

ALAMONTADE

a tale of the times of Louis XIV

by Heinrich Zschokke

A small village in Languedoc was my home and birth-place. I lost my mother very early. My father, a poor farmer, could spend but little for my education, although he was very saving; and yet he was far from being the poorest in the village. He was obliged to give for taxes, besides the tithe on his vineyards, olive plantations, and corn lands, a fourth of what he earned with great trouble. Our daily food was porridge, with black bread and turnips.

My father sank under his troubles. This grieved him very sorely. "Colas," said he frequently to me, with troubled voice, laying his hand upon my head, "hope forsakes me. I shall not, in spite of the sweat on my brow, lay my head down in the coffin without leaving debts behind. How shall I keep the promise which I made to your mother, with the last kiss, on her death-bed? I solemnly promised her to send you to school and make a clergyman of you. You will become a labourer and a servant to strangers."

In such moments I comforted the good old man as well as I could. But childish consolation only made him still more dejected. He became worse, and felt the approach of his last days. He often looked at me with concern and care for my future life; and the bitter tear of hopelessness moistened his eyes. When I saw this I abandoned my sports; I jumped up to him, for I could not bear to see him weeping; I clung to his neck, kissed away the tears from his eyelashes, and exclaimed, sobbing, "Oh! my father, pray do not weep!"

What a happy people might inhabit that country where the fertile soil yields two harvests yearly to the agriculturist, and olives and grapes ripen in abundance by the warm rays of the sun! But an oppressed

race of men creeps over this blooming earth. They give the fruits of their necessity and labour to the gormandising bishops, who promise them, for the sufferings in this world, the everlasting joys of a future life; they give their gain to the nobles and princes, who, in return, profess themselves willing to govern the country with wisdom and goodness. One banquet at court devours the annual produce of a whole province, wrung from the lap of the earth with millions of groans, and millions of drops of sweat.

I had attained my eighteenth year when my father died. It was a serene evening, and the sun near its setting. My father was sitting before our cot in the shade of a chesnut tree, he wished once more to enjoy the sight of a world that had become dear to him amidst all his sorrows. When I returned home from the fields, I went up to him, and found him already faint; he clasped me in his arms, and said, "Oh, my son! I now feel happy. Mine eve is approaching; and I shall go to rest. But I shall not forget thee. I shall stand before the Almighty with thy mother; above yonder stars we will pray for thee. Think of us, and be faithful to virtue even to death! We will pray for thee. Thou art under the care of the Almighty, therefore weep not. For when once thou shalt have ended thy day's work thy evening hour will also strike. Then thou wilt find us yonder, me and thy mother. Oh, Colas, with what longing we shall await thee there! What a delight it will be when the three blessed hearts of the parents and the child will again palpitate against each other before the throne of God!"

The last ray of the sun grew pale on the distant mountain tops; the world was plunged in a gray twilight. The spirit of my father had freed itself from the frail frame of its beloved body, which now lay in my arms.

Our faithful servant--whose name has escaped my memory--being directed, by the last wish of my father, to take me to my uncle, on my mother's side, Etienne, held me by the hand when we were pacing through the dark and narrow streets of the city of Nismes. I trembled.

An involuntary shudder seized upon my mind. "You are trembling, Colas," said the servant; "you look pale and anxious; are you not well?"

"Alas!" exclaimed I, "do not bring me to this dark, stony labyrinth. I am as terrified as if I were going to die here. Let me be a common labourer in my verdant native village. Look only at these walls, they stand here like those of a dungeon; and those men look as confused and troubled as though they were criminals."

"Your uncle, the miller," replied he, "does not live in this city; his house stands outside the Carmelite-gate in the open green fields."

Men are apt to believe that the soul possesses a secret faculty for anticipating its future fate. When I became a fellow-sufferer in that horrible misfortune, the history of which has filled with shuddering every sensible heart of the civilised world, I remembered the first apprehensive anxiety which I felt in the streets of the gloomy Nismes, on entering the city, and which I then took for an omen. Even the most enlightened man cannot entirely divest himself of a superstitious fear when his despairing hope gropes about in vain for help in darkness.

The impression that Nismes had made upon me remained permanent within me. This was natural. Accustomed to live in and with nature, solitary and simple, the stirring crowd of the busy town had a terrifying effect upon me. My mother had rocked me under the branches of the olive trees, and my childhood I had dreamed away in the green, cheerful shade of chesnut groves. How could I bear living within the narrow, damp, walls, where only the thirst for money brings men together? In solitude the passions die away, and the heart assumes the tranquillity of rural nature. The first sight, therefore, of so many faces, in which anger and care, pride and avarice, debauchery and envy, had left behind their traces, and which were no more perceived by him who saw them daily, made me tremble.

Outside the Carmelite-gate was the house of my uncle, and by the side of it his mill. The servant pointed with his hand to the fine building, and said, "M. Etienne is a wealthy man, but alas--"

"And what then--alas?"

"A Calvinist, as people say."

I did not understand him. We entered the beautiful building, and my anxiety vanished. A tranquil, kind spirit spoke to me, as it were, from every thing I beheld, and I felt as happy as if I were in my native place.

In a neat room, marked by simplicity and order, the mother was sitting at the table, surrounded by three blooming daughters, busy with domestic work. A boy of two years' old sat playing in his mother's lap. Kindness and tranquillity were on every countenance. All were silent, and directed their looks to me. My uncle stood at the window and was reading. His locks were already gray, but a youthful serenity beamed from his looks. His air was that of piety. The servant said to him, "This is your nephew, Colas, M. Etienne. His father, your brother-in-law, died in poverty. He ordered me, therefore, to bring his son to you, that you might be a father to him."

"My welcome and blessing to you, Colas!" said M. Etienne, laying his hand upon my head; "I will be your father."

Then arose Mdme. Etienne, who offered me her hand, and said, "I will be your mother."

My heart was much moved by this kindness. I wept, and kissed the hands of my new parents, without being able to utter a word. Now their three daughters surrounded me, and said, "Do not weep, Colas, we will be your sisters." From this hour I was as much accustomed to my new home as if I had never been a stranger to it. I fancied myself

living in a family of quiet angels, of whom my father had often told me. I became as pious as they all were, and yet I never could surpass them in piety.

I was sent to school. After the lapse of half-a-year, M. Etienne told me one day, with a very kind look, "Colas, you are poor, but God has blessed you with superior talents; your masters praise your industry, and say how wonderfully you surpass all your fellow-scholars in learning. I therefore have come to the resolution that you shall devote yourself to study. When you have completed your term at Nismes, I will send you to the academy of Montpellier. You shall study the law, which will enable you to become a defender of our oppressed church. I behold in you an instrument of God for our salvation, and for the protection of the Protestant faith against the cruelty and violence of the Papists."

M. Etienne was secretly a Protestant, as also were several thousands in Nismes, and in the places surrounding it. He initiated me into the doctrines of his faith. The Protestants were laborious, quiet, and benevolent citizens; but the hatred of the people and the fury of the priests persecuted these unfortunate individuals even to the interior of their homes. They lived in continual fear; yet this kept up the ardour of piety more alive in the hearts of all. By compulsion, and for the sake of appearance, we frequented the churches of the Catholics, celebrated their holy days, and kept the images of their saints in our rooms. But neither this compliance, nor the practical piety of the persecuted, could appease the hatred of the persecutors.

Wavering between two different persuasions, to one of which I belonged publicly, to the other secretly, a daily witness of the bitter quarrels of both parties; and how much more pride, hatred, and selfishness, than conviction and piety, flocked to the standards of the belligerent churches, I became, without knowing it, a hypocrite and a disbeliever to both. The grounds upon which each attacked the contested doctrinal points of the other, were better weighed, more

subtle and effective than those upon which, the value of that, which was thus attacked, was defended. This raised within me a distrust against all tenets; only those that never had been attacked retained a lasting sway in my eyes. Yet I concealed my inward thoughts from all, that I might not be an abomination to all.

Thus my mind isolated itself early. God and His creation were, in my leisure hours, the objects of my contemplation. I had a horror for the frenzy of men, with which they persecuted one another on account of a changing opinion, a tract of country, or a title of princes. Early I felt the hardness of my fate in living among beings who, in every thing, judged differently from myself. I saw myself surrounded by barbarians or half-savages, not yet much more humanised than those, at whose sacrifices of men we are struck with horror. If the ancient Celts, or the Brahmins, or the savages of the wilds of America butcher human beings at the altars of their gods, were they in this more monstrous than the modern Europeans, who, at the altars of their gods (since opinions are the gods of mortals) butcher, in their pious zeal, thousands of their brethren? I lamented over the atrocities of the age I lived in, and saw no means that could remove the general ferocity of nations. The animal nature of man is everywhere the prevailing one. Food, concupiscence, and greediness for power are, as in every species of animals, the most powerful provocatives to activity; they are the sources of harmony as well as of discord, of the rise and fall of nations. Disinterested virtue, eternal right, and incontrovertible truth, are more felt than recognised and encouraged. Their names are proclaimed in the schools, while their essence does not, at all times, pervade the teachers themselves. And whoever should, with a pious zeal, profess them, would soon become the laughing-stock of those surrounding him, and the victim of the general frenzy.

The present time was too gloomy for me, I longed for things nobler and more perfect. In the period of a blooming imagination, I could not but create a more beautiful world, in which virtue, justice, and truth, embraced each other, and where the senses diffused the tenderest

feelings. I turned poet, and lamented the fall of Rome and Greece, which gave hopes of a more delightful existence of mankind, and bitterly disappointed their expectations.

The ruins of the vast amphitheatre at Nismes, that ancient splendid monument of Roman greatness, became my favourite haunt. When walking through the lofty arcades between the gray pillasters, or looking down over the magnificent ruins from the Attica, I felt as if the spirit of that majestic antiquity embraced me, and, lamenting, pressed me to its breast.

Here I lingered with pleasure, but never without a feeling of sadness. The remains of long-departed human generations became to me books of history. The hands of several nations have been patching up this work of Roman magnificence. The two half-decayed towers of the Attica, solitary masses of stone piled up without taste and sense of art, were reared by the Goths, the conquerors of the Romans. And the huts of wood in the arena beneath, are the dwellings of poor labourers and workmen of modern days. What a change of times, and of the men that lived in them!

The shriek of a female under the vaults startled me one evening out of my dreams. Darkness had already crept into the halls. I hastened down the steps from the second story, and perceived a well-dressed woman in the power of a common man. The sound of my steps frightened the villain, and he disappeared among the columns. A young girl with dishevelled hair sat on a block of marble, trembling, and almost beside herself with fright.

"Have you sustained any harm?" I asked her.

She raised her hand to her head, and said: "It was a robber, sir, who had torn off my head-dress, consisting of some pins of value;--nothing further. I entreat you to afford me your protection, as I am a stranger in this place. It was from curiosity I left my mother and sister who are

waiting without. This man was to guide me back from this extensive labyrinth, and he led me to this remote spot."

I offered her my arm; we stepped out to the daylight. Oh! my Clementine!

She was sixteen years of age, delicately and beautifully formed. She floats at my side, like an aërial being; I did not perceive her steps. The sweetness, freshness, and intellectual expression of her countenance were angelic, and her look, full of innocence and love, penetrated my inmost soul.

I sank into a pleasant confusion. I had never before known such a sensation of confidence and admiration, of inexpressible affection and profound respect. I had grown up to the age of twenty-one, I knew love only from the pictures of the ancient poets, and I called it a passionate friendship, unworthy a man. Alas! it was, indeed, something very different. Love is the poetry of human nature. The sensation we experience in contemplating beauty, ennobles rude sensuality, and elevates it to a point of contact with the spiritual, so that the virtuous, independent spirit unites itself, under the magic influence of grace, with the earthly. Thus it is true that love deifies the mortal clay, and draws down upon earth what is heavenly.

Thus I went on, and I had lost all my recollection, till we arrived at the Carmelite-gate, where, suddenly, I came to myself again.

"You are a stranger?" I asked, in a faltering voice.

"Yes," she replied; "but it is in vain that we seek my mother and sister. Do you know the house of M. Albertas? It is there we live."

"I will bring you to it."

We turned round towards the street where M. Albertas resided. What a change! The narrow dark streets seemed no longer to me like damp dungeon walls, but like splendid clouds through which men were passing like shadows.

We did not speak. We came to the house. The door was joyfully opened. The whole family pressed forward to welcome the beloved lost child, for whom servants had been sent out, who were still in search of her. It was then that I heard, amidst a thousand caresses towards her, the name, "Clementine." She thanked me in a few words, not without blushing. All the rest did the same; but I was unable to reply. They asked my name; I told it them, bowed, and left the company.

I was often afterwards in the amphitheatre, and my way led me frequently through the street in which M. Albertas lived. Her I did not see again; but her image was constantly hovering before me, in my waking hours as well as in my dreams. The hope of beholding the beautiful vision again forsook me; but not so my longing after her.

Now, for the first time, I felt that I stood alone in the world, and that I could not cling to a being akin to myself. I was without a mother and father, without a sister or brother. Beloved by the family of my uncle, I still looked upon myself amidst them, only as a fortunate orphan; and upon all who loaded me with their kindness, I looked as upon beings elevated above myself.

The time approached when I was to be sent to the academy of Montpellier. M. Etienne repeated to me his wishes, and conjured me not to disappoint his expectations. In the excess of his confidence in my youthful faculties, he saw in me the future protecting angel of the Protestant church in France. He gave me his blessing, whilst the whole family stood weeping round me as I took my farewell. I promised to come to Nismes in all my vacations, and went away overpowered with grief.

The distance from Montpellier to Nismes is full eight leagues. I walked in the shade of mulberry-trees, between the golden fields of corn, and along the vineyards on the chain of hills, overtopped by the gray Sevennes. But the air was glowing, and the ground beneath my feet burning. After three hours' walk, I sank fatigued on the banks of the Vidourle, in the shade of a neat villa and its chesnut trees.

I reflected on my past and future life. I computed the time I had lived, and the space of time still remaining, according to the general measure, for my sphere of action. I found I had still forty years, and, for the first time, I shuddered at the shortness of our life. The oak on the mountains wants one century for its development, and stands for another in its full vigour, while man's existence is so transitory! And wherefore is it thus? How shall he employ his faculties? Not a long life, but a life of variety, is given to mortal man by nature. This thought quiets me. Well, then, I said to myself, forty years more, and I shall stand perfected where my father is.

Pursuing these thoughts, I gradually fell into a slumber. In my dream I imagined myself an old man; my limbs were heavy, my hair gray; the thousand fine pores of the skin, by which the body imperceptibly imbibes vitality, and is nourished by the elements, were dried up. With the decreasing influx of life, the power of the muscles relaxed, the delicate parts, which we call organs, gradually hardened and closed. I heard no more of the world, and the light of my eyes was also extinguished. While the senses, by which the spirit is rooted to the earth were thus dying away, the feelings became weaker, the ideas fainter, and all that was formerly communicated to the mind by the active senses was lost. I was no longer master of my body, and had forgotten the names of things and their use. Men fed me, dressed and undressed me, and treated me as a child. I was still able to speak, but often wanted words, and sometimes uttered phrases which no one understood; thoughts still presented themselves, and I felt, though without regret, that I no more belonged to the earth. Soon, however, I

was not able to give utterance to my thoughts; but had only an unvarying, torpid consciousness of existence, such as we feel while sleeping, when not even dreams present themselves. This state, always the same, without any external change, was unaccompanied by pleasure or pain; there was no variety of thought, therefore no succession or notion of time. In short, I had been dead for a long period, and my body had been buried and mouldering for centuries. Only on earth, during the existence of the senses, where we count the change of things, we can speak of ages, and the succession of events suggests to us the notion of time. Abstracting from all idea of change, time no longer exists.

A pleasing, indefinable sensation produced a change in me; my mind, before isolated, was connected with new organs which opened to me a larger sphere of action in the universe.

I began to feel more and more conscious, I heard a gentle rustling around me, which invigorated me with its delightful freshness. Before me floated dazzling golden rays, whilst silvery clouds sportively passed along. I cast my wandering gaze on the bright transparent verdure of the surrounding boughs, which waved in the crystal ether like aërial forms, and between the boughs and the clouds shone Clementine, motionless, in ineffable beauty, a wreath of fresh flowers entwining her dark hair.

She smiled on me with an expression of innocent love; took the wreath from her hair, waved it with her delicate hand, and it dropped on my breast.

"Oh! heavenly dream never depart from me," I said, while gazing with inexpressible rapture on the beautiful vision.

While I was in this state a carriage rolled past. Clementine's countenance darkened on hearing her name called.

"Farewell, Alamontade," said she, and disappeared amidst the trembling boughs.

At that moment I was going to fall at her feet but found myself on the ground. I was no longer in a dream, for I perceived the Vidourle and the château in the shade of the lofty chesnut trees.

I rose and heard a carriage rattling over the bridge, and as I hastened along, an old servant approached, and asked whether I wished any refreshment. On my evincing astonishment, he asked, "Are you not M. Alamontade?" I answered in the affirmative. Then he said, "Mademoiselle de Sonnes and her mother have left me orders to that effect!" I went back, took up the wreath and followed the servant. Clementine was Mademoiselle de Sonnes.

That day was the happiest and most memorable of my life.

A garret in the back part of the house of M. Bertollon, one of the richest and most fortunate citizens of Montpellier was my dwelling. Some roofs, black walls, and two windows, with the balconies of a house in the opposite street were my only prospect; still I was happy. Surrounded by books, I lived only to study, and Clementine's wreath hung over my table. The millions of spring blossoms lost their splendour before the magic of these withered flowers, and the jewels of kings were valueless to me in comparison with the smallest leaf of the clover.

Clementine was my saint, and I loved her with a pious veneration, such as we feel for angelic beings. Her wreath was a relic, which an angel had let fall on me from heaven. In my dreams I saw her surrounded by glory, and she was the subject of my poetic effusions. I looked most anxiously for the vacations of the college to see my uncle and Nismes, and perhaps, by some happy chance, my adored saint.

One day the door of my solitary room opened, and a handsome young man entered. It was M. Bertollon. "You have a gloomy prospect," he said, as he stepped to the window, "still it extends to part of the house of M. de Sonnes, one of the most tasteful in the town," he added, smiling.

At that name I became agitated. M. Bertollon stood thoughtfully at the window and appeared melancholy. We resumed the conversation, and he asked my name and the nature of my studies. Having mentioned my fondness for the harp, he said: "Do you play the harp and love it passionately without possessing one?"

"I am too poor, sir, to purchase one, for the little money I have is scarcely sufficient to procure the books that I need most."

"My wife has two harps and can well spare one," he replied, and left me.

Before an hour elapsed the harp was sent. How happy was I! I now thought of Clementine, and struck the chords. Sentiments are speechless; words have been invented to express thoughts, and melodious tones to express the feelings of the heart.

On the following morning the amiable Bertollon came again, and I thanked him with emotion. He asked me to play, and I complied with his request, still thinking of Clementine. He was leaning with his forehead against the window, and gazed sadly on the opposite roofs. My soul was enrapt in the fulness of harmony, and I did not perceive that he had turned and stood listening near me.

"You are a delightful magician," he said, and embraced me with warmth; "we must become friends."

I was his friend already, and in the space of a few weeks our intimacy increased. During our short excursions, when the weather was fine, he

gradually introduced me to a numerous acquaintance, who treated me uniformly with esteem and attention, and Bertollon seemed only happy in my society. In possession of a considerable library, and a museum of natural history, he entrusted me with their superintendence, and appeared to have chosen this as a way of assisting my slender means, by a considerable annual income, without hurting my feelings.

Bertollon was in more than one respect a distinguished man. His acquirements were various; he possessed wit and eloquence; he captivated by his gracefulness and dignity; in company he was the spirit of joy, and his sole aim was to gain the esteem of his fellow-citizens. He had already refused several public appointments with a modesty which made him still more worthy of general confidence. He was wealthy, the partner in a large commercial house, was possessed of one of the most delightful châteaux on the height of the neighbouring village of Castelnau, and was the husband of the most beautiful woman of Montpellier. His wife usually lived at the château, where Bertollon saw her but seldom, but in winter she resided in town. Their alliance seemed to have been formed not from love, but convenience and interest.

What made this man still more remarkable to me was his freedom from all prejudice, in a town which seemed entirely animated by religious fanaticism, and where he only was an exception. Notwithstanding this he went frequently to mass, and was himself a member of the fraternity of the Penitents. "It is so easy," he used to say, "to reconcile men; we need but pay homage to their prejudices if we cannot combat and conquer them, and are sure to gain all hearts. He who wages open war against prejudices is as much a fanatic as he who defends them with arms."

We nevertheless were often involved in friendly disputes. He considered happiness the grand end of man, and recognised no bounds in the choice of means to that end; he derided my ardent zeal for

virtue, called it a work of social order, and proved to me that it assumed different colours among different nations. His wit sometimes made me appear ridiculous to myself, by following my cardinal virtues to different nations, where he always confounded them. But notwithstanding the danger of these principles, Bertollon was dear to me, for he always did what was right.

While I thus devoted my time to friendship and the muses, the two windows and the balcony of the house of De Sonnes were not forgotten. M. Bertollon had more than once offered to exchange my garret for a room in his house, which was furnished in costly style, and commanded an extensive and cheerful prospect. But I would not have exchanged my poor garret for his best drawing-room, or for the prospect of the paradise of Languedoc.

By chance--for a singular shyness prevented me from making inquiries--I learned that the family De Sonnes would, in a few weeks, return to Nismes, and that they were in great grief for Clementine's sister, who had died lately.

The few weeks, and, indeed, the quarter passed. As often as I played the harp, my eye was fixed on those beloved walls, but the family De Sonnes did not return, and no chance brought me further intelligence. I was silent, and concealed my love from the world.

The vacation arrived; I hastened to Nismes in hopes of being happier there. As I passed the château on the Vidourle I stopped. All was closed, though the fields and vineyards were thronged with reapers and grape-gatherers. I looked for the magic spot under the chesnut trees, where dream and reality were once so magically blended. I threw myself under the waving branches, and on the spot which Clementine's foot had once hallowed by its touch. Love and sadness weighed me down, and I kissed the sacred ground which had then borne all that the world contained most dear to me.

In vain, alas! I looked for the angelic vision. I left the delightful spot when evening approached, and only the rocky summits of the Sevens reflected the sun's golden rays over the dusky plain.

My uncle Etienne and the pious mother, with my cousins, Maria, Antonia, and Susanna, received me with affecting joy. I embraced them all speechlessly and rapturously, and knew not who expressed the greatest affection for me, or whom I most loved. I was the son and brother of the family; I felt at home, and was the joy of them all.

"Yes," said my uncle, with emotion, "you are the joy of us all, and the hope of our church. All the reports from Montpellier have praised your industry, and have expressed the esteem your teachers entertain for you. Continue, Colas, to strengthen yourself, for our sufferings are great, and the affliction of the true believers knows no end. God calls you to become his chosen instrument to break the power of Antichrist, and to raise triumphantly the gospel now trodden in the dust."

The fears of my uncle had been particularly increased of late by the harsh expressions of the governor of the province against the secret Protestants. The Mareschale de Montreval resided in Nismes, and was the more powerful and formidable as he possessed the unbounded confidence of the king. His threats against the Calvinists spread from mouth to mouth, and were the common talk even of the boys in the street.

I was harassed by another care. In vain had I wandered daily up and down the street in which the house of M. Albertas was situated; in vain had I loitered in the amphitheatre; Clementine was nowhere to be seen.

One morning I met the old servant who had entertained me, by the orders of Madame de Sonnes, in the château. He recognised me joyfully, shook me by the hand, and told me, among a thousand other things, that Madame de Sonnes and her daughter had left Nismes for

some months, but had gone to Marseilles to seek relief from their sorrow for the loss of a beloved daughter and sister, in the amusements of that great commercial city.

My hopes of seeing Clementine once more being thus disappointed, I walked sadly home. All the joyful expectations which had supported me for the last six months were frustrated. I determined to go to Marseilles, which was only three days' journey, there to search every street and window, attend every church and mass, to discover her, if only for a moment;--would she not, for so much trouble, give me one kind look?

But, on cooler reflection, I soon abandoned my wild scheme, and returned home more dejected than ever.

With surprise, I there perceived an unusual embarrassment and trouble in every countenance.

My aunt came towards me, put her hands on my shoulders, and kissed me with an air of deep melancholy; my cousins kindly seized my hand, as if wishing to comfort me.

"What is it, after all?" asked my uncle, with a powerful voice; who, notwithstanding his air of piety, had something heroic in his character; "you know that a good Christian is most cheerful when the waves of misfortune are lashed most tempestuously. The devil has no power over us, and providence has numbered every hair of our heads. The mareschale is not beyond the power of the Almighty."

I expressed my surprise at this. "You are right, Colas," said my uncle, "and I am grieved at the despair of the women. The Mareschale de Montreval sent orders here an hour ago for you to go to the castle tomorrow morning, at ten o'clock;--that is all. And where then is there cause for alarm? If you have a good conscience, go to him without fear, though his castle be hell itself."

No wonder that the peremptory order, coming from so exalted a personage, terrified the humble miller's family. The mareschale seldom showed himself to the people, and then only when attended by a numerous suite of high officers, noblemen, and guards. The external pomp of the great, exercises greater awe on the minds of the uneducated multitude than their power.

Next morning, my aunt arranged my wardrobe with trembling hands, and I endeavoured to comfort my dear afflicted relatives. "It is ten o'clock," cried my uncle, "go in God's name, we will pray for you."

I went, and learned that the mareschale was still in his cabinet. After an hour and a half I was conducted through a suite of rooms to him. An elderly gentleman, rather thin, and of a stiff commanding manner, of dark complexion and piercing eyes, stepped towards me, while the respect of those around marked him as the mareschale.

"I wished to see you, Alamontade," said he, "as you have been distinguished by so much praise on the university list of Montpellier. Cultivate your talents, and you may become a useful man. You shall have my patronage for the future. Let not my encouragement make you proud, but more industrious, and I shall not fail to learn how you proceed. Do all in your power to retain the friendship of M. Bertollon, your patron, and tell him that I sent for you."

This was all the mareschale said. He evinced satisfaction with me during this short interview. I commended myself to his favour and hastened to comfort my family, who were most anxious about me.

Their joy at my return was great, and soon all our neighbours, indeed the whole town had heard the great honour I had received from the mareschale. "Did I not say before that it is God who governs the hearts of the powerful?" exclaimed my uncle; "The sun rises out of

darkness, and the holy cross rears itself to heaven over the bruised serpent and painful thorns."

On arriving at Montpellier, I found M. Bertollon had gone to his wife in the country. With melancholy feelings I stood in my garret before the withered wreath, and sighed forth the name of Clementine, while I kissed the faded leaves which had once bloomed in her delicate hand. I felt half ashamed of the tears with which disappointed hope suffused my eyes, and yet I felt happy.

The wreath and the small part of the magnificent house, De Sonnes, were to become again, during winter, the mute witnesses of my love, joys, and hopes. Spring and its blossoms (I said as I looked towards the palace) will bring her, perhaps, to Montpellier.

At this moment I saw, at the opposite window, a female form attired in deep mourning, and with her back turned towards me. My pulse ceased to beat, my breath stopped, and my eyes became dim. "It can only be Clementine," said a voice within me; but I had sunk down senseless on the window, having neither the courage nor the power to look up and convince myself.

When I had recovered, I raised myself, and cast a trembling look towards her. Her face was turned towards me, covered with a black veil, with which the breezes sported; it was raised--I saw Clementine, and that at a moment when I had engaged her attention. I cast down my eyes, and felt a burning glow through my veins. When I again raised them, she was gone from the window, but not from my mind. "It is she," said a voice within me, and I stood on the pinnacle of earthly bliss, solitary, but having before me Clementine's image, and inspiring anticipations for the future. A golden gleam was poured over the smoky walls, and a sea of flowers waved over the naked roofs; the world dissolved before me like a splendid cloud, Clementine's form passed through a lovely eternity, while I was beside her, and my lot was endless rapture. "Oh, of what bliss is the human heart

susceptible!" I exclaimed, falling on my knees, and raising my hands to heaven. "Oh God! for what scenes hast thou spared me! Oh! perpetuate this feeling!"

Late that evening, I saw the windows lighted, and her shadow passing to and fro; I took my harp, and with its sounds, my feelings gradually became calm.

I did not awake till late the next morning, having passed a sleepless night. When I stepped to the window I saw Clementine leaning from hers in her morning dress. I saluted her, and received a scarcely perceptible return; but she looked kindly. I was riveted to the spot while she remained, our glances met timidly; but my soul conversed with her, and I seemed to receive soft answers.

Oh! blessed hours which I dreamed away harmlessly in the secret contemplation of a lovely being. With my poor and humble parentage, and without claim, as I was, to personal attractions, how could I raise my hopes to the most lovely, richest heiress of Montpellier, whose favour was courted by the noblest youths of the country?

How much do my thoughts love to dwell on the recollection of those days! Friendship and love belong only to mortal man; he shares them neither with angels nor the animal creation; they are the offspring of the union of the earthly and divine nature within us: they constitute the privilege of man. In their possession we are more pious, more believing, more indulgent, and more at home in the universe; we have more confidence, and endure the thorns by the way. Nay, even the wilderness appears more splendid in the glow of a calm, bright fancy.

In the evening I again took the harp, struck the chords, and played the sufferings of Count Peter of Provence and his beloved Magellone, then one of the newest and most affecting ballads, and full of expressive melody. When I had finished the first stanza, and rested a minute, I heard the sound of a harp, softly repeating the same air in

the stillness of the night. Who could it be but Clementine, who wished to become the echo of my sentiments? When she had finished I began again; thus we responded to each other. Music is the language of the soul. What an ineffable delight to my heart, Clementine thought me worthy of this converse!

Alas! I must pass over in silence a thousand nameless trifles which receive their inestimable value only from the sense by which they are given and received; but they cannot be forgotten. The corse of the dream of my happy youth, I mean recollection, is also still delightful, though its life has passed away.

My dream lasted thus for two years. During that time we saw each other in silence, but still loving, and we conversed only by means of the chords of the harp, without ever approaching nearer. I knew the church where she prayed; I also went and prayed too. I knew the days when she, in the company of her mother and friends, promenaded amid the shady trees of the Peyrou;[1] there I went also. Her look showed that she recognised me, and timidly rewarded me.

Without having spoken to each other during this long space of time, we had by degrees become the most intimate confidants; we reciprocated our joys and sorrows; we entreated and granted, hoped and feared, and made vows that were never broken.

No one suspected the intercourse of our souls, our sweet and innocent familiarity. Only M. Bertollon's kindness threatened more than once to rob me of my joys, as he insisted on my occupying a better room, and it was with difficulty I retained possession of my garret.

When Madame Bertollon had returned from her country house her husband introduced me to her. "Here," said he, "is Alamontade, a young man whom I love as a friend, and to whom I wish nothing better than that he may become yours also."

What I had heard of her was not exaggerated. She seemed scarcely twenty years old, was very beautiful, and might have served an artist as an idea for a Madonna. A pleasing timidity rendered her the more attractive, especially as most of her sex and rank in Montpellier knew less of that reserve, without which grace itself loses all its charms.

She spoke little, but well; she appeared cold, but the vivacity and brightness of her eye betrayed a sensitive heart and active mind. She was the benefactress of the poor, and honoured by the whole city. Neglected by her husband, and adored by young and attractive men of the first families, she allowed not calumny itself to throw a shade over the purity of her character. She lived as retired as in a convent. I saw her but seldom, and only during my last year at the university, when the illness of her husband afforded me an opportunity of meeting in his apartment.

The tenderest anxiety for the health of M. Bertollon was visible in all her features. She was incessantly with him, administering his medicine, or reading to him; and, when the illness reached its crisis, she never quitted his bedside, but even destroyed her own health by her continual nightly watching.

When M. Bertollon recovered, he continued his cold and polite behaviour towards her, and never returned her affection. This indifference she seemed to feel deeply, and by degrees became estranged from him as his health returned. I could only pity her, and reproach my friend.

"But what do you demand of me, Colas?" he said one day. "Are you master of your own heart, that you can ask obedience from mine? I grant you my wife is beautiful; but mere beauty is only a pleasing gloss, under which the heart remains cold. Why do we not fall in love with the chefs-d'oeuvre of the sculptor? I grant you she has understanding; this, however, we do not love, but at most admire. She is charitable; but she has money enough, and takes no pleasure in

expensive amusements. She showed me much attention during my illness; for that I am grateful to her. She shall not want any thing that she wishes, and I can give; but the heart cannot be given, that must be taken. As to the rest, my friend, you do not know her. She also has her failings; nay, if you will allow so much, her faults. If it should unfortunately happen, now, that some of these faults are of such a nature as necessarily to extinguish every rising feeling of affection in me, am I to blame, that I cannot change stone into gold, and transform a marriage of convenience into one of the heart?"

"But, dear Bertollon, I never even discovered the slightest trace of such a repulsive fault."

"That is because you do not know my wife. To you, as my friend, I may reveal what has estranged me from her for ever, even during the very first days of our marriage. It is her untameable and unreasonable temper, which is as an all-consuming fire. Trust not the ice and snow of the external veil; a volcano is burning within it which, from time to time, must emit its flames, or it would burst its outward covering. She is quiet, but the more dangerous; every feeling is fermenting long within her before it manifests itself; but when it has done so, it is the more lasting and destructive. She seems to be virtue and gentleness personified; without her unhappy temper she might be a saint, but that destroys all better feelings. I have often surprised her in designs so atrocious and terrible, that it is difficult to conceive how one of them could find its way into the soul of a woman, or how she could harbour it. Such a character, my friend, is not likely to conquer one's heart."

These confidential communications startled me the more, as I had proofs of Bertollon's knowledge of men, and his correct judgments. In the meanwhile, I did not discontinue my visits to Madame Bertollon, and thought I perceived that she found pleasure in my society. She was always tranquil, gentle, and seemed suffering. So much beauty and gentleness changed my respect into sincere friendship. I formed

the resolution of reconciling her to her husband, let it cost what it would; or, rather, of bringing him back to her arms.

The habit of daily intercourse removed, by degrees, the constraint of etiquette, and made her society absolutely necessary to me. Once when I was walking with her in the garden, and she leaned on my arm, she said: "You are Bertollon's most intimate friend and confidant. I consider you mine also, and your character gives me a claim on your kindness. Speak openly, Alamontade, for you know the reason--why does Bertollon hate me?"

"He does not hate you, madame, he entertains the highest esteem for you. Hate? he must be a monster if he can do that. No! he is a noble man, he cannot hate any body."

"You are right: he can hate no one, because he loves no one. He does not consider himself born for the world, nor for any one; but that the whole world, and every one in it, is made for him. Education, perhaps, never poisoned a more feeling heart and a sounder head than his."

"You judge, perhaps, too harshly, madame."

"Would to Heaven I did! Pray convince me of the contrary."

"I convince you? Not so, madame; observe your husband, and you will change your mind."

"Observe him? I always did so, and always found him the same."

"He is a kind, amiable man, at least."

"Amiable! he is so, he knows it, and takes pains to be so; but, unfortunately, not to make others happy--only himself. For this I cannot call him good, although I cannot call him bad."

"Surely, madame, I do not understand you; permit me, however, to return confidence for confidence. I never knew two human beings who so much deserved to be happy, and were so calculated to render each other so, as you and your husband, and yet you are estranged from each other. I shall certainly believe I have lived long enough, and have accomplished enough, if I can unite you more affectionately to each other, and attach your now divided hearts."

"You are very kind; but though half your wish is already accomplished--for my heart has long been pursuing his, which flies from me--I fear that you attempt an impossibility. However, if any one could succeed in this, you are that one. You, Alamontade, are the first to whom Bertollon has quite attached himself,--to whom he firmly clings. Try it; change the disposition of the man."

"You are joking; I change him? What other virtue do you wish Bertollon to practise? He is generous, modest, the protector of innocence, of an unvarying temper, without predominant passions, disinterested, kind."

"You are right, he is all that."

"And how shall I change him?"

"Make him a better man."

"A better man?" replied I, astonished, stopping and looking with embarrassment into the eyes of this beautiful woman, which were filled with tears. "Is he, then, bad? Is he vicious?"

"That he is not," she said; "but he is not good."

"And yet, madame, you allow that he possesses all the noble qualities for which I just now praised him? Do you not, perhaps, demand too much from a mortal?"

"I do not deny that he possesses what you have praised in him, Alamontade; but he does not use those qualities as virtues, only as instruments. He does much good, not because it is good, but because it is advantageous to him. He is not virtuous, but prudent. In every action he only looks at the useful and injurious, never at the good and evil. He would as soon employ hell for accomplishing his designs as heaven. His happiness consists in the attainment of his desires, and for this he is and does what suits his purpose under any given circumstances. The world is to him the field of desire, wherein all belongs to the most fortunate and cunning. The throng of men living together created, in his opinion, states and laws, religions and usages. The wisest man in his eyes is he who knows the entangled tissue of circumstances to its finest threads; and he who knows that can do any thing. Nothing is in itself right or wrong; opinion alone sanctions and condemns. This, Alamontade, is a picture of my husband. He cannot love me, for he only loves himself. His mind and taste change, and with them his nature. With iron perseverance he pursues and attains his ends. The son of a much respected family, which had been reduced in circumstances, he wished to be rich, so he became a merchant, went to distant lands and returned the possessor of a million. He then wished to secure his wealth by uniting himself with one of the most respectable families of this city, and I became his wife. Desirous to possess influence in public affairs, without exciting envy, he made himself popular, and refused the most honourable posts of office. In his opinion nothing is unattainable; he considers nothing sacred; he conquers every obstacle; no one is too strong for him, because all are weak by some propensity, passion, and opinion."

This picture of Bertollon's character staggered me. I found it corresponding to the original in every particular. I had never formed a clear idea of all this, although I had felt it. I discovered the enormous chasm that separated their hearts, and despaired of ever being able to fill it up.

"But, madame," said I, pressing her hand with emotion, "do not despair; your persevering affection and virtue will finally triumph over him."

"Virtue! Oh, my dear Alamontade, what can be expected from a man who calls it a weakness, or one-sidedness of character, or prudery of mind? From one who considers religion only as the toy of church and education,--the toy with which the fancy of the shortsighted plays with childish zeal?"

"But still he possesses a heart."

"He has a heart, but only for himself--not for others. He wishes to be loved without any sacrifice of feeling on his part. Alas! can one love such a man? No, Alamontade, love demands something more; it gives itself up to the beloved object, exists in it, and is not master of itself; it does not calculate, it knows no care; it takes its chance whether fidelity will at length bless it or treachery destroy it. But it cannot exist without hope; it demands the heart of its object, and in that finds its heaven."

"And in that it finds its heaven," sighed I, as I again stood in my own chamber and thought of Clementine.

I took down the withered wreath, which had been hitherto a sacred pledge of Clementine's favour, and hung it upon my harp. Had she not herself thrown it on the breast which incloses my loving heart? Did she not then appear as if she wished to crown that heart with her own hand? Could it only have been childish play? Ah! could it have been indifferent to her whether it was a crown of thorns or a wreath of blossoms which she was winding round my heart?

She was at the window. I raised the wreath and pressed it to my lips. She seemed to perceive it; she suppressed a smile, bent forward and looked into the street, but not again at me. This response plunged me

into inexpressible trouble. It seemed as if she was ashamed of the gift she once had bestowed on me. I now suddenly became conscious of what I expected and hoped from her. I wished an impossibility. I had never thought of Clementine as my wife; I loved her and wished to be loved by her. But she my wife? I, the poor son of a farmer who died encumbered with debt. I who still had to battle with want, and only saw an uncertain fate in the future--I expect the richest heiress in Montpellier!

At this thought my proud spirit sank. I loved Clementine and forgave her if she could not return my love. I saw clearly that I could not change the relations of social life; and, in fact, was too proud to make my fortune by marriage.

Henceforth I applied more ardently to my studies, wishing to pave my way to Clementine's elevation by my own energies. Many nights I passed sleepless in study. Desirous of hearing the unbiassed judgment of critics respecting my talents, I published, anonymously, a work on the jurisprudence of the ancients, and a collection of poems, the greater part of which were inspired by my secret passion.

This publication of my labours had an unexpected success. Curiosity soon discovered the name of the author, who was everywhere courted. The loud applause raised my self-esteem, and the success of my first attempt rekindled the extinguished flame of hope by the light of which I saw Clementine as my own, though at a distance which rendered her indistinct.

She herself rewarded me in the most pleasing manner, by once reading my poems at the window, when their author had become known. Indeed, from a hundred allusions in the poems which she only understood, she might have guessed their author. She looked across to me, smiled, and pressed the book to her bosom, as if she wished to tell me, "I love it, and what you express in it you have addressed to this heart, which feels and is grateful."

I again took up the withered wreath, at which I had often sung; smiled, made a sigh, and retired.

But no one was more delighted by the applause I had gained than my friend Bertollon. He became more affectionate and confidential. We regarded each other as brothers; he was devoted to me, and proved, in a thousand ways, that he had a heart for others. He did not let a day pass without showing some kindness; it was only by chance that I learned many of his noble deeds.

"Oh! Bertollon," I once exclaimed, as I pressed him to my heart, "what a man you are! Why must I pity as much as admire you?"

"You go too far in both points, for I deserve neither one nor the other," replied he, with a complacent smile.

"No! Bertollon, what I lament is, that you are good and virtuous, without wishing to appear so; you call virtue fanaticism and narrowness of ideas, and yet you constantly practise its precepts."

"Well, then, Alamontade, rest satisfied with that. Why do you for ever weary yourself with my conversion? When you are older I shall see you treading in my footsteps; be, at least, tolerant for the present; the same child has, perhaps, a twofold name."

"I doubt it. Could you, Bertollon, voluntarily plunge yourself into misery in order to support a righteous cause?"

"What do you call a righteous cause? Your ideas are not clear."

"If you could save Montpellier from destruction by sacrificing yourself, would you be capable of suffering poverty or death?"

"M. Colas, you rave again. Only fanatics can demand and make such sacrifices, and it is good for the world that there are such. But now come for once to your senses; I am sorry that you are always indulging such whims, for in this way you will never be happy. Run over the whole world and collect the fools who would meet death for your notions: you will not find one in a hundred million. Every thing is true, good, useful, just, and noble, only under certain circumstances. The ideas of men vary everywhere; many have fancied that they could save the world by their death. They died, but for their own caprice, not for the world, and were afterwards laughed at as fools."

"For these words I could despise you, Bertollon."

"Then you would not be over virtuous, according to your own notions."

"If you could increase your wealth by plunging me into misery, would you do so!"

"For such a question I ought to despise you, Colas?"

"And yet I may put it, for you say that you only strive after that which is useful to yourself. You weigh the goodness of an action only by the result."

"Dear Colas, I see you will be a bad advocate, and will make a poor fortune, if you only defend causes which are right according to your notions, and never an unjust one by which you might gain."

"I swear to you, Bertollon, I should abhor myself as long as I lived, if ever I moved my lips for the accusation of innocence, and the defence of crime."

"And yet you, good-hearted simpleton, you will do it more than once, because you will not always find guilt or innocence written on men's foreheads. You will be the world's fool, if you will not walk its way."

In this manner we often disputed. I was sometimes puzzled with him, and could have feared him, had he not always expressed his terrible opinions so jocosely, that he did not seem to believe them himself. He only wished to irritate me, and when he had succeeded, laughed heartily. But his actions contradicted his words.

Madame Bertollon, on the contrary, daily displayed more of the noble sentiments that animated her. She glowed for the virtuous actions which she practised with religious ardour.

I became her guest, and we were never in want of conversation. Alone with her I spent the long winter evenings, and from me she learned the harp. Soon I could accompany her charming voice, while she sang my songs with deep feeling. She was lovely, and her beauty would have been dangerous to me, had not my heart been fixed on Clementine.

When I spoke of her with enthusiasm to Bertollon, he smiled; if I reproached him for leaving such a lovely creature to herself, he replied, "Our tastes differ; let every one follow his own inclination. Would you, dear despot, have all heads and hearts moulded in the same form? I know my wife loses nothing by me, consequently she is not made unhappy by my treating her in the manner so customary in fashionable society. She knew this beforehand. If you are happy in her society I am glad; and I rejoice if she also finds pleasure in your conversation. You see, virtuous Colas, that I, also, am capable of great sacrifices, for I leave you to her often when I most sincerely desire your company."

I had finished my studies, had taken the degree of Doctor of Laws, and had obtained permission to practise as attorney before the tribunals of the kingdom. My increased occupations during this time

prevented me from visiting Madame Bertollon as frequently as before; but she received me the more joy fully when we met; and I felt now, more than ever, how sincerely I was attached to her. We never confessed how indispensable we were to each other; but each of us betrayed it in every feature, and by the cordiality of demeanour.

At times it seemed to me as if she were more melancholy than she had been, and then, again, more affable and complaisant; at other times she appeared to treat me with marked coldness and reserve; and then, again, as if she wished, with sisterly affection, to quiet my anxiety. This change of behaviour surprised me, and I vainly endeavoured to discover the reason of it. I could not help perceiving that she no longer possessed her former serenity and equanimity. I often found her with eyes that evinced recent weeping. She sometimes spoke with singular enthusiasm of the retirement of a convent, and withdrew more and more from her usual society. A hidden melancholy gnawed the bud of her youth.

These reflections make me also melancholy, and I in vain endeavoured to cheer her. The calm sadness of her look, the vanishing bloom of her cheek, her deep silence, and her efforts to conceal, by an affected cheerfulness, the grief which was gnawing her heart, added to my friendship the genial warmth and tenderness of sympathy. How gladly would I have sacrificed my life to procure happiness for her!

One evening when I accompanied her singing on my harp, a sudden burst of tears choked her voice. Alarmed, I ceased playing. She rose, and was on the point of hurrying to her apartment to conceal her grief.

How touching, in moments of quiet suffering, are youth, beauty, and innocence. I seized her hand, and held her back.

"No!" she exclaimed, "let me go."

"Stay, I cannot possibly let you go in this excited state. May I not witness your grief? Am I not your friend? Do you not yourself call me so? And does not this pleasing name give me a right to ask you the cause of that affliction which you in vain endeavour to conceal from me?"

"Leave me, I conjure you, leave me," she cried, as she endeavoured, with feeble efforts, to free herself.

"No," said I, "you are unhappy."

"Unhappy, alas!" she sighed, with unrestrained grief, drooping her beautiful face on my bosom to conceal her tears.

Involuntarily I clasped my arms around the gentle sufferer. A deep sympathy seized me. I stammered forth some words of consolation, and begged her to be calm.

"Alas! I am unhappy," she exclaimed, sobbing, and with vehemence. I dared not endeavour further to appease the storm of feeling by my untimely persuasions; and, letting her weep without interruption, I led her back to her seat, as I felt that she became exhausted and trembling, her head resting still on my bosom.

"You are not well?" I asked timidly.

"I feel better now," she replied; and, becoming more tranquil, she looked up, and seeing tears in my eyes, asked, "Why do you weep, Alamontade?"

"Can I remain unmoved by your sorrows?" I answered, bending down to her. Silently we sat absorbed in our feelings, hand in hand, gazing at each other. A tear rolled down her cheek, which I kissed away, and drew the sufferer closely to my heart, unconscious of what I was

doing. During this embrace our fears evaporated with the glow of our cheeks; and what we called friendship, was changed into love.

We parted; ten times we bade each other farewell, and as often I clasped her in my arms, forgetting the separation.

Keeling as if intoxicated, I entered my room; the harp, wreath, and window, terrified me.

I had never been in a greater state of confusion than I was on the following morning. I could not understand myself, and wavered between contradictions. Madame Bertollon appeared to love me; but hitherto she had heroically struggled with feelings which seemed to wound the nobility of her mind. I was the wretch who, without loving her, could encourage her passion, and fan the fatal flame by which she must be consumed, and I must be dishonoured still more than the unhappy woman herself.

In vain I called to mind the sacredness of my duties; in vain I disclosed to myself the base ingratitude I committed against Bertollon's generous friendship; in vain I remembered my own and Clementine's vows; all that once had been to her pleasing and estimable had lost its power and influence. The tumult of my senses continued without intermission: only Bertollon's lovely wife floated in my imagination; I still felt on my lip the glow of her kiss, and my flattered vanity overwhelmed the earnest warnings of my conscience with illusive sophistry.

"Wretch! you will feel remorse, you will some day blush at your own disgraceful act, and the snow of advanced age will not quench the burning of an evil conscience!"

With these words I endeavoured to arouse my better feelings. While I still revelled in the remembrance of the previous evening, and dark forebodings were rising in my mind, I sat down at the table to write to

Madame Bertollon, to describe to her the danger to which we should both expose ourselves by further intercourse, and to tell her that to continue worthy of her friendship I must leave her and Montpellier.

But while reason dictated her precepts, and I wished to make the first heavy sacrifice to virtue, I wrote to Madame Bertollon the most solemn oaths of my attachment, declaring falsely that a secret passion for her had long consumed me, and that I saw my happiness only in her love. I entreated and conjured her not to let me despair, and unrolled to her imagination a vivid picture of our bliss.

I started up, read the letter over and over, tore it, and wrote another, repeating only what I had written, and then again destroyed it. As if by an unknown power I was drawn against my will to a crime at which my soul vainly shuddered. While vowing to myself, in a half-suppressed voice, that I would start for Nismes, and never again see the walls of Montpellier, I also vowed unconsciously I would never leave the charming though unhappy woman; but that I would cling to her, although my passion should lead to inevitable death.

It was as if two distinct souls were struggling within me with equal power and skill. But consciousness became more dim, and the feeling of duty expired in the feeling of the all-engrossing desire. I resolved to hasten to Madame Bertollon, thinking that she was perhaps tormenting herself with reproaches at the weakness she had shown, or that she also might be determined to leave me and Montpellier. I intended to detain her to reason away her fears, and to endeavour to persuade her of the lawfulness of our love.

I started up and ran to the door. A voice within me again cried, "You are going to sin then?--to lose the long guarded feeling of innocence?" I hesitated, and stepped back, saying to myself, "Be pure as God and continue so. One day more and this storm will pass over, and then you are safe."

This holy feeling exalted me; the words, "Be pure as God," sounded above the tumult of my agitated feelings, and deterred me, for the time at least, from hastening to Madame Bertollon. But the struggle remained undecided; my yearnings became more impetuous, and I scorned my own virtuous intentions.

At this moment the door of my room opened, and M. Bertollon entered.

"How are you, dear Colas," he asked, "are you unwell?" At this question I first perceived that I had thrown myself on my bed, from which I jumped up, but had not the courage to take the hand which he extended to me.

"But what is the matter with you, Colas?" he said again, "you look confused and pale."

Before I could reply, the voice within me again called, "Disclose all to him, disclose all to her husband, and a barrier will be raised between you and his wife; you will remain pure, you will not be the seducer of a woman, nor the traitor and deceiver of your noble benefactor and friend."

"Bertollon," said I, hastily, fearing that I might not finish my confession; "I am unhappy, because I love your wife." I had scarcely uttered the last syllable when remorse seized me; but it was too late, it was done, the husband knew all, and I was now for once right. In the wild tumult of the senses, when powerful passion struggles with the sense of duty, it is only a sudden and decided act which we perceive to be a remedy, that can save us. We must as it were forcibly drive the reluctant body to accomplish it, until we can no more return. I felt like one who is tossed about by the waves of the ocean, and who, when on the point of drowning, indistinctly perceives before his giddy eye the branches on the shore, and hears a voice within him saying, "Seize them."

Bertollon changed colour and said, "What did you say, Colas?"

"I must go, I must flee Montpellier, you and your wife, for I love her," replied I.

"I think you are a fool," said he, smiling, and he regained his usual colour.

"No, Bertollon, I am in earnest; I must not remain here. Your wife is a virtuous woman! and I fear my intercourse with her will prove her ruin and my own. It is yet time. You are my friend, my benefactor, I will not deceive you. Take this bitter confession as a proof of my love for you. I am too weak to be always master of myself, and your wife is too lovely for me to remain indifferent near her."

"A saint like you, Colas," said Bertollon, laughing loud, "who with pious devotion confesses the secrets of his heart to the husband himself, will not be dangerous to any husband. Compose yourself; you will remain with us. What folly to make so much ado about a passion? I trust you, and have suspicion neither of you nor of my wife; let that suffice. If you love each other, what can I do against your hearts? If I interpose the world between you, would you love each other less for that? Will your removal remove also your heart? Love each other; I know you both think too nobly to forget yourselves."

He said all this so ingenuously and cheerfully, and with a tone of such unsuspecting confidence, that I pressed him with emotion to my heart. His noble-mindedness renewed my virtuous resolutions; I was ashamed of my baseness and even of the fact that it had cost me so hard a struggle.

"No! dear Bertollon," said I. "I should indeed be a wretch if I could betray your confidence and requite your friendship so disgracefully. You have brought me back to a sense of my better self; I will remain

here, and the recollection of your trust in me will preserve me against any dishonourable intention. I will remain and prove that I am worthy of you, by breaking off all intercourse with your wife. I will never see her alone; I will----"

"Why tell me all this?" interrupted Bertollon. "It is enough that I trust you. Do you imagine that I have not long observed that my wife loves you, that her love is characterised by her violent, impetuous temper, and that her passion is the more powerful the more she conceals it? Impress her with your noble principles, and cure her if you wish; but be cautious. I know her; her love might soon change into terrible hatred, and then woe be to you."

"What! Do you expect, Bertollon, that I shall cure her of a disease by which I am myself overwhelmed? And what are you talking of the violence of her temper? Of this I have never discovered even the slightest symptom."

"Friend Colas, you do not know the sex. In order to please you, she will not show herself in her true colours; and should she once forget herself, love will make you blind."

Here the subject was dropped, and he engaged my attention by another topic, as he would not suffer me to resume our former conversation. The more I had cause to admire the extent of his confidence, the calmer I became, and the more I resolved to separate gradually from his wife. The following evening I saw her again: she was sitting alone in her apartment, her beautiful head resting sadly on her arm. As soon as she perceived me she rose, her face expressing a pleasing confusion, and her eyes cast down. For some time we remain silent.

At length I asked, trembling, "May I dare to appear before you? But I only come to atone for my transgression."

To this she made no reply.

"I have abused your confidence," I continued. "Esteem ought to be my only feeling for the wife of my friend. I have acted dishonourably."

"So have I," she added in a whisper.

"Alas! madame, I feel I am too little master of myself;--nay, who could be so in your presence? But, should it cost my life, I will not disturb your peace of mind. My resolution is unalterably taken. I have discovered my innermost heart to your husband."

"Discovered!" she exclaimed, terrified; "and he--?"

"He at first changed colour."

"He changed colour?" she faltered.

"But with confidence in you, madame, and with a confidence greater than my virtue, he wished to dissuade me from my intention of leaving Montpellier."

"Was that your intention, Alamontade?"

"It is still so. I love you, madame; but you are Bertollon's wife, and I will not disturb the peace of a family to which I am indebted for a thousand benefits."

"You are a noble man," said she, shedding tears. "You intend doing what I was resolved to do. My clothes are ready packed. I must and will not conceal from you, Alamontade, that I wish I had never known you. Our friendship grew into love. I deceived myself in vain, and struggled too late against my violent feelings."

She sobbed more violently, and exclaimed, "Yes, it is better thus! We must part, but not for ever. No! only until our hearts beat more calmly, until we can meet with cooler friendship."

At these words I was deeply moved.

"But, alas! kind friend," she continued, still sobbing, and throwing herself on my bosom, "I shall not long survive this separation."

While her heart beat against mine, and our passion was rekindled, and our sense of duty was struggling for victory, the hours fled quickly. We vowed eternal, pure, sacred love, and yet swore to extinguish it in our hearts. We resolved to separate, to see each other seldom, and then only with calmness, and in the presence of witnesses, and sealed the indissoluble alliance of our souls with rapturous kisses.

What a wretched creature is man! He is ever weakest when he thinks himself strongest. He who flees temptation is the hero; he who wantonly runs into it to attain the crown of virtue has lost it before he begins the combat.

When we parted, we agreed that I should not go farther than a league from Montpellier. I was to live at the château near Castelnau, and only to come to town on an occasional visit. Without delay I executed my design, departing without venturing to take leave of Madame Bertollon; and, however much M. Bertollon was against it, he was, nevertheless, obliged at last to consent.

I soon recovered from my delusion in the tranquillity of rural nature. I felt that I had never loved Madame Bertollon, and I despised myself for endeavouring to make her believe that I entertained a sentiment for her which I did not feel. All with me had been nothing but an intoxicating delusion, which was first produced by the unhappy passion that this lovely creature could no longer conceal from me. She

alone was to be pitied, and it was my duty to restore to her the peace she had lost.

My mind now gradually resuming its wonted serenity and cheerfulness, rose above the clouds that had darkened it, and Clementine's image stood before me more resplendent and charming than ever. At my departure from Montpellier, I had left the wreath and harp behind, not because I had then quite forgotten Clementine, but because shame and a sacred awe drove me back when I was on the point of touching the adored relics. I no longer thought myself worthy of her, and considered the torments of my longing, and of the separation from her, a mild penance for my crime.

Several weeks passed, during which Bertollon only called on me, telling me often that he could not live without me, and yet that he was fettered by his affairs to the unlucky town.

He made several attempts to induce me to return to Montpellier; but in vain. I continued in my salutary retreat, and felt myself happier.

One morning early, I was awakened by my servant, who told me that M. Larette, a friend of Bertollon's, had called, and desired to speak to me immediately. At the same moment, Larette himself entered, pale and confused.

"Get up," he cried, "and come directly to Montpellier."

"What is the matter?" I asked, terrified.

"Get up and dress yourself; you must not lose a moment; Bertollon is poisoned, and is on the point of death."

"Poisoned?" I faltered, and sank back senseless on my bed.

"Only be quick, he wishes to see you once more; I hastened here by his order."

Trembling, I flung on my clothes, and followed him mechanically to the door, where a carriage awaited us. We stepped in, and, with the utmost speed, went to Montpellier.

"Poisoned?" I asked again on the way.

"Certainly," replied M. Larette, "but there is an inconceivable mystery about the affair. A fellow who bought the poison at the chemist's has been imprisoned; Madame Bertollon is also a prisoner in her apartment."

"Madame Bertollon a prisoner!--For what reason? And who has put her under arrest?"

"The magistrate."

"The magistrate! Is the police mad enough to fancy Madame Bertollon capable of poisoning her husband?"

"He believes it, and every body----"

"Sir, you are shrugging your shoulders; 'And every body?--' Well, continue: what were you going to say."

"That every body believes it. The fellow, Valentine I think is his name----"

"What Valentine? Sure the old faithful servant, the most honest fellow under the sun----"

"Well, he has deposed, that about a week ago, he fetched the poison by order of Madame Bertollon."

"The infernal liar; the----"

"And Madame Bertollon, when interrogated about the servant's deposition, has confessed it unconditionally. There, that is the whole affair."

"Confessed? I am bewildered; for I do not understand you. What has she confessed?"

"That she sent Valentine for the poison."

"Horrible! and also that it was she that murdered, poisoned, her own husband?"

"Who would like to confess such things? but such unfortunately is the case. Bertollon felt yesterday morning his usual indisposition; you know he is sometimes subject to giddiness. He then requested his wife, who keeps a medicine-chest, to give him the usual cordial, a very expensive essence which she keeps in a gilt blue phial."

"I know it well and also the essence."

"She herself poured it into a spoon, added some sugar and administered it to her husband. In a short time he felt the most violent spasms in his bowels. The physician was sent for and recognised the symptoms as the effect of poison; of which they found remains in the spoon. The physician did his utmost to save him. He asked for the essence to analyze it. At this Madame Bertollon was offended, and asked whether they thought she was a poisoner; but at length being no longer able to refuse the phial without causing suspicion, she gave it up. In the meanwhile several physicians had been called, as well as an officer of the police. The affair becoming known, the druggist, who recollected that the poison had been bought by Valentine, had informed the police of the circumstance. Valentine was immediately

arrested, but referred to his mistress and her orders. Madame Bertollon being interrogated by the police, fainted; all her keys were taken from her, the medicine-chest was examined, and the poison, which was recognised by the above-mentioned druggist, was found. It was, however, deficient in weight, and the essence in the blue phial being likewise examined, the poison was discovered in that. Thus, sir, do matters stand, and you may think of it as you please."

I shuddered but did not say a word, seeing in the whole a horrible connexion which neither Lurette nor any one but myself could perceive. Madame Bertollon loved me with frightful intensity, and our separation had increased her passion instead of checking it; thus she conceived this atrocious plan of freeing herself from her husband. I called to mind the consuming fire in her character, of which Bertollon had told me. I also remembered my last interview with her, during which I had inconsiderately told her that I had candidly confessed our attachment to her husband, and how she then was startled, and how she had inquired anxiously concerning Bertollon's deparment.

My conjecture was changed into a frightful certainty. I could imagine how the black thought was matured in her, I saw her mixing the accursed draught, and, infatuated by her passion, presenting it to her unhappy husband.

We arrived in Montpellier. I hastened to the room of my beloved benefactor, exclaiming at the foot of the stairs: "Is he still living?"

They told me in whispers to be calm, and prevented me from entering his apartment. He had sunk into a gentle slumber, from which he was expected to derive benefit, and even to recover during its influence.

"And where is Madame Bertollon?" I asked.

In answer to this I was told that she had left the house early that morning, and had gone to her relations, where she was under arrest

upon the security of her family; that her nearest relations, by their influence and with much difficulty, had succeeded in saving her from the disgrace of imprisonment. I was further told in confidence that M. Bertollon had advised her, through a friend, to fly to Italy before it was too late. As she hesitated, her brothers also had endeavoured to persuade her to avail herself of her short period of liberty. Her pride, however, triumphed, and her reply was: "I shall not fly, for by doing so I should own a crime of which I am not yet, and cannot be, convicted."

Beauty of form exerts its magic only so far as we conceive it to be the sign of a noble soul, but loses all its power, nay, inspires us with horror, when it is the cloak of crime. Let the artist paint Sin beautiful on the threshold of hell, and it will be a thousand times more terrible when that which is dearest to man is but the tool of his wickedness.

I could no longer think of Madame Bertollon without detestation. She was a poisoner, and all that Lurette had hastily told me was confirmed in Montpellier; while a number of various circumstances threw still greater light on her murderous deed.

All Montpellier was in agitation at this extraordinary occurrence. Bertollon's gradual recovery, which was accomplished by the skill of the physicians, caused the most lively joy in every house. I no more left the bed of my beloved friend, whom I honoured as a father and a brother.

"Oh, Bertollon!" I exclaimed one day, "You are saved. How miserable I should have been had you died! My grief would not long have allowed me to survive your death. You are my only friend, the only one in the world; you are my benefactor, my guardian angel. I am always ready to die for you. And is it possible that a woman, such a tender timid creature, a woman endowed with, such heavenly charms, a woman whose eyes and mouth preached virtue so sweetly, could be so atrocious?"

"Do you still love her, Alamontade," said Bertollon, pressing my hand.

"Love her? The very thought is revolting to me. I never loved her; it was only trifling vanity and a delusion of the senses that I once in my infatuation called love. I have never loved her. A secret power always drove my heart from her. How should I love one who intended to murder you? I curse every hour I spent in her society; and repent the attentions I lavished on her. Ah! I knew her not."

By this time the trial had commenced. The most celebrated counsel in Montpellier, M. Menard, came forward of his own accord to the family of the accused, and offered to be her defender. Menard had never lost a suit. The charm of his eloquence conquered all; where he could not convince reason he knew how to entangle it inextricably by doubts, and to excite against it all the feelings of the heart. Whenever he spoke in the court it was crowded with spectators, who often came from distant parts to hear him. He undertook with success even the worst cause, if he could expect from it a rich reward.

"I desire nothing," said Bertollon, "but an eternal separation from the poisoner, and I require no other punishment for her than the failure of her attempt. Her own conscience and public contempt are a sufficient sting to her. I know Menard is my personal enemy. He was once my rival, and I foresee that by his artifices he will so confound and dazzle the judges and people, that my infamous wife will extricate herself triumphantly."

"That he shall not do!" I exclaimed with vehemence. "Pray Bertollon entrust me with your case, though I am but a beginner, and have never spoken in a court of law. Confide in me and the justness of your cause. Indeed, it does not grieve me to appear before the tribunal against a lady whom I once called my friend, and who loaded me with

treacherous favours. You are my brother and benefactor, your cause is sacred."

Bertollon smiled, expressing at the same time his doubts as to my being a match for my adversary's tact. At length, however, he agreed to my wish of making his suit the first trial of my ability, but was apparently apprehensive.

"Be easy, dear Bertollon," said I, "friendship will inspire and exalt me if I should seem to sink under Menard's superior powers, and notwithstanding all his subtlety he will not be able to get over the facts which his client too hastily confessed."

From time immemorial no trial had excited greater interest than this, which was rendered so conspicuous, both by the atrocity of its cause, and the respectability of the parties concerned. And what a part I undertook! No one knew the relation in which I had stood to Madame Bertollon. No one imagined that I had once clasped the accused to my heart in a moment of extatic rapture; no one knew that her illicit affection for me had perhaps given her hand the first direction towards mixing the poisonous draught.

All this was still a secret, and was to remain so until Menard's art should threaten victory over me. Then only this last mine was to explode against him.

When it was reported in Montpellier that I was Bertollon's advocate, success was given to my opponent beforehand. After sufficient investigation, and the examination of witnesses, Menard and I were called to the bar. This powerful speaker seemed only to mock me. He almost evinced contempt, at appearing against a young man who had recently been his pupil, and was now going to make his debüt. He spoke with such power that he affected me most deeply, and almost inspired me for the cause of the accused.

The trial had been prolonged by Menard's manoeuvres for six months, when I had hoped to conquer in a few weeks. Menard was always followed by the applause of the people on leaving the court; and it appeared that I wasted my energies in rendering his victory more difficult, only to increase his laurels.

The beauty of the accused had gained for her party all the young men of the town, and her former beneficence engaged for her the poorer class of the people. I had to contend against Menard, against the secret predilection of innumerable hearts prejudiced in her favour, and the remembrance of the virtues which Madame Bertollon had once displayed.

The more, however, my cause seemed hopeless, the more my courage rose. An unusual energy animated me, and Menard himself began to respect or fear me the more I drove him back from his first conquests. His party diminished in proportion, as he was forced to acknowledge the truth of facts which he had before rendered doubtful and uncertain. Soon I heard my praise in public; soon a small number of partisans surrounded me: soon the applause of the people was increased, the more Madame Bertollon appeared guilty, and her beauty and virtues were eclipsed and darkened by the remembrance of so black a deed.

Pleasing as this incense was to me, it delighted me less than Clementine's quiet approval. Madame Bertollon was related to the family De Sonnes. When it was known that I undertook Bertollon's cause, Clementine often appeared at the window shaking her head sadly, and making menacing signs. I thought I understood her, and shrugged my shoulders, but was not deterred from performing a duty so sacred.

As my name became more known and lauded in Montpellier, she became more friendly. She appeared to forget her relationship to Madame Bertollon in my success. Yes! I saw myself loved by the

angel I adored. No mortal could be happier than I. Our dumb correspondence had now lasted for years.

But I turn to that fatal trial which now took the most serious turn for the accused. Madame Bertollon seeing every fact and witness in league against her, could do nothing but strongly deny her intention of poisoning her husband, though appearances rendered her guilty. I now insisted on interrogating her more closely respecting her object in buying the poison a week previous to the deed. To this she gave evasive answers, and entangled herself in contradictions. It was evident that she feared discovering the reason. All the entreaties of her relations, and the menaces of her advocate, were of no avail. This increased the suspicion; Menard gave up his case as lost, though still protesting her innocence. The tribunal ordered closer confinement, and threatened the first examination by the rack to force confession.

Now Madame Bertollon undertook to plead her own cause before the tribunal in which Menard had been so unsuccessful. In this I saw nothing but an artifice of Menard himself, who wished to call the power of female beauty to his aid to support his eloquence.

As she entered the hall a deathlike silence prevailed. She never was so charming as at this moment; her simple attire, and the paleness of deep grief, summoned compassion into each heart, and tears into every eye.

All was silent, and all eyes were turned from her upon me. I was to speak, but could not, such was my inexpressible confusion. She was the picture of suffering innocence. All the delightful hours I had spent with her were recalled to my memory on seeing her, and surrounded my soul like weeping angels pleading for her and whispering that she was certainly guiltless.

At length I recovered. I declared that no one would be more delighted by a proof of the innocence of the accused than her husband, and

myself, his advocate. But for this proof it was necessary that she should remove suspicion and confess her intention in purchasing the poison.

Madame Bertollon appeared very weak, leaning on the arm of her advocate. She looked at me with a painful glance, expressive of love and sorrow.

"Oh! Alamontade," she said, in a faint voice, "and must it be you to urge the discovery of my object in purchasing the poison? You--and in this place?"

After a few moments' silence she suddenly rose, turned her pale countenance towards the judges, and said, in a bitter tone, expressive of mental despair,

"My lords, you have threatened me with the rack to force my confession; that is sufficient, and I will put an end to the proceedings-- I am guilty, I intended a murder with this poison. More you will not learn from me; pronounce your verdict."

She turned and left the court--perfect silence and utter amazement prevailed. Two days afterwards the tribunal pronounced the verdict of "guilty" against the wretched woman.

M. Bertollon had long since recovered. He was more cheerful than usual, and joked as before at my zeal for virtue; he loved me at the same time so truly that it grieved him that I so obstinately persisted in my strict principles. I therefore sometimes afforded him the satisfaction of appearing to agree with him, and of yielding to his favourite whim, that all upon earth was but a play of expediency.

The evening previous to the day on which the sentence was passed I was with him; we were cheerfully sitting at our wine, until midnight, and swore everlasting friendship to each other till death.

"Tell me, Colas, do you know Clementine de Sonnes?"

I blushed. Wine and confidence in his friendship elicited the holy secret. Bertollon laughed immoderately, exclaiming repeatedly, "Simpleton that you are! you are everywhere tricked by your heavenly virtue. Pray be rational for once, why have you not told me this long since? She would now be your betrothed; well, she shall be yours, here is my hand upon it. With prudence we may subdue the world, why not a girl or a proud family? I have already observed that Clementine is not likely to refuse you."

In raptures I clasped my friend in my arms. "Oh! if you could do that, Bertollon, you would make me happy--make me a god."

"So much the better, for I shall still want your divine assistance for some pet plan. A girl so like your Clementine that they might be taken for sisters. Such a girl lives at Adze. You simpletons have hitherto thought that I go there as frequently as I do for the sake of pure air or business. No; I love the girl inexpressibly; no woman ever fettered me like her. As soon as I am rid of my wife I shall court the Venus of Adze. But then, M. Colas, I shall trouble you not to have such conversations with my future wife as you used to enjoy with my first one."

"What, Bertollon!" I exclaimed, confounded; "you will marry again?"

"Certainly. Look you. I at first thought you were going to play a romance in due form with my wife; I thought you really loved her, in which case I would have resigned her to you, and then we could have come to some arrangement in the affair. I should have liked it very well, and we should not have had all this ado about the poison which had nearly gone against me."

"But how do you mean, Bertollon? I do not quite understand you."

"I must tell you, you innocent. In my wife's absence, I one evening secretly searched her drawers--you may laugh; you see I did not quite trust you at that time, with all your virtue; for I thought you had exchanged love letters of grief and affection. While so doing, the lame Jacques happened to come down the stairs and saw me leave my wife's room after I played her this trick. But the blockhead passed quickly and saluted me."

"What trick do you mean? You talk so confusedly. Drink! here is to your health."

"And to yours, Colas! You have acquitted yourself well. You are a capital fellow. I lay you would not have made an address half so good before the court against my wife, had you known that I myself mixed the poison with the essence, though it was only a small quantity."

"No! certainly not, dear Bertollon."

"Therefore it was wise on my part not to tell you before; now it can do no harm."

"Why you were not fool enough to wish to poison yourself?"

"As to that I knew very well that I was in no great danger. I was only astonished to find poison in my wife's possession. She had labelled it. But what do you think she intended to do with it?"

"Why, that is an enigma."

"But it was a deep trick, Colas, was it not? The following morning I pretended giddiness, sent for my wife, who brought me the essence herself as usual. The physician was also sent for, and an antidote was applied, but I had only mixed in a small quantity of the poison."

"But Bertollon, what are you talking about? Your wife after all then is quite innocent?"

"That is the joke in the affair. And you have pleaded your throat sore for nothing. But drink; this will cure it. Confess now, was it not a bold stroke of mine? My wife must think she is quite bewitched, for she does not know that I have the best of picklocks in the world for all her drawers."

"But--" said I, becoming suddenly sober with horror.

"Let no one hear any thing of this; you, Colas, are my only confidant. You must know that the affair might have terminated badly after all, as in my haste I upset a phial containing a red liquid in the medicine-chest, and forgot to replace it. But, to cut the matter short, Colas, I am happy. You shall be so too. I swear to you that the day on which I marry Julia, you shall celebrate your nuptials with Clementine. But what is the matter with you? Actually you are fainting. There--drink some water. The champagne does not agree with you."

He supported me with one arm, while offering me the glass with the other, which I pushed back shuddering. I was stunned by what I had heard.

"Go to bed," he said.

I left him, while he staggered after me, laughing loudly.

Midnight had long passed, sleep had not visited me, and when morning approached I had not even undressed, and I walked up and down the room in great agitation. What a night! What had I learned? I was not able to believe so atrocious and revolting a crime. An innocent and virtuous wife, who had never offended her husband, plunged into prison and everlasting disgrace; the husband abusing his

friend by making him accomplish his hellish designs, and innocence tortured with pangs more bitter than death?

I felt some relief, however, in the hope that Bertollon only wished to test my friendship. For, if he really had acted so atrociously, how could he venture to let another glass of wine pass his lips, since every drop threatened to disclose his secret; how could he so shamelessly reveal himself in all his atrocity, either to a villain or to an honourable man?

But I hoped in vain to deceive myself; his expressions respecting me and his unfortunate wife, and his former willingness to resign her to me, made all but too true. His early plans were now becoming clearly developed in the misty distance. I recollected many expressions which he had used, and that he himself favoured my intercourse with Madame Bertollon, and refused to become suspicious of our intimacy. And when he spoke of the vehemence and reserve of her disposition, he probably then conceived designs of charging her with this crime.

The morning had dawned, and I was still undecided as to what I should do. Innocence must be saved, but her safety must be the ruin of my benefactor, my first and only friend; only an excess of love for me had elicited the horrible secret. Should I go and betray him? He was the author of my happiness; should the hand which had received innumerable benefits from him, plunge him ungratefully into an unfathomable abyss? Should I lose him whom I still loved, the only one who loved me? "Unhappy series of events," I sighed, "must I become the instrument of fettering innocence, or of sacrificing the life of my benefactor?"

But my conscience cried, "Be just before you wish to be kind! Whatever consequences may attend the actions which we perform, from duty,--nay, even did they involve the destruction of ourselves--nothing should hinder us when virtue is at stake. Return to your poverty, go solitary and cheerfully through life, only save your peace

of mind and carry with you a quiet conscience. You did what justice required. There is a God, be pure as he is."

I wrote to the police inspector of the district to come immediately to me on most urgent business. On his arrival I repaired to Bertollon's room, while the officer remained without.

Bertollon was still asleep; I trembled, love and compassion overcame me, I exclaimed, "Bertollon," and kissed him.

He awoke, and I suffered him to wake completely during some indifferent conversation.

"Tell me," I said, at length, "is your wife really innocent? Had you poisoned the essence yourself?"

He looked at me with a penetrating glance, saying, "Be silent."

"But, Bertollon, this answer is but a confirmation of last night's statement. I conjure you, my friend, remove my doubts. Have you done all you said, or did you only wish to----"

Bertollon rose, and said, "Colas! I trust you are discreet."

"But speak, Bertollon, pray speak! the court will pass sentence on your wife to-day, let not innocence perish!"

"Are you mad, Colas? Would you become the betrayer of your friend?"

While stammering this he appeared in violent emotion. He turned pale, and his lips became livid; his eyes stared vacantly. All proved too certainly that he had confessed the previous night, in the excitement of wine, circumstances at which he was now terrified, seeing they were no longer safe in my keeping.

I put my hand on his shoulder, and whispered in his ear, "Bertollon! dress, take money enough with you, and flee. I will manage the rest."

With a look threatening death, he asked, "Why?"

"Fly, I say, while there is time."

"Why?" he replied, "Do you intend---- or have you, perhaps, already--
--"

"By all that is dear and sacred to you, fly!"

While I whispered these last words to him, he suddenly jumped up, looked about the room as if searching for something, which made me think he had forgotten in his consternation that his clothes lay near the bed. While I stooped to give them to him he fired a pistol at me, and the blood gushed down over my chest.

The door was burst open, and the inspector of police entered in terror. Bertollon still holding in one hand the pistol he had fired, and a second in the other, looked aghast at the unexpected appearance.

"Accursed dog!" he cried to me, with gestures of despair, and flung the discharged pistol furiously at my head. Another shot followed-- Bertollon had shot himself. He reeled against me--I caught him in my arms--his head was shattered.

I became senseless, sank on the floor, and when I first recovered consciousness, I found myself in my own room, with physicians and servants busy about me. My wound, which was under the left shoulder, was probed and dressed, but was not dangerous.

All around me were in great consternation. Several of Bertollon's friends were near me, assailing me with questions.

I dismissed them, and, when recovered, dressed myself and ordered a sedan-chair to carry me to the assembled court.

In the meanwhile Bertollon's suicide had become known in the town. An enormous concourse of people thronged his house, but when they learned that I intended going to the court the curious crowd followed me.

Sentence had already been passed on Madame Bertollon at a private sitting of the court. The moment she was led into the hall to hear it before the assembled multitude, I arrived.

I begged a hearing as I had to make important disclosures. Permission to speak was granted me. Amidst a silence as if death reigned, I said to the judges: "My lords, once I stood here the accuser of innocence, I now come to save her, and to prepare her for a well-deserved triumph. I was deceived by the appearance of circumstances, deceived and abused by my friend, and an accomplice in an act of cruelty without knowing it. The unfortunate lady upon whom you are about to pronounce sentence is not guilty of any crime."

I now distinctly stated the history of the previous night, Bertollon's suicide, and his attempt on my life. Beside me stood the police-inspector as a witness, and lame Jacques, who recollected that he had seen M. Bertollon the evening previous to the poison being taken, coming from the apartment of his wife with a light.

Such a termination to the trial in which I had at first achieved such a splendid victory over my opponent Menard, and which was to found my reputation in that country, no one had expected. During my speech astonishment and horror were depicted on a thousand faces. But when I stopped, a murmuring arose which swelled to loud exultation. My name was shouted with enthusiastic joy, and the eyes of all were filled with tears.

All order was at an end: Madame Bertollon had sunk fainting amidst the congratulations of those around. The vice-governor of the province, a relation of the Mareschale Montreval, whom chance or curiosity brought to the court, descended from his seat and embraced me. M. Menard followed his example, amidst the shouts of the enthusiastic multitude.

I was led to Madame Bertollon, my knees failed me, I sank down and pressed her hand, which I bedewed with tears.

"Can you forgive me?" I faltered.

With a look full of excessive love and a heavenly smile, she looked down on me. "Alamontade!" she sighed softly, but tears checked her words.

The court broke up and the judges embraced me. In vain I endeavoured to find Madame Bertollon; the crowd was too great. I was led down the steps of the court-house, through the dense mass which headed me, with marks of honour.

In the act of getting into my sedan, I was stopped by a well-dressed young man saying, "Sir, you cannot possibly return with pleasant feelings to a house which still contains the corpse of a suicide, and which must remind you of the most horrible circumstances. Do me the honour of allowing me to entertain you in the meanwhile in my own house."

This invitation, urged with cordiality, was quite unexpected. Tears still sparkled in the young man's eyes, and he entreated me so earnestly that I could not refuse. He pressed my hand with joyful gratitude, gave orders to the bearers and disappeared.

Followed by the acclamations of the multitude through the streets, I proceeded but slowly, but at length arrived at the house of my unknown friend. I only noticed that it was in the neighbourhood of Bertollon's house and in the street where Clementine lived, which could not be an unpleasant discovery to me, though I was still confused and overcome.

At the foot of the steps in the inner court, the sedan-chair was opened. The friendly stranger awaited me; I saw myself in a large splendid building, and was assisted up the marble stairs by two servants.

All that is terrible and pleasing in human life was compressed for me into the narrow space of this one day.

The folding-doors were opened, and some ladies advanced to receive me. The eldest among them addressed me, saying, "I am much indebted to my nephew for procuring me the honour of seeing the noble-minded deliverer of innocence in my dwelling."

Who can describe my astonishment when I discovered this lady to be Madame de Sonnes, and that Clementine was following her. I was about to stammer something in reply to her kind reception, but was too much exhausted. The loss of blood in the morning, after a night spent in wakeful melancholy, and the various and extraordinary sensations to which I had been exposed, had quite exhausted me. Clementine's appearance made me lose sight of all around me. I only saw her, only spoke to her, until forms and colours were blended before my fading sight in a confused chaos.

For several weeks I kept my bed and room, a fever having been produced by the sufferings from my wound. Young M. de Sonnes never left me; he had all my property removed from Bertollon's house; including the harp, but not the wreath. They did not know of what value it was to me.

In the meanwhile Madame Bertollon had been acquitted; and M. de Sonnes told me that the fair sufferer had immediately left Montpellier, and had gone into a distant convent. He likewise gave me a letter which had been sent for me, under cover, to Madame de Sonnes, saying, "Madame Bertollon probably wished us to thank her deliverer."

I took it with a trembling hand; as soon as I was alone I perused it, and ever since it has accompanied me in weal and woe. Its contents are as follows:--

"Abbey St. G., at V----, "May 11, 1762.

"Farewell, Alamontade, these lines, the first I ever wrote to a man, will be the last. I have left the stormy life of the great world; the solemn stillness of sacred walls encloses me; I have been able to disengage myself, without regret, from all that once was dear and indispensable; I take nothing out of the world except the wounds which it inflicted.

"Ah! that I could have left these wounds, and the remembrance of the past behind me. They cling to me to make my last friend, Death, the more desirable.

"In the bloom of life the black veil of widowhood encircles me; by it I show to men a mourning which I feel not, and conceal that which consumes me.

"Yes, Alamontade, I do not blush even now, in this sacred spot, to confess what I never wished to conceal from you, that I loved you. You knew it. Alas! you still know it; and it was you who could point the dagger to a heart which beat for you alone in this world.

"Oh! Alamontade, you have deceived me. You never loved me. I was not grieved at my unfortunate husband accusing me of the blackest

crime. No. But that you could believe me guilty, could become my accuser; you, for whom I would cheerfully have died,--that has withered the very root of my life.

"But no; no reproaches. Noble, and still beloved, you were blameless. Dazzled by appearances, you sacrificed feeling to friendship and your sense of justice. You wished, at most, to be unhappy, not ungrateful. I feel it fully; the wife of another dared not love you; and I, in my sinful affection, was never worthy of your pure heart. I always felt this, and my weakness was always at war with my inclination. No being was more wretched than I; and each look from you, each kiss perpetuated a flame which it ought to have extinguished. In a moment of despair I wished for a voluntary death rather than the danger of losing my virtue. Then I procured the poison which I had destined for myself, because I loved you much too passionately. This is the secret which shame would have prevented me from confessing upon the rack. Alas! You, the source of my misfortune--it was you that interrogated me before the judges.

"You have never loved me, and my separation will never grieve you. I had deceived myself, and must suffer for the devotion of my unsuspecting heart. The world pities me, but its pity leaves me without consolation; and even your compassion, my friend, aggravates my pain instead of mitigating it.

"Within these cloistered walls I see the end of my short pilgrimage; the lime-tree before the grated window of my cell throws its shade upon the little spot that will become my tomb. This is my consolation.

"Ah! how melancholy to stand thus alone in the world! and I am alone, for no one living loves me. My friends have forgotten me already in their joyous circles, and my tears do not disturb their merriment. I fade like the solitary flower of the mountain, unknown and unseen; it gives and receives no joy; its disappearance leaves no trace behind.

"And you, the only one I loved, receive these lines as a farewell. A breaking heart breathed these words; a dying hand traced them. I do my last duty. Do not disturb my peace by answering this. I shall not receive any letter, and will never see you. I will pray to God for your happiness; and my last sigh shall be for you; and, with the remembrance of you, death shall lead me to a better life.

"AMELIA BERTOLLON."

I never saw the noble creature again. Perfectly virtuous, she sank. But I never forgot her, and often shed tears to her memory.

Madame de Sonnes and Clementine frequently visited me during my illness, and treated me not like a stranger, but like a brother, or near relative.

Madame de Sonnes was a noble lady of lively temperament and superior education. She never seemed to live for herself, but only for others; being constantly anxious to afford pleasure and render some service, she knew how to give to those, who were not above profiting by her benevolence, the appearance of being her benefactors. Her kindness always wore the stamp of gratitude.

Clementine, the pride of the family, was quite worthy of her mother. Perfect innocence and constant serenity formed her character, and no one could approach her without loving her. I had never seen, never fancied her so beautiful as now. Her smile was inspiring, her look penetrated to the soul, her deportment was the beau ideal of grace, and she was distinguished above her friends by so much amiability that she alone was unusually admired. Yet she was the most unassuming of all; she knew nothing of all her excellence, and was delighted when she discovered excellence in others. You could imagine that she had never seen her own image reflected.

I had never touched my harp since I had been with them; she also was more reserved than when at a distance as formerly; she came less frequently than any one else, spoke less to me than to others, and yet was most solicitous about me, watching anxiously my minutest wish. Only her eyes expressed her friendly feeling towards me.

While my love for her increased to an unconquerable passion, a thousand obstacles became more evident, which deprived me of all hope of ever being made happy by her hand. I was poor, as I possessed nothing but a good reputation and the confidence of all honest people. But how little is that in the great world! I had, indeed, gained such general reputation by Bertollon's lawsuit, that the number of my clients increased daily. Still how long had I to work before I could acquire a fortune sufficient even to approach Clementine. I saw the lovely creature every day, both at home and in the garden, sometimes alone and sometimes in company. Oh! she might easily perceive how much I loved her, for my silence and my converse, my approach and departure, were so many betrayers of my heart.

I became daily more embarrassed and uneasy. Absence from her was the only remedy against inexpressible unhappiness. I came to the resolution of taking a house for myself, and discovered my intention to M. de Sonnes. Both he and his aunt opposed me in vain; I remained immovable to their wishes and entreaties. Clementine alone neither appeared nor entreated, but she became more serious, and, as I thought, more sad.

"You are very cruel," said Madame de Sonnes one day to me; "what have we done to offend you, that you wish to punish us so severely? You will take with you the peace of our house, until now so happy. We all love you, leave us not, I beseech you."

All the reasons that I could state to justify my departure were insufficient to satisfy her. The most important, indeed the only one, I

could not reveal, and she saw nothing but unconquerable caprice in my refusal.

"Well then," she said at length, "we must, I suppose, resign ourselves to your will; we are more indifferent to you than I thought. Why is it not given to all to allow friendship to strike root in the heart just deep enough to be plucked up without pain at any time?--Clementine will some day be unhappy for this. I fear she will be quite ill."

These words pained me. I turned pale and trembled, faltering, "Clementine suffer?"

Without the least suspicion of what was passing in my mind, Madame de Sonnes said, "Come with me to my room." I followed; and on opening the door, she said to her daughter: "He will not stay, you perhaps can persuade him." Finding myself alone with her, I approached her.

What a beautiful picture of grief! It will never be effaced from my memory. The terrors of endless misery which I have suffered in foreign climes have not been able to deprive it of its charm and life. There she sat in her plain attire, charming as a child of Eden; a fading blossom of lilac hung from her head, peering forth by her simple veil, as though it were a symbol of that which she most needed, repose.

When I approached her, she looked up, and her kindly beaming eyes, filled with tears, smiled upon me. I took her hand, and kneeling before her, sighed, "Clementine!"

She made no answer, nor did she smile.

"Do you also wish me to stay? Only command me and I will joyfully obey, even if I should become more unhappy."

"More unhappy?" she replied, with an anxious look; "Are you then unhappy with us!"

"You do not know that! You only wish to diffuse happiness around you; but, Clementine, you accustomed me to a heaven too soon. If sooner or later I should have to lose all, to lose your society (and such a time might arrive, Clementine), how would it then be with me?" I asked, while I pressed her hand against my throbbing heart.

"If you never separate yourself from us we shall not lose you," she replied.

"Would to heaven I might not leave you but in death," I exclaimed.

She looked towards heaven, sighed, and leaning forward, a burning tear rolled on my hand.

"Do you doubt the constancy of my friendship," she said.

"Have I a right to your friendship, Clementine, and this noble heart? Alas! will it not some day beat more warmly for another? and then, Clementine, then----"

"Never! Alamontade," she said, rising quickly, and turning away her face, which was suffused with a gentle glow. I rose with ineffable rapture, clasped her in my arms, her bosom heaving with strong emotion, her cheeks glowing, and her looks expressing the words which her lips refused to utter.

Our souls were united, and made the everlasting compact. A trembling sigh was our vow, the world vanished like a shadow, and in a kiss we exchanged life for life.

Oh! what bliss has the hand of the Almighty infused even in the dust, and how much has it sweetened the lot of the spirit to be united with the earthly.

When we awoke from our pure rapture, and I could lisp Clementine's name, and she mine, all nature around was changed, and nothing was left of the former world. Every thing shone more gloriously and beautifully; the dull apartment resembled a temple, and a sweet spirit spoke from every object--from the pictures and from the carpet. Even the whispering of the trees was significant, and in the waving shadows of the leaves there was a secret expression of delight.

"I will remain," I exclaimed.

"And for ever," she added.

A few hours afterwards, when I saw Madame de Sonnes, I felt a slight timidity; but she came to me with a smile, and said, "What changes have you worked on Clementine? She is inspired. She speaks in verses. She steps as light as a fairy. But what do I see, Alamontade? Why do you blush? I am indebted to you. How shall I show my gratitude?"

Saying this, she embraced me with great affection, adding, "You are a noble man. I know well the dearest reasons you had for leaving us."

I was so confused that I could not reply.

"Singular enough, that I, after all, was not to guess your secret. You always wished to be the wiser, and so you are, Alamontade, but not this time! Do you think that I did not perceive your love for Clementine? Why did you make a secret of it to me, the mother of your beloved?"

"Madame,----" I faltered, more confused.

"I think you would, even now, deny it if you could," she said, in a pleasant tone. "I stood near you both when in the height of your happiness, you neither saw me nor the world around; and then I felt that I was not at all required to witness your betrothal. My daughter lives for you, make her happy, and then I shall be so too."

What kindness! I sank at her feet, and kissed her hand without being able to utter a word.

"Not so," she said, "a son must not kneel before his mother."

"Madame," I exclaimed, "you give more than the most daring hopes could----"

"Not I," she replied, "it is you, dear friend, who bring peace to our house. I am indeed a mother, but I have no command over my daughter's heart. Clementine has known you longer than I. On your account she has refused many offers; her hopes were centred in you. To complete her happiness is my duty. Now I know you, I bless Clementine's choice."

"This is too great kindness," I said; "it was indeed my resolution, some day, when my fortune should be adequate--but I am poor, Madame----"

"What has fortune to do with this affair?" answered the noble lady, "you have a respectable competency, and Clementine, beside having property of her own, is my heiress. The cares of life cannot trouble you; and should you ever, by any misfortune, lose all, you must retrench; you possess knowledge, activity, and honesty: with these you will always succeed."

In vain I stated several obstacles; she was above considering them important.

"No, sir," she said, "that you loved Clementine without regard to wealth I was well aware. And indeed the girl has sufficient worth of her own to be loved for herself only. Your delicacy, dear friend, is therefore not compromised; if you could aspire to her heart and conquer it, truly you need not blush at her bringing you a rich dowry. The heart which you possess is worth more than the paltry money to which you fear to aspire, as if it were too much. My daughter cannot be happier, if she marries with a man she does not love, though he has a million. She will only be rendered happy by the mind, nobleness, true love, and solicitude of her beloved."

"And--" said Clementine, bounding in with her charming simplicity, taking my hand, and looking affectionately in the eyes of her kind mother.

"You have chosen well," said Madame de Sonnes, embracing us both; "you always are more solicitous for your mother's happiness than for your own."

Clementine was now my betrothed; the whole family treated me with the greatest affection; I was looked upon as the beloved son, and possessed the esteem of the whole town. I had attained my supreme object, and it would be wearisome to describe the variety of my enjoyments.

Letters had arrived from London to the Mareschale de Montreval, as governor of the province, for my late father, together with the deeds of a large inheritance left him by a brother who had died in the West Indies. I hastened for a few days to Nismes to the mareschale by his order. He only showed me the letter from the London banker and a copy of the will, without being able to give me any further particulars.

The property had been already remitted to the government of Languedoc by draughts on the bank in Paris. This made me the possessor of an annual income of 4000 livres.

Although aware that one of my uncles, in his early days, had gone to America, from whence no news had ever arrived, I could scarcely believe that he had saved so large a fortune. Moreover the obscurity which enveloped several points requisite to be known in the account from London, inspired me with some suspicion as to this unexpected wealth, considered as an inheritance, though it appeared to me too large for a present. I wrote both to the London banker and the magistrate of the province in America, where my uncle was reported to have died; but never discovered more than I knew already. Hence I could not help thinking that Madame Bertollon had more to do with the inheritance than my uncle.

The mareschale appeared almost angry at my scruples. "Enjoy your undisputed property and have a dozen masses for uncle," he said; "and that you may not live altogether idle on your property, come to me and accept the first situation in my office. One condition, however, I must make, viz: that you live in my palace. I must see you daily, my affairs are numerous, and your advice will be valuable to me."

I thanked the mareschale for this honourable distinction, and only asked time for consideration before accepting a situation to which my attainments were not adequate. He overwhelmed me with civilities, and dismissed me with kindly menaces in case I did not soon resolve to comply with his wishes.

M. Etienne, my good old uncle, was elated with joy when he heard of the mareschale's offer to me.

"When you, Colas, came to me as a boy, in your smock-frock and wooden shoes, and so stood before me in your poverty, I was then touched in my heart, and heard, as it were, the voice of the spirit

within me, commanding me to adopt you, because you would one day be the guardian angel of the oppressed believers. Behold, Colas, the Lord has done great things for you; you now stand again on the same spot of the poor miller's house, and are a highly honoured, learned, and rich man. Hesitate no longer to accept the offer of the mareschale. It is not his will, no, it is the will of God; it is not his calling, but it is the call of Heaven, which comes to you to afford comfort to the gospel Christians."

My uncle and his amiable family (in whose circle one daughter was missing, having been married), as well as his friends, who were all secret Protestants, did not desist in their most urgent remonstrances with me to accept the situation. I was obliged partly to promise that I would accept it; but it was still important to consult Clementine and her mother on the subject.

I had no sooner made the mareschale's proposal known to them, than both were at once agreed that I must not let slip an opportunity which promised me a larger sphere of activity.

"We will both accompany you to Nismes," said Clementine; "you will no doubt remember the amphitheatre and the house of Albertas?--but to live with the mareschale--no, that will not do, you must refuse that politely."

And so it happened; we went together to Nismes, I entered on my situation, and I was permitted to find recreation in Clementine's society.

Wealth, authority, and influence over the affairs of the province, prepared for me the happiest lot man could imagine. Friendship and love completed my felicity; but in the picture of my life, at that period, there was almost too much light, too little shade, and all became a bright, rosy monotony.

The death of Clementine's grandfather occasioned a family mourning, and our union was postponed, out of respect, for six months. But this could not darken our happiness; we saw each other daily, and nothing in the world could separate us.

During the first few months the Mareschale de Montreval treated me with marked favour. Still I could not prevail upon myself to approach him with confidence, or to return his kind sentiments with equal cordiality. His affable demeanour had something terrible in it, and in his smile there was always something threatening. He was a man of genius and judgment, but yet beclouded by prejudices which were sacred to him, and which were probably owing to his monkish education in his early life. Enervated by former excesses, he was sickly, fearful of death, tormented by dark imaginations and suspicions. He never scrupled to commit the most arbitrary acts, to be severe even to cruelty, and to sacrifice the welfare of many to his caprice; but at the same time he professed to be very religious. The monks were his favourite associates, and ruled him without his suspecting it. He never neglected a mass, and passed for a most devout man. He seldom smiled, was generally grave and cold; and there was something commanding in his calm demeanour. The more I knew him, the more I privately disliked him. A man like Bertollon, without religion, without God, without eternity, and without moral principles, who, acting only on the suggestions of prudence, could see with an egotist smile a whole despairing world sink for his gain, is not more atrocious, not more dangerous, than a man of the world, filled with bigotry, like Montreval. The atheist and bigot, who do not acknowledge moral principles and eternal right, weigh equally in the scale of morals, and are equally poisonous to society. Both without feeling for the true dignity of man, without regard for humanity, spin their subtle web between the relations of society, and rob and kill with honour. Neither fear God, for the one does not believe in him, the other tries to appease his wrath with prayers and masses, and in the temple cleanses himself of the sins which he has committed without.

Even during the first days of my residence in Nismes, I was surrounded by a holy troop of monks, who feared my influence on the mareschale as being hostile to their views. But they perceived how little I cared for this influence, and gradually left me to myself. They, however, continued very friendly, praised my character to the mareschale, and ended by expressing their pity I was a man without religion.

The Protestants of Nismes looked upon me as their leader and protector. They showed me extravagant honours, which could not fail to excite the suspicion of the mareschale, even if he had been less suspicious than he was. They became bolder in their words and deeds. More than once I succeeded in obtaining his pardon for their inconsiderate acts; but instead of being warned by such occurrences, their fanaticism, in frequent combat with their persecutors, and a secret confidence in my protection, only rose higher, and it was in vain for me to represent to them the danger which they wantonly prepared for themselves.

"No!" cried M. Etienne, my uncle; "no, where God is, there is no danger. Oh! Colas, be not afraid of men, for the Lord is with you. 'He who confesses me before men, him will I also confess before my Father,' says the Saviour of the world. In France, the gospel grain of mustard-seed will spring up, as on the mountains of Switzerland and in the forests of Germany; but we want men like Zuinglius, Calvin, and Luther, who do not tremble before the princes of this world. And you, Alamontade, be like them, and God will be your strong fortress."

Once, when I was again obliged to intercede for the Protestants, the mareschale asked me, with a penetrating glance, "You are not a heretic, I hope?" He refused my solicitations, and from that time became more reserved towards me.

I perceived how little good I could do under existing circumstances, but, on the contrary, how injurious my presence in Nismes, my office,

and the false notion of my influence must be to the followers of Calvin, who relied upon me with too much confidence. This brought me to the resolution of requesting my discharge; but Madame de Sonnes and Clementine prevented me from doing so by their entreaties until the winter had passed. The mareschale was in Montpellier, and his absence rendered me happier, but the Protestants still more daring.

On the Palm Sunday of the year 1703, the mareschale, who had recently returned from Montpellier, invited me to a banquet in his castle, and though not feeling quite well I determined on going.

In the morning I said smiling to Clementine, "To-morrow I shall ask for my discharge, and whatever your mother may say, it must be done to-morrow, and then, Clementine!----"

"And then?"---- she asked.

"We will no longer delay our union. We may now rejoice with propriety since you have this day left off your black dress. Therefore in a week you will be my wife. And then," I continued, "we will leave this melancholy Nismes, and go to our new estate near Montpellier. Spring is coming with its beauty; we must live amid rural nature."

And this was resolved on, and sealed by a kiss.

At this moment I was called out. I quitted the room; I found that my uncle had come, and requested a private interview in my own apartment.

"Colas," said he, "this is Palm Sunday, and you must come with me."

"I cannot," was my reply, "for I am invited to dine with the mareschale."

"And I," said he, with solemn voice. "I invite you to the holy supper. No grandee of this earth will there sit at table with us, but we shall be assembled in Jesus' name, and he will be in the midst of us. All of us, some hundreds in number, with our wives and children, celebrate this morning the holy sacrament in my mill near the Carmelite gate."

I was terrified, and exclaimed: "What presumption! Do you not know that the mareschale is in Nismes?"

"We know it, and the Almighty God is there also."

"Will you then designedly plunge yourselves into misery and a dungeon? The law forbids most strictly all meetings of this kind, and threatens death."

"What law? The law of the mortal king? Thou shalt obey God rather than man."

In this way my uncle knew how to surmount all my objections, by biblical quotations, and the more I urged the unlawfulness and danger of such meetings, and the more vividly I described the probable consequences, the more zealous he became.

"When Jesus was betrayed," he exclaimed, "and when the traitor stood near him, and when he knew they were preparing to take him, then, oh! Colas, surrounded by the danger of certain death, he instituted the holy sacrament. And should we, who would be the disciples of Jesus, tremble? No, never; if all hell were in arms it should not terrify us."

I could not bring my uncle to his senses; he called me an apostate, a hypocrite, a papist, and left me in a rage.

I returned to Clementine. She had seen my uncle, and the vexation expressed in all his gestures; she inquired the cause which I dared not disclose to her. Amidst her innocent caresses, my fear and uneasiness

gradually left me. She told me that her mother agreed to all my wishes; this cheered me still more. On Clementine's bosom I dreamed of the peaceful happiness of the future.

Withdrawn from the tumult of the world and its passions, I proposed to live alone with my young wife, surrounded by blooming nature, by love and friendship, and in the pursuit of science.

How happy we were both in these moments! "Oh! Clementine," said I, "no throne is indeed required to make others happy, but only the will. We may be useful even in a small and insignificant sphere. We will visit the abodes of poverty. I shall again defend the cause of accused innocence, and a kiss shall be my reward when I have succeeded in accomplishing any good. Our library furnishes an inexhaustible store for the mind, and our harp shall sound in the evening, to record the unenvied felicity of two loving souls in the shade of our own grove. The poor shall eat at our table, and those consoled in their griefs shall be our companions. Surely, Clementine, we shall never yearn for the cold splendour of this palace. And some day, you, Clementine--the mere thought vibrates rapture through me--some day, Clementine, you will be a mother. Mother! oh, Clementine!"--Her kisses interrupted my words.

At this moment my servant entered pale as death and breathless.

"What is the matter with you?" I asked.

"Sir," he faltered, "the Calvinists have met for their interdicted worship in the mill of M. Etienne near the Carmelite gate."

I was much alarmed. Lo, then, it was betrayed. "And what else," I cried.

"The mill is surrounded by dragoons, and all within are prisoners. Only think, the Mareschale de Montreval is there himself. The

preacher and a few others of the secured heretics endeavoured to escape through the window, but the mareschale gave the signal, and the dragoons fired."

"Fired?" I cried. "Was any one killed?"

"Four of them lie dead on the spot," was the servant's reply.

Without asking any further questions, I took my hat and stick. Clementine wept and trembled; she would not let me leave her, turned pale, and clung speechless and in great anguish round my neck.

Madame de Sonnes came in. I told her of this frightful occurrence, and that I was resolved to hasten there in order to move the mareschale to humanity. She praised my resolution, entreating me to fly thither without delay, and spoke consoling words to Clementine.

As I departed, I looked back, and saw Clementine pale and trembling in her mother's arms. I returned, kissed her pale lips, and hastened away.

When I reached the gate, I had to force my way through a throng of people who stood crowded together, gaping with mingled curiosity, terror, joy, and expectation.

With cold shuddering I beheld above the crowd the glittering arms of the dragoons, who surrounded, three deep, my beloved uncle's mill. High above all I saw the mareschale on horseback, surrounded by noblemen; he seemed grave and thoughtful.

"My lord!" I exclaimed, when I reached him.

He turned round on hearing me, looked at me, and pointing with his stick to the mill, said, without changing a feature, "The wretches! Now they are caught."

"What do you intend doing, my lord?" I asked.

"I have been considering for the last quarter of an hour."

"Oh! my lord," I said; "it is true these infatuated men have broken the laws, but truly they are more the objects of your contempt than your wrath. Be magnanimous, my lord, and the transgressors will fall at your feet in repentance, and never again----"

"What!" interrupted the mareschale, "these men are incorrigible. They are rebels, furious, audacious rebels. Am I to let this accursed weed luxuriate until it can perpetrate a second Michelade?"[2]

"No, my lord," I said, seizing his hand, which was hanging down; "you are too just to attribute to these unfortunate persons cruelties which happened nearly a century and a half ago."

"It is time to set a severe example," said the mareschale, who to this moment had been undecided. He withdrew his hand, rode a few paces forward without further noticing me, and cried, with a loud voice, "Fire the mill!"

Cold with terror, I staggered after him, seized the reins of his horse, and cried, "For God's sake mercy, mercy."

"Begone," he cried, casting a furious look at me, and flourishing his stick as if he would strike me. I let go the horse and fell upon my knees before this cold-blooded demon, crying, "Mercy!"

I heard the crackling and hissing of the flames, saw the thick clouds of smoke rolling over the roof of the mill, and then heard the horrible cries of those enclosed within. I sprang up again and clasped the mareschale's knees, but God only knows what I cried to him in my

anguish. He heard me not, he had no humanity; the pious tiger only looked upon the burning mill.

Soon my voice was drowned amidst the wild roar around, the cries of those consigned to death, and the thunder of the carabines. Those who endeavoured to escape the flames were shot down by the dragoons.

I started up and ran to the mill. At this moment a girl threw herself from the window. I caught her in my arms; it was Antonia my uncle's youngest daughter.

"You are saved, Antonia," said I, carrying away the poor creature through the smoke and fire, and came up, without knowing it, to the mareschale.

"The dog!" he cried, "I always said he was one of them!" I knew not he spoke of me.

"Down with them!" he shouted again. Two dragoons tore the fainting girl from my arms, and while she lay on the ground these ruffians shot the innocent creature at my feet.

"It serves the cursed heretics right!" said the mareschale calmly, close behind me.

"Oh! you atrocious monster! how will you answer for this deed before your and our king,--before your and our God?" I cried, foaming with rage.

He galloped up to me, gave me a blow on my head with his stick, and rode over me. Half stunned, I imagined he had given orders to kill me. I started up and snatched a carabine from the hands of a dragoon to defend my life. No one dared to lay hands on me, in spite of the mareschale's exclaiming repeatedly, "Secure him! secure him!"

While looking around me with consternation, I beheld--oh! horrible sight--I beheld my uncle with blood streaming from his head, standing over the corpse of Antonia; I only recognised him by his figure and clothing. He uttered a frightful shriek towards heaven, and sank amidst musket shots over the body of his beloved child.

I was going to address the mareschale, but my tongue was paralysed. Raising my eyes and my arm with the musket to heaven, I received a blow, and sank down perfectly insensible.

Until then, I had still preserved my faith in humanity, and blindly devoted myself to this belief. Impressed with the best works of the greatest minds of our time, I had lulled myself into happy illusions. I had believed mankind much more humane and freer from the bonds of barbarism. Indeed, I was the subject of the most lauded monarch of the world, and France called the reign of Louis XIV. her Golden Age. Alas! Montreval was one of his governors, and the Palm Sunday of 1703, a day of that Golden Age. About 200 men were burnt alive and shot on that day, and even the infant on its mother's breast was not spared. All the property of the murdered was confiscated, and Montreval's cruelty was crowned with laurels by the royal hand.

When I had recovered my consciousness and could discover the objects around, I found myself among strangers, and my wounded head bandaged. Now and then, during my insensibility, I felt pain, and dimly perceived that people were employed about me; but this consciousness soon left me, and I relapsed again into stupor as into a heavy sleep.

"By my faith thou hast a tough life." These were the first words I heard, as they were uttered by a dirty old fellow, who was standing by me offering medicine.

I did not see Clementine. I was in a narrow chamber, on a hard, coarse bed.

"Where am I then?" I asked.

"Thou art with me," said the fellow. I now, for the first time, remembered the fatal event to which I owed my present situation.

"Am I then a prisoner?"

"To be sure, and quite right too!" answered my keeper.

"Does Madame de Sonnes know of this? Has she not sent here? May I not see her?"

"Dost thou know any one here? Where does she live?"

"In the Rue de Martin. The house Albertas."

"Thou fool! there is no Rue de Martin in all Marseilles. Thou art still feverish, I think, or dost thou not know that thou art in Marseilles?"

"In Marseilles? What, in Marseilles am I? Am I not in Nismes? How long have I been here?"

"May be three weeks. I can easily believe that thou, poor devil, dost not know of it. Thou hast been raving in a burning fever till last night. Thou must have a strong constitution. We thought we should have to bury thee to-day."

"What am I to do here?"

"When thou art recovered thou wilt put on that dress; dost thou know it?"

"That is a galley slave's dress. What? pray tell me, am I then--I will--I cannot believe--have I been sentenced?"

"Perhaps so; only for twenty-nine years to the oars, as they say."

The fellow spoke too truly. As soon as I recovered, my terrible sentence was announced to me. I was condemned to punishment in the galleys for twenty-nine years, for menaces, and murderous attempts on the life of the Mareschale de Montreval; also for the crime of being a secret Protestant, and for having committed sundry peculations, for the benefit of the heretics, in the office where I had influence, by virtue of my situation.

I sighed, yet conscious of my innocence, put on the dress without pain. My tears flowed only for the fate of Clementine. I endeavoured to send her a few lines, which I wrote as a farewell, on a scrap of paper, with a pencil I borrowed. But alas! I was too poor to bribe my keeper; he took the paper, read it, and laughing, tore it to pieces, saying, "There is no post for love letters here."

I was now put in chains, and led, together with some companions in misfortune, to the galley appointed for us in the harbour. It was a beautiful evening, and the city displayed its splendour in the radiance of the setting sun. Amidst the dark green of the sloping mountains surrounding the harbour, which was crowded with the vessels of all nations, glistened innumerable snow-white villas, and between the almond and olive trees of the Bastides, waved a thousand silken pennons, displaying all the colours of the rainbow; while through the mouth of the harbour, the view was lost in the immeasurable expanse of the ocean.

The splendour of this spectacle dazzled me, and filled me with melancholy. The shores of my native land seemed to display all their glory, only to make me feel more vividly what I had lost. All around breathed joy, I only was for ever joyless, and I saw no limits to my misery, except on the brink of the distant grave.

I passed the night sleepless; with the early dawn our galley left the harbour and when the sun arose above the ruddy waves, I lost sight of Marseilles. I and five other slaves were chained to the oars.

What a fate! To be for ever separated from all the friends and playmates of my youth,--to be separated alas! from thee, Clementine, cast from the lap of wealth upon the hard bench, forgotten by all the happy, dishonoured, and among malefactors, to hear now, instead of Clementine's delightful conversation, only the curses and ribaldry of low thieves, murderers, smugglers, and robbers;--to be without books, without information as to the progress of science, my mind left the prey of itself, without hope;--to hear the terrible clanking of my chains instead of the magic of music and Clementine's harp! Surely, death itself is not so bitter as this dreadful change.

"But I will bear it," said I to myself; "there is a God, and my spirit knows its divine origin. I have not lost myself. I shall remain faithful to virtue, and though mistaken by the world, I carry with me across the sea the esteem which innocent souls feel for themselves. I have only been compelled to forsake that which was not my own, and what I suffer is but the pain of a body which hitherto has not been accustomed to deny itself."

Thus my mind, after one year had passed, obtained the victory; thus did I live the greater part of my life, joyless, and in solitude. I have grown old in misfortune, and have never again heard any thing of those who once loved me. The only cheerful feelings I have had were when, in my leisure hours, I could write down my thoughts, and look back with tears on the long passed paradise of my youth. Often during the monotonous sound of the oars, grief recalled to my mind the visions of the happy past. Then it seemed as if Clementine floated on the waves of the sea, and encouraged me with her smiles, like an angel of consolation. I gazed with moistened eyes at the beloved vision, and felt all the wounds of my heart again opened. Still I despaired not, but rowed cheerfully on.

I should sometimes have taken all the felicities of my youth as the effect of imagination, had not the melancholy farewell letter which Madame Bertollon had written from the convent, by some chance remained with me. I preserved it with veneration, as the last sacred remnant of what I formerly possessed. I often read it in distant seas, and on the burning coasts of Africa; and I always drew from it unspeakable consolation, and rowed cheerfully onwards, nearer and nearer to the end of my life.

Thus nine-and-twenty years have now elapsed. What are they?

Death, my ardently wished for friend comes to release me. Ah! sir, you have shown much compassion for me in making the last hours of my life so sweet. Our minds are congenial, and will, perhaps, meet again.

* * * * *

[The preceding narrative, according to the author, is related to some friends by the Abbé Dillon, who was with Alamontade the last days of his life, after his liberation from the galleys.

Shortly before his death, Alamontade learns that Clementine is still living, and is much delighted to hear that she has remained faithfully attached to him. His only wish and consolation now is, that his days may be prolonged till she arrives; but she does not come till the day after his death; aged and infirm herself, she soon follows him to the grave.

The whole of Alamontade is divided into two books in the original, the first containing Zschokke's[3] views on religion and moral philosophy. The following are the author's prefatory remarks:

"The following narrative was composed during the winter of 1801-2, at Berne, where the author having retired from public affairs, wished to devote his leisure hours to some useful purpose, having, by frequent intercourse become acquainted with many of those diseased minds who, being entangled in doubts, have lost their God and the joys of life. He therefore was desirous of making an attempt to raise again in them a holy faith and courage for virtue. He was inspired by the affecting dream of one night; it was an angelic but transient vision, which he in vain endeavoured to hold fast. However imperfect the original narrative was, yet it went through four editions during the first ten years after its appearance. This circumstance makes the author believe that he has not altogether failed in his object."]

C. A. F.

[1] One of the most lovely walks near Montpellier.

[2] The Calvinists in Nismes had, in the night after Michaelmas day, 1567, murdered in their fanatic rage, about thirty magistrates, deans, and monks. This slaughter gave rise to the word Michelade.

[3] It will be remembered that he is the author of *Die Stunden der Andacht*.