of his crimes. I am quite innocent of murder. No torture will draw from me the secret of Cardillac's iniquities. Not through any action of mine shall that Eternal Power, which has for all this time hidden from Madelon her father's gruesome crimes, break in upon her now, to her destruction; nor shall earthly vengeance drag the corpse of Cardillac out of the soil which covers it, and brand his mouldering bones with infamy. No; the beloved of my soul shall mourn me as an innocent victim. Time will mitigate her sorrow for me, but her grief for her father's terrible crimes nothing would ever assuage."

Olivier ceased, and a torrent of tears fell down his cheeks. He threw himself at Mademoiselle de Scudéri's feet, saying imploringly: "You are convinced that I am innocent; I know you are. Be merciful to me. Tell me how Madelon is faring."

Mademoiselle de Scudéri summoned La Martinière, and in a few minutes Madelon was clinging to Olivier's neck.

"Now that you are here, all is well. I knew that this noble−hearted lady would save you," Madelon cried over and over again; and Olivier forgot his fate, and all that threatened him.

He was free and happy. In the most touching manner they bewailed what each had suffered for the other, and embraced afresh, and wept for joy at being together again.

Had Mademoiselle de Scudéri not been convinced of Olivier's innocence before, she must have been so when she saw those two lovers forgetting, in the rapture of the moment, the world, their sufferings and their indescribable sorrows.

"None but a guiltless heart," she cried, "would be capable of such blissful forgetfulness."

The morning light came breaking into the room, and Desgrais knocked gently at the door, reminding them that it was time to take Olivier away, as it could not be done later without attracting attention. The lovers had to part.

The dim anticipations which Mademoiselle de Scudéri had felt when Olivier first came in had now embodied themselves in reality—in a terrible fashion. The son of her much−loved Anne was, though innocent, implicated in a manner which apparently made it impossible to save him from a shameful death. She admired his heroism, which led him to prefer death, loaded with the imputation of guilt, to the betrayal of a secret which would kill Madelon. In the whole realm of possibility, she could see no mode of saving the unfortunate lad from his gruesome prison and the dreadful trial. Yet it was firmly impressed on her mind that she must not shrink from any sacrifice to prevent this most crying injustice.

She tortured herself with all kinds of plans and projects, which were chiefly of the most impracticable and impossible kind—rejected as soon as formed. Every glimmer of hope grew fainter and fainter, and she well−nigh despaired. But Madelon's pious, absolute, childlike confidence, the inspired manner in which she spoke of her lover, soon to be free and to take her to his heart as his wife, restored Mademoiselle de Scudéri's hopes to some extent.

By way of beginning to do something, she wrote to La Regnie a long letter, in which she said that Olivier Brusson had proved to her in the most credible manner his entire innocence of Cardillac's murder, and that nothing but a heroic resolution to carry to the grave with him a secret, the disclosure of which would bring destruction upon an innocent and virtuous person, withheld him from laying a statement before the Court, which would completely clear him from all guilt and show that he had never belonged to the band at all. With the best eloquence at her command, she said everything she could think of which might be expected to soften La Regnie's hard heart.

He replied to this in a few hours, saying he was very glad that Olivier had so thoroughly justified himself in the eyes of his kind patron and protector; but, as for his heroic resolution to carry to the grave with him a secret relating to the crime with which he was charged, he regretted that the Chambre Ardente could feel no admiration for heroism of that description, but must endeavour to dispel it by powerful means. In three days' time, he had little doubt, he would be in possession of the wondrous secret, which would probably bring many strange matters to light.

Mademoiselle de Scudéri knew well what the terrible La Regnie meant by the "powerful means," which were to break down Olivier's heroism. It was but too clear that the unfortunate wretch was threatened with the torture. In her mortal anxiety it at last occurred to her that, were it only to gain time, the advice of a lawyer would be of some service.

Pierre Arnaud d'Andilly was at that time the most celebrated advocate in Paris. His goodness of heart and his highly honourable character were on a par with his professional skill and his comprehensive mind. To him she repaired, and told him the whole tale, as far as it was possible to do so without divulging Olivier's secret. She expected that d'Andilly would warmly espouse the cause of this innocent man, but in this she was woefully disappointed. He listened silently to what she had to say, and then, with a quiet smile, answered in the words of Boileau, "Le vrai peut quelquefois n'être point vraisemblable." He showed her that there were the most grave and marked suspicions against Olivier; that La Regnie's action was by no means severe or premature, but wholly regular; indeed, that to act otherwise would be to neglect his duty as a Judge. He did not believe that he—d'Andilly—could save Brusson from the rack, by the very ablest of pleading. Nobody could do that but Brusson himself, either by making the fullest confession, or by accurately relating the circumstances of Cardillac's murder, which might lead to further discoveries.

"Then I will throw myself at the King's feet and sue for mercy," cried Mademoiselle de Scudéri, her voice choked by weeping.

"For Heaven's sake, do not do that," cried d'Andilly. "Keep that in reserve for the last extremity. If it fails you once, it is lost for ever. The King will not pardon a criminal like Brusson; the people would justly complain of the danger to them. Possibly Brusson may manage to dispel the suspicion against him, by revealing his secret, or in some other way. Then would be the time to resort to the King, who would not ask what was or was not legally proved, but be guided by his own conviction."

Mademoiselle de Scudéri could not but agree with what d'Andilly's great experience dictated. She was sitting in her room, pondering as to what—in the name of the Virgin and all the saints—she should try next to do, when La Martinière came to say that the Count de Miossens, Colonel of one of the King's Body Guard, was most anxious to speak with her.

"Pardon me, Mademoiselle," said the Colonel, bowing with a soldier's courtesy, "for disturbing you, and breaking in upon you at such an hour. Two words will be sufficient excuse for me. I come about Olivier Brusson."

"Olivier Brusson," cried Mademoiselle de Scudéri, eagerly anticipating what she was going to hear; "that most unfortunate of men! What have you to say of him?"

"I knew," said Miossens, laughing again, "that your protégé's name would ensure me a favourable hearing. Everybody is convinced of Brusson's guilt. I know you think otherwise, and it is said your opinion rests on what he himself has told you. With me the case is different. Nobody can be more certain than I that Brusson is innocent of Cardillac's death."

"Speak! Oh, speak!" cried Mademoiselle Scudéri.

"I was the man who stabbed the old goldsmith in the Rue St Honoré, close to your door," said the Colonel.

"You—you!" cried Mademoiselle de Scudéri. "In the name of all the Saints, how?"

"And I vow to you, Mademoiselle, that I am very proud of my achievement. Cardillac, I must tell you, was a most abandoned hypocritical old ruffian, who went about at night robbing and murdering people, and was never suspected of anything of the kind. I don't myself know from whence it came that I felt a suspicion of the old scoundrel, when he seemed so distressed at handing me over some work which I had got him to do for me; when he carefully wormed out of me for whom I designed it, and cross−questioned my valet as to the times when I was in the habit of going to see a certain lady. It struck me long ago, that everyone who was murdered by these unknown hands had the selfsame wound, and I saw quite clearly that the murderer had practiced to the utmost perfection of certainty that particular thrust, which must kill instantaneously—and that he reckoned upon it; so that, if it were to fail, the fight would be fair. This led me to employ a precaution so very simple and obvious that I cannot imagine how somebody else did not think of it long ago. I wore a light breastplate of steel under my dress. Cardillac set upon me from behind. He grasped me with the strength of a giant, but his finely directed thrust glided off the steel breastplate. I then freed myself from his clutch, and planted my dagger in his heart."

"And you have said nothing?" said Mademoiselle de Scudéri. "You have not told the authorities anything about this?"

"Allow me to point out to you, Mademoiselle," said he, "that to have done that would have involved me in a most terrible legal investigation, probably ending in my ruin. La Regnie, who scents out crime everywhere, would not have been at all likely to believe me at once, when I accused the good, respectable, exemplary Cardillac of being an habitual murderer. The sword of Justice would, most probably, have turned its point against me."

"Impossible," said Mademoiselle de Scudéri. "Your rank—your position −"

"Oh!" interrupted Miossens, "remember the Maréchal de Luxembourg; he took it into his head to have his horoscope cast by Le Sage, and was suspected of poisoning, and put in the Bastille. No; by Saint Dionys! not one moment of freedom—not the tip of one of my ears, would I trust to that raging La Regnie, who would be delighted to put his knife to all our throats."

"But this brings an innocent man to the scaffold," said Mademoiselle de Scudéri.

"Innocent, Mademoiselle!" cried Miossens. "Do you call Cardillac's accomplice an innocent man? He who assisted him in his crimes, and has deserved death a hundred times? No, in verity; he suffers justly; although I told you the true state of the case in the hope that you might somehow make use of it in the interests of your protégé, without bringing me into the clutches of the Chambre Ardente."

Delighted at having her conviction of Olivier's innocence confirmed in such a decided manner, Mademoiselle de Scudéri had no hesitation in telling the Count the whole affair, since he already knew all about Cardillac's crimes, and in begging him to go with her to d'Andilly, to whom everything should be communicated under the seal of secrecy and who should advise what was next to be done.

When Mademoiselle de Scudéri had told him at full length all the circumstances, D'Andilly inquired again into the very minutest particulars. He asked Count Miossens if he was quite positive as to its having been Cardillac who attacked him, and if he would recognise Olivier as the person who carried away the body.

"Not only," said Miossens, "was the moon shining brightly, so that I recognised the old goldsmith perfectly well, but this morning, at La Regnie's, I saw the dagger with which he was stabbed. It is mine; I know it by the ornamentation of the handle. And as I was within a pace of the young man, I saw his face quite distinctly, all the

more because his hat had fallen off. As a matter of course I should know him in a moment."

D'Andilly looked before him meditatively for a few moments, and said: "There is no way of getting Brusson out of the hands of justice by any ordinary means. On Madelon's account, nothing will induce him to admit that Cardillac was a robber and a murderer. And even were he to do so, and succeed in proving the truth of it by pointing out the secret entrance and the collection of stolen jewels, death would be his own lot, as an accomplice. The same consequence would follow if Count Miossens related to the judges the adventure with Cardillac. Delay is what we must aim at. Let Count Miossens go to the Conciergerie, be confronted with Olivier, and recognise him as the person who carried off Cardillac's body; let him then go to La Regnie and say, 'I saw a man stabbed in the Rue St. Honoré, and was close to the body when another man darted up, bent down over it, and finding life still in it, took it on his shoulders and carried it away. I recognised Olivier Brusson as that man.'

"This will lead to a further examination of Brusson, to his being confronted with Count Miossens; the torture will be postponed, and further investigations made. Then will be the time to have recourse to the King. Your brilliant intellect, Mademoiselle, will point out the most fitting way to do this. I think it would be best to tell His Majesty the whole story. Count Miossens' statement will support Olivier's. Perhaps, too, an examination of Cardillac's house would help matters. The King might then follow the bent of his own judgment—of his kind heart, which might pardon where justice could only punish." Count Miossens closely followed D'Andilly's advice, and everything fell out just as he had said it would.

It was now time to repair to the King; and this was the chief difficulty of all, as he had such an intense horror of Brusson—whom he believed to be the man who had for so long kept Paris in a state of terror—that the least allusion to him threw him at once into the most violent anger. Madame de Maintenon, faithful to her system of never mentioning unpleasant subjects to him, declined all intermediation; so that Brusson's fate was entirely in Mademoiselle de Scudéri's hands. After long reflection, she hit upon a scheme which she put into execution at once. She put on a heavy black silk dress, with Cardillac's jewels, and a long black veil, and appeared at Madame de Maintenon's at the time when she knew the King would be there. Her noble figure in this mourning garb excited the reverential respect even of those frivolous persons who pass their days in Court antechambers. They all made way for her and, when she came into the presence, the King himself rose, astonished, and came forward to meet her.

The splendid diamonds of the necklace and bracelets flashed in his eyes, and he cried: "By Heavens! Cardillac's work!" Then, turning to Madame de Maintenon, he said, with a pleasant smile, "See, Madame la Marquise, how our fair lady mourns for her affianced husband."

"Ah, Sire!" said Mademoiselle de Scudéri, as if keeping up the jest, "it would ill become a mourning bride to wear such bravery. No; I have done with the goldsmith; nor would I remember him, but that the gruesome spectacle of his corpse carried off before my eyes keeps coming back to my memory."

"What!" said the King, "did you actually see him, poor fellow?"

She then told him in few words (not introducing Brusson into the business at all) how chance had brought her to Cardillac's door just when the murder had been discovered. She described Madelon's wild terror and sorrow; the impression made upon her by the beautiful girl; how she had taken her out of Desgrais's hands and borne her away amid the applause of the crowd. The scenes with La Regnie, with Desgrais, with Olivier Brusson himself, now followed, the interest constantly increasing. The King, carried away by the vividness with which Mademoiselle de Scudéri told the tale, did not notice that the Brusson case, which he so abominated, was in question, listened breathlessly, occasionally expressing his interest by an ejaculation. And ere he was well aware, still amazed by the marvels which he was hearing, not yet able to arrange them all in his mind, behold! Mademoiselle de Scudéri was at his feet, imploring mercy for Olivier Brusson.

"What are you doing?" broke out the King, seizing both her hands and making her sit down. "This is a strange way of taking us by storm. It is a most terrible story! Who is to answer for the truth of Brusson's extraordinary tale?"

"Miossens' deposition proves it," she cried; "the searching of Cardillac's house; my own firm conviction, and, ah! Madelon's pure heart, which recognises equal purity in poor Brusson."

The King, about to say something, was interrupted by a noise in the direction of the door. Louvois, who was at work in the next room, put his head in with an anxious expression. The King rose, and followed him out. Both Madame de Maintenon and Mademoiselle de Scudéri thought this interruption of evil augury; for, though once surprised into interest, the King might take care not to fall into the snare a second time. But he came back in a few minuses, walked quickly up and down the room two or three times; and then, pausing with his hands behind his back before Mademoiselle de Scudéri, he said, in a half−whisper, without looking at her: "I should like to see this Madelon of yours."

On this Mademoiselle de Scudéri said: "Oh! gracious Sire! what a marvellous honour you vouchsafe to the poor unfortunate child. She will be at your feet in an instant."

She tripped to the door as quickly as her heavy dress allowed, and called to those in the anteroom that the King wished to see Madelon Cardillac. She came back weeping and sobbing with delight and emotion. Having expected this, she had brought Madelon with her, leaving her to wait with the Marquise's maid, with a short petition in her hand drawn up by D'Andilly. In a few moments she had prostrated herself, speechless, at the King's feet. Awe, confusion, shyness, love and sorrow sent the blood coursing faster and faster through her veins; her cheeks glowed, her eyes sparkled with the bright tear−drops, which now and again fell from her silken lashes down upon her beautiful lily−white breast. The King was moved by the wonderful beauty of the girl. He raised her gently, and stooped down as if about to kiss her hand, which he had taken in his; but he let the hand go, and gazed at her with tears in his eyes, evincing deep emotion.

Madame de Maintenon whispered to Mademoiselle de Scudéri, "Is she not exactly like La Vallière, the little thing? The King is indulging in the sweetest memories: you have gained the day."

Though she spoke softly, the King seemed to hear.

A blush came to his cheek; he scanned Madame de Maintenon with a glance, and then said, gently and kindly: "I am quite sure that you, my dear child, think your lover is innocent; but we must hear what the Chambre Ardente has to say."

A gentle wave of his hand dismissed Madelon, bathed in tears. Mademoiselle de Scudéri saw, to her alarm, that the resemblance to La Vallière, advantageous as it had seemed to be at first, had nevertheless changed the King's intention as soon as Madame de Maintenon had spoken of it. Perhaps he felt himself somewhat ungently reminded that he was going to sacrifice strict justice to beauty; or he may have been like a dreamer who, when loudly addressed by his name, finds that the beautiful, magic visions by which he thought he was surrounded vanish away. Perhaps he no longer saw his La Vallière before him, but thought only of Soeur Louise de la Miséricorde—La Vallière's cloister name among the Carmelite nuns—paining him with her piety and repentance. There was nothing for it now but to wait patiently for the King's decision.

Meanwhile Count Miossens' statement before the Chambre Ardente had become known; and, as often happens, popular opinion soon flew from one extreme to the other, so that the person whom it had stigmatized as the most atrocious of murderers, and would fain have torn in pieces before he reached the scaffold, was now bewailed as the innocent victim of a barbarous sacrifice. His old neighbours now only remembered his admirable character and behaviour, his love for Madelon, and the faithfulness and devotion of body and soul with which he had served

his master. Crowds of people, in threatening temper, often collected before La Regnie's Palais, crying, "Give us out Olivier Brusson!—he is innocent!", even throwing stones at the windows, so that La Regnie had to seek the protection of the Marechaussée.

Many days elapsed without Mademoiselle de Scudéri's hearing anything on the subject of Olivier Brusson. In her anxiety she went to Madame de Maintenon, who said the King was keeping silence on the subject, and it was not advisable to remind him of it. When she then, with a peculiar smile, asked after the "little La Vallière," Mademoiselle de Scudéri saw that this proud lady felt, in the depths of her heart, some slight annoyance at a matter which had the power of drawing the fickle King into a province whose charm was beyond her own sphere. Consequently nothing was to be hoped from Madame de Maintenon.

At length Mademoiselle de Scudéri managed to find out, with D'Andilly's help, that the King had had a long interview with Count Miossens; further, that Bontems, the King's confidential groom of the chamber and secret agent, had been to the Conciergerie, and spoken with Brusson; that, finally, the said Bontems, with several other persons, had paid a long visit to Cardillac's house. Claude Patru, who lived in the lower story, said he had heard banging noises above his head in the night, and that he had recognised Olivier's voice amongst others. So far it was certain that the King was, himself, causing the matter to be investigated; but what was puzzling was the long delay in coming to a decision. La Regnie was most probably trying all in his power to prevent his prey from slipping through his fingers; and this nipped all hope in the bud.

Nearly a month had elapsed, when Madame de Maintenon sent to tell Mademoiselle de Scudéri that the King wished to see her that evening in her salon. Her heart beat fast. She knew that Olivier's fate would be decided that night. She told Madelon so, and the latter prayed to the Virgin and all the Saints that Mademoiselle de Scudéri might succeed in convincing the King of her lover's innocence.

And yet it appeared as if he had forgotten the whole affair, for he passed the time in chatting pleasantly with Madame de Maintenon and Mademoiselle de Scudéri, without a single word of poor Olivier Brusson.

At length Bontems appeared, approached the King, and spoke a few words so softly that the ladies could not hear them.

Mademoiselle de Scudéri trembled; but the King rose, went up to her, and said, with beaming eyes: "I congratulate you, Mademoiselle. Your protégé, Olivier Brusson, is free."

Mademoiselle de Scudéri, with tears streaming down her cheeks, unable to utter a word, would have cast herself at the King's feet; but he prevented her, saying: "Come, Come! Mademoiselle, you ought to be my Attorney−General and plead my causes, for nobody on earth can resist your eloquence and powers of persuasion. He who is shielded by virtue," he added more gravely, "may snap his fingers at every accusation, by the Chambre Ardente, or any other tribunal on earth."

Mademoiselle de Scudéri, now finding words, poured forth a most glowing tribute of gratitude. But the King interrupted her, saying there were warmer thanks awaiting her at home than any he could expect from her, as at that moment doubtless Olivier was embracing his Madelon. "Bontems," added His Majesty, "will hand you a thousand Louis, which you will give the little one from me as a wedding portion. Let her marry her Brusson, who does not deserve such a treasure, and then they must both leave Paris. That is my will."

La Martinière came to meet her mistress with eager steps, followed by Baptiste, their faces beaming with joy, and both crying out: "He is here! he is free! Oh, the dear young couple!"

The happy pair fell at Mademoiselle de Scudéri's feet, and Madelon cried: "Ah! I knew that you, and you only, would save my husband."

"You have been my mother," cried Olivier, "my belief in you never wavered." They kissed her hands, and shed many tears; and then they embraced again, and vowed that the heavenly bliss of that moment was worth all the nameless sufferings of the days that were past.

In a few days the priest pronounced his blessing upon them. Even had it not been the King's command that they were to leave Paris, Brusson could not have remained there, where everything reminded him of the dreadful epoch of Cardillac's atrocities, and where any accident might have disclosed the evil secret, already known to several persons, and destroyed the peace of his life for ever. Immediately after the wedding he started with his young wife for Geneva, sped on his way by Mademoiselle de Scudéri's blessings. Handsomely provided with Madelon's portion, his own skill at his calling, and every civic virtue, he there led a happy life, without a care. The hopes, whose frustration had sent the father to his grave, were fulfilled in the son.

A year after Brusson left Paris, a public proclamation, signed by Harloy de Chauvalon, Archbishop of Paris, and by Pierre Arnaud D'Andilly, Advocate of the Parliament, appeared, stating that a repentant sinner had, under seal of confession, made over to the Church a valuable stolen treasure of gold and jewels. All those who, up to about the end of the year 1680, had been robbed of property of this description, particularly if by murderous attack in the street, were directed to apply to D'Andilly, when they would receive it back, provided that anything in the said collection agreed with the description to be by them given, and provided that there was no doubt of the genuineness of the application. Many whose names occurred in Cardillac's list as having been merely stunned, not murdered, came from time to time to D'Andilly to reclaim their property, and received it back, to their no small surprise. The remainder became the property of the Church of St. Eustache.