

PART THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

On a spring morning, in the year seventeen hundred and ninety-eight, the public conveyance then running between Chalons-sur-Marne and Paris sat down one of its outside passengers at the first post-station beyond Meaux. The traveler, an old man, after looking about him hesitatingly for a moment or two, betook himself to a little inn opposite the post-house, known by the sign of the Piebald Horse, and kept by the Widow Duval--a woman who enjoyed and deserved the reputation of being the fastest talker and the best maker of gibelotte in the whole locality.

Although the traveler was carelessly noticed by the village idlers, and received without ceremony by the Widow Duval, he was by no means so ordinary and uninteresting a stranger as the rustics of the place were pleased to consider him. The time had been when this quiet, elderly, unobtrusive applicant for refreshment at the Piebald House was trusted with the darkest secrets of the Reign of Terror, and was admitted at all times and seasons to speak face to face with Maximilian Robespierre himself. The Widow Duval and the hangers-on in front of the post-house would have been all astonished indeed if any well-informed personage from the metropolis had been present to tell them that the modest old traveler with the shabby little carpet-bag was an ex-chief agent of the secret police of Paris!

Between three and four years had elapsed since Lomaque had exercised, for the last time, his official functions under the Reign of Terror. His shoulders had contracted an extra stoop, and his hair had all fallen off, except at the sides and back of his head. In some other respects, however, advancing age seemed to have improved rather than deteriorated him in personal appearance. His complexion looked healthier, his expression cheerfuller, his eyes brighter than they had ever been of late years. He walked, too, with a brisker step than the step of old times in the police office; and his dress, although it certainly did not look like the costume of a man in affluent circumstances, was cleaner and far more nearly worn than ever it had been in the past days of his political employment at Paris.

He sat down alone in the inn parlor, and occupied the time, while his hostess had gone to fetch the half-bottle of wine that he ordered, in examining a dirty old card which he extricated from a mass of papers in his pocket-book, and which bore, written on it, these lines:

"When the troubles are over, do not forget those who remember you with eternal gratitude. Stop at the first post-station beyond Meaux, on the high-road to Paris, and ask at the inn for Citizen Maurice, whenever you wish to see us or to hear of us again."

"Pray," inquired Lomaque, putting the card in his pocket when the Widow Duval brought in the wine, "can you inform me whether a person named Maurice lives anywhere in this neighborhood?"

"Can I inform you?" repeated the voluble widow. "Of course I can! Citizen Maurice, and the citoyenne, his amiable sister--who is not to be passed over because you don't mention her, my honest man--lives within ten minutes' walk of my house. A charming cottage, in a charming situation, inhabited by two charming people--so quiet, so retiring, such excellent pay. I supply them with everything--fowls, eggs, bread, butter, vegetables (not that they eat much of anything), wine (which they don't drink half enough of to do them good); in short, I victual the dear little hermitage, and love the two amiable recluses with all my heart. Ah! they have had their troubles, poor people, the sister especially, though they never talk about them. When they first came to live in our neighborhood--"

"I beg pardon, citoyenne, but if you would only be so kind as to direct me--"

"Which is three--no, four--no, three years and a half ago--in short, just after the time when that Satan of a man, Robespierre, had his head cut off (and serve him right!), I said to my husband (who was on his last legs then, poor man!) 'She'll die'--meaning the lady. She didn't though. My fowls, eggs, bread, butter, vegetables, and wine carried her through--always in combination with the anxious care of Citizen Maurice. Yes, yes! let us be tenderly conscientious in giving credit where credit is due; let us never forget that the citizen Maurice contributed something to the cure of the interesting invalid, as well as the victuals and drink from the Piebald Horse. There she is now, the prettiest little woman in the prettiest little cottage--"

"Where? Will you be so obliging as to tell me where?"

"And in excellent health, except that she is subject now and then to nervous attacks; having evidently, as I believe, been struck with some dreadful

fright--most likely during that accursed time of the Terror; for they came from Paris--you don't drink, honest man! Why don't you drink? Very, very pretty in a pale way; figure perhaps too thin--let me pour it out for you--but an angel of gentleness, and attached in such a touching way to the citizen Maurice--"

"Citizen hostess, will you, or will you not, tell me where they live?"

"You droll little man, why did you not ask me that before, if you wanted to know? Finish your wine, and come to the door. There's your change, and thank you for your custom, though it isn't much. Come to the door, I say, and don't interrupt me! You're an old man--can you see forty yards before you? Yes, you can! Don't be peevish--that never did anybody any good yet. Now look back, along the road where I am pointing. You see a large heap of stones? Good. On the other side of the heap of stones there is a little path; you can't see that, but you can remember what I tell you? Good. You go down the path till you get to a stream; down the stream till you get to a bridge; down the other bank of the stream (after crossing the bridge) till you get to an old water-mill--a jewel of a water-mill, famous for miles round; artists from the four quarters of the globe are always coming to sketch it. Ah! what, you are getting peevish again? You won't wait? Impatient old man, what a life your wife must lead, if you have got one! Remember the bridge. Ah! your poor wife and children, I pity them; your daughters especially! Pst! pst! Remember the bridge--peevish old man, remember the bridge!"

Walking as fast as he could out of hearing of the Widow Duval's tongue, Lomaque took the path by the heap of stones which led out of the high-road, crossed the stream, and arrived at the old water-mill. Close by it stood a cottage--a rough, simple building, with a strip of garden in front. Lomaque's observant eyes marked the graceful arrangement of the flower-beds, and the delicate whiteness of the curtains that hung behind the badly-glazed narrow windows. "This must be the place," he said to himself, as he knocked at the door with his stick. "I can see the traces of her hand before I cross the threshold."

The door was opened. "Pray, does the citizen Maurice--" Lomaque began, not seeing clearly, for the first moment, in the dark little passage.

Before he could say any more his hand was grasped, his carpet-bag was taken from him, and a well-known voice cried, "Welcome! a thousand thousand times welcome, at last! Citizen Maurice is not at home; but Louis Trudaine takes his place, and is overjoyed to see once more the best and dearest of his friends!"

"I hardly know you again. How you are altered for the better!" exclaimed Lomaque, as they entered the parlor of the cottage.

"Remember that you see me after a long freedom from anxiety. Since I have lived here, I have gone to rest at night, and have not been afraid of the morning," replied Trudaine. He went out into the passage while he spoke, and called at the foot of the one flight of stairs which the cottage possessed, "Rose! Rose! come down! The friend whom you most wished to see has arrived at last."

She answered the summons immediately. The frank, friendly warmth of her greeting; her resolute determination, after the first inquiries were over, to help the guest to take off his upper coat with her own hands, so confused and delighted Lomaque, that he hardly knew which way to turn, or what to say.

"This is even more trying, in a pleasant way, to a lonely old fellow like me," he was about to add, "than the unexpected civility of the hot cup of coffee years ago"; but remembering what recollections even that trifling circumstance might recall, he checked himself.

"More trying than what?" asked Rose, leading him to a chair.

"Ah! I forget. I am in my dotage already!" he answered, confusedly. "I have not got used just yet to the pleasure of seeing your kind face again." It was indeed a pleasure to look at that face now, after Lomaque's last experience of it. Three years of repose, though they had not restored to Rose those youthful attractions which she had lost forever in the days of the Terror, had not passed without leaving kindly outward traces of their healing progress. Though the girlish roundness had not returned to her cheeks, or the girlish delicacy of color to her complexion, her eyes had recovered much of their old softness, and her expression all of its old winning charm. What was left of latent sadness in her face, and of significant quietness in her manner, remained gently and harmlessly--remained rather to show what had been once than what was now.

When they were all seated, there was, however, something like a momentary return to the suspense and anxiety of past days in their faces, as Trudaine, looking earnestly at Lomaque, asked, "Do you bring any news from Paris?"

"None," he replied; "but excellent news, instead, from Rouen. I have heard, accidentally, through the employer whom I have been serving since we

parted, that your old house by the river-side is to let again."

Rose started from her chair. "Oh, Louis, if we could only live there once more! My flower-garden?" she continued to Lomaque.

"Cultivated throughout," he answered, "by the late proprietor."

"And the laboratory?" added her brother.

"Left standing," said Lomaque. "Here is a letter with all the particulars. You may depend upon them, for the writer is the person charged with the letting of the house."

Trudaine looked over the letter eagerly.

"The price is not beyond our means," he said. "After our three years' economy here, we can afford to give something for a great pleasure."

"Oh, what a day of happiness it will be when we go home again!" cried Rose. "Pray write to your friend at once," she added, addressing Lomaque, "and say we take the house, before any one else is beforehand with us!"

He nodded, and folding up the letter mechanically in the old official form, made a note on it in the old official manner. Trudaine observed the action, and felt its association with past times of trouble and terror. His face grew grave again as he said to Lomaque, "And is this good news really all the news of importance you have to tell us?"

Lomaque hesitated, and fidgeted in his chair. "What other news I have will bear keeping," he replied. "There are many questions I should like to ask first, about your sister and yourself. Do you mind allowing me to refer for a moment to the time when we last met?"

He addressed this inquiry to Rose, who answered in the negative; but her voice seemed to falter, even in saying the one word "No." She turned her head away when she spoke; and Lomaque noticed that her hands trembled as she took up some work lying on a table near, and hurriedly occupied herself with it.

"We speak as little about that time as possible," said Trudaine, looking significantly toward his sister; "but we have some questions to ask you in our turn; so the allusion, for this once, is inevitable. Your sudden disappearance at the very crisis of that time of danger has not yet been fully

explained to us. The one short note which you left behind you helped us to guess at what had happened rather than to understand it."

"I can easily explain it now," answered Lomaque. "The sudden overthrow of the Reign of Terror, which was salvation to you, was destruction to me. The new republican reign was a reign of mercy, except for the tail of Robespierre, as the phrase ran then. Every man who had been so wicked or so unfortunate as to be involved, even in the meanest capacity, with the machinery of the government of Terror, was threatened, and justly, with the fate of Robespierre. I, among others, fell under this menace of death. I deserved to die, and should have resigned myself to the guillotine but for you. From the course taken by public events, I knew you would be saved; and although your safety was the work of circumstances, still I had a hand in rendering it possible at the outset; and a yearning came over me to behold you both free again with my own eyes--a selfish yearning to see in you a living, breathing, real result of the one good impulse of my heart, which I could look back on with satisfaction. This desire gave me a new interest in life. I resolved to escape death if it were possible. For ten days I lay hidden in Paris. After that--thanks to certain scraps of useful knowledge which my experience in the office of secret police had given me--I succeeded in getting clear of Paris and in making my way safely to Switzerland. The rest of my story is so short and so soon told that I may as well get it over at once. The only relation I knew of in the world to apply to was a cousin of mine (whom I had never seen before), established as a silk-mercator at Berne. I threw myself on this man's mercy. He discovered that I was likely, with my business habits, to be of some use to him, and he took me into his house. I worked for what he pleased to give me, traveled about for him in Switzerland, deserved his confidence, and won it. Till within the last few months I remained with him; and only left my employment to enter, by my master's own desire, the house of his brother, established also as a silk-mercator, at Chalons-sur-Marne. In the counting-house of this merchant I am corresponding clerk, and am only able to come and see you now by offering to undertake a special business mission for my employer at Paris. It is drudgery, at my time of life, after all I have gone through--but my hard work is innocent work. I am not obliged to cringe for every crown-piece I put in my pocket--not bound to denounce, deceive, and dog to death other men, before I can earn my bread, and scrape together money enough to bury me. I am ending a bad, base life harmlessly at last. It is a poor thing to do, but it is something done--and even that contents a man at my age. In short, I am happier than I used to be, or at least less ashamed when I look people like you in the face."

"Hush! hush!" interrupted Rose, laying her hand on his arm. "I cannot allow

you to talk of yourself in that way, even in jest."

"I was speaking in earnest," answered Lomaque, quietly; "but I won't weary you with any more words about myself. My story is told."

"All?" asked Trudaine. He looked searchingly, almost suspiciously, at Lomaque, as he put the question. "All?" he repeated. "Yours is a short story, indeed, my good friend! Perhaps you have forgotten some of it?"

Again Lomaque fidgeted and hesitated.

"Is it not a little hard on an old man to be always asking questions of him, and never answering one of his inquiries in return?" he said to Rose, very gayly as to manner, but rather uneasily as to look.

"He will not speak out till we two are alone," thought Trudaine. "It is best to risk nothing, and to humor him."

"Come, come," he said aloud; "no grumbling. I admit that it is your turn to hear our story now; and I will do my best to gratify you. But before I begin," he added, turning to his sister, "let me suggest, Rose, that if you have any household matters to settle upstairs--"

"I know what you mean," she interrupted, hurriedly, taking up the work which, during the last few minutes, she had allowed to drop into her lap; "but I am stronger than you think; I can face the worst of our recollections composedly. Go on, Louis; pray go on--I am quite fit to stop and hear you."

"You know what we suffered in the first days of our suspense, after the success of your stratagem," said Trudaine, turning to Lomaque. "I think it was on the evening after we had seen you for the last time at St. Lazare that strange, confused rumors of an impending convulsion in Paris first penetrated within our prison walls. During the next few days the faces of our jailers were enough to show us that those rumors were true, and that the Reign of Terror was actually threatened with overthrow at the hands of the Moderate Party. We had hardly time to hope everything from this blessed change before the tremendous news of Robespierre's attempted suicide, then of his condemnation and execution, reached us. The confusion produced in the prison was beyond all description. The accused who had been tried and the accused who had not been tried got mingled together. From the day of Robespierre's arrest, no orders came to the authorities, no death-lists reached the prison. The jailers, terrified by rumors that the lowest accomplices of the tyrant would be held responsible, and be condemned

with him, made no attempt to maintain order. Some of them--that hunchback man among the rest--deserted their duties altogether. The disorganization was so complete, that when the commissioners from the new Government came to St. Lazare, some of us were actually half starving from want of the bare necessities of life. To inquire separately into our cases was found to be impossible. Sometimes the necessary papers were lost; sometimes what documents remained were incomprehensible to the new commissioners. They were obliged, at last, to make short work of it by calling us up before them in dozens. Tried or not tried, we had all been arrested by the tyrant, had all been accused of conspiracy against him, and were all ready to hail the new Government as the salvation of France. In nine cases out of ten, our best claim to be discharged was derived from these circumstances. We were trusted by Tallien and the men of the Ninth Thermidor, because we had been suspected by Robespierre, Couthon, and St. Just. Arrested informally, we were now liberated informally. When it came to my sister's turn and mine, we were not under examination five minutes. No such thing as a searching question was asked of us; I believe we might even have given our own names with perfect impunity. But I had previously instructed Rose that we were to assume our mother's maiden name--Maurice. As the citizen and citoyenne Maurice, accordingly, we passed out of prison--under the same name we have lived ever since in hiding here. Our past repose has depended, our future happiness will depend, on our escape from death being kept the profoundest secret among us three. For one all sufficient reason, which you can easily guess at, the brother and sister Maurice must still know nothing of Louis Trudaine and Rose Danville, except that they were two among the hundreds of victims guillotined during the Reign of Terror."

He spoke the last sentence with a faint smile, and with the air of a man trying, in spite of himself, to treat a grave subject lightly. His face clouded again, however, in a moment, when he looked toward his sister, as he ceased. Her work had once more dropped on her lap, her face was turned away so that he could not see it; but he knew by the trembling of her clasped hands, as they rested on her knee, and by the slight swelling of the veins on her neck which she could not hide from him, that her boasted strength of nerve had deserted her. Three years of repose had not yet enabled her to hear her marriage name uttered, or to be present when past times of deathly suffering and terror were referred to, without betraying the shock in her face and manner. Trudaine looked saddened, but in no way surprised by what he saw. Making a sign to Lomaque to say nothing, he rose and took up his sister's hood, which lay on a window-seat near him.

"Come, Rose," he said, "the sun is shining, the sweet spring air is inviting us

out. Let us have a quiet stroll along the banks of the stream. Why should we keep our good friend here cooped up in this narrow little room, when we have miles and miles of beautiful landscape to show him on the other side of the threshold? Come, it is high treason to Queen Nature to remain indoors on such a morning as this."

Without waiting for her to reply, he put on her hood, drew her arm through his, and led the way out. Lomaque's face grew grave as he followed them.

"I am glad I only showed the bright side of my budget of news in her presence," thought he. "She is not well at heart yet. I might have hurt her, poor thing! I might have hurt her again sadly, if I had not held my tongue!"

They walked for a little while down the banks of the stream, talking of indifferent matters; then returned to the cottage. By that time Rose had recovered her spirits, and could listen with interest and amusement to Lomaque's dryly-humorous description of his life as a clerk at Chalons-sur-Marne. They parted for a little while at the cottage door. Rose retired to the upstairs room from which she had been summoned by her brother. Trudaine and Lomaque returned to wander again along the banks of the stream.

With one accord, and without a word passing between them, they left the neighborhood of the cottage hurriedly; then stopped on a sudden, and attentively looked each other in the face--looked in silence for an instant. Trudaine spoke first.

"I thank you for having spared her," he began, abruptly. "She is not strong enough yet to bear hearing of a new misfortune, unless I break the tidings to her first."

"You suspect me, then, of bringing bad news?" said Lomaque.

"I know you do. When I saw your first look at her, after we were all seated in the cottage parlor, I knew it. Speak without fear, without caution, without one useless word of preface. After three years of repose, if it pleases God to afflict us again, I can bear the trial calmly; and, if need be, can strengthen her to bear it calmly, too. I say again, Lomaque, speak at once, and speak out! I know your news is bad, for I know beforehand that it is news of Danville."

"You are right; my bad news is news of him."

"He has discovered the secret of our escape from the guillotine?"

"No--he has not a suspicion of it. He believes--as his mother, as every one does--that you were both executed the day after the Revolutionary Tribunal sentenced you to death."

"Lomaque, you speak positively of that belief of his--but you cannot be certain of it."

"I can, on the most indisputable, the most startling evidence--on the authority of Danville's own act. You have asked me to speak out--"

"I ask you again--I insist on it! Your news, Lomaque--your news, without another word of preface!"

"You shall have it without another word of preface. Danville is on the point of being married."

As the answer was given they both stopped by the bank of the stream, and again looked each other in the face. There was a minute of dead silence between them. During that minute, the water bubbling by happily over its bed of pebbles seemed strangely loud, the singing of birds in a little wood by the stream-side strangely near and shrill, in both their ears. The light breeze, for all its midday warmth, touched their cheeks coldly; and the spring sunlight pouring on their faces felt as if it were glimmering on them through winter clouds.

"Let us walk on," said Trudaine, in a low voice. "I was prepared for bad news, yet not for that. Are you certain of what you have just told me?"

"As certain as that the stream here is flowing by our side. Hear how I made the discovery, and you will doubt no longer. Before last week I knew nothing of Danville, except that his arrest on suspicion by Robespierre's order was, as events turned out, the saving of his life. He was imprisoned, as I told you, on the evening after he had heard your names read from the death-list at the prison grate. He remained in confinement at the Temple, unnoticed in the political confusion out-of-doors, just as you remained unnoticed at St. Lazare, and he profited precisely in the same manner that you profited by the timely insurrection which overthrew the Reign of Terror. I knew this, and I knew that he walked out of prison in the character of a persecuted victim of Robespierre's--and, for better than three years past, I knew no more. Now listen. Last week I happened to be waiting in the shop of my employer, Citizen Clairfait, for some papers to take into the counting-house, when an

old man enters with a sealed parcel, which he hands to one of the shopmen, saying:

"Give that to Citizen Clairfait."

"Any name?" says the shopman.

"The name is of no consequence," answers the old man; "but if you please, you can give mine. Say the parcel came from Citizen Dubois;" and then he goes out. His name, in connection with his elderly look, strikes me directly.

"Does that old fellow live at Chalons?" I ask.

"No," says the shopman. "He is here in attendance on a customer of ours--an old ex-aristocrat named Danville. She is on a visit in our town."

"I leave you to imagine how that reply startles and amazes me. The shopman can answer none of the other questions I put to him; but the next day I am asked to dinner by my employer (who, for his brother's sake, shows me the utmost civility). On entering the room, I find his daughter just putting away a lavender-colored silk scarf, on which she has been embroidering in silver what looks to me very like a crest and coat-of-arms.

"I don't mind your seeing what I am about, Citizen Lomaque," says she; "for I know my father can trust you. That scarf is sent back to us by the purchaser, an ex-emigrant lady of the old aristocratic school, to have her family coat-of-arms embroidered on it."

"Rather a dangerous commission even in these mercifully democratic times, is it not?" says I.

"The old lady, you must know," says she, "is as proud as Lucifer; and having got back safely to France in these days of moderate republicanism, thinks she may now indulge with impunity in all her old-fashioned notions. She has been an excellent customer of ours, so my father thought it best to humor her, without, however, trusting her commission to any of the workroom women to execute. We are not living under the Reign of Terror now, certainly; still there is nothing like being on the safe side."

"Nothing," I answer. "Pray what is this ex-emigrant's name?"

"Danville," replies the citoyenne Clairfait. "She is going to appear in that fine scarf at her son's marriage."

"Marriage! I exclaim, perfectly thunderstruck.

"Yes,' says she. 'What is there so amazing in that? By all accounts, the son, poor man, deserves to make a lucky marriage this time. His first wife was taken away from him in the Reign of Terror by the guillotine.'

"Who is he going to marry?' I inquire, still breathless.

"The daughter of General Berthelin--an ex-aristocrat by family, like the old lady; but by principle as good a republican as ever lived--a hard-drinking, loud-swearing, big-whiskered old soldier, who snaps his fingers at his ancestors and says we are all descended from Adam, the first genuine sans-culotte in the world.'

"In this way the citoyenne Ciairfait gossips on all dinner-time, but says nothing more of any importance. I, with my old police-office habits, set to the next day, and try to make some discoveries for myself. The sum of what I find out is this: Danville's mother is staying with General Berthelin's sister and daughter at Chalons, and Danville himself is expected to arrive every day to escort them all three to Paris, where the marriage-contract is to be signed at the general's house. Discovering this, and seeing that prompt action is now of the most vital importance, I undertake, as I told you, my employer's commission for Paris, depart with all speed, and stop here on my way. Wait! I have not done yet. All the haste I can make is not haste enough to give me a good start of the wedding party. On my road here, the diligence by which I travel is passed by a carriage, posting along at full speed. I cannot see inside that carriage; but I look at the box-seat, and recognize on it the old man Dubois. He whirls by in a cloud of dust, but I am certain of him; and I say to myself what I now say again to you, no time is to be lost!"

"No time shall be lost," answers, Trudaine, firmly. "Three years have passed," he continued, in a lower voice, speaking to himself rather than to Lomaque; "three years since the day when I led my sister out of the gates of the prison--three years since I said in my heart, 'I will be patient, and will not seek to avenge myself. Our wrongs cry from earth to heaven; from man who inflicts to God who redresses. When the day of reckoning comes, let it be the day of his vengeance, not of mine.' In my heart I said those words--I have been true to them--I have waited. The day has come, and the duty it demands of me shall be fulfilled."

There was a moment's silence before Lomaque spoke again. "Your sister?" he began, hesitatingly.

"It is there only that my purpose falters," said the other, earnestly. "If it were but possible to spare her all knowledge of this last trial, and to leave the accomplishment of the terrible task to me alone?"

"I think it is possible," interposed Lomaque. "Listen to what I advise. We must depart for Paris by the diligence to-morrow morning, and we must take your sister with us--to-morrow will be time enough; people don't sign marriage-contracts on the evening after a long day's journey. We must go then, and we must take your sister. Leave the care of her in Paris, and the responsibility of keeping her in ignorance of what you are doing, to me. Go to this General Berthelin's house at a time when you know Danville is there (we can get that knowledge through the servants); confront him without a moment's previous warning; confront him as a man risen from the dead; confront him before every soul in the room though the room should be full of people--and leave the rest to the self-betrayal of a panic-stricken man. Say but three words, and your duty will be done; you may return to your sister, and may depart with her in safety to your old retreat at Rouen, or where else you please, on the very day when you have put it out of her infamous husband's power to add another to the list of his crimes."

"You forget the suddenness of the journey to Paris," said Trudaine. "How are we to account for it without the risk of awakening my sister's suspicions?"

"Trust that to me," answered Lomaque. "Let us return to the cottage at once. No, not you," he added, suddenly, as they turned to retrace their steps. "There is that in your face which would betray us. Leave me to go back alone--I will say that you have gone to give some orders at the inn. Let us separate immediately. You will recover your self-possession--you will get to look yourself again sooner--if you are left alone. I know enough of you to know that. We will not waste another minute in explanations; even minutes are precious to us on such a day as this. By the time you are fit to meet your sister again, I shall have had time to say all I wish to her, and shall be waiting at the cottage to tell you the result."

He looked at Trudaine, and his eyes seemed to brighten again with something of the old energy and sudden decision of the days when he was a man in office under the Reign of Terror. "Leave it to me," he said; and, waving his hand, turned away quickly in the direction of the cottage.

Nearly an hour passed before Trudaine ventured to follow him. When he at length entered the path which led to the garden gate, he saw his sister waiting at the cottage door. Her face looked unusually animated; and she

ran forward a step or two to meet him.

"Oh, Louis!" she said, "I have a confession to make, and I must beg you to hear it patiently to the end. You must know that our good Lomaque, though he came in tired from his walk, occupied himself the first thing, at my request, in writing the letter which is to secure to us our dear old home by the banks of the Seine. When he had done, he looked at me, and said, 'I should like to be present at your happy return to the house where I first saw you.' 'Oh, come, come with us!' I said directly. 'I am not an independent man,' he answered; 'I have a margin of time allowed me at Paris, certainly, but it is not long--if I were only my own master--' and then he stopped. Louis, I remembered all we owed to him; I remembered that there was no sacrifice we ought not to be too glad to make for his sake; I felt the kindness of the wish he had expressed; and perhaps I was a little influenced by my own impatience to see once more my flower-garden and the rooms where we used to be so happy. So I said to him, 'I am sure Louis will agree with me that our time is yours, and that we shall be only too glad to advance our departure so as to make traveling leisure enough for you to come with us to Rouen. We should be worse than ungrateful--' He stopped me. 'You have always been good to me,' he said. 'I must not impose on your kindness now. No, no, you have formalities to settle before you can leave this place.' 'Not one,' I said--for we have not, as you know, Louis? 'Why, here is your furniture to begin with,' he said. 'A few chairs and tables hired from the inn,' I answered; 'we have only to give the landlady our key, to leave a letter for the owner of the cottage, and then--' He laughed. 'Why, to hear you talk, one would think you were as ready to travel as I am!' 'So we are,' I said, 'quite as ready, living in the way we do here.' He shook his head; but you will not shake yours, Louis, I am sure, now you have heard all my long story? You can't blame me can you?"

Before Trudaine could answer, Lomaque looked out of the cottage window.

"I have just been telling my brother every thing," said Rose, turning round toward him.

"And what does he say?" asked Lomaque.

"He says what I say," replied Rose, answering for her brother; "that our time is your time--the time of our best and dearest friend."

"Shall it be done, then?" asked Lomaque, with a meaning look at Trudaine.

Rose glanced anxiously at her brother; his face was much graver than she

had expected to see it, but his answer relieved her from all suspense.

"You are quite right, love, to speak as you did," he said, gently. Then, turning to Lomaque, he added, in a firmer voice, "It shall be done!"

CHAPTER II.

Two days after the traveling-carriage described by Lomaque had passed the diligence on the road to Paris, Madame Danville sat in the drawing-room of an apartment in the Rue de Grenelle, handsomely dressed for driving out. After consulting a large gold watch that hung at her side, and finding that it wanted a quarter of an hour only to two o'clock, she rang her hand-bell, and said to the maid-servant who answered the summons, "I have five minutes to spare. Send Dubois here with my chocolate."

The old man made his appearance with great alacrity. After handing the cup of chocolate to his mistress, he ventured to use the privilege of talking, to which his long and faithful services entitled him, and paid the old lady a compliment. "I am rejoiced to see madame looking so young and in such good spirits this morning," he said, with a low bow and a mild, deferential smile.

"I think I have some reason for being in good spirits on the day when my son's marriage-contract is to be signed," said Madame Danville, with a gracious nod of the head. "Ha, Dubois, I shall live yet to see him with a patent of nobility in his hand. The mob has done its worst; the end of this infamous revolution is not far off; our order will have its turn again soon, and then who will have such a chance at court as my son? He is noble already through his mother, he will then be noble also through his wife. Yes, yes; let that coarse-mannered, passionate, old soldier-father of hers be as unnaturally republican as he pleases, he has inherited a name which will help my son to a peerage! The Vicomte D'Anville (D with an apostrophe, Dubois, you understand?), the Vicomte D'Anville--how prettily it sounds!"

"Charmingly, madame--charmingly. Ah! this second marriage of my young master's begins under much better auspices than the first."

The remark was an unfortunate one. Madame Danville frowned portentously, and rose in a great hurry from her chair.

"Are your wits failing you, you old fool?" she exclaimed, indignantly. "What do you mean by referring to such a subject as that, on this day, of all others? You are always harping on those two wretched people who were guillotined, as if you thought I could have saved their lives. Were you not present when my son and I met, after the time of the Terror? Did you not hear my first words to him, when he told me of the catastrophe? Were they

not 'Charles, I love you; but if I thought you had let those two unfortunates, who risked themselves to save me, die without risking your life in return to save them, I would break my heart rather than ever look at you or speak to you again!' Did I not say that? And did he not answer, 'Mother, my life was risked for them. I proved my devotion by exposing myself to arrest--I was imprisoned for my exertions--and then I could do no more!' Did you not stand by and hear him give that answer, overwhelmed while he spoke by generous emotion? Do you not know that he really was imprisoned in the Temple? Do you dare to think that we are to blame after that? I owe you much, Dubois, but if you are to take liberties with me--"

"Oh, madame! I beg pardon a thousand times. I was thoughtless--only thoughtless--"

"Silence! Is my coach at the door? Very well. Get ready to accompany me. Your master will not have time to return here. He will meet me, for the signing of the contract, at General Berthelin's house at two precisely. Stop! Are there many people in the street? I can't be stared at by the mob as I go to my carriage."

Dubois hobbled penitently to the window and looked out, while his mistress walked to the door.

"The street is almost empty, madame," he said. "Only a man with a woman on his arm, stopping and admiring your carriage. They seem like decent people, as well as I can tell without my spectacles. Not mob, I should say, madame; certainly not mob!"

"Very well. Attend me downstairs; and bring some loose silver with you, in case those two decent people should be fit objects for charity. No orders for the coachman, except that he is to go straight to the general's house."

The party assembled at General Berthelin's to witness the signature of the marriage-contract, comprised, besides the persons immediately interested in the ceremony of the day, some young ladies, friends of the bride, and a few officers, who had been comrades of her father's in past years. The guests were distributed, rather unequally, in two handsome apartments opening into each other--one called in the house the drawing-room, and the other the library. In the drawing-room were assembled the notary, with the contract ready, the bride, the young ladies, and the majority of General Berthelin's friends. In the library, the remainder of the military guests were amusing themselves at a billiard-table until the signing of the contract should take place, while Danville and his future father-in-law walked up

and down the room together, the first listening absently, the last talking with all his accustomed energy, and with more than his accustomed allowance of barrack-room expletives. The general had taken it into his head to explain some of the clauses in the marriage-contract to the bridegroom, who, though far better acquainted with their full scope and meaning than his father-in-law, was obliged to listen for civility's sake. While the old soldier was still in the midst of his long and confused harangue, a clock struck on the library mantel-piece.

"Two o'clock!" exclaimed Danville, glad of any pretext for interrupting the talk about the contract. "Two o'clock; and my mother not here yet! What can be delaying her?"

"Nothing," cried the general. "When did you ever know a woman punctual, my lad? If we wait for your mother--and she's such a rabid aristocrat that she would never forgive us for not waiting--we shan't sign the contract yet this half-hour. Never mind! let's go on with what we were talking about. Where the devil was I when that cursed clock struck and interrupted us? Now then, Black Eyes, what's the matter?"

This last question was addressed to Mademoiselle Berthelin, who at that moment hastily entered the library from the drawing-room. She was a tall and rather masculine-looking girl, with superb black eyes, dark hair growing low on her forehead, and something of her father's decision and bluntness in her manner of speaking.

"A stranger in the other room, papa, who wants to see you. I suppose the servants showed him upstairs, thinking he was one of the guests. Ought I to have had him shown down again?"

"A nice question! How should I know? Wait till I have seen him, miss, and then I'll tell you!" With these words the general turned on his heel, and went into the drawing-room.

His daughter would have followed him, but Danville caught her by the hand.

"Can you be hard-hearted enough to leave me here alone?" he asked.

"What is to become of all my bosom friends in the next room, you selfish man, if I stop here with you?" retorted mademoiselle, struggling to free herself.

"Call them in here," said Danville gayly, making himself master of her other

hand.

She laughed, and drew him away toward the drawing-room.

"Come," she cried, "and let all the ladies see what a tyrant I am going to marry. Come, and show them what an obstinate, unreasonable, wearisome--"

Her voice suddenly failed her; she shuddered, and turned faint. Danville's hand had in one instant grown cold as death in hers; the momentary touch of his fingers, as she felt their grasp loosen, struck some mysterious chill through her from head to foot. She glanced round at him affrightedly, and saw his eyes looking straight into the drawing-room. They were fixed in a strange, unwavering, awful stare, while, from the rest of his face, all expression, all character, all recognizable play and movement of feature, had utterly gone. It was a breathless, lifeless mask--a white blank. With a cry of terror, she looked where he seemed to be looking; and could see nothing but the stranger standing in the middle of the drawing-room. Before she could ask a question--before she could speak even a single word--her father came to her, caught Danville by the arm, and pushed her roughly back into the library.

"Go there, and take the women with you," he said, in a quick, fierce whisper. "Into the library!" he continued, turning to the ladies, and raising his voice. "Into the library, all of you, along with my daughter."

The women, terrified by his manner, obeyed him in the greatest confusion. As they hurried past him into the library, he signed to the notary to follow; and then closed the door of communication between the two rooms.

"Stop where you are!" he cried, addressing the old officers, who had risen from their chairs. "Stay, I insist on it! Whatever happens, Jacques Berthelin has done nothing to be ashamed of in the presence of his old friends and companions. You have seen the beginning, now stay and see the end."

While he spoke, he walked into the middle of the room. He had never quitted his hold of Danville's arm; step by step they advanced together to the place where Trudaine was standing.

"You have come into my house, and asked me for my daughter in marriage--and I have given her to you," said the general, addressing Danville, quietly. "You told me that your first wife and her brother were guillotined three years ago in the time of the Terror--and I believed you. Now look at that man--look

him straight in the face. He has announced himself to me as the brother of your wife, and he asserts that his sister is alive at this moment. One of you two has deceived me. Which is it?"

Danville tried to speak, but no sound passed his lips; tried to wrench his arm from the grasp that was on it, but could not stir the old soldier's steady hand.

"Are you afraid? are you a coward? Can't you look him in the face?" asked the general, tightening his hold sternly.

"Stop! stop!" interposed one of the old officers, coming forward. "Give him time. This may be a case of strange accidental resemblance, which would be enough, under the circumstances, to discompose any man. You will excuse me, citizen," he continued, turning to Trudaine; "but you are a stranger. You have given us no proof of your identity."

"There is the proof," said Trudaine, pointing to Danville's face.

"Yes, yes," pursued the other; "he looks pale and startled enough, certainly. But I say again, let us not be too hasty; there are strange cases on record of accidental resemblances, and this may be one of them!"

As he repeated those words, Danville looked at him with a faint, cringing gratitude, stealing slowly over the blank terror of his face. He bowed his head, murmured something, and gesticulated confusedly with the hand that he was free to use.

"Look!" cried the old officer; "look, Berthelin; he denies the man's identity."

"Do you hear that?" said the general, appealing to Trudaine. "Have you proofs to confute him? If you have, produce them instantly."

Before the answer could be given the door leading into the drawing-room from the staircase was violently flung open, and Madame Danville--her hair in disorder, her face in its colorless terror looking like the very counterpart of her son's--appeared on the threshold, with the old man Dubois and a group of amazed and startled servants behind her.

"For God's sake, don't sign! for God's sake, come away!" she cried. "I have seen your wife--in the spirit, or in the flesh, I know not which--but I have seen her. Charles! Charles! as true as Heaven is above us, I have seen your wife!"

"You have seen her in the flesh, living and breathing as you see her brother yonder," said a firm, quiet voice, from among the servants on the landing outside.

"Let that man enter, whoever he is!" cried the general.

Lomaque passed Madame Danville on the threshold. She trembled as he brushed by her; then, supporting herself by the wall, followed him a few paces into the room. She looked first at her son--after that, at Trudaine--after that back again at her son. Something in her presence silenced every one. There fell a sudden stillness over all the assembly--a stillness so deep that the eager, frightened whispering, and sharp rustling of dresses among the women in the library, became audible from the other side of the closed door.

"Charles," she said, slowly advancing; "why do you look--" She stopped, and fixed her eyes again on her son more earnestly than before; then turned them suddenly on Trudaine. "You are looking at my son, sir," she said, "and I see contempt in your face. By what right do you insult a man whose grateful sense of his mother's obligations to you made him risk his life for the saving of yours and your sister's? By what right have you kept the escape of my son's wife from death by the guillotine--an escape which, for all I know to the contrary, his generous exertions were instrumental in effecting--a secret from my son? By what right, I demand to know, has your treacherous secrecy placed us in such a position as we now stand in before the master of this house?"

An expression of sorrow and pity passed over Trudaine's face while she spoke. He retired a few steps, and gave her no answer. The general looked at him with eager curiosity, and, dropping his hold of Danville's arm, seemed about to speak; but Lomaque stepped forward at the same time, and held up his hand to claim attention.

"I think I shall express the wishes of Citizen Trudaine," he said, addressing Madame Danville, "if I recommend this lady not to press for too public an answer to her questions."

"Pray who are you, sir, who take it on yourself to advise me?" she retorted, haughtily. "I have nothing to say to you, except that I repeat those questions, and that I insist on their being answered."

"Who is this man?" asked the general, addressing Trudaine, and pointing to

Lomaque.

"A man unworthy of credit," cried Danville, speaking audibly for the first time, and darting a look of deadly hatred at Lomaque. "An agent of police under Robespierre."

"And in that capacity capable of answering questions which refer to the transactions of Robespierre's tribunals," remarked the ex-chief agent, with his old official self-possession.

"True!" exclaimed the general; "the man is right--let him be heard."

"There is no help for it," said Lomaque, looking at Trudaine; "leave it to me--it is fittest that I should speak. I was present," he continued, in a louder voice, "at the trial of Citizen Trudaine and his sister. They were brought to the bar through the denunciation of Citizen Danville. Till the confession of the male prisoner exposed the fact, I can answer for Danville's not being aware of the real nature of the offenses charged against Trudaine and his sister. When it became known that they had been secretly helping this lady to escape from France, and when Danville's own head was consequently in danger, I myself heard him save it by a false assertion that he had been aware of Trudaine's conspiracy from the first--"

"Do you mean to say," interrupted the general, "that he proclaimed himself in open court as having knowingly denounced the man who was on trial for saving his mother?"

"I do," answered Lomaque. (A murmur of horror and indignation rose from all the strangers present at that reply.) "The reports of the Tribunal are existing to prove the truth of what I say," he went on. "As to the escape of Citizen Trudaine and the wife of Danville from the guillotine, it was the work of political circumstances, which there are persons living to speak to if necessary; and of a little stratagem of mine, which need not be referred to now. And, last, with reference to the concealment which followed the escape, I beg to inform you that it was abandoned the moment we knew of what was going on here; and that it was only persevered in up to this time, as a natural measure of precaution on the part of Citizen Trudaine. From a similar motive we now abstain from exposing his sister to the shock and the peril of being present here. What man with an atom of feeling would risk letting her even look again on such a husband as that?"

He glanced round him, and pointed to Danville, as he put the question. Before a word could be spoken by any one else in the room, a low wailing cry

of "My mistress! my dear, dear mistress!" directed all eyes first on the old man Dubois, then on Madame Danville.

She had been leaning against the wall, before Lomaque began to speak; but she stood perfectly upright now. She neither spoke nor moved. Not one of the light gaudy ribbons flaunting on her disordered head-dress so much as trembled. The old servant Dubois was crouched on his knees at her side, kissing her cold right hand, chafing it in his, reiterating his faint, mournful cry, "Oh! my mistress! my dear, dear mistress!" but she did not appear to know that he was near her. It was only when her son advanced a step or two toward her that she seemed to awaken suddenly from that death-trance of mental pain. Then she slowly raised the hand that was free, and waved him back from her. He stopped in obedience to the gesture, and endeavored to speak. She waved her hand again, and the deathly stillness of her face began to grow troubled. Her lips moved a little--she spoke.

"Oblige me, sir, for the last time, by keeping silence. You and I have henceforth nothing to say to each other. I am the daughter of a race of nobles, and the widow of a man of honor. You are a traitor and a false witness--a thing from which all true men and true women turn with contempt. I renounce you! Publicly, in the presence of these gentlemen, I say it--I have no son."

She turned her back on him; and, bowing to the other persons in the room with the old formal courtesy of by-gone times, walked slowly and steadily to the door. Stopping there, she looked back; and then the artificial courage of the moment failed her. With a faint, suppressed cry she clutched at the hand of the old servant, who still kept faithfully at her side; he caught her in his arms, and her head sank on his shoulder.

"Help him!" cried the general to the servants near the door. "Help him to take her into the next room!"

The old man looked up suspiciously from his mistress to the persons who were assisting him to support her. With a strange, sudden jealousy he shook his hand at them. "Home," he cried; "she shall go home, and I will take care of her. Away! you there--nobody holds her head but Dubois. Downstairs! downstairs to her carriage! She has nobody but me now, and I say that she shall be taken home."

As the door closed, General Berthelin approached Trudaine, who had stood silent and apart, from the time when Lomaque first appeared in the drawing-room.

"I wish to ask your pardon," said the old soldier, "because I have wronged you by a moment of unjust suspicion. For my daughter's sake, I bitterly regret that we did not see each other long ago; but I thank you, nevertheless, for coming here, even at the eleventh hour."

While he was speaking, one of his friends came up, and touching him on the shoulder, said: "Berthelin, is that scoundrel to be allowed to go?"

The general turned on his heel directly, and beckoned contemptuously to Danville to follow him to the door. When they were well out of ear-shot, he spoke these words:

"You have been exposed as a villain by your brother-in-law, and renounced as a liar by your mother. They have done their duty by you, and now it only remains for me to do mine. When a man enters the house of another under false pretenses, and compromises the reputation of his daughter, we old army men have a very expeditious way of making him answer for it. It is just three o'clock now; at five you will find me and one of my friends--"

He stopped, and looked round cautiously--then whispered the rest in Danville's ear--threw open the door, and pointed downstairs.

"Our work here is done," said Lomaque, laying his hand on Trudaine's arm. "Let us give Danville time to get clear of the house, and then leave it too."

"My sister! where is she?" asked Trudaine, eagerly.

"Make your mind easy about her. I will tell you more when we get out."

"You will excuse me, I know," said General Berthelin, speaking to all the persons present, with his hand on the library door, "if I leave you. I have bad news to break to my daughter, and private business after that to settle with a friend."

He saluted the company, with his usual bluff nod of the head, and entered the library. A few minutes afterward, Trudaine and Lomaque left the house.

"You will find your sister waiting for you in our apartment at the hotel," said the latter. "She knows nothing, absolutely nothing, of what has passed."

"But the recognition?" asked Trudaine, amazedly. "His mother saw her. Surely she--"

"I managed it so that she should be seen, and should not see. Our former experience of Danville suggested to me the propriety of making the experiment, and my old police-office practice came in useful in carrying it out. I saw the carriage standing at the door, and waited till the old lady came down. I walked your sister away as she got in, and walked her back again past the window as the carriage drove off. A moment did it, and it turned out as useful as I thought it would. Enough of that! Go back now to your sister. Keep indoors till the night mail starts for Rouen. I have had two places taken for you on speculation. Go! resume possession of your house, and leave me here to transact the business which my employer has intrusted to me, and to see how matters end with Danville and his mother. I will make time somehow to come and bid you good-by at Rouen, though it should be only for a single day. Bah! no thanks. Give us your hand. I was ashamed to take it eight years ago--I can give it a hearty shake now! There is your way; here is mine. Leave me to my business in silks and satins, and go you back to your sister, and help her to pack up for the night mail."

CHAPTER III.

Three more days have passed. It is evening. Rose, Trudaine and Lomaque are seated together on the bench that overlooks the windings of the Seine. The old familiar scene spreads before them, beautiful as ever--unchanged, as if it was but yesterday since they had all looked on it for the last time.

They talk together seriously and in low voices. The same recollections fill their hearts--recollections which they refrain from acknowledging, but the influence of which each knows by instinct that the other partakes. Sometimes one leads the conversation, sometimes another; but whoever speaks, the topic chosen is always, as if by common consent, a topic connected with the future.

The evening darkens in, and Rose is the first to rise from the bench. A secret look of intelligence passes between her and her brother, and then she speaks to Lomaque.

"Will you follow me into the house," she asks, "with as little delay as possible? I have something that I very much wish to show you."

Her brother waits till she is out of hearing, then inquires anxiously what has happened at Paris since the night when he and Rose left it.

"Your sister is free," Lomaque answers.

"The duel took place, then?"

"The same day. They were both to fire together. The second of his adversary asserts that he was paralyzed with terror; his own second declares that he was resolved, however he might have lived, to confront death courageously by offering his life at the first fire to the man whom he had injured. Which account is true, I know not. It is only certain that he did not discharge his pistol, that he fell by his antagonist's first bullet, and that he never spoke afterward."

"And his mother?"

"It is hard to gain information. Her doors are closed; the old servant guards her with jealous care. A medical man is in constant attendance, and there are reports in the house that the illness from which she is suffering affects

her mind more than her body. I could ascertain no more."

After that answer they both remain silent for a little while, then rise from the bench and walk toward the house.

"Have you thought yet about preparing your sister to hear of all that has happened?" Lomaque asks, as he sees the lamp-light glimmering in the parlor window.

"I shall wait to prepare her till we are settled again here--till the first holiday pleasure of our return has worn off, and the quiet realities of our every-day life of old have resumed their way," answers Trudaine.

They enter the house. Rose beckons to Lomaque to sit down near her, and places pen and ink and an open letter before him.

"I have a last favor to ask of you," she says, smiling.

"I hope it will not take long to grant," he rejoins; "for I have only to-night to be with you. To-morrow morning, before you are up, I must be on my way back to Chalons."

"Will you sign that letter?" she continues, still smiling, "and then give it to me to send to the post? It was dictated by Louis, and written by me, and it will be quite complete, if you will put your name at the end of it."

"I suppose I may read it?"

She nods, and Lomaque reads these lines:

"CITIZEN--I beg respectfully to apprise you that the commission you intrusted to me at Paris has been performed.

"I have also to beg that you will accept my resignation of the place I hold in your counting-house. The kindness shown me by you and your brother before you, emboldens me to hope that you will learn with pleasure the motive of my withdrawal. Two friends of mine, who consider that they are under some obligations to me, are anxious that I should pass the rest of my days in the quiet and protection of their home. Troubles of former years have knit us together as closely as if we were all three members of one family. I need the repose of a happy fireside as much as any man, after the life I have led; and my friends assure me so earnestly that their whole hearts are set on establishing the old man's easy-chair by their hearth, that I

cannot summon resolution enough to turn my back on them and their offer.

"Accept, then, I beg of you, the resignation which this letter contains, and with it the assurance of my sincere gratitude and respect.

"To Citizen Clairfait, Silk-mercier,

"Chalons-sur-Marne."

After reading these lines, Lomaque turned round to Trudaine and attempted to speak; but the words would not come at command. He looked up at Rose, and tried to smile; but his lip only trembled. She dipped the pen in the ink, and placed it in his hand. He bent his head down quickly over the paper, so that she could not see his face; but still he did not write his name. She put her hand caressingly on his shoulder, and whispered to him:

"Come, come, humor 'Sister Rose.' She must have her own way now she is back again at home."

He did not answer--his head sank lower--he hesitated for an instant--then signed his name in faint, trembling characters, at the end of the letter.

She drew it away from him gently. A few tear-drops lay on the paper. As she dried them with her handkerchief she looked at her brother.

"They are the last he shall ever shed, Louis; you and I will take care of that!"