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CINQ MARS

By ALFRED DE VIGNY

BOOK 3.

CHAPTER IX

THE SIEGE

There are moments in our life when we long ardently for strong excitement to drown our petty griefs--times when the soul, like the lion in the fable, wearied with the continual attacks of the gnat, earnestly desires a mightier enemy and real danger. Cinq-Mars found himself in this condition of mind, which always results from a morbid sensibility in the organic constitution and a perpetual agitation of the heart. Weary of continually turning over in his mind a combination of the events which he desired, and of those which he dreaded; weary of calculating his chances to the best of his power; of summoning to his assistance all that his education had taught him concerning the lives of illustrious men, in order to compare it with his present situation; oppressed by his regrets, his dreams, predictions, fancies, and all that imaginary world in which he had lived during his solitary journey--he breathed freely upon finding himself thrown into a real world almost as full of agitation; and the realizing of two actual dangers restored circulation to his blood, and youth to his whole being.

Since the nocturnal scene at the inn near Loudun, he had not been able to resume sufficient empire over his mind to occupy himself with anything save his cherished though sad reflections; and consumption was already threatening him, when happily he arrived at the camp of Perpignan, and happily also had the opportunity of accepting the proposition of the Abbe de Gondi--for the reader has no doubt recognized Cinq-Mars in the person of that young stranger in mourning, so careless and so melancholy, whom the duellist in the cassock invited to be his second.

He had ordered his tent to be pitched as a volunteer in the street of the camp assigned to the young noblemen who were to be presented to the King and were to serve as aides-de-camp to the Generals; he soon repaired thither, and was quickly armed, horsed, and cuirassed, according to the custom of the time, and set out alone for the Spanish bastion, the place of rendezvous. He was the first arrival, and found that a small plot of turf, hidden among the works of the besieged place, had been well chosen by the little Abbe for his homicidal purposes; for besides the probability that no one would have suspected officers of engaging in a duel immediately beneath the town which they were attacking, the body of the bastion separated them from the French camp, and would conceal them like an immense screen. It was wise to take these precautions, for at that time it cost a man his head to give himself the satisfaction of risking his body.

While waiting for his friends and his adversaries, Cinq-Mars had time to examine the southern side of Perpignan, before which he stood. He had heard that these works were not those which were to be attacked, and he tried in vain to account for the besieger's projects. Between this southern face of the town, the mountains of Albere, and the Col du Perthus, there might have been advantageous lines of attack, and redoubts against the accessible point; but not a single soldier was stationed there. All the forces seemed directed upon the north of Perpignan, upon the most difficult side, against a brick fort called the Castillet, which surmounted the gate of Notre-Dame. He discovered that a piece of ground, apparently marshy, but in reality very solid, led up to the very foot of the Spanish bastion; that this post was guarded with true Castilian negligence, although its sole strength lay entirely in its defenders; for its battlements, almost in ruin, were furnished with four pieces of cannon of enormous calibre, embedded in the turf, and thus rendered immovable, and impossible to be directed against a troop advancing rapidly to the foot of the wall.

It was easy to see that these enormous pieces had discouraged the besiegers from attacking this point, and had kept the besieged from any idea of addition to its means of defence. Thus, on the one side, the vedettes and advanced posts were at a distance, and on the other, the sentinels were few and ill supported. A young Spaniard, carrying a long gun, with its rest suspended at his side and the burning match in his right hand, who was walking with nonchalance upon the rampart, stopped to look at Cinq-Mars, who was riding about the ditches and moats.

"Senor caballero," he cried, "are you going to take the bastion by yourself on horseback, like Don Quixote--Quixada de la Mancha?"

At the same time he detached from his side the iron rest, planted it in the ground, and supported upon it the barrel of his gun in order to take aim, when a grave and older Spaniard, enveloped in a dirty brown cloak, said to him in his own tongue:

"'Ambrosio de demonio', do you not know that it is forbidden to throw away powder uselessly, before sallies or attacks are made, merely to have

the pleasure of killing a boy not worth your match? It was in this very place that Charles the Fifth threw the sleeping sentinel into the ditch and drowned him. Do your duty, or I shall follow his example."

Ambrosio replaced the gun upon his shoulder, the rest at his side, and continued his walk upon the rampart.

Cinq-Mars had been little alarmed at this menacing gesture, contenting himself with tightening the reins of his horse and bringing the spurs close to his sides, knowing that with a single leap of the nimble animal he should be carried behind the wall of a hut which stood near by, and should thus be sheltered from the Spanish fusil before the operation of the fork and match could be completed. He knew, too, that a tacit convention between the two armies prohibited marksmen from firing upon the sentinels; each party would have regarded it as assassination. The soldier who had thus prepared to attack Cinq-Mars must have been ignorant of this understanding. Young D'Effiat, therefore, made no visible movement; and when the sentinel had resumed his walk upon the rampart, he again betook himself to his ride upon the turf, and presently saw five cavaliers directing their course toward him. The first two, who came on at full gallop, did not salute him, but, stopping close to him, leaped to the ground, and he found himself in the arms of the Counsellor de Thou, who embraced him tenderly, while the little Abbe de Gondi, laughing heartily, cried:

"Behold another Orestes recovering his Pylades, and at the moment of immolating a rascal who is not of the family of the King of kings, I assure you."

"What! is it you, my dear Cinq-Mars?" cried De Thou; "and I knew not of your arrival in the camp! Yes, it is indeed you; I recognize you, although you are very pale. Have you been ill, my dear friend? I have often written to you; for my boyish friendship has always remained in my heart."

"And I," answered Henri d'Effiat, "I have been very culpable toward you; but I will relate to you all the causes of my neglect. I can speak of them, but I was ashamed to write them. But how good you are! Your friendship has never relaxed."

"I knew you too well," replied De Thou; "I knew that there could be no real coldness between us, and that my soul had its echo in yours."

With these words they embraced once more, their eyes moist with those sweet tears which so seldom flow in one's life, but with which it seems, nevertheless, the heart is always charged, so much relief do they give in flowing.

This moment was short; and during these few words, Gondi had been pulling them by their cloaks, saying:

"To horse! to horse, gentlemen! Pardieu! you will have time enough to embrace, if you are so affectionate; but do not delay. Let our first

thought be to have done with our good friends who will soon arrive. We are in a fine position, with those three villains there before us, the archers close by, and the Spaniards up yonder! We shall be under three fires."

He was still speaking, when De Launay, finding himself at about sixty paces from his opponents, with his seconds, who were chosen from his own friends rather than from among the partisans of the Cardinal, put his horse to a canter, advanced gracefully toward his young adversaries, and gravely saluted them.

"Gentlemen, I think that we shall do well to select our men, and to take the field; for there is talk of attacking the lines, and I must be at my post."

"We are ready, Monsieur," said Cinq-Mars; "and as for selecting opponents, I shall be very glad to become yours, for I have not forgotten the Marechal de Bassompierre and the wood of Chaumont. You know my opinion concerning your insolent visit to my mother."

"You are very young, Monsieur. In regard to Madame, your mother, I fulfilled the duties of a man of the world; toward the Marechal, those of a captain of the guard; here, those of a gentleman toward Monsieur l'Abbe, who has challenged me; afterward I shall have that honor with you."

"If I permit you," said the Abbe, who was already on horseback.

They took sixty paces of ground--all that was afforded them by the extent of the meadow that enclosed them. The Abbe de Gondi was stationed between De Thou and his friend, who sat nearest the ramparts, upon which two Spanish officers and a score of soldiers stood, as in a balcony, to witness this duel of six persons--a spectacle common enough to them. They showed the same signs of joy as at their bullfights, and laughed with that savage and bitter laugh which their temperament derives from their admixture of Arab blood.

At a sign from Gondi, the six horses set off at full gallop, and met, without coming in contact, in the middle of the arena; at that instant, six pistol-shots were heard almost together, and the smoke covered the combatants.

When it dispersed, of the six cavaliers and six horses but three men and three animals were on their legs. Cinq-Mars was on horseback, giving his hand to his adversary, as calm as himself; at the other end of the field, De Thou stood by his opponent, whose horse he had killed, and whom he was helping to rise. As for Gondi and De Launay, neither was to be seen. Cinq-Mars, looking about for them anxiously, perceived the Abbe's horse, which, caracoling and curvetting, was dragging after him the future cardinal, whose foot was caught in the stirrup, and who was swearing as if he had never studied anything but the language of the camp. His nose and hands were stained and bloody with his fall and with his efforts to seize the grass; and he was regarding with considerable dissatisfaction

his horse, which in spite of himself he irritated with his spurs, making its way to the trench, filled with water, which surrounded the bastion, when, happily, Cinq-Mars, passing between the edge of the swamp and the animal, seized its bridle and stopped its career.

"Well, my dear Abbe, I see that no great harm has come to you, for you speak with decided energy."

"Corbleu!" cried Gondj, wiping the dust out of his eyes, "to fire a pistol in the face of that giant I had to lean forward and rise in my stirrups, and thus I lost my balance; but I fancy that he is down, too."

"You are right, sir," said De Thou, coming up; "there is his horse swimming in the ditch with its master, whose brains are blown out. We must think now of escaping."

"Escaping! That, gentlemen, will be rather difficult," said the adversary of Cinq-Mars, approaching. "Hark! there is the cannon-shot, the signal for the attack. I did not expect it would have been given so soon. If we return we shall meet the Swiss and the foot-soldiers, who are marching in this direction."

"Monsieur de Fontrailles says well," said De Thou; "but if we do not return, here are these Spaniards, who are running to arms, and whose balls we shall presently have whistling about our heads."

"Well, let us hold a council," said Gondj; "summon Monsieur de Montresor, who is uselessly occupied in searching for the body of poor De Launay. You have not wounded him, Monsieur De Thou?"

"No, Monsieur l'Abbe; not every one has so good an aim as you," said Montresor, bitterly, limping from his fall. "We shall not have time to continue with the sword."

"As to continuing, I will not consent to it, gentlemen," said Fontrailles; "Monsieur de Cinq-Mars has behaved too nobly toward me. My pistol went off too soon, and his was at my very cheek--I feel the coldness of it now--but he had the generosity to withdraw it and fire in the air. I shall not forget it; and I am his in life and in death."

"We must think of other things now," interrupted Cinq-Mars; "a ball has just whistled past my ear. The attack has begun on all sides; and we are surrounded by friends and by enemies."

In fact, the cannonading was general; the citadel, the town, and the army were covered with smoke. The bastion before them as yet was unassailed, and its guards seemed less eager to defend it than to observe the fate of the other fortifications.

"I believe that the enemy has made a sally," said Montresor, "for the smoke has cleared from the plain, and I see masses of cavalry charging under the protection of the battery."

"Gentlemen," said Cinq-Mars, who had not ceased to observe the walls, "there is a very decided part which we could take, an important share in this--we might enter this ill-guarded bastion."

"An excellent idea, Monsieur," said Fontrailles; "but we are but five against at least thirty, and are in plain sight and easily counted."

"Faith, the idea is not bad," said Gondi; "it is better to be shot up there than hanged down here, as we shall be if we are found, for De Launay must be already missed by his company, and all the court knows of our quarrel."

"Parbleu! gentlemen," said Montresor, "help is coming to us."

A numerous troop of horse, in great disorder, advanced toward them at full gallop; their red uniform made them visible from afar. It seemed to be their intention to halt on the very ground on which were our embarrassed duellists, for hardly had the first cavalier reached it when cries of "Halt!" were repeated and prolonged by the voices of the chiefs who were mingled with their cavaliers.

"Let us go to them; these are the men-at-arms of the King's guard," said Fontrailles. "I recognize them by their black cockades. I see also many of the light-horse with them; let us mingle in the disorder, for I fancy they are 'ramenes'."

This is a polite phrase signifying in military language "put to rout." All five advanced toward the noisy and animated troops, and found that this conjecture was right. But instead of the consternation which one might expect in such a case, they found nothing but a youthful and rattling gayety, and heard only bursts of laughter from the two companies.

"Ah, pardieu! Cahuzac," said one, "your horse runs better than mine; I suppose you have exercised it in the King's hunts!"

"Ah, I see, 'twas that we might be the sooner rallied that you arrived here first," answered the other.

"I think the Marquis de Coislin must be mad, to make four hundred of us charge eight Spanish regiments."

"Ha! ha! Locmaria, your plume is a fine ornament; it looks like a weeping willow. If we follow that, it will be to our burial."

"Gentlemen, I said to you before," angrily replied the young officer, "that I was sure that Capuchin Joseph, who meddles in everything, was mistaken in telling us to charge, upon the part of the Cardinal. But would you have been satisfied if those who have the honor of commanding you had refused to charge?"

"No, no, no!" answered all the young men, at the same time forming themselves quickly into ranks.

"I said," interposed the old Marquis de Coislin, who, despite his white head, had all the fire of youth in his eyes, "that if you were commanded to mount to the assault on horseback, you would do it."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried all the men-at-arms, clapping their hands.

"Well, Monsieur le Marquis," said Cinq-Mars, approaching, "here is an opportunity to execute what you have promised. I am only a volunteer; but an instant ago these gentlemen and I examined this bastion, and I believe that it is possible to take it."

"Monsieur, we must first examine the ditch to see--"

At this moment a ball from the rampart of which they were speaking struck in the head the horse of the old captain, laying it low.

"Locmaria, De Mouy, take the command, and to the assault!" cried the two noble companies, believing their leader dead.

"Stop a moment, gentlemen," said old Coislin, rising, "I will lead you, if you please. Guide us, Monsieur volunteer, for the Spaniards invite us to this ball, and we must reply politely."

Hardly had the old man mounted another horse, which one of his men brought him, and drawn his sword, when, without awaiting his order, all these ardent youths, preceded by Cinq-Mars and his friends, whose horses were urged on by the squadrons behind, had thrown themselves into the morass, wherein, to their great astonishment and to that of the Spaniards, who had counted too much upon its depth, the horses were in the water only up to their hams; and in spite of a discharge of grape-shot from the two largest pieces, all reached pell-mell a strip of land at the foot of the half-ruined ramparts. In the ardor of the rush, Cinq-Mars and Fontrailles, with the young Locmaria, forced their horses upon the rampart itself; but a brisk fusillade killed the three animals, which rolled over their masters.

"Dismount all, gentlemen!" cried old Coislin; "forward with pistol and sword! Abandon your horses!"

All obeyed instantly, and threw themselves in a mass upon the breach.

Meantime, De Thou, whose coolness never quitted him any more than his friendship, had not lost sight of the young Henri, and had received him in his arms when his horse fell. He helped him to rise, restored to him his sword, which he had dropped, and said to him, with the greatest calmness, notwithstanding the balls which rained on all sides:

"My friend, do I not appear very ridiculous amid all this skirmish, in my costume of Counsellor in Parliament?"

"Parbleu!" said Montresor, advancing, "here's the Abbe, who quite justifies you."

And, in fact, little Gondi, pushing on among the light horsemen, was shouting, at the top of his voice: "Three duels and an assault. I hope to get rid of my cassock at last!"

Saying this, he cut and thrust at a tall Spaniard.

The defence was not long. The Castilian soldiers were no match for the French officers, and not one of them had time or courage to recharge his carbine.

"Gentlemen, we will relate this to our mistresses in Paris," said Locmaria, throwing his hat into the air; and Cinq-Mars, De Thou, Coislin, De Mouy, Londigny, officers of the red companies, and all the young noblemen, with swords in their right hands and pistols in their left, dashing, pushing, and doing each other by their eagerness as much harm as they did the enemy, finally rushed upon the platform of the bastion, as water poured from a vase, of which the opening is too small, leaps out in interrupted gushes.

Disdaining to occupy themselves with the vanquished soldiers, who cast themselves at their feet, they left them to look about the fort, without even disarming them, and began to examine their conquest, like schoolboys in vacation, laughing with all their hearts, as if they were at a pleasure-party.

A Spanish officer, enveloped in his brown cloak, watched them with a sombre air.

"What demons are these, Ambrosio?" said he to a soldier. "I never have met with any such before in France. If Louis XIII has an entire army thus composed, it is very good of him not to conquer all Europe."

"Oh, I do not believe they are very numerous; they must be some poor adventurers, who have nothing to lose and all to gain by pillage."

"You are right," said the officer; "I will try to persuade one of them to let me escape."

And slowly approaching, he accosted a young light-horseman, of about eighteen, who was sitting apart from his comrades upon the parapet. He had the pink-and-white complexion of a young girl; his delicate hand held an embroidered handkerchief, with which he wiped his forehead and his golden locks. He was consulting a large, round watch set with rubies, suspended from his girdle by a knot of ribbons.

The astonished Spaniard paused. Had he not seen this youth overthrow his soldiers, he would not have believed him capable of anything beyond singing a romance, reclined upon a couch. But, filled with the suggestion of Ambrosio, he thought that he might have stolen these objects of luxury in the pillage of the apartments of a woman; so, going abruptly up to him, he said:

"Hombre! I am an officer; will you restore me to liberty, that I may once more see my country?"

The young Frenchman looked at him with the gentle expression of his age, and, thinking of his own family, he said:

"Monsieur, I will present you to the Marquis de Coislin, who will, I doubt not, grant your request; is your family of Castile or of Aragon?"

"Your Coislin will ask the permission of somebody else, and will make me wait a year. I will give you four thousand ducats if you will let me escape."

That gentle face, those girlish features, became infused with the purple of fury; those blue eyes shot forth lightning; and, exclaiming, "Money to me! away, fool!" the young man gave the Spaniard a ringing box on the ear. The latter, without hesitating, drew a long poniard from his breast, and, seizing the arm of the Frenchman, thought to plunge it easily into his heart; but, nimble and vigorous, the youth caught him by the right arm, and, lifting it with force above his head, sent it back with the weapon it held upon the head of the Spaniard, who was furious with rage.

"Eh! eh! Softly, Olivier!" cried his comrades, running from all directions; "there are Spaniards enough on the ground already."

And they disarmed the hostile officer.

"What shall we do with this lunatic?" said one.

"I should not like to have him for my valet-dechambre," returned another.

"He deserves to be hanged," said a third; "but, faith, gentlemen, we don't know how to hang. Let us send him to that battalion of Swiss which is now passing across the plain."

And the calm and sombre Spaniard, enveloping himself anew in his cloak, began the march of his own accord, followed by Ambrosio, to join the battalion, pushed by the shoulders and urged on by five or six of these young madcaps.

Meantime, the first troop of the besiegers, astonished at their success, had followed it out to the end; Cinq-Mars, so advised by the aged Coislin, had made with him the circuit of the bastion, and found to their vexation that it was completely separated from the city, and that they could not follow up their advantage. They, therefore, returned slowly to the platform, talking by the way, to rejoin De Thou and the Abbe de Gondi, whom they found laughing with the young light-horsemen.

"We have Religion and justice with us, gentlemen; we could not fail to triumph."

"No doubt, for they fought as hard as we."

There was silence at the approach of Cinq-Mars, and they remained for an instant whispering and asking his name; then all surrounded him, and took his hand with delight.

"Gentlemen, you are right," said their old captain; "he is, as our fathers used to say, the best doer of the day. He is a volunteer, who is to be presented today to the King by the Cardinal."

"By the Cardinal! We will present him ourselves. Ah, do not let him be a Cardinalist; he is too good a fellow for that!" exclaimed all the young men, with vivacity.

"Monsieur, I will undertake to disgust you with him," said Olivier d'Entraigues, approaching Cinq-Mars, "for I have been his page. Rather serve in the red companies; come, you will have good comrades there."

The old Marquis saved Cinq-Mars the embarrassment of replying, by ordering the trumpets to sound and rally his brilliant companies. The cannon was no longer heard, and a soldier announced that the King and the Cardinal were traversing the lines to examine the results of the day. He made all the horses pass through the breach, which was tolerably wide, and ranged the two companies of cavalry in battle array, upon a spot where it seemed impossible that any but infantry could penetrate.

CHAPTER X

THE RECOMPENSE

Cardinal Richelieu had said to himself, "To soften the first paroxysm of the royal grief, to open a source of emotions which shall turn from its sorrow this wavering soul, let this city be besieged; I consent. Let Louis go; I will allow him to strike a few poor soldiers with the blows which he wishes, but dares not, to inflict upon me. Let his anger drown itself in this obscure blood; I agree. But this caprice of glory shall not derange my fixed designs; this city shall not fall yet. It shall not become French forever until two years have past; it shall come into my nets only on the day upon which I have fixed in my own mind. Thunder, bombs, and cannons; meditate upon your operations, skilful captains; hasten, young warriors. I shall silence your noise, I shall dissipate your projects, and make your efforts abortive; all shall end in vain smoke, for I shall conduct in order to mislead you."

This is the substance of what passed in the bald head of the Cardinal before the attack of which we have witnessed a part. He was stationed on horseback, upon one of the mountains of Salces, north of the city; from this point he could see the plain of Roussillon before him, sloping to the Mediterranean. Perpignan, with its ramparts of brick, its bastions, its citadel, and its spire, formed upon this plain an oval and sombre

mass on its broad and verdant meadows; the vast mountains surrounded it, and the valley, like an enormous bow curved from north to south, while, stretching its white line in the east, the sea looked like its silver cord. On his right rose that immense mountain called the Canigou, whose sides send forth two rivers into the plain below. The French line extended to the foot of this western barrier. A crowd of generals and of great lords were on horseback behind the minister, but at twenty paces' distance and profoundly silent.

Cardinal Richelieu had at first followed slowly the line of operations, but had later returned and stationed himself upon this height, whence his eye and his thought hovered over the destinies of besiegers and besieged. The whole army had its eyes upon him, and could see him from every point. All looked upon him as their immediate chief, and awaited his gesture before they acted. France had bent beneath his yoke a long time; and admiration of him shielded all his actions to which another would have been often subjected. At this moment, for instance, no one thought of smiling, or even of feeling surprised, that the cuirass should clothe the priest; and the severity of his character and aspect suppressed every thought of ironical comparisons or injurious conjectures. This day the Cardinal appeared in a costume entirely martial: he wore a reddish-brown coat, embroidered with gold, a water-colored cuirass, a sword at his side, pistols at his saddle-bow, and he had a plumed hat; but this he seldom put on his head, which was still covered with the red cap. Two pages were behind him; one carried his gauntlets, the other his casque, and the captain of his guards was at his side.

As the King had recently named him generalissimo of his troops, it was to him that the generals sent for their orders; but he, knowing only too well the secret motives of his master's present anger, affected to refer to that Prince all who sought a decision from his own mouth. It happened as he had foreseen; for he regulated and calculated the movements of that heart as those of a watch, and could have told with precision through what sensations it had passed. Louis XIII came and placed himself at his side; but he came as a pupil, forced to acknowledge that his master is in the right. His air was haughty and dissatisfied, his language brusque and dry. The Cardinal remained impassible. It was remarked that the King, in consulting him, employed the words of command, thus reconciling his weakness and his power of place, his irresolution and his pride, his ignorance and his pretensions, while his minister dictated laws to him in a tone of the most profound obedience.

"I will have them attack immediately, Cardinal," said the Prince on coming up; "that is to say," he added, with a careless air, "when all your preparations are made, and you have fixed upon the hour with our generals."

"Sire, if I might venture to express my judgment, I should be glad did your Majesty think proper to begin the attack in a quarter of an hour, for that will give time enough to advance the third line."

"Yes, yes; you are right, Monsieur le Cardinal! I think so, too. I will go and give my orders myself; I wish to do everything myself. Schomberg,

Schomberg! in a quarter of an hour I wish to hear the signal-gun; I command it."

And Schomberg, taking the command of the right wing, gave the order, and the signal was made.

The batteries, arranged long since by the Marechal de la Meilleraie, began to batter a breach, but slowly, because the artillerymen felt that they had been directed to attack two impregnable points; and because, with their experience, and above all with the common sense and quick perception of French soldiers, any one of them could at once have indicated the point against which the attack should have been directed. The King was surprised at the slowness of the firing.

"La Meilleraie," said he, impatiently, "these batteries do not play well; your cannoneers are asleep."

The principal artillery officers were present as well as the Marechal; but no one answered a syllable. They had looked toward the Cardinal, who remained as immovable as an equestrian statue, and they imitated his example. The answer must have been that the fault was not with the soldiers, but with him who had ordered this false disposition of the batteries; and this was Richelieu himself, who, pretending to believe them more useful in that position, had stopped the remarks of the chiefs.

The King, astonished at this silence, and, fearing that he had committed some gross military blunder by his question, blushed slightly, and, approaching the group of princes who had accompanied him, said, in order to reassure himself:

"D'Angouleme, Beaufort, this is very tiresome, is it not? We stand here like mummies."

Charles de Valois drew near and said:

"It seems to me, Sire, that they are not employing here the machines of the engineer Pompee-Targon."

"Parbleu!" said the Duc de Beaufort, regarding Richelieu fixedly, "that is because we were more eager to take Rochelle than Perpignan at the time that Italian came. Here we have not an engine ready, not a mine, not a petard beneath these walls; and the Marechal de la Meilleraie told me this morning that he had proposed to bring some with which to open the breach. It was neither the Castillet, nor the six great bastions which surround it, nor the half-moon, we should have attacked. If we go on in this way, the great stone arm of the citadel will show us its fist a long time yet."

The Cardinal, still motionless, said not a single word; he only made a sign to Fabert, who left the group in attendance, and ranged his horse behind that of Richelieu, close to the captain of his guards.

The Duc de la Rochefoucauld, drawing near the King, said:

"I believe, Sire, that our inactivity makes the enemy insolent, for look! here is a numerous sally, directing itself straight toward your Majesty; and the regiments of Biron and De Ponts fall back after firing."

"Well!" said the King, drawing his sword, "let us charge and force those villains back again. Bring on the cavalry with me, D'Angouleme. Where is it, Cardinal?"

"Behind that hill, Sire, there are in column six regiments of dragoons, and the carabineers of La Roque; below you are my men-at-arms and my light horse, whom I pray your Majesty to employ, for those of your Majesty's guard are ill guided by the Marquis de Coislin, who is ever too zealous. Joseph, go tell him to return."

He whispered to the Capuchin, who had accompanied him, huddled up in military attire, which he wore awkwardly, and who immediately advanced into the plain.

In the mean time, the compact columns of the old Spanish infantry issued from the gate of Notre-Dame like a dark and moving forest, while from another gate proceeded the heavy cavalry, which drew up on the plain. The French army, in battle array at the foot of the hill where the King stood, behind fortifications of earth, behind redoubts and fascines of turf, perceived with alarm the men-at-arms and the light horse pressed between these two forces, ten times their superior in numbers.

"Sound the charge!" cried Louis XIII; "or my old Coislin is lost."

And he descended the hill, with all his suite as ardent as himself; but before he reached the plain and was at the head of his musketeers, the two companies had taken their course, dashing off with the rapidity of lightning, and to the cry of "Vive le Roi!" They fell upon the long column of the enemy's cavalry like two vultures upon a serpent; and, making a large and bloody gap, they passed beyond, and rallied behind the Spanish bastion, leaving the enemy's cavalry so astonished that they thought only of re-forming their own ranks, and not of pursuing.

The French army uttered a burst of applause; the King paused in amazement. He looked around him, and saw a burning desire for attack in all eyes; the valor of his race shone in his own. He paused yet another instant in suspense, listening, intoxicated, to the roar of the cannon, inhaling the odor of the powder; he seemed to receive another life, and to become once more a Bourbon. All who looked on him felt as if they were commanded by another man, when, raising his sword and his eyes toward the sun, he cried:

"Follow me, brave friends! here I am King of France!"

His cavalry, deploying, dashed off with an ardor which devoured space, and, raising billows of dust from the ground, which trembled beneath them, they were in an instant mingled with the Spanish cavalry, and both were swallowed up in an immense and fluctuating cloud.

"Now! now!" cried the Cardinal, in a voice of thunder, from his elevation, "now remove the guns from their useless position! Fabert, give your orders; let them be all directed upon the infantry which slowly approaches to surround the King. Haste! save the King!"

Immediately the Cardinal's suite, until then sitting erect as so many statues, were in motion. The generals gave their orders; the aides-de-camp galloped off into the plain, where, leaping over the ditches, barriers, and palisades, they arrived at their destination as soon as the thought that directed them and the glance that followed them.

Suddenly the few and interrupted flashes which had shone from the discouraged batteries became a continual and immense flame, leaving no room for the smoke, which rose to the sky in an infinite number of light and floating wreaths; the volleys of cannon, which had seemed like far and feeble echoes, changed into a formidable thunder whose roll was as rapid as that of drums beating the charge; while from three opposite points large red flashes from fiery mouths fell upon the dark columns which issued from the besieged city.

Meantime, without changing his position, but with ardent eyes and imperative gestures, Richelieu ceased not to multiply his orders, casting upon those who received them a look which implied a sentence of death if he was not instantly obeyed.

"The King has overthrown the cavalry; but the foot still resist. Our batteries have only killed, they have not conquered. Forward with three regiments of infantry instantly, Gassion, La Meilleraie, and Lesdiguières! Take the enemy's columns in flank. Order the rest of the army to cease from the attack, and to remain motionless throughout the whole line. Bring paper! I will write myself to Schomberg."

A page alighted and advanced, holding a pencil and paper. The minister, supported by four men of his suite, also alighted, but with difficulty, uttering a cry, wrested from him by pain; but he conquered it by an effort, and seated himself upon the carriage of a cannon. The page presented his shoulder as a desk; and the Cardinal hastily penned that order which contemporary manuscripts have transmitted to us, and which might well be imitated by the diplomatists of our day, who are, it seems, more desirous to maintain themselves in perfect balance between two ideas than to seek those combinations which decide the destinies of the world, regarding the clear and obvious dictates of true genius as beneath their profound subtlety.

"M. le Marechal, do not risk anything, and reflect before you attack. When you are thus told that the King desires you not to risk anything, you are not to understand that his Majesty forbids you to fight at all; but his intention is that you do not engage in a general battle unless it be with a notable hope of gain from the advantage which a favorable situation may present, the responsibility of the battle naturally falling upon you."

These orders given, the old minister, still seated upon the gun-carriage, his arms resting upon the touch-hole, and his chin upon his arms, in the attitude of one who adjusts and points a cannon, continued in silence to watch the battle, like an old wolf, which, sated with victims and torpid with age, contemplates in the plain the ravages of a lion among a herd of cattle, which he himself dares not attack. From time to time his eye brightens; the smell of blood rejoices him, and he laps his burning tongue over his toothless jaw.

On that day, it was remarked by his servants--or, in other words, by all surrounding him--that from the time of his rising until night he took no nourishment, and so fixed all the application of his soul on the events which he had to conduct that he triumphed over his physical pains, seeming, by forgetting, to have destroyed them. It was this power of attention, this continual presence of mind, that raised him almost to genius. He would have attained it quite, had he not lacked native elevation of soul and generous sensibility of heart.

Everything happened upon the field of battle as he had wished, fortune attending him there as well as in the cabinet. Louis XIII claimed with eager hand the victory which his minister had procured for him; he had contributed himself, however, only that grandeur which consists in personal valor.

The cannon had ceased to roar when the broken columns of infantry fell back into Perpignan; the remainder had met the same fate, was already within the walls, and on the plain no living man was to be seen, save the glittering squadrons of the King, who followed him, forming ranks as they went.

He returned at a slow walk, and contemplated with satisfaction the battlefield swept clear of enemies; he passed haughtily under the very fire of the Spanish guns, which, whether from lack of skill, or by a secret agreement with the Prime Minister, or from very shame to kill a king of France, only sent after him a few balls, which, passing two feet above his head, fell in front of the lines, and merely served to increase the royal reputation for courage.

At every step, however, that he took toward the spot where Richelieu awaited him, the King's countenance changed and visibly fell; he lost all the flush of combat; the noble sweat of triumph dried upon his brow. As he approached, his usual pallor returned to his face, as if having the right to sit alone on a royal head; his look lost its fleeting fire, and at last, when he joined the Cardinal, a profound melancholy entirely possessed him. He found the minister as he had left him, on horseback; the latter, still coldly respectful, bowed, and after a few words of compliment, placed himself near Louis to traverse the lines and examine the results of the day, while the princes and great lords, riding at some distance before and behind, formed a crowd around them.

The wily minister was careful not to say a word or to make a gesture that could suggest the idea that he had had the slightest share in the events of the day; and it was remarkable that of all those who came to hand in

their reports, there was not one who did not seem to divine his thoughts, and exercise care not to compromise his occult power by open obedience. All reports were made to the King. The Cardinal then traversed, by the side of the Prince, the right of the camp, which had not been under his view from the height where he had remained; and he saw with satisfaction that Schomberg, who knew him well, had acted precisely as his master had directed, bringing into action only a few of the light troops, and fighting just enough not to incur reproach for inaction, and not enough to obtain any distinct result. This line of conduct charmed the minister, and did not displease the King, whose vanity cherished the idea of having been the sole conqueror that day. He even wished to persuade himself, and to have it supposed, that all the efforts of Schomberg had been fruitless, saying to him that he was not angry with him, that he had himself just had proof that the enemy before him was less despicable than had been supposed.

"To show you that you have lost nothing in our estimation," he added, "we name you a knight of our order, and we give you public and private access to our person."

The Cardinal affectionately pressed his hand as he passed him, and the Marechal, astonished at this deluge of favors, followed the Prince with his bent head, like a culprit, recalling, to console himself, all the brilliant actions of his career which had remained unnoticed, and mentally attributing to them these unmerited rewards to reconcile them to his conscience.

The King was about to retrace his steps, when the Due de Beaufort, with an astonished air, exclaimed:

"But, Sire, have I still the powder in my eyes, or have I been sun-struck? It appears to me that I see upon yonder bastion several cavaliers in red uniforms who greatly resemble your light horse whom we thought to be killed."

The Cardinal knitted his brows.

"Impossible, Monsieur," he said; "the imprudence of Monsieur de Coislin has destroyed his Majesty's men-at-arms and those cavaliers. It is for that reason I ventured just now to say to the King that if the useless corps were suppressed, it might be very advantageous from a military point of view."

"Pardieu! your Eminence will pardon me," answered the Duc de Beaufort; "but I do not deceive myself, and there are seven or eight of them driving prisoners before them."

"Well! let us go to the point," said the King; "if I find my old Coislin there I shall be very glad."

With great caution, the horses of the King and his suite passed across the marsh, and with infinite astonishment their riders saw on the ramparts the two red companies in battle array as on parade.

"Vive Dieu!" cried Louis; "I think that not one of them is missing!
Well, Marquis, you keep your word--you take walls on horseback."

"In my opinion, this point was ill chosen," said Richelieu, with disdain;
"it in no way advances the taking of Perpignan, and must have cost many
lives."

"Faith, you are right," said the King, for the first time since the
intelligence of the Queen's death addressing the Cardinal without
dryness; "I regret the blood which must have been spilled here."

"Only two of own young men have been wounded in the attack, Sire," said
old Coislin; "and we have gained new companions-in-arms, in the
volunteers who guided us."

"Who are they?" said the Prince.

"Three of them have modestly retired, Sire; but the youngest, whom you
see, was the first who proposed the assault, and the first to venture his
person in making it. The two companies claim the honor of presenting him
to your Majesty."

Cinq-Mars, who was on horseback behind the old captain, took off his hat
and showed his pale face, his large, dark eyes, and his long, chestnut
hair.

"Those features remind me of some one," said the King; "what say you,
Cardinal?"

The latter, who had already cast a penetrating glance at the newcomer,
replied:

"Unless I am mistaken, this young man is--"

"Henri d'Effiat," said the volunteer, bowing.

"Sire, it is the same whom I had announced to your Majesty, and who was
to have been presented to you by me; the second son of the Marechal."

"Ah!" said Louis, warmly, "I am glad to see the son of my old friend
presented by this bastion. It is a suitable introduction, my boy, for
one bearing your name. You will follow us to the camp, where we have
much to say to you. But what! you here, Monsieur de Thou? Whom have
you come to judge?"

"Sire," answered Coislin, "he has condemned to death, without judging,
sundry Spaniards, for he was the second to enter the place."

"I struck no one, Monsieur," interrupted De Thou reddening; "it is not my
business. Herein I have no merit; I merely accompanied my friend,
Monsieur de Cinq-Mars."

"We approve your modesty as well as your bravery, and we shall not forget this. Cardinal, is there not some presidency vacant?"

Richelieu did not like De Thou. And as the sources of his dislike were always mysterious, it was difficult to guess the cause of this animosity; it revealed itself in a cruel word that escaped him. The motive was a passage in the history of the President De Thou--the father of the young man now in question--wherein he stigmatized, in the eyes of posterity, a granduncle of the Cardinal, an apostate monk, sullied with every human vice.

Richelieu, bending to Joseph's ear, whispered:

"You see that man; his father put my name into his history. Well, I will put his into mine." And, truly enough, he subsequently wrote it in blood. At this moment, to avoid answering the King, he feigned not to have heard his question, and to be wholly intent upon the merit of Cinq-Mars and the desire to see him well placed at court.

"I promised you beforehand to make him a captain in my guards," said the Prince; "let him be nominated to-morrow. I would know more of him, and raise him to a higher fortune, if he pleases me. Let us now retire; the sun has set, and we are far from our army. Tell my two good companies to follow us."

The minister, after repeating the order, omitting the implied praise, placed himself on the King's right hand, and the whole court quitted the bastion, now confided to the care of the Swiss, and returned to the camp.

The two red companies defiled slowly through the breach which they had effected with such promptitude; their countenances were grave and silent.

Cinq-Mars went up to his friend.

"These are heroes but ill recompensed," said he; "not a favor, not a compliment."

"I, on the other hand," said the simple De Thou "I, who came here against my will--receive one. Such are courts, such is life; but above us is the true judge, whom men can not blind."

"This will not prevent us from meeting death tomorrow, if necessary," said the young Olivier, laughing.

CHAPTER XI

THE BLUNDERS

In order to appear before the King, Cinq-Mars had been compelled to mount the charger of one of the light horse, wounded in the affair, having lost

his own at the foot of the rampart. As the two companies were marching out, he felt some one touch his shoulder, and, turning round, saw old Grandchamp leading a very beautiful gray horse.

"Will Monsieur le Marquis mount a horse of his own?" said he. "I have put on the saddle and housings of velvet embroidered in gold that remained in the trench. Alas, when I think that a Spaniard might have taken it, or even a Frenchman! For just now there are so many people who take all they find, as if it were their own; and then, as the proverb says, 'What falls in the ditch is for the soldier.' They might also have taken the four hundred gold crowns that Monsieur le Marquis, be it said without reproach, forgot to take out of the holsters. And the pistols! Oh, what pistols! I bought them in Germany; and here they are as good as ever, and with their locks perfect. It was quite enough to kill the poor little black horse, that was born in England as sure as I was at Tours in Touraine, without also exposing these valuables to pass into the hands of the enemy."

While making this lamentation, the worthy man finished saddling the gray horse. The column was long enough filing out to give him time to pay scrupulous attention to the length of the stirrups and of the bands, all the while continuing his harangue.

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur, for being somewhat slow about this; but I sprained my arm slightly in lifting Monsieur de Thou, who himself raised Monsieur le Marquis during the grand scuffle."

"How camest thou there at all, stupid?" said Cinq-Mars. "That is not thy business. I told thee to remain in the camp."

"Oh, as to remaining in the camp, that is out of the question. I can't stay there; when I hear a musket-shot, I should be ill did I not see the flash. As for my business, that is to take care of your horses, and you are on them. Monsieur, think you I should not have saved, had I been able, the life of the poor black horse down there in the trench? Ah, how I loved him!--a horse that gained three races in his time--a time too short for those who loved him as I loved him! He never would take his corn but from his dear Grandchamp; and then he would caress me with his head. The end of my left ear that he carried away one day--poor fellow!--proves it, for it was not out of ill-will he bit it off; quite the contrary. You should have heard how he neighed with rage when any one else came near him; that was the reason why he broke Jean's leg. Good creature, I loved him so!

"When he fell I held him on one side with one hand and M. de Locmaria with the other. I thought at first that both he and that gentleman would recover; but unhappily only one of them returned to life, and that was he whom I least knew. You seem to be laughing at what I say about your horse, Monsieur; you forget that in times of war the horse is the soul of the cavalier. Yes, Monsieur, his soul; for what is it that intimidates the infantry? It is the horse! It certainly is not the man, who, once seated, is little more than a bundle of hay. Who is it that performs the fine deeds that men admire? The horse. There are times when his master,

who a moment before would rather have been far away, finds himself victorious and rewarded for his horse's valor, while the poor beast gets nothing but blows. Who is it gains the prize in the race? The horse, that sups hardly better than usual, while the master pockets the gold, and is envied by his friends and admired by all the lords as if he had run himself. Who is it that hunts the roebuck, yet puts but a morsel in his own mouth? Again, the horse; sometimes the horse is even eaten himself, poor animal! I remember in a campaign with Monsieur le Marechal, it happened that-- But what is the matter, Monsieur, you grow pale?"

"Bind up my leg with something--a handkerchief, a strap, or what you will. I feel a burning pain there; I know not what."

"Your boot is cut, Monsieur. It may be some ball; however, lead is the friend of man."

"It is no friend of mine, at all events."

"Ah, who loves, chastens! Lead must not be ill spoken of! What is that--"

While occupied in binding his master's leg below the knee, the worthy Grandchamp was about to hold forth in praise of lead as absurdly as he had in praise of the horse, when he was forced, as well as Cinq-Mars, to hear a warm and clamorous dispute among some Swiss soldiers who had remained behind the other troops. They were talking with much gesticulation, and seemed busied with two men among a group of about thirty soldiers.

D'Effiat, still holding out his leg to his servant, and leaning on the saddle of his horse, tried, by listening attentively, to understand the subject of the colloquy; but he knew nothing of German, and could not comprehend the dispute. Grandchamp, who, still holding the boot, had also been listening very seriously, suddenly burst into loud laughter, holding his sides in a manner not usual with him.

"Ha, ha, ha! Monsieur, here are two sergeants disputing which they ought to hang of the two Spaniards there; for your red comrades did not take the trouble to tell them. One of the Swiss says that it's the officer, the other that it's the soldier; a third has just made a proposition for meeting the difficulty."

"And what does he say?"

"He suggests that they hang them both."

"Stop! stop!" cried Cinq-Mars to the soldiers, attempting to walk; but his leg would not support him.

"Put me on my horse, Grandchamp."

"Monsieur, you forget your wound."

"Do as I command, and then mount thyself."

The old servant grumblingly obeyed, and then galloped off, in fulfilment of another imperative order, to stop the Swiss, who were just about to hang their two prisoners to a tree, or to let them hang themselves; for the officer, with the sang-froid of his nation, had himself passed the running noose of a rope around his own neck, and, without being told, had ascended a small ladder placed against the tree, in order to tie the other end of the rope to one of its branches. The soldier, with the same calm indifference, was looking on at the Swiss disputing around him, while holding the ladder.

Cinq-Mars arrived in time to save them, gave his name to the Swiss sergeant, and, employing Grandchamp as interpreter, said that the two prisoners were his, and that he would take them to his tent; that he was a captain in the guards, and would be responsible for them. The German, ever exact in discipline, made no reply; the only resistance was on the part of the prisoner. The officer, still on the top of the ladder, turned round, and speaking thence as from a pulpit, said, with a sardonic laugh:

"I should much like to know what you do here? Who told you I wished to live?"

"I do not ask to know anything about that," said Cinq-Mars; "it matters not to me what becomes of you afterward. All I propose now is to prevent an act which seems to me unjust and cruel. You may kill yourself afterward, if you like."

"Well said," returned the ferocious Spaniard; "you please me. I thought at first you meant to affect the generous in order to oblige me to be grateful, which is a thing I detest. Well, I consent to come down; but I shall hate you as much as ever, for you are a Frenchman. Nor do I thank you, for you only discharge a debt you owe me, since it was I who this morning kept you from being shot by this young soldier while he was taking aim at you; and he is a man who never missed a chamois in the mountains of Leon."

"Be it as you will," said Cinq-Mars; "come down."

It was his character ever to assume with others the mien they wore toward him; and the rudeness of the Spaniard made him as hard as iron toward him.

"A proud rascal that, Monsieur," said Grandchamp; "in your place Monsieur le Marechal would certainly have left him on his ladder. Come, Louis, Etienne, Germain, escort Monsieur's prisoners--a fine acquisition, truly! If they bring you any luck, I shall be very much surprised."

Cinq-Mars, suffering from the motion of his horse, rode only at the pace of his prisoners on foot, and was accordingly at a distance behind the red companies, who followed close upon the King. He meditated on his way

what it could be that the Prince desired to say to him. A ray of hope presented to his mind the figure of Marie de Mantua in the distance; and for a moment his thoughts were calmed. But all his future lay in that brief sentence--"to please the King"; and he began to reflect upon all the bitterness in which his task might involve him.

At that moment he saw approaching his friend, De Thou, who, anxious at his remaining behind, had sought him in the plain, eager to aid him if necessary.

"It is late, my friend; night approaches. You have delayed long; I feared for you. Whom have you here? What has detained you? The King will soon be asking for you."

Such were the rapid inquiries of the young counsellor, whose anxiety, more than the battle itself, had made him lose his accustomed serenity.

"I was slightly wounded; I bring a prisoner, and I was thinking of the King. What can he want me for, my friend? What must I do if he proposes to place me about his person? I must please him; and at this thought--shall I own it?--I am tempted to fly. But I trust that I shall not have that fatal honor. 'To please,' how humiliating the word! 'to obey' quite the opposite! A soldier runs the chance of death, and there's an end. But in what base compliances, what sacrifices of himself, what compositions with his conscience, what degradation of his own thought, may not a courtier be involved! Ah, De Thou, my dear De Thou! I am not made for the court; I feel it, though I have seen it but for a moment. There is in my temperament a certain savageness, which education has polished only on the surface. At a distance, I thought myself adapted to live in this all-powerful world; I even desired it, led by a cherished hope of my heart. But I shuddered at the first step; I shuddered at the mere sight of the Cardinal. The recollection of the last of his crimes, at which I was present, kept me from addressing him. He horrifies me; I never can endure to be near him. The King's favor, too, has that about it which dismays me, as if I knew it would be fatal to me."

"I am glad to perceive this apprehension in you; it may be most salutary," said De Thou, as they rode on. "You are about to enter into contact with power. Before, you did not even conceive it; now you will touch it with your very hand. You will see what it is, and what hand hurls the lightning. Heaven grant that that lightning may never strike you! You will probably be present in those councils which regulate the destiny of nations; you will see, you will perchance originate, those caprices whence are born sanguinary wars, conquests, and treaties; you will hold in your hand the drop of water which swells into mighty torrents. It is only from high places that men can judge of human affairs; you must look from the mountaintop ere you can appreciate the littleness of those things which from below appear to us great."

"Ah, were I on those heights, I should at least learn the lesson you speak of; but this Cardinal, this man to whom I must be under obligation, this man whom I know too well by his works--what will he be to me?"

"A friend, a protector, no doubt," answered De Thou.

"Death were a thousand times preferable to his friendship! I hate his whole being, even his very name; he spills the blood of men with the cross of the Redeemer!"

"What horrors are you saying, my friend? You will ruin yourself if you reveal your sentiments respecting the Cardinal to the King."

"Never mind; in the midst of these tortuous ways, I desire to take a new one, the right line. My whole opinion, the opinion of a just man, shall be unveiled to the King himself, if he interrogate me, even should it cost me my head. I have at last seen this King, who has been described to me as so weak; I have seen him, and his aspect has touched me to the heart in spite of myself. Certainly, he is very unfortunate, but he can not be cruel; he will listen to the truth."

"Yes; but he will not dare to make it triumph," answered the sage De Thou. "Beware of this warmth of heart, which often draws you by sudden and dangerous movements. Do not attack a colossus like Richelieu without having measured him."

"That is just like my tutor, the Abbe Quillet. My dear and prudent friend, neither the one nor the other of you know me; you do not know how weary I am of myself, and whither I have cast my gaze. I must mount or die."

"What! already ambitious?" exclaimed De Thou, with extreme surprise.

His friend inclined his head upon his hands, abandoning the reins of his horse, and did not answer.

"What! has this selfish passion of a riper age obtained possession of you at twenty, Henri? Ambition is the saddest of all hopes."

"And yet it possesses me entirely at present, for I see only by means of it, and by it my whole heart is penetrated."

"Ah, Cinq-Mars, I no longer recognize you! how different you were formerly! I do not conceal from you that you appear to me to have degenerated. In those walks of our childhood, when the life, and, above all, the death of Socrates, caused tears of admiration and envy to flow from our eyes; when, raising ourselves to the ideal of the highest virtue, we wished that those illustrious sorrows, those sublime misfortunes, which create great men, might in the future come upon us; when we constructed for ourselves imaginary occasions of sacrifices and devotion--if the voice of a man had pronounced, between us two, the single word, 'ambition,' we should have believed that we were touching a serpent."

De Thou spoke with the heat of enthusiasm and of reproach. Cinq-Mars went on without answering, and still with his face in his hands. After an instant of silence he removed them, and allowed his eyes to be seen,

full of generous tears. He pressed the hand of his friend warmly, and said to him, with a penetrating accent:

"Monsieur de Thou, you have recalled to me the most beautiful thoughts of my earliest youth. Do not believe that I have fallen; I am consumed by a secret hope which I can not confide even to you. I despise, as much as you, the ambition which will seem to possess me. All the world will believe in it; but what do I care for the world? As for you, noble friend, promise me that you will not cease to esteem me, whatever you may see me do. I swear that my thoughts are as pure as heaven itself!"

"Well," said De Thou, "I swear by heaven that I believe you blindly; you give me back my life!"

They shook hands again with effusion of heart, and then perceived that they had arrived almost before the tent of the King.

Day was nearly over; but one might have believed that a softer day was rising, for the moon issued from the sea in all her splendor. The transparent sky of the south showed not a single cloud, and it seemed like a veil of pale blue sown with silver spangles; the air, still hot, was agitated only by the rare passage of breezes from the Mediterranean; and all sounds had ceased upon the earth. The fatigued army reposed beneath their tents, the line of which was marked by the fires, and the besieged city seemed oppressed by the same slumber; upon its ramparts nothing was to be seen but the arms of the sentinels, which shone in the rays of the moon, or the wandering fire of the night-rounds. Nothing was to be heard but the gloomy and prolonged cries of its guards, who warned one another not to sleep.

It was only around the King that all things waked, but at a great distance from him. This Prince had dismissed all his suite; he walked alone before his tent, and, pausing sometimes to contemplate the beauty of the heavens, he appeared plunged in melancholy meditation. No one dared to interrupt him; and those of the nobility who had remained in the royal quarters had gathered about the Cardinal, who, at twenty paces from the King, was seated upon a little hillock of turf, fashioned into a seat by the soldiers. There he wiped his pale forehead, fatigued with the cares of the day and with the unaccustomed weight of a suit of armor; he bade adieu, in a few hurried but always attentive and polite words, to those who came to salute him as they retired. No one was near him now except Joseph, who was talking with Laubardemont. The Cardinal was looking at the King, to see whether, before reentering, this Prince would not speak to him, when the sound of the horses of Cinq-Mars was heard. The Cardinal's guards questioned him, and allowed him to advance without followers, and only with De Thou.

"You are come too late, young man, to speak with the King," said the Cardinal-Duke with a sharp voice. "One can not make his Majesty wait."

The two friends were about to retire, when the voice of Louis XIII himself made itself heard. This Prince was at that moment in one of those false positions which constituted the misfortune of his whole life.

Profoundly irritated against his minister, but not concealing from himself that he owed the success of the day to him, desiring, moreover, to announce to him his intention to quit the army and to raise the siege of Perpignan, he was torn between the desire of speaking to the Cardinal and the fear lest his anger might be weakened. The minister, upon his part, dared not be the first to speak, being uncertain as to the thoughts which occupied his master, and fearing to choose his time ill, but yet not able to decide upon retiring. Both found themselves precisely in the position of two lovers who have quarrelled and desire to have an explanation, when the King, seized with joy the first opportunity of extricating himself. The chance was fatal to the minister. See upon what trifles depend those destinies which are called great.

"Is it not Monsieur de Cinq-Mars?" said the King, in a loud voice.
"Let him approach; I am waiting for him."

Young D'Effiat approached on horseback, and at some paces from the King desired to set foot to earth; but hardly had his leg touched the ground when he dropped upon his knees.

"Pardon, Sire!" said he, "I believe that I am wounded;" and the blood issued violently from his boot.

De Thou had seen him fall, and had approached to sustain him. Richelieu seized this opportunity of advancing also, with dissembled eagerness.

"Remove this spectacle from the eyes of the King," said he. "You see very well that this young man is dying."

"Not at all," said Louis, himself supporting him; "a king of France knows how to see a man die, and has no fear of the blood which flows for him. This young man interests me. Let him be carried into my tent, and let my doctors attend him. If his wound is not serious, he shall come with me to Paris, for the siege is suspended, Monsieur le Cardinal. Such is my desire; other affairs call me to the centre of the kingdom. I will leave you here to command in my absence. This is what I desired to say to you."

With these words the King went abruptly into his tent, preceded by his pages and his officers, carrying flambeaux.

The royal pavilion was closed, and Cinq-Mars was borne in by De Thou and his people, while the Duc de Richelieu, motionless and stupefied, still regarded the spot where this scene had passed. He appeared thunder-struck, and incapable of seeing or hearing those who observed him.

Laubardemont, still intimidated by his ill reception of the preceding day, dared not speak a word to him, and Joseph hardly recognized in him his former master. For an instant he regretted having given himself to him, and fancied that his star was waning; but, reflecting that he was hated by all men and had no resource save in Richelieu, he seized him by the arm, and, shaking him roughly, said to him in a low voice, but harshly:

"Come, come, Monseigneur, you are chickenhearted; come with us."

And, appearing to sustain him by the elbow, but in fact drawing him in spite of himself, with the aid of Laubardemont, he made him enter his tent, as a schoolmaster forces a schoolboy to rest, fearing the effects of the evening mist upon him.

The prematurely aged man slowly obeyed the wishes of his two parasites, and the purple of the pavilion dropped upon him.

CHAPTER XII

THE NIGHT-WATCH

O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!
The lights burn blue. It is now dead midnight,
Cold, fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
What do I fear? Myself?
I love myself!

SHAKESPEARE.

Hardly was the Cardinal in his tent before he dropped, armed and cuirassed, into a great armchair; and there, holding his handkerchief to his mouth with a fixed gaze, he remained in this attitude, letting his two dark confidants wonder whether contemplation or annihilation maintained him in it. He was deadly pale, and a cold sweat streamed upon his brow. In wiping it with a sudden movement, he threw behind him his red cap, the only ecclesiastical sign which remained upon him, and again rested with his mouth upon his hands. The Capuchin on one side, and the sombre magistrate on the other, considered him in silence, and seemed, with their brown and black costumes like the priest and the notary of a dying man.

The friar, drawing from the depth of his chest a voice that seemed better suited to repeat the service of the dead than to administer consolation, spoke first:

"If Monseigneur will recall my counsels given at Narbonne, he will confess that I had a just presentiment of the troubles which this young man would one day cause him."

The magistrate continued:

"I have learned from the old deaf abbe who dined at the house of the Marechale d'Effiat, and who heard all, that this young Cinq-Mars exhibited more energy than one would have imagined, and that he attempted to rescue the Marechal de Bassompierre. I have still by me the detailed report of the deaf man, who played his part very well. His Eminence the Cardinal must be sufficiently convinced by it."

"I have told Monseigneur," resumed Joseph--for these two ferocious Seyds alternated their discourse like the shepherds of Virgil--"I have told him that it would be well to get rid of this young D'Effiat, and that I would charge myself with the business, if such were his good pleasure. It would be easy to destroy him in the opinion of the King."

"It would be safer to make him die of his wound," answered Laubardemont; "if his Eminence would have the goodness to command me, I know intimately the assistant-physician, who cured me of a blow on the forehead, and is now attending to him. He is a prudent man, entirely devoted to Monseigneur the Cardinal-Duke, and whose affairs have been somewhat embarrassed by gambling."

"I believe," replied Joseph, with an air of modesty, mingled with a touch of bitterness, "that if his Excellency proposed to employ any one in this useful project, it should be his accustomed negotiator, who has had some success in the past."

"I fancy that I could enumerate some signal instances," answered Laubardemont, "and very recent ones, of which the difficulty was great."

"Ah, no doubt," said the father, with a bow and an air of consideration and politeness, "your most bold and skilfully executed commission was the trial of Urbain Grandier, the magician. But, with Heaven's assistance, one may be enabled to do things quite as worthy and bold. It is not without merit, for instance," added he, dropping his eyes like a young girl, "to have extirpated vigorously a royal Bourbon branch."

"It was not very difficult," answered the magistrate, with bitterness, "to select a soldier from the guards to kill the Comte de Soissons; but to preside, to judge--"

"And to execute one's self," interrupted the heated Capuchin, "is certainly less difficult than to educate a man from infancy in the thought of accomplishing great things with discretion, and to bear all tortures, if necessary, for the love of heaven, rather than reveal the name of those who have armed him with their justice, or to die courageously upon the body of him that he has struck, as did one who was commissioned by me. He uttered no cry at the blow of the sword of Riquemont, the equerry of the Prince. He died like a saint; he was my pupil."

"To give orders is somewhat different from running risk one's self."

"And did I risk nothing at the siege of Rochelle?"

"Of being drowned in a sewer, no doubt," said Laubardemont.

"And you," said Joseph, "has your danger been that of catching your fingers in instruments of torture? And all this because the Abbess of the Ursulines is your niece."

"It was a good thing for your brothers of Saint Francis, who held the hammers; but I--I was struck in the forehead by this same Cinq-Mars, who was leading an enraged multitude."

"Are you quite sure of that?" cried Joseph, delighted. "Did he dare to act thus against the commands of the King?" The joy which this discovery gave him made him forget his anger.

"Fools!" exclaimed the Cardinal, suddenly breaking his long silence, and taking from his lips his handkerchief stained with blood. "I would punish your angry dispute had it not taught me many secrets of infamy on your part. You have exceeded my orders; I commanded no torture, Laubardemont. That is your second fault. You cause me to be hated for nothing; that was useless. But you, Joseph, do not neglect the details of this disturbance in which Cinq-Mars was engaged; it may be of use in the end."

"I have all the names and descriptions," said the secret judge, eagerly, bending his tall form and thin, olive-colored visage, wrinkled with a servile smile, down to the armchair.

"It is well! it is well!" said the minister, pushing him back; "but that is not the question yet. You, Joseph, be in Paris before this young upstart, who will become a favorite, I am certain. Become his friend; make him of my party or destroy him. Let him serve me or fall. But, above all, send me every day safe persons to give me verbal accounts. I will have no more writing for the future. I am much displeased with you, Joseph. What a miserable courier you chose to send from Cologne! He could not understand me. He saw the King too soon, and here we are still in disgrace in consequence. You have just missed ruining me entirely. Go and observe what is about to be done in Paris. A conspiracy will soon be hatched against me; but it will be the last. I remain here in order to let them all act more freely. Go, both of you, and send me my valet after the lapse of two hours; I wish now to be alone."

The steps of the two men were still to be heard as Richelieu, with eyes fixed upon the entrance to the tent, pursued them with his irritated glance.

"Wretches!" he exclaimed, when he was alone, "go and accomplish some more secret work, and afterward I will crush you, in pure instruments of my power. The King will soon succumb beneath the slow malady which consumes him. I shall then be regent; I shall be King of France myself; I shall no longer have to dread the caprices of his weakness. I will destroy the haughty races of this country. I will be alone above them all. Europe shall tremble."

Here the blood, which again filled his mouth, obliged him to apply his handkerchief to it once more.

"Ah, what do I say? Unhappy victim that I am! Here am I, death-stricken! My dissolution is near; my blood flows, and my spirit desires

to labor still. Why? For whom? Is it for glory? That is an empty word. Is it for men? I despise them. For whom, then, since I shall die, perhaps, in two or three years? Is it for God? What a name! I have not walked with Him! He has seen all--"

Here he let his head fall upon his breast, and his eyes met the great cross of gold which was suspended from his neck. He could not help throwing himself back in his chair; but it followed him. He took it; and considering it with fixed arid devouring looks, he said in a low voice:

"Terrible sign! thou followest me! Shall I find thee elsewhere-- divinity and suffering? What am I? What have I done?"

For the first time a singular and unknown terror penetrated him. He trembled, at once frozen and scorched by an invincible shudder. He dared not lift his eyes, fearing to meet some terrible vision. He dared not call, fearing to hear the sound of his own voice. He remained profoundly plunged in meditations on eternity, so terrible for him, and he murmured the following kind of prayer:

"Great God, if Thou hearest me, judge me then, but do not isolate me in judging me! Look upon me, surrounded by the men of my generation; consider the immense work I had undertaken!, Was not an enormous lever wanted to bestir those masses; and if this lever in falling crushes some useless wretches, am I very culpable? I seem wicked to men; but Thou, Supreme judge, dost thou regard me thus?"

"No; Thou knowest it is boundless power which makes creature culpable against creature. It is not Armand de Richelieu who destroys; it is the Prime-Minister. It is not for his personal injuries; it is to carry out a system. But a system--what is this word? Is it permitted me to play thus with men, to regard them as numbers for working out a thought, which perhaps is false? I overturn the framework of the throne. What if, without knowing it, I sap its foundations and hasten its fall! Yes, my borrowed power has seduced me. O labyrinth! O weakness of human thought! Simple faith, why did I quit thy path? Why am I not a simple priest? If I dared to break with man and give myself to God, the ladder of Jacob would again descend in my dreams."

At this moment his ear was struck by a great noise outside--laughter of soldiers, ferocious shouts and oaths, mingled with words which were a long time sustained by a weak yet clear voice; one would have said it was the voice of an angel interrupted by the laughter of demons. He rose and opened a sort of linen window, worked in the side of his square tent. A singular spectacle presented itself to his view; he remained some instants contemplating it, attentive to the conversation which was going on.

"Listen, listen, La Valeur!" said one soldier to another. "See, she begins again to speak and to sing!"

"Put her in the middle of the circle, between us and the fire."

"You do not know her! You do not know her!" said another. "But here is Grand-Ferre, who says that he knows her."

"Yes, I tell you I know her; and, by Saint Peter of Loudun, I will swear that I have seen her in my village, when I had leave of absence; and it was upon an occasion at which one shuddered, but concerning which one dares not talk, especially to a Cardinalist like you."

"Eh! and pray why dare not one speak of it, you great simpleton?" said an old soldier, twisting up his moustache.

"It is not spoken of because it burns the tongue. Do you understand that?"

"No, I don't understand it."

"Well, nor I neither; but certain citizens told it to me."

Here a general laugh interrupted him.

"Ha, ha, ha! is he a fool?" said one. "He listens to what the townfolk tell him."

"Ah, well! if you listen to their gabble, you have time to lose," said another.

"You do not know, then, what my mother said, greenhorn?" said the eldest, gravely dropping his eyes with a solemn air, to compel attention.

"Eh! how can you think that I know it, La Pipe? Your mother must have died of old age before my grandfather came into the world."

"Well, greenhorn, I will tell you! You shall know, first of all, that my mother was a respectable Bohemian, as much attached to the regiment of carabineers of La Roque as my dog Canon there. She carried brandy round her neck in a barrel, and drank better than the best of us. She had fourteen husbands, all soldiers, who died upon the field of battle."

"Ha! that was a woman!" interrupted the soldiers, full of respect.

"And never once in her life did she speak to a townsman, unless it was to say to him on coming to her lodging, 'Light my candle and warm my soup.'"

"Well, and what was it that your mother said to you?"

"If you are in such a hurry, you shall not know, greenhorn. She said habitually in her talk, 'A soldier is better than a dog; but a dog is better than a bourgeois.'"

"Bravo! bravo! that was well said!" cried the soldier, filled with enthusiasm at these fine words.

"That," said Grand-Ferre, "does not prove that the citizens who made the remark to me that it burned the tongue were in the right; besides, they were not altogether citizens, for they had swords, and they were grieved at a cure being burned, and so was I."

"Eh! what was it to you that they burned your cure, great simpleton?" said a sergeant, leaning upon the fork of his arquebus; "after him another would come. You might have taken one of our generals in his stead, who are all cures at present; for me, I am a Royalist, and I say it frankly."

"Hold your tongue!" cried La Pipe; "let the girl speak. It is these dogs of Royalists who always disturb us in our amusements."

"What say you?" answered Grand-Ferre. "Do you even know what it is to be a Royalist?"

"Yes," said La Pipe; "I know you all very well. Go, you are for the old self-called princes of the peace, together with the wranglers against the Cardinal and the gabelle. Am I right or not?"

"No, old red-stocking. A Royalist is one who is for the King; that's what it is. And as my father was the King's valet, I am for the King, you see; and I have no liking for the red-stockings, I can tell you."

"Ah, you call me red-stocking, eh?" answered the old soldier. "You shall give me satisfaction to-morrow morning. If you had made war in the Valteline, you would not talk like that; and if you had seen his Eminence marching upon the dike at Rochelle, with the old Marquis de Spinola, while volleys of cannonshot were sent after him, you would have nothing to say about red-stockings."

"Come, let us amuse ourselves, instead of quarrelling," said the other soldiers.

The men who conversed thus were standing round a great fire, which illuminated them more than the moon, beautiful as it was; and in the centre of the group was the object of their gathering and their cries. The Cardinal perceived a young woman arrayed in black and covered with a long, white veil. Her feet were bare; a thick cord clasped her elegant figure; a long rosary fell from her neck almost to her feet, and her hands, delicate and white as ivory, turned its beads and made them pass rapidly beneath her fingers. The soldiers, with a barbarous joy, amused themselves with laying little brands in her way to burn her naked feet. The oldest took the smoking match of his arquebus, and, approaching it to the edge of her robe, said in a hoarse voice:

"Come, madcap, tell me your history, or I will fill you with powder and blow you up like a mine; take care, for I have already played that trick to others besides you, in the old wars of the Huguenots. Come, sing."

The young woman, looking at him gravely, made no reply, but lowered her veil.

"You don't manage her well," said Grand-Ferre, with a drunken laugh; "you will make her cry. You don't know the fine language of the court; let me speak to her." And, touching her on the chin, "My little heart," he said, "if you will please, my sweet, to resume the little story you told just now to these gentlemen, I will pray you to travel with me upon the river Du Tendre, as the great ladies of Paris say, and to take a glass of brandy with your faithful chevalier, who met you formerly at Loudun, when you played a comedy in order to burn a poor devil."

The young woman crossed her arms, and, looking around her with an imperious air, cried:

"Withdraw, in the name of the God of armies; withdraw, impious men! There is nothing in common between us. I do not understand your tongue, nor you mine. Go, sell your blood to the princes of the earth at so many oboles a day, and leave me to accomplish my mission! Conduct me to the Cardinal."

A coarse laugh interrupted her.

"Do you think," said a carabineer of Maurevert, "that his Eminence the Generalissimo will receive you with your feet naked? Go and wash them."

"The Lord has said, 'Jerusalem, lift thy robe, and pass the rivers of water,'" she answered, her arms still crossed. "Let me be conducted to the Cardinal."

Richelieu cried in a loud voice, "Bring the woman to me, and let her alone!"

All were silent; they conducted her to the minister.

"Why," said she, beholding him--"why bring me before an armed man?"

They left her alone with him without answering.

The Cardinal looked at her with a suspicious air. "Madame," said he, "what are you doing in the camp at this hour? And if your mind is not disordered, why these naked feet?"

"It is a vow; it is a vow," answered the young woman, with an air of impatience, seating herself beside him abruptly. "I have also made a vow not to eat until I have found the man I seek."

"My sister," said the Cardinal, astonished and softened, looking closely at her, "God does not exact such rigors from a weak body, and particularly from one of your age, for you seem very young."

"Young! oh, yes, I was very young a few days ago; but I have since passed two existences at least, so much have I thought and suffered. Look on my countenance."

And she discovered a face of perfect beauty. Black and very regular eyes gave life to it; but in their absence one might have thought her features were those of a phantom, she was so pale. Her lips were blue and quivering; and a strong shudder made her teeth chatter.

"You are ill, my sister," said the minister, touched, taking her hand, which he felt to be burning hot. A sort of habit of inquiring concerning his own health, and that of others, made him touch the pulse of her emaciated arm; he felt that the arteries were swollen by the beatings of a terrible fever.

"Alas!" he continued, with more of interest, "you have killed yourself with rigors beyond human strength! I have always blamed them, and especially at a tender age. What, then, has induced you to do this? Is it to confide it to me that you are come? Speak calmly, and be sure of succor."

"Confide in men!" answered the young woman; "oh, no, never! All have deceived me. I will confide myself to no one, not even to Monsieur Cinq-Mars, although he must soon die."

"What!" said Richelieu, contracting his brows, but with a bitter laugh, --"what! do you know this young man? Has he been the cause of your misfortune?"

"Oh, no! He is very good, and hates wickedness; that is what will ruin him. Besides," said she, suddenly assuming a harsh and savage air, "men are weak, and there are things which women must accomplish. When there were no more valiant men in Israel, Deborah arose."

"Ah! how came you with all this fine learning?" continued the Cardinal, still holding her hand.

"Oh, I can't explain that!" answered she, with a touching air of naivete and a very gentle voice; "you would not understand me. It is the Devil who has taught me all, and who has destroyed me."

"Ah, my child! it is always he who destroys us; but he instructs us ill," said Richelieu, with an air of paternal protection and an increasing pity. "What have been your faults? Tell them to me; I am very powerful."

"Ah," said she, with a look of doubt, "you have much influence over warriors, brave men and generals! Beneath your cuirass must beat a noble heart; you are an old General who knows nothing of the tricks of crime."

Richelieu smiled; this mistake flattered him.

"I heard you ask for the Cardinal; do you desire to see him? Did you come here to seek him?"

The girl drew back and placed a finger upon her forehead.

"I had forgotten it," said she; "you have talked to me too much. I had overlooked this idea, and yet it is an important one; it is for that that I have condemned myself to the hunger which is killing me. I must accomplish it, or I shall die first. Ah," said she, putting her hand beneath her robe in her bosom, whence she appeared to take something, "behold it! this idea--"

She suddenly blushed, and her eyes widened extraordinarily. She continued, bending to the ear of the Cardinal:

"I will tell you; listen! Urbain Grandier, my lover Urbain, told me this night that it was Richelieu who had been the cause of his death. I took a knife from an inn, and I come here to kill him; tell me where he is."

The Cardinal, surprised and terrified, recoiled with horror. He dared not call his guards, fearing the cries of this woman and her accusations; nevertheless, a transport of this madness might be fatal to him.

"This frightful history will pursue me everywhere!" cried he, looking fixedly at her, and thinking within himself of the course he should take.

They remained in silence, face to face, in the same attitude, like two wrestlers who contemplate before attacking each other, or like the pointer and his victim petrified by the power of a look.

In the mean time, Laubardemont and Joseph had gone forth together; and ere separating they talked for a moment before the tent of the Cardinal, because they were eager mutually to deceive each other. Their hatred had acquired new force by their recent quarrel; and each had resolved to ruin his rival in the mind of his master. The judge then began the dialogue, which each of them had prepared, taking the arm of the other as by one and the same movement.

"Ah, reverend father! how you have afflicted me by seeming to take in ill part the trifling pleasantries which I said to you just now."

"Heavens, no! my dear Monsieur, I am far from that. Charity, where would be charity? I have sometimes a holy warmth in conversation, for the good of the State and of Monseigneur, to whom I am entirely devoted."

"Ah, who knows it better than I, reverend father? But render me justice; you also know how completely I am attached to his Eminence the Cardinal, to whom I owe all. Alas! I have employed too much zeal in serving him, since he reproaches me with it."

"Reassure yourself," said Joseph; "he bears no ill-will toward you. I know him well; he can appreciate one's actions in favor of one's family. He, too, is a very good relative."

"Yes, there it is," answered Laubardemont; "consider my condition. My niece would have been totally ruined at her convent had Urbain triumphed; you feel that as well as I do, particularly as she did not quite comprehend us, and acted the child when she was compelled to appear."

"Is it possible? In full audience! What you tell me indeed makes me feel for you. How painful it must have been!"

"More so than you can imagine. She forgot, in her madness, all that she had been told, committed a thousand blunders in Latin, which we patched up as well as we could; and she even caused an unpleasant scene on the day of the trial, very unpleasant for me and the judges--there were swoons and shrieks. Ah, I swear that I would have scolded her well had I not been forced to quit precipitately that, little town of Loudun. But, you see, it is natural enough that I am attached to her. She is my nearest relative; for my son has turned out ill, and no one knows what has become of him during the last four years. Poor little Jeanne de Belfiel! I made her a nun, and then abbess, in order to preserve all for that scamp. Had I foreseen his conduct, I should have retained her for the world."

"She is said to have great beauty," answered Joseph; "that is a precious gift for a family. She might have been presented at court, and the King --Ah! ah! Mademoiselle de la Fayette--eh! eh!--Mademoiselle d'Hautefort--you understand; it may be even possible to think of it yet."

"Ah, that is like you, Monseigneur! for we know that you have been nominated to the cardinalate; how good you are to remember the most devoted of your friends!"

Laubardemont was yet talking to Joseph when they found themselves at the end of the line of the camp, which led to the quarter of the volunteers.

"May God and his Holy Mother protect you during my absence!" said Joseph, stopping. "To-morrow I depart for Paris; and as I shall have frequent business with this young Cinq-Mars, I shall first go to see him, and learn news of his wound."

"Had I been listened to," said Laubardemont, "you would not now have had this trouble."

"Alas, you are right!" answered Joseph, with a profound sigh, and raising his eyes to heaven; "but the Cardinal is no longer the same man. He will not take advantage of good ideas; he will ruin us if he goes on thus."

And, making a low bow to the judge, the Capuchin took the road which he had indicated to him.

Laubardemont followed him for some time with his eyes, and, when he was quite sure of the route which he had taken, he returned, or, rather, ran back to the tent of the minister. "The Cardinal dismisses him, he tells me; that shows that he is tired of him. I know secrets which will ruin him. I will add that he is gone to pay court to the future favorite. I will replace this monk in the favor of the minister. The moment is propitious. It is midnight; he will be alone for an hour and a half yet. Let me run."

He arrived at the tent of the guards, which was before the pavilion.

"Monseigneur gives audience to some one," said the captain, hesitating; "you can not enter."

"Never mind; you saw me leave an hour ago, and things are passing of which I must give an account."

"Come in, Laubardemont," cried the minister; "come in quickly, and alone."

He entered. The Cardinal, still seated, held the two hands of the nun in one of his, and with the other he imposed silence upon his stupefied agent, who remained motionless, not yet seeing the face of this woman. She spoke volubly, and the strange things she said contrasted horribly with the sweetness of her voice. Richelieu seemed moved.

"Yes, I will stab him with a knife. It is the knife which the demon Behirith gave me at the inn; but it is the nail of Sisera. It has a handle of ivory, you see; and I have wept much over it. Is it not singular, my good General? I will turn it in the throat of him who killed my friend, as he himself told me to do; and afterward I will burn the body. There is like for like, the punishment which God permitted to Adam. You have an astonished air, my brave general; but you would be much more so, were I to repeat to you his song--the song which he sang to me again last night, at the hour of the funeral-pyre--you understand?--the hour when it rains, the hour when my hand burns as now. He said to me: 'They are much deceived, the magistrates, the red judges. I have eleven demons at my command; and I shall come to see you when the clock strikes, under a canopy of purple velvet, with torches--torches of resin to give us light--' Ah, that is beautiful! Listen, listen to what he sings!"

And she sang to the air of De Profundis.

"Is it not singular, my good General?" said she, when she had finished; "and I--I answer him every evening."

"Then he speaks as spirits and prophets speak. He says: 'Woe, woe to him who has shed blood! Are the judges of the earth gods? No, they are men who grow old and suffer, and yet they dare to say aloud, Let that man die! The penalty of death, the pain of death--who has given to man the right of imposing it on man? Is the number two? One would be an assassin, look you! But count well, one, two, three. Behold, they are wise and just, these grave and salaried criminals! O crime, the horror of Heaven! If you looked upon them from above as I look upon them, you would be yet paler than I am. Flesh destroys flesh! That which lives by blood sheds blood coldly and without anger, like a God with power to create!'"

The cries which the unhappy girl uttered, as she rapidly spoke these words, terrified Richelieu and Laubardemont so much that they still

remained motionless. The delirium and the fever continued to transport her.

"Did the judges tremble?" said Urbain Grandier to me. 'Did they tremble at deceiving themselves?' They work the work of the just. The question! They bind his limbs with ropes to make him speak. His skin cracks, tears away, and rolls up like a parchment; his nerves are naked, red, and glittering; his bones crack; the marrow spurts out. But the judges sleep! they dream of flowers and spring. 'How hot the grand chamber is!' says one, awaking; 'this man has not chosen to speak! Is the torture finished?' And pitiful at last, he dooms him to death--death, the sole fear of the living! death, the unknown world! He sends before him a furious soul which will wait for him. Oh! has he never seen the vision of vengeance? Has he never seen before falling asleep the flayed prevaricator?"

Already weakened by fever, fatigue, and grief, the Cardinal, seized with horror and pity, exclaimed:

"Ah, for the love of God, let this terrible scene have an end! Take away this woman; she is mad!"

The frantic creature turned, and suddenly uttering loud cries, "Ah, the judge! the judge! the judge!" she said, recognizing Laubardemont.

The latter, clasping his hands and trembling before the Cardinal, said with terror:

"Alas, Monseigneur, pardon me! she is my niece, who has lost her reason. I was not aware of this misfortune, or she would have been shut up long ago. Jeanne! Jeanne! come, Madame, to your knees! ask forgiveness of Monseigneur the Cardinal-duc."

"It is Richelieu!" she cried; and astonishment seemed wholly to paralyze this young and unhappy beauty. The flush which had animated her at first gave place to a deadly pallor, her cries to a motionless silence, her wandering looks to a frightful fixedness of her large eyes, which constantly followed the agitated minister.

"Take away this unfortunate child quickly," said he; "she is dying, and so am I. So many horrors pursue me since that sentence that I believe all hell is loosed upon me."

He rose as he spoke; Jeanne de Belfiel, still silent and stupefied, with haggard eyes, open mouth, and head bent forward, yet remained beneath the shock of her double surprise, which seemed to have extinguished the rest of her reason and her strength. At the movement of the Cardinal, she shuddered to find herself between him and Laubardemont, looked by turns at one and the other, let the knife which she held fall from her hand, and retired slowly toward the opening of the tent, covering herself completely with her veil, and looking wildly and with terror behind her upon her uncle who followed, like an affrighted lamb, which already feels at its back the burning breath of the wolf about to seize it.

Thus they both went forth; and hardly had they reached the open air, when the furious judge caught the hands of his victim, tied them with a handkerchief, and easily led her, for she uttered no cry, not even a sigh, but followed him with her head still drooping upon her bosom, and as if plunged in profound somnambulism.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SPANIARD

Meantime, a scene of different nature was passing in the tent of Cinq-Mars; the words of the King, the first balm to his wounds, had been followed by the anxious care of the surgeons of the court. A spent ball, easily extracted, had been the only cause of his accident. He was allowed to travel and all was ready. The invalid had received up to midnight friendly or interested visits; among the first were those of little Gondi and of Fontrailles, who were also preparing to quit Perpignan for Paris. The ex-page, Olivier d'Entraigues, joined with them in complimenting the fortunate volunteer, whom the King seemed to have distinguished. The habitual coldness of the Prince toward all who surrounded him having caused those who knew of them to regard the few words he had spoken as assured signs of high favor, all came to congratulate him.

At length, released from visitors, he lay upon his camp-bed. De Thou sat by his side, holding his hand, and Grandchamp at his feet, still grumbling at the numerous interruptions that had fatigued his wounded master. Cinq-Mars himself tasted one of those moments of calm and hope, which so refresh the soul as well as the body. His free hand secretly pressed the gold cross that hung next to his heart, the beloved donor of which he was so soon to behold. Outwardly, he listened with kindly looks to the counsels of the young magistrate; but his inward thoughts were all turned toward the object of his journey--the object, also, of his life. The grave De Thou went on in a calm, gentle voice:

"I shall soon follow you to Paris. I am happier than you at seeing the King take you there with him. You are right in looking upon it as the beginning of a friendship which must be turned to profit. I have reflected deeply on the secret causes of your ambition, and I think I have divined your heart. Yes; that feeling of love for France, which made it beat in your earliest youth, must have gained greater strength. You would be near the King in order to serve your country, in order to put in action those golden dreams of your early years. The thought is a vast one, and worthy of you! I admire you; I bow before you. To approach the monarch with the chivalrous devotion of our fathers, with a heart full of candor, and prepared for any sacrifice; to receive the confidences of his soul; to pour into his those of his subjects; to soften the sorrows of the King by telling him the confidence his people have in him; to cure the wounds of the people by laying them open to its

master, and by the intervention of your favor thus to reestablish that intercourse of love between the father and his children which for eighteen years has been interrupted by a man whose heart is marble; for this noble enterprise, to expose yourself to all the horrors of his vengeance and, what is even worse, to brave all the perfidious calumnies which pursue the favorite to the very steps of the throne--this dream was worthy of you.

"Pursue it, my friend," De Thou continued. "Never become discouraged. Speak loudly to the King of the merit and misfortunes of his most illustrious friends who are trampled on. Tell him fearlessly that his old nobility have never conspired against him; and that from the young Montmorency to the amiable Comte de Soissons, all have opposed the minister, and never the monarch. Tell him that the old families of France were born with his race; that in striking them he affects the whole nation; and that, should he destroy them, his own race will suffer, that it will stand alone exposed to the blast of time and events, as an old oak trembling and exposed to the wind of the plain, when the forest which surrounded and supported it has been destroyed. Yes!" cried De Thou, growing animated, "this aim is a fine and noble one. Go on in your course with a resolute step; expel even that secret shame, that shyness, which a noble soul experiences before it can resolve upon flattering--upon paying what the world calls its court. Alas, kings are accustomed to these continual expressions of false admiration for them! Look upon them as a new language which must be learned--a language hitherto foreign to your lips, but which, believe me, may be nobly spoken, and which may express high and generous thoughts."

During this warm discourse of his friend, Cinq-Mars could not refrain from a sudden blush; and he turned his head on his pillow toward the tent, so that his face might not be seen. De Thou stopped:

"What is the matter, Henri? You do not answer. Am I deceived?"

Cinq-Mars gave a deep sigh and remained silent.

"Is not your heart affected by these ideas which I thought would have transported it?"

The wounded man looked more calmly at his friend and said:

"I thought, my dear De Thou, that you would not interrogate me further, and that you were willing to repose a blind confidence in me. What evil genius has moved you thus to sound my soul? I am not a stranger to these ideas which possess you. Who told you that I had not conceived them? Who told you that I had not formed the firm resolution of prosecuting them infinitely farther in action than you have put them in words? Love for France, virtuous hatred of the ambition which oppresses and shatters her ancient institutions with the axe of the executioner, the firm belief that virtue may be as skilful as crime,--these are my gods as much as yours. But when you see a man kneeling in a church, do you ask him what saint or what angel protects him and receives his prayer? What matters it to you, provided that he pray at the foot of the altars that you

adore--provided that, if called upon, he fall a martyr at the foot of those 'altars? When our forefathers journeyed with naked feet toward the Holy Sepulchre, with pilgrims' staves in their hands, did men inquire the secret vow which led them to the Holy Land? They struck, they died; and men, perhaps God himself, asked no more. The pious captain who led them never stripped their bodies to see whether the red cross and haircloth concealed any other mysterious symbol; and in heaven, doubtless, they were not judged with any greater rigor for having aided the strength of their resolutions upon earth by some hope permitted to a Christian--some second and secret thought, more human, and nearer the mortal heart."

De Thou smiled and slightly blushed, lowering his eyes.

"My friend," he answered, gravely; "this excitement may be injurious to you. Let us not continue this subject; let us not mingle God and heaven in our discourse. It is not well; and draw the coverings over your shoulder, for the night is cold. I promise you," he added, covering his young invalid with a maternal care--"I promise not to offend you again with my counsels."

"And I," cried Cinq-Mars, despite the interdiction to speak, "swear to you by this gold cross you see, and by the Holy Mary, to die rather than renounce the plan that you first traced out! You may one day, perhaps, be forced to pray me to stop; but then it will be too late."

"Very well!" repeated the counsellor, "now sleep; if you do not stop, I will go on with you, wherever you lead me."

And, taking a prayer-book from his pocket, he began to read attentively; in a short time he looked at Cinq-Mars, who was still awake. He made a sign to Grandchamp to put the lamp out of sight of the invalid; but this new care succeeded no better. The latter, with his eyes still open, tossed restlessly on his narrow bed.

"Come, you are not calm," said De Thou, smiling; "I will read to you some pious passage which will put your mind in repose. Ah, my friend, it is here that true repose is to be found; it is in this consolatory book, for, open it where you will, you will always see, on the one hand, man in the only condition that suits his weakness--prayer, and the uncertainty as to his destiny--and, on the other, God himself speaking to him of his infirmities! What a glorious and heavenly spectacle! What a sublime bond between heaven and earth! Life, death, and eternity are there; open it at random."

"Yes!" said Cinq-Mars, rising with a vivacity which had something boyish in it; "you shall read to me, but let me open the book. You know the old superstition of our country--when the mass-book is opened with a sword, the first page on the left contains the destiny of him who reads, and the first person who enters after he has read is powerfully to influence the reader's future fate."

"What childishness! But be it as you will. Here is your sword; insert the point. Let us see."

"Let me read myself," said Cinq-Mars, taking one side of the book. Old Grandchamp gravely advanced his tawny face and his gray hair to the foot of the bed to listen. His master read, stopped at the first phrase, but with a smile, perhaps slightly forced, he went on to the end.

"I. Now it was in the city of Milan that they appeared.

"II. The high-priest said to them, 'Bow down and adore the gods.'

"III. And the people were silent, looking at their faces, which appeared as the faces of angels.

"IV. But Gervais, taking the hand of Protais, cried, looking to heaven, and filled with the Holy Ghost:

"V. Oh, my brother! I see the Son of man smiling upon us; let me die first.

"VI. For if I see thy blood, I fear I shall shed tears unworthy of the Lord our God.

"VII. Then Protais answered him in these words:

"VIII. My brother, it is just that I should perish after thee, for I am older, and have more strength to see thee suffer.

"IX. But the senators and people ground their teeth at them.

"X. And the soldiers having struck them, their heads fell together on the same stone.

"XI. Now it was in this same place that the blessed Saint Ambroise found the ashes of the two martyrs which gave sight to the blind."

"Well," said Cinq-Mars, looking at his friend when he had finished, "what do you say to that?"

"God's will be done! but we should not scrutinize it."

"Nor put off our designs for a child's play," said D'Effiat impatiently, and wrapping himself in a cloak which was thrown over him. "Remember the lines we formerly so frequently quoted, 'Justum et tenacem Propositi viruna'; these iron words are stamped upon my brain. Yes; let the universe crumble around me, its wreck shall carry me away still resolute."

"Let us not compare the thoughts of man with those of Heaven; and let us be submissive," said De Thou, gravely.

"Amen!" said old Grandchamp, whose eyes had filled with tears, which he hastily brushed away.

"What hast thou to do with it, old soldier? Thou weepest," said his master.

"Amen!" said a voice, in a nasal tone, at the entrance of the tent.

"Parbleu, Monsieur! rather put that question to his Gray Eminence, who comes to visit you," answered the faithful servant, pointing to Joseph, who advanced with his arms crossed, making a salutation with a frowning air.

"Ah, it will be he, then!" murmured Cinq-Mars.

"Perhaps I come inopportunately," said Joseph, soothingly.

"Perhaps very opportunely," said Henri d'Effiat, smiling, with a glance at De Thou. "What can bring you here, Father, at one o'clock in the morning? It should be some good work."

Joseph saw he was ill-received; and as he had always sundry reproaches to make himself with reference to all persons whom he addressed, and as many resources in his mind for getting out of the difficulty, he fancied that they had discovered the object of his visit, and felt that he should not select a moment of ill humor for preparing the way to friendship. Therefore, seating himself near the bed, he said, coldly:

"I come, Monsieur, to speak to you on the part of the Cardinal-Generalissimo, of the two Spanish prisoners you have made; he desires to have information concerning them as soon as possible. I am to see and question them. But I did not suppose you were still awake; I merely wished to receive them from your people."

After a forced interchange of politeness, they ordered into the tent the two prisoners, whom Cinq-Mars had almost forgotten.

They appeared--the one, young and displaying an animated and rather wild countenance, was the soldier; the other, concealing his form under a brown cloak, and his gloomy features, which had something ambiguous in their expression, under his broad-brimmed hat, which he did not remove, was the officer. He spoke first:

"Why do you make me leave my straw and my sleep? Is it to deliver me or hang me?"

"Neither," said Joseph.

"What have I to do with thee, man with the long beard? I did not see thee at the breach."

It took some time after this amiable exordium to make the stranger understand the right a Capuchin had to interrogate him.

"Well," he said, "what dost thou want?"

"I would know your name and your country."

"I shall not tell my name; and as for my country, I have the air of a Spaniard, but perhaps am not one, for a Spaniard never acknowledges his country."

Father Joseph, turning toward the two friends, said: "Unless I deceive myself, I have heard his voice somewhere. This man speaks French without an accent; but it seems he wishes to give us enigmas, as in the East."

"The East? that is it," said the prisoner. "A Spaniard is a man from the East; he is a Catholic Turk; his blood either flags or boils; he is lazy or indefatigable; indolence makes him a slave, ardor a tyrant; immovable in his ignorance, ingenious in his superstition, he needs only a religious book and a tyrannical master; he obeys the law of the pyre; he commands by that of the poniard. At night he falls asleep in his bloodthirsty misery, nurses fanaticism, and awakes to crime. Who is this gentleman? Is it the Spaniard or the Turk? Guess! Ah! you seem to think that I have wit, because I light upon analogy."

"Truly, gentlemen, you do me honor; and yet the idea may be carried much further, if desired. If I pass to the physical order, for example, may I not say to you, This man has long and serious features, a black and almond-shaped eye, rugged brows, a sad and mobile mouth, tawny, meagre, and wrinkled cheeks; his head is shaved, and he covers it with a black handkerchief in the form of a turban; he passes the whole day lying or standing under a burning sun, without motion, without utterance, smoking a pipe that intoxicates him. Is this a Turk or a Spaniard? Are you satisfied, gentlemen? Truly, it would seem so; you laugh, and at what do you laugh? I, who have presented this idea to you--I have not laughed; see, my countenance is sad. Ah! perhaps it is because the gloomy prisoner has suddenly become a gossip, and talks rapidly. That is nothing! I might tell you other things, and render you some service, my worthy friends.

"If I should relate anecdotes, for example; if I told you I knew a priest who ordered the death of some heretics before saying mass, and who, furious at being interrupted at the altar during the holy sacrifice, cried to those who asked for his orders, 'Kill them all! kill them all!!--should you all laugh, gentlemen? No, not all! This gentleman here, for instance, would bite his lips and his beard. Oh! it is true he might answer that he did wisely, and that they were wrong to interrupt his unsullied prayer. But if I added that he concealed himself for an hour behind the curtain of your tent, Monsieur de Cinq-Mars, to listen while you talked, and that he came to betray you, and not to get me, what would he say? Now, gentlemen, are you satisfied? May I retire after this display?"

The prisoner had uttered this with the rapidity of a quack vending his wares, and in so loud a voice that Joseph was quite confounded. He arose indignantly at last, and, addressing himself to Cinq-Mars, said:

"How can you suffer a prisoner who should have been hanged to speak to

you thus, Monsieur?"

The Spaniard, without deigning to notice him any further, leaned toward D'Effiat, and whispered in his ear:

"I can be of no further use to you; give me my liberty. I might ere this have taken it; but I would not do so without your consent. Give it me, or have me killed."

"Go, if you will!" said Cinq-Mars to him. "I assure you I shall be very glad;" and he told his people to retire with the soldier, whom he wished to keep in his service.

This was the affair of a moment. No one remained any longer in the tent with the two friends, except the abashed Joseph and the Spaniard. The latter, taking off his hat, showed a French but savage countenance. He laughed, and seemed to respire more air into his broad chest.

"Yes, I am a Frenchman," he said to Joseph. "But I hate France, because she gave birth to my father, who is a monster, and to me, who have become one, and who once struck him. I hate her inhabitants, because they have robbed me of my whole fortune at play, and because I have robbed them and killed them. I have been two years in Spain in order to kill more Frenchmen; but now I hate Spain still more. No one will know the reason why. Adieu! I must live henceforth without a nation; all men are my enemies. Go on, Joseph, and you will soon be as good as I. Yes, you have seen me once before," he continued, violently striking him in the breast and throwing him down. "I am Jacques de Laubardemont, the son of your worthy friend."

With these words, quickly leaving the tent, he disappeared like an apparition. De Thou and the servants, who ran to the entrance, saw him, with two bounds, spring over a surprised and disarmed soldier, and run toward the mountains with the swiftness of a deer, despite various musket-shots. Joseph took advantage of the disorder to slip away, stammering a few words of politeness, and left the two friends laughing at his adventure and his disappointment, as two schoolboys laugh at seeing the spectacles of their pedagogue fall off. At last they prepared to seek a rest of which they both stood in need, and which they soon found—the wounded man in his bed, and the young counsellor in his chair.

As for the Capuchin, he walked toward his tent, meditating how he should turn all this so as to take the greatest possible revenge, when he met Laubardemont dragging the young mad-woman by her two hands. They recounted to each other their mutual and horrible adventures.

Joseph had no small pleasure in turning the poniard in the wound of his friend's heart, by telling him of the fate of his son.

"You are not exactly happy in your domestic relations," he added. "I advise you to shut up your niece and hang your son, if you are fortunate enough to find him."

Laubardemont replied with a hideous laugh:

"As for this idiot here, I am going to give her to an ex-secret judge, at present a smuggler in the Pyrenees at Oleron. He can do what he pleases with her--make her a servant in his posada, for instance. I care not, so that my lord never hears of her."

Jeanne de Belfiel, her head hanging down, gave no sign of sensibility. Every glimmer of reason was extinguished in her; one word alone remained upon her lips, and this she continually pronounced.

"The judge! the judge! the judge!" she murmured, and was silent.

Her uncle and Joseph threw her, almost like a sack of corn, on one of the horses which were led up by two servants. Laubardemont mounted another, and prepared to leave the camp, wishing to get into the mountains before day.

"A good journey to you!" he said to Joseph. "Execute your business well in Paris. I commend to you Orestes and Pylades."

"A good journey to you!" answered the other. "I commend to you Cassandra and OEdipus."

"Oh! he has neither killed his father nor married his mother."

"But he is on the high-road to those little pleasantries."

"Adieu, my reverend Father!"

"Adieu, my venerable friend!"

Then each added aloud, but in suppressed tones:

"Adieu, assassin of the gray robe! During thy absence I shall have the ear of the Cardinal."

"Adieu, villain in the red robe! Go thyself and destroy thy cursed family. Finish shedding that portion of thy blood that is in others' veins. That share which remains in thee, I will take charge of. Ha! a well-employed night!"

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Ambition is the saddest of all hopes
Assume with others the mien they wore toward him
Men are weak, and there are things which women must accomplish

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schoolboys laugh at
seeing the spectacles of their pedagogue fall off. At last they prepared
to seek a rest of which they both stood in need, and which they soon
found--the wounded man in his bed, and the young counsellor in his chair.

As for the Capuchin, he walked toward his tent, meditating how he should
turn all this so as to take the greatest possible revenge, when he met
Laubardemont dragging the young mad-woman by her two hands. They
recounted to each other their mutual and horrible adventures.

Joseph had no small pleasure in turning the poniard in the wound of his
friend's heart, by telling him of the fate of his son.

"You are not exactly happy in your domestic relations," he added. "I
advise you to shut up your niece and hang your son, if you are fortunate
enough to find him."

Laubardemont replied with a hideous laugh:

"As for this idiot here, I am going to give h