

Chapter 5

Manicamp and Malicorne.

Malicorne, then, left Blois, as we have said, and went to find his friend, Manicamp, then in temporary retreat in the city of Orleans. It was just at the moment when that young nobleman was employed in selling the last decent clothing he had left. He had, a fortnight before, extorted from the Comte de Guiche a hundred pistoles, all he had, to assist in equipping him properly to go and meet Madame, on her arrival at Le Havre. He had drawn from Malicorne, three days before, fifty pistoles, the price of the *_brevet_* obtained for Montalais. He had then no expectation of anything else, having exhausted all his resources, with the exception of selling a handsome suit of cloth and satin, embroidered and laced with gold, which had been the admiration of the court. But to be able to sell this suit, the last he had left, - as we have been forced to confess to the reader - Manicamp had been obliged to take to his bed. No more fire, no more pocket-money, no more walking-money, nothing but sleep to take the place of repasts, companies and balls. It has been said - "He who sleeps, dines;" but it has never been affirmed - He who sleeps, plays - or, He who sleeps, dances. Manicamp, reduced to this extremity of neither playing nor dancing, for a week at least, was, consequently, very sad; he was expecting a usurer, and saw Malicorne enter. A cry of distress escaped him.

"Eh! what!" said he, in a tone which nothing can describe, "is that you

again, dear friend?"

"Humph! you are very polite!" said Malicorne.

"Ay, but look you, I was expecting money, and, instead of money, I see
you."

"And suppose I brought you some money?"

"Oh! that would be quite another thing. You are very welcome, my dear
friend!"

And he held out his hand, not for the hand of Malicorne, but for the
purse. Malicorne pretended to be mistaken, and gave him his hand.

"And the money?" said Manicamp.

"My dear friend, if you wish to have it, earn it."

"What must be done for it?"

"Earn it, _parbleu!_"

"And after what fashion?"

"Oh! that is rather trying, I warn you."

"The devil!"

"You must get out of bed, and go immediately to M. le Comte de Guiche."

"I get up!" said Manicamp, stretching himself in his bed, complacently,
"oh, no, thank you!"

"You have sold all your clothes?"

"No, I have one suit left, the handsomest even, but I expect a purchaser."

"And the _chausses?_"

"Well, if you look, you will see them on that chair."

"Very well! since you have some _chausses_ and a _pourpoint_ left, put your legs into the first and your back into the other; have a horse saddled, and set off."

"Not I."

"And why not?"

"_Morbleu!_ don't you know, then, that M. de Guiche is at Etampes?"

"No, I thought he was at Paris. You will then only have fifteen leagues to go, instead of thirty."

"You are a wonderfully clever fellow! If I were to ride fifteen leagues in these clothes, they would never be fit to put on again; and, instead of selling them for thirty pistoles, I should be obliged to take fifteen."

"Sell them for whatever you like, but I must have a second commission of maid of honor."

"Good! for whom? Is Montalais doubled, then?"

"Vile fellow! - It is you who are doubled. You swallow up two fortunes - mine, and that of M. le Comte de Guiche."

"You should say, that of M. le Comte de Guiche and yours."

"That is true; honor where it is due; but I return to my brevet."

"And you are wrong."

"Prove me that."

"My friend, there will only be twelve maids of honor for madame; I have already obtained for you what twelve hundred women are trying for, and for that I was forced to employ all my diplomacy."

"Oh! yes, I know you have been quite heroic, my dear friend."

"We know what we are about," said Manicamp.

"To whom do you tell that? When I am king, I promise you one thing."

"What? To call yourself Malicorne the First?"

"No; to make you superintendent of my finances; but that is not the question now."

"Unfortunately."

"The present affair is to procure for me a second place of maid of honor."

"My friend, if you were to promise me the price of heaven, I would decline to disturb myself at this moment."

Malicorne chinked the money in his pocket.

"There are twenty pistoles here," said Malicorne.

"And what would you do with twenty pistoles, *_mon Dieu!_*"

"Well!" said Malicorne, a little angry, "suppose I were to add them to

the five hundred you already owe me?"

"You are right," replied Manicamp, stretching out his hand again, "and from that point of view I can accept them. Give them to me."

"An instant, what the devil! it is not only holding out your hand that will do; if I give you the twenty pistoles, shall I have my _brevet?_"

"To be sure you shall."

"Soon?"

"To-day."

"Oh! take care! Monsieur de Manicamp; you undertake much, and I do not ask that. Thirty leagues in a day is too much, you would kill yourself."

"I think nothing impossible when obliging a friend."

"You are quite heroic."

"Where are the twenty pistoles?"

"Here they are," said Malicorne, showing them.

"That's well."

"Yes, but my dear M. Manicamp, you would consume them in post-horses alone!"

"No, no, make yourself easy on that score."

"Pardon me. Why, it is fifteen leagues from this place to Etampes?"

"Fourteen."

"Well! fourteen be it; fourteen leagues makes seven posts; at twenty _sous_ the post, seven _livres_ ; seven _livres_ the courier, fourteen; as many for coming back, twenty-eight! as much for bed and supper, that makes sixty _livres_ this complaisance would cost."

Manicamp stretched himself like a serpent in his bed, and fixing his two great eyes upon Malicorne, "You are right," said he; "I could not return before to-morrow;" and he took the twenty pistoles.

"Now, then, be off!"

"Well, as I cannot be back before to-morrow, we have time."

"Time for what?"

"Time to play."

"What do you wish to play with?"

"Your twenty pistoles, _pardieu!_"

"No; you always win."

"I will wager them, then."

"Against what?"

"Against twenty others."

"And what shall be the object of the wager?"

"This. We have said it was fourteen leagues to Etampes."

"Yes."

"And fourteen leagues back?"

"Doubtless."

"Well; for these twenty-eight leagues you cannot allow less than fourteen hours?"

"That is agreed."

"One hour to find the Comte de Guiche."

"Go on."

"And an hour to persuade him to write a letter to Monsieur."

"Just so."

"Sixteen hours in all?"

"You reckon as well as M. Colbert."

"It is now twelve o'clock."

"Half-past."

"_Hein!_ - you have a handsome watch!"

"What were you saying?" said Malicorne, putting his watch quickly back into his fob.

"Ah! true; I was offering to lay you twenty pistoles against these you have lent me, that you will have the Comte de Guiche's letter in - "

"How soon?"

"In eight hours."

"Have you a winged horse, then?"

"That is no matter. Will you bet?"

"I shall have the comte's letter in eight hours?"

"Yes."

"In hand?"

"In hand."

"Well, be it so; I lay," said Malicorne, curious enough to know how this seller of clothes would get through.

"Is it agreed?"

"It is."

"Pass me the pen, ink, and paper."

"Here they are."

"Thank you."

Manicamp raised himself with a sigh, and leaning on his left elbow, in his best hand, traced the following lines: -

"Good for an order for a place of maid of honor to Madame, which M. le Comte de

Guiche will take upon him to obtain at sight.

DE MANICAMP."

This painful task accomplished, he laid himself down in bed again.

"Well!" asked Malicorne, "what does this mean?"

"That means that if you are in a hurry to have the letter from the Comte de Guiche for Monsieur, I have won my wager."

"How the devil is that?"

"That is transparent enough, I think; you take that paper."

"Well?"

"And you set out instead of me."

"Ah!"

"You put your horses to their best speed."

"Good!"

"In six hours you will be at Etampes; in seven hours you have the letter from the comte, and I shall have won my wager without stirring from my bed, which suits me and you too, at the same time, I am very sure."

"Decidedly, Manicamp, you are a great man."

"_Hein!_ I know that."

"I am to start then for Etampes?"

"Directly."

"I am to go to the Comte de Guiche with this order?"

"He will give you a similar one for Monsieur."

"Monsieur will approve?"

"Instantly."

"And I shall have my _brevet?_"

"You will."

"Ah!"

"Well, I hope I behave genteely?"

"Adorably."

"Thank you."

"You do as you please, then, with the Comte de Guiche, Manicamp?"

"Except making money of him - everything?"

"_Diable!_ the exception is annoying; but then, if instead of asking him for money, you were to ask - "

"What?"

"Something important."

"What do you call important?"

"Well! suppose one of your friends asked you to render him a service?"

"I would not render it to him."

"Selfish fellow!"

"Or at least I would ask him what service he would render me in exchange."

"Ah! that, perhaps, is fair. Well, that friend speaks to you."

"What, you, Malicorne?"

"Yes; I."

"Ah! ah! you are rich, then?"

"I have still fifty pistoles left."

"Exactly the sum I want. Where are those fifty pistoles?"

"Here," said Malicorne, slapping his pocket.

"Then speak, my friend; what do you want?"

Malicorne took up the pen, ink, and paper again, and presented them all to Manicamp. "Write!" said he.

"Dictate!"

"An order for a place in the household of Monsieur."

"Oh!" said Manicamp, laying down the pen, "a place in the household of Monsieur for fifty pistoles?"

"You mistook me, my friend; you did not hear plainly."

"What did you say, then?"

"I said five hundred."

"And the five hundred?"

"Here they are."

Manicamp devoured the rouleau with his eyes; but this time Malicorne held it at a distance.

"Eh! what do you say to that? Five hundred pistoles."

"I say it is for nothing, my friend," said Manicamp, taking up the pen again, "and you exhaust my credit. Dictate."

Malicorne continued:

"Which my friend the Comte de Guiche will obtain for my friend Malicorne."

"That's it," said Manicamp.

"Pardon me, you have forgotten to sign."

"Ah! that is true. The five hundred pistoles?"

"Here are two hundred and fifty of them."

"And the other two hundred and fifty?"

"When I am in possession of my place."

Manicamp made a face.

"In that case give me the recommendation back again."

"What to do?"

"To add two words to it."

"Two words?"

"Yes; two words only."

"What are they?"

"In haste."

Malicorne returned the recommendation; Manicamp added the words.

"Good," said Malicorne, taking back the paper.

Manicamp began to count out the pistoles.

"There want twenty," said he.

"How so?"

"The twenty I have won."

"In what way?"

"By laying that you would have the letter from the Comte de Guiche in eight hours."

"Ah! that's fair," and he gave him the twenty pistoles.

Manicamp began to scoop up his gold by handfuls, and pour it in cascades upon his bed.

"This second place," murmured Malicorne, whilst drying his paper, "which, at first glance appears to cost me more than the first, but - " He stopped, took up the pen in his turn, and wrote to Montalais: -

"MADEMOISELLE, - Announce to your friend that her commission will not be

long before it arrives; I am setting out to get it signed: that will be twenty-eight leagues I shall have gone for the love of you."

Then with his sardonic smile, taking up the interrupted sentence: - "This place," said he, "at first glance, appears to have cost more than the first; but - the benefit will be, I hope, in proportion with the expense, and Mademoiselle de la Valliere will bring me back more than Mademoiselle de Montalais, or else, - or else my name is not Malicorne. Farewell, Manicamp," and he left the room.