

## Chapter 6

### The Courtyard of the Hotel Grammont.

On Malicorne's arrival at Orleans, he was informed that the Comte de Guiche had just set out for Paris. Malicorne rested himself for a couple of hours, and then prepared to continue his journey. He reached Paris during the night, and alighted at a small hotel, where, in his previous journeys to the capital, he had been accustomed to put up, and at eight o'clock the next morning presented himself at the Hotel Grammont.

Malicorne arrived just in time, for the Comte de Guiche was on the point of taking leave of Monsieur before setting out for Le Havre, where the principal members of the French nobility had gone to await Madame's arrival from England. Malicorne pronounced the name of Manicamp, and was

immediately admitted. He found the Comte de Guiche in the courtyard of the Hotel Grammont, inspecting his horses, which his trainers and equerries were passing in review before him. The count, in the presence of his tradespeople and of his servants, was engaged in praising or blaming, as the case seemed to deserve, the appointments, horses, and harness that were being submitted to him; when, in the midst of this important occupation, the name of Manicamp was announced.

"Manicamp!" he exclaimed; "let him enter by all means." And he advanced a few steps toward the door.

Malicorne slipped through the half-open door, and looking at the Comte de Guiche, who was surprised to see a face he did not recognize, instead of the one he expected, said: "Forgive me, monsieur le comte, but I believe a mistake has been made. M. Manicamp himself was announced to you, instead of which it is only an envoy from him."

"Ah!" exclaimed De Guiche, coldly; "and what do you bring me?"

"A letter, monsieur le comte." Malicorne handed him the first document, and narrowly watched the count's face, who, as he read it, began to laugh.

"What!" he exclaimed, "another maid of honor? Are all the maids of honor in France, then, under his protection?"

Malicorne bowed.

"Why does he not come himself?" he inquired.

"He is confined to his bed."

"The deuce! he has no money then, I suppose," said De Guiche, shrugging his shoulders. "What does he do with his money?"

Malicorne made a movement, to indicate that upon this subject he was as ignorant as the count himself. "Why does he not make use of his credit, then?" continued De Guiche.

"With regard to that, I think - "

"What?"

"That Manicamp has credit with no one but yourself, monsieur le comte!"

"He will not be at Le Havre, then?" Whereupon Malicorne made another movement.

"But every one will be there."

"I trust, monsieur le comte, that he will not neglect so excellent an opportunity."

"He should be at Paris by this time."

"He will take the direct road perhaps to make up for lost time."

"Where is he now?"

"At Orleans."

"Monsieur," said De Guiche, "you seem to me a man of very good taste."

Malicorne was wearing some of Manicamp's old-new clothes. He bowed in

return, saying, "You do me a very great honor, monsieur le comte."

"Whom have I the pleasure of addressing?"

"My name is Malicorne, monsieur."

"M. de Malicorne, what do you think of these pistol-holsters?"

Malicorne was a man of great readiness and immediately understood the position of affairs. Besides, the "de" which had been prefixed to his name, raised him to the rank of the person with whom he was conversing. He looked at the holsters with the air of a connoisseur and said, without hesitation: "Somewhat heavy, monsieur."

"You see," said De Guiche to the saddler, "this gentleman, who understands these matters well, thinks the holsters heavy, a complaint I had already made." The saddler was full of excuses.

"What do you think," asked De Guiche, "of this horse, which I have just purchased?"

"To look at it, it seems perfect, monsieur le comte; but I must mount it before I give you my opinion."

"Do so, M. de Malicorne, and ride him round the court two or three times."

The courtyard of the hotel was so arranged, that whenever there was any occasion for it, it could be used as a riding-school. Malicorne, with perfect ease, arranged the bridle and snaffle-reins, placed his left hand on the horse's mane, and, with his foot in the stirrup, raised himself and seated himself in the saddle. At first, he made the horse walk the whole circuit of the court-yard at a foot-pace; next at a trot; lastly at a gallop. He then drew up close to the count, dismounted, and threw the bridle to a groom standing by. "Well," said the count, "what do you think of it, M. de Malicorne?"

"This horse, monsieur le comte, is of the Mecklenburg breed. In looking whether the bit suited his mouth, I saw that he was rising seven, the very age when the training of a horse intended for a charger should commence. The forehead is light. A horse which holds its head high, it is said, never tires his rider's hand. The withers are rather low. The drooping of the hind-quarters would almost make me doubt the purity of its German breed, and I think there is English blood in him. He stands well on his legs, but he trots high, and may cut himself, which requires attention to be paid to his shoeing. He is tractable; and as I made him turn round and change his feet, I found him quick and ready in doing so."

"Well said, M. de Malicorne," exclaimed the comte; "you are a judge of horses, I perceive;" then, turning towards him again, he continued, "you are most becomingly dressed, M. de Malicorne. That is not a provincial cut, I presume. Such a style of dress is not to be met with at Tours or Orleans."

"No, monsieur le comte; my clothes were made at Paris."

"There is no doubt about that. But let us resume our own affair.  
Manicamp wishes for the appointment of a second maid of honor."

"You perceive what he has written, monsieur le comte."

"For whom was the first appointment?"

Malicorne felt the color rise in his face as he answered hurriedly.

"A charming maid of honor, Mademoiselle de Montalais."

"Ah, ah! you are acquainted with her?"

"We are affianced, or nearly so."

"That is quite another thing, then; a thousand compliments," exclaimed De Guiche, upon whose lips a courtier's jest was already fitting, but to whom the word "affianced," addressed by Malicorne with respect to Mademoiselle de Montalais, recalled the respect due to women.

"And for whom is the second appointment destined?" asked De Guiche; "is it for anyone to whom Manicamp may happen to be affianced? In that case I pity her, poor girl! for she will have a sad fellow for a husband."

"No, monsieur le comte; the second appointment is for Mademoiselle de la Baume le Blanc de la Valliere."

"Unknown," said De Guiche.

"Unknown? yes, monsieur," said Malicorne, smiling in his turn.

"Very good. I will speak to Monsieur about it. By the by, she is of gentle birth?"

"She belongs to a very good family and is maid of honor to Madame."

"That's well. Will you accompany me to Monsieur?"

"Most certainly, if I may be permitted the honor."

"Have you your carriage?"

"No; I came here on horseback."

"Dressed as you are?"

"No, monsieur; I posted from Orleans, and I changed my traveling suit for the one I have on, in order to present myself to you."

"True, you already told me you had come from Orleans;" saying which he crumpled Manicamp's letter in his hand, and thrust it in his pocket.

"I beg your pardon," said Malicorne, timidly; "but I do not think you have read all."

"Not read all, do you say?"

"No; there were two letters in the same envelope."

"Oh! are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

"Let us look, then," said the count, as he opened the letter again.

"Ah! you are right," he said opening the paper which he had not yet read.

"I suspected it," he continued - "another application for an appointment under Monsieur. This Manicamp is a regular vampire: - he is carrying on a trade in it."

"No, monsieur le comte, he wishes to make a present of it."

"To whom?"



"To myself, monsieur."

"Why did you not say so at once, my dear M. Mauvaisecorne?"

"Malicorne, monsieur le comte."

"Forgive me; it is that Latin that bothers me - that terrible mine of etymologies. Why the deuce are young men of family taught Latin? \_Mala\_ and \_mauvaise\_ - you understand it is the same thing. You will forgive me, I trust, M. de Malicorne."

"Your kindness affects me much, monsieur: but it is a reason why I should make you acquainted with one circumstance without any delay."

"What is it?"

"That I was not born a gentleman. I am not without courage, and not altogether deficient in ability; but my name is Malicorne simply."

"You appear to me, monsieur!" exclaimed the count, looking at the astute face of his companion, "to be a most agreeable man. Your face pleases me, M. Malicorne, and you must possess some indisputably excellent qualities to have pleased that egotistical Manicamp. Be candid and tell me whether you are not some saint descended upon the earth."

"Why so?"

"For the simple reason that he makes you a present of anything. Did you not say that he intended to make you a present of some appointment in the king's household?"

"I beg your pardon, count; but, if I succeed in obtaining the appointment, you, and not he, will have bestowed it on me."

"Besides he will not have given it to you for nothing, I suppose. Stay, I have it; - there is a Malicorne at Orleans who lends money to the prince."

"I think that must be my father, monsieur."

"Ah! the prince has the father, and that terrible dragon of a Manicamp has the son. Take care, monsieur, I know him. He will fleece you completely."

"The only difference is, that I lend without interest," said Malicorne, smiling.

"I was correct in saying you were either a saint or very much resembled one. M. Malicorne, you shall have the post you want, or I will forfeit my name."

"Ah! monsieur le comte, what a debt of gratitude shall I not owe you?" said Malicorne, transported.

"Let us go to the prince, my dear M. Malicorne." And De Guiche proceeded toward the door, desiring Malicorne to follow him. At the very moment they were about to cross the threshold, a young man appeared on the other side. He was from twenty-four to twenty-five years of age, of pale complexion, bright eyes and brown hair and eyebrows. "Good-day," said he, suddenly, almost pushing De Guiche back into the courtyard again.

"Is that you, De Wardes? - What! and booted, spurred and whip in hand, too?"

"The most befitting costume for a man about to set off for Le Havre. There will be no one left in Paris to-morrow." And hereupon he saluted Malicorne with great ceremony, whose handsome dress gave him the appearance of a prince.

"M. Malicorne," said De Guiche to his friend. De Wardes bowed.

"M. de Wardes," said Guiche to Malicorne, who bowed in return. "By the by, De Wardes," continued De Guiche, "you who are so well acquainted with these matters, can you tell us, probably, what appointments are still vacant at the court; or rather in the prince's household?"

"In the prince's household," said De Wardes looking up with an air of consideration, "let me see - the appointment of the master of the horse is vacant, I believe."

"Oh," said Malicorne, "there is no question of such a post as that, monsieur; my ambition is not nearly so exalted,"

De Wardes had a more penetrating observation than De Guiche, and fathomed

Malicorne immediately. "The fact is," he said, looking at him from head to foot, "a man must be either a duke or a peer to fill that post."

"All I solicit," said Malicorne, "is a very humble appointment; I am of little importance, and I do not rank myself above my position."

"M. Malicorne, whom you see here," said De Guiche to De Wardes, "is a very excellent fellow, whose only misfortune is that of not being of gentle birth. As far as I am concerned, you know, I attach little value to those who have but gentle birth to boast of."

"Assuredly," said De Wardes; "but will you allow me to remark, my dear count, that, without rank of some sort, one can hardly hope to belong to his royal highness's household?"

"You are right," said the count, "court etiquette is absolute. The devil! - we never so much as gave it a thought."

"Alas! a sad misfortune for me, monsieur le comte," said Malicorne, changing color.

"Yet not without remedy, I hope," returned De Guiche.

"The remedy is found easily enough," exclaimed De Wardes; "you can be created a gentleman. His Eminence, the Cardinal Mazarin, did nothing else from morning till night."

"Hush, hush, De Wardes," said the count; "no jests of that kind; it ill becomes us to turn such matters into ridicule. Letters of nobility, it is true, are purchasable; but that is a sufficient misfortune without the nobles themselves laughing at it."

"Upon my word, De Guiche, you're quite a Puritan, as the English say."

At this moment the Vicomte de Bragelonne was announced by one of the servants in the courtyard, in precisely the same manner as he would have done in a room.

"Come here, my dear Raoul. What! you, too, booted and spurred? You are setting off, then?"

Bragelonne approached the group of young men, and saluted them with that quiet and serious manner peculiar to him. His salutation was principally addressed to De Wardes, with whom he was unacquainted, and whose features, on his perceiving Raoul, had assumed a strange sternness of expression. "I have come, De Guiche," he said, "to ask your

companionship. We set off for Le Havre, I presume."

"This is admirable - delightful. We shall have a most enjoyable journey. M. Malicorne, M. Bragelonne - ah! M. de Wardes, let me present you." The young men saluted each other in a restrained manner. Their very natures seemed, from the beginning, disposed to take exception to each other. De Wardes was pliant, subtle, full of dissimulation; Raoul was calm, grave, and upright. "Decide between us - between De Wardes and myself, Raoul."

"Upon what subject?"

"Upon the subject of noble birth."

"Who can be better informed on that subject than a De Gramont?"

"No compliments; it is your opinion I ask."

"At least, inform me of the subject under discussion."

"De Wardes asserts that the distribution of titles is abused; I, on the contrary, maintain that a title is useless to the man on whom it is bestowed."

"And you are correct," said Bragelonne, quietly.

"But, monsieur le vicomte," interrupted De Wardes, with a kind of obstinacy, "I affirm that it is I who am correct."

"What was your opinion, monsieur?"

"I was saying that everything is done in France at the present moment, to humiliate men of family."

"And by whom?"

"By the king himself. He surrounds himself with people who cannot show four quarterings."

"Nonsense," said De Guiche, "where could you possibly have seen that, De Wardes?"

"One example will suffice," he returned, directing his look fully upon Raoul.

"State it then."

"Do you know who has just been nominated captain-general of the musketeers? - an appointment more valuable than a peerage; for it gives precedence over all the marechals of France."

Raoul's color mounted in his face; for he saw the object De Wardes had in

view. "No; who has been appointed? In any case it must have been very recently, for the appointment was vacant eight days ago; a proof of which is, that the king refused Monsieur, who solicited the post for one of his \_proteges\_."

"Well, the king refused it to Monsieur's \_protege\_, in order to bestow it upon the Chevalier d'Artagnan, a younger brother of some Gascon family, who has been trailing his sword in the ante-chambers during the last thirty years."

"Forgive me if I interrupt you," said Raoul, darting a glance full of severity at De Wardes; "but you give me the impression of being unacquainted with the gentleman of whom you are speaking."

"I not acquainted with M. d'Artagnan? Can you tell me, monsieur, who does \_not\_ know him?"

"Those who \_do\_ know him, monsieur," replied Raoul, with still greater calmness and sternness of manner, "are in the habit of saying, that if he is not as good a gentleman as the king - which is not his fault - he is the equal of all the kings of the earth in courage and loyalty. Such is my opinion, monsieur; and I thank heaven I have known M. d'Artagnan from my birth."

De Wardes was about to reply, when De Guiche interrupted him.