The Companions of Jehu

By

Alexandre Dumas pere

Introduction and Prologue

Just about a year ago my old friend, Jules Simon, author of "Devoir," came to me with a request that I write a novel for the "Journal pour Tous." I gave him the outline of a novel which I had in mind. The subject pleased him, and the contract was signed on the spot.

The action occurred between 1791 and 1793, and the first chapter opened at Varennes the evening of the king's arrest.

Only, impatient as was the "Journal pour Tous," I demanded a fortnight of Jules Simon before beginning my novel. I wished to go to Varennes; I was not acquainted with the locality, and I confess there is one thing I cannot do; I am unable to write a novel or a drama about localities with which I am not familiar.

In order to write "Christine" I went to Fontainebleau; in writing "Henri III." I went to Blois; for "Les Trois Mousquetaires" I went to Boulogne and Béthune; for "Monte-Cristo" I returned to the Catalans and the Château d'If; for "Isaac Laquedem" I revisited Rome; and I certainly spent more time studying Jerusalem and Corinth from a distance than if I had gone there.

This gives such a character of veracity to all that I write, that the personages whom I create become eventually such integral parts of the places in which I planted them that, as a consequence, many end by believing in their actual existence. There are even some people who claim to have known them.

In this connection, dear readers, I am going to tell you something in confidence--only do not repeat it. I do not wish to injure honest fathers of families who live by this little industry, but if you go to Marseilles you will be shown there the house of Morel on the Cours, the house of Mercédès at the Catalans, and the dungeons of Dantès and Faria at the Château d'If.

When I staged "Monte-Cristo" at the Theâtre-Historique, I wrote to Marseilles for a plan of the Château d'If, which was sent to me. This drawing was for the use of the scene painter. The artist to whom I had recourse forwarded me the desired plan. He even did better than I would have dared ask of him; he wrote beneath it: "View of the Château d'If, from the side where Dantès was thrown into the sea."

I have learned since that a worthy man, a guide attached to the Château d'If, sells pens made of fish-bone by the Abbé Faria himself.

There is but one unfortunate circumstance concerning this; the fact is, Dantès and the Abbé Faria have never existed save in my imagination; consequently, Dantès could not have been precipitated from the top to the bottom of the Château d'If, nor could the Abbé Faria have made pens. But that is what comes from visiting these localities in person.

Therefore, I wished to visit Varennes before commencing my novel, because the first chapter was to open in that city. Besides, historically, Varennes worried me considerably; the more I perused the historical accounts of Varennes, the less I was able to understand, topographically, the king's arrest.

I therefore proposed to my young friend, Paul Bocage, that he accompany me to Varennes. I was sure in advance that he would accept. To merely propose such a trip to his picturesque and charming mind was to make him bound from his chair to the tram. We took the railroad to Châlons. There we bargained with a livery-stable keeper, who agreed, for a consideration of ten francs a day, to furnish us with a horse and carriage. We were seven days on the trip, three days to go from Châlons to Varennes, one day to make the requisite local researches in the city, and three days to return from Varennes to Châlons.

I recognized with a degree of satisfaction which you will easily comprehend, that not a single historian had been historical, and with still greater satisfaction that M. Thiers had been the least accurate of all these historians. I had already suspected this, but was not certain. The only one

who had been accurate, with absolute accuracy, was Victor Hugo in his book called "The Rhine." It is true that Victor Hugo is a poet and not a historian. What historians these poets would make, if they would but consent to become historians!

One day Lamartine asked me to what I attributed the immense success of his "Histoire des Girondins."

"To this, because in it you rose to the level of a novel," I answered him. He reflected for a while and ended, I believe, by agreeing with me.

I spent a day, therefore, at Varennes and visited all the localities necessary for my novel, which was to be called "René d'Argonne." Then I returned. My son was staying in the country at Sainte-Assise, near Melun; my room awaited me, and I resolved to go there to write my novel.

I am acquainted with no two characters more dissimilar than Alexandre's and mine, which nevertheless harmonize so well. It is true we pass many enjoyable hours during our separations; but none I think pleasanter than those we spend together.

I had been installed there for three or four days endeavoring to begin my "René d'Argonne," taking up my pen, then laying it aside almost immediately. The thing would not go. I consoled myself by telling stories. Chance willed that I should relate one which Nodier had told me of four young men affiliated with the Company of Jehu, who had been executed at Bourg in Bresse amid the most dramatic circumstances. One of these four young men, he who had found the greatest difficulty in dying, or rather he whom they had the greatest difficulty in killing, was but nineteen and a half years old.

Alexandre listened to my story with much interest. When I had finished: "Do you know," said he, "what I should do in your place?"

"What?"

"I should lay aside 'René d'Argonne,' which refuses to materialize, and in its stead I should write 'The Companions of Jehu.'"

"But just think, I have had that other novel in mind for a year or two, and it is almost finished."

"It never will be since it is not finished now."

"Perhaps you are right, but I shall lose six months regaining my present vantage-ground."

"Good! In three days you will have written half a volume."

"Then you will help me."

"Yes, for I shall give you two characters."

"Is that all?"

"You are too exacting! The rest is your affair; I am busy with my 'Question d'Argent.'"

"Well, who are your two characters, then?"

"An English gentleman and a French captain."

"Introduce the Englishman first."

"Very well." And Alexandre drew Lord Tanlay's portrait for me.

"Your English gentleman pleases me," said I; "now let us see your French captain."

"My French captain is a mysterious character, who courts death with all his might, without being able to accomplish his desire; so that each time he rushes into mortal danger he performs some brilliant feat which secures him promotion."

"But why does he wish to get himself killed?"

"Because he is disgusted with life."

"Why is he disgusted with life?"

"Ah! That will be the secret of the book."

"It must be told in the end."

"On the contrary, I, in your place, would not tell it."

"The readers will demand it."

"You will reply that they have only to search for it; you must leave them something to do, these readers of yours."

"Dear friend, I shall be overwhelmed with letters."

"You need not answer them."

"Yes, but for my personal gratification I, at least, must know why my hero longs to die."

"Oh, I do not refuse to tell you."

"Let me hear, then."

"Well, suppose, instead of being professor of dialectics, Abelard had been a soldier."

"Well?"

"Well, let us suppose that a bullet--"

"Excellent!"

"You understand? Instead of withdrawing to Paraclet, he would have courted death at every possible opportunity."

"Hum! That will be difficult."

"Difficult! In what way?"

"To make the public swallow that."

"But since you are not going to tell the public."

"That is true. By my faith, I believe you are right. Wait."

"I am waiting."

"Have you Nodier's 'Souvenirs de la Révolution'? I believe he wrote one or two pages about Guyon, Leprêtre, Amiet and Hyvert."

"They will say, then, that you have plagiarized from Nodier."

"Oh! He loved me well enough during his life not to refuse me whatever I shall take from him after his death. Go fetch me the 'Souvenirs de la Révolution.'"

Alexandre brought me the book. I opened it, turned over two or three pages, and at last discovered what I was looking for. A little of Nodier, dear readers, you will lose nothing by it. It is he who is speaking:

The highwaymen who attacked the diligences, as mentioned in the article on Amiet, which I quoted just now, were called Leprêtre, Hyvert, Guyon and Amiet.

Leprêtre was forty-eight years old. He was formerly a captain of dragoons, a knight of St. Louis, of a noble countenance, prepossessing carriage and much elegance of manner. Guyon and Amiet have never been known by their real names. They owe that to the accommodating spirit prevailing

among the vendors of passports of those days. Let the reader picture to himself two dare-devils between twenty and thirty years of age, allied by some common responsibility, the sequence, perhaps of some misdeed, or, by a more delicate and generous interest, the fear of compromising their family name. Then you will know of Guyon and Amiet all that I can recall. The latter had a sinister countenance, to which, perhaps, he owes the bad reputation with which all his biographers have credited him. Hyvert was the son of a rich merchant of Lyons, who had offered the sub-officer charged with his deportation sixty thousand francs to permit his escape. He was at once the Achilles and the Paris of the band. He was of medium height but well formed, lithe, and of graceful and pleasing address. His eyes were never without animation nor his lips without a smile. His was one of those countenances which are never forgotten, and which present an inexpressible blending of sweetness and strength, tenderness and energy. When he yielded to the eloquent petulance of his inspirations he soared to enthusiasm. His conversation revealed the rudiments of an excellent early education and much natural intelligence. That which was so terrifying in him was his tone of heedless gayety, which contrasted so horribly with his position. For the rest, he was unanimously conceded to be kind, generous, humane, lenient toward the weak, while with the strong he loved to display a vigor truly athletic which his somewhat effeminate features were far from indicating. He boasted that he had never been without money, and had no enemies. That was his sole reply to the charges of theft and assassination. He was twenty-two years old.

To these four men was intrusted the attack upon a diligence conveying forty thousand francs of government money. This deed was transacted in broad daylight, with an exchange of mutual courtesy almost; and the travellers, who were not disturbed by the attack, gave little heed to it. But a child of only ten years of age, with reckless bravado, seized the pistol of the conductor and fired it into the midst of the assailants. As this peaceful weapon, according to the custom, was only charged with powder, no one was injured; but the occupants of the coach quite naturally experienced a lively fear of reprisals. The little boy's mother fell into violent hysterics. This new disturbance created a general diversion which dominated all the preceding events and particularly attracted the attention of the robbers. One of them flew to the woman's side, reassuring her in the most affectionate manner, while complimenting her upon her son's precocious courage, and courteously pressed upon her the salts and perfumes with which these gentlemen were ordinarily provided for their own use. She regained consciousness. In the excitement of the moment her travelling companions

noticed that the highwayman's mask had fallen off, but they did not see his face.

The police of those days, restricted to mere impotent supervision, were unable to cope with the depredations of these banditti, although they did not lack the means to follow them up. Appointments were made at the cafés, and narratives relating to deeds carrying with them the penalty of death circulated freely through all the billiard-halls in the land. Such was the importance which the culprits and the public attached to the police.

These men of blood and terror assembled in society in the evening, and discussed their nocturnal expeditions as if they had been mere pleasure-parties.

Leprêtre, Hyvert, Amiet and Guyon were arraigned before the tribunal of a neighboring department. No one save the Treasury had suffered from their attack, and there was no one to identify them save the lady who took very good care not to do so. They were therefore acquitted unanimously.

Nevertheless, the evidence against them so obviously called for conviction, that the Ministry was forced to appeal from this decision. The verdict was set aside; but such was the government's vacillation, that it hesitated to punish excesses that might on the morrow be regarded as virtues. The accused were cited before the tribunal of Ain, in the city of Bourg, where dwelt a majority of their friends, relatives, abettors and accomplices. The Ministry sought to propitiate the one party by the return of its victims, and the other by the almost inviolate safeguards with which it surrounded the prisoners. The return to prison indeed resembled nothing less than a triumph.

The trial recommenced. It was at first attended by the same results as the preceding one. The four accused were protected by an alibi, patently false, but attested by a hundred signatures, and for which they could easily have obtained ten thousand. All moral convictions must fail in the presence of such authoritative testimony. An acquittal seemed certain, when a question,

perhaps involuntarily insidious, from the president, changed the aspect of the trial.

"Madam," said he to the lady who had been so kindly assisted by one of the highwaymen, "which of these men was it who tendered you such thoughtful attention?"

This unexpected form of interrogation confused her ideas. It is probable that she believed the facts to be known, and saw in this a means of modifying the fate of the man who interested her.

"It was that gentleman," said she, pointing to Leprêtre. The four accused, who were included in a common alibi, fell by this one admission under the executioner's axe. They rose and bowed to her with a smile.

"Faith!" said Hyvert, falling back upon his bench with a burst of laughter, "that, Captain, will teach you to play the gallant."

I have heard it said that the unhappy lady died shortly after of chagrin.

The customary appeal followed; but, this time, there was little hope. The Republican party, which Napoleon annihilated a month later, was in the ascendency. That of the Counter-Revolution was compromised by its odious excesses. The people demanded examples, and matters were arranged accordingly, as is ordinarily the custom in strenuous times; for it is with governments as with men, the weakest are always the most cruel. Nor had the Companies of Jehu longer an organized existence. The heroes of these ferocious bands, Debeauce, Hastier, Bary, Le Coq, Dabri, Delbourbe and Storkenfeld, had either fallen on the scaffold or elsewhere. The condemned could look for no further assistance from the daring courage of these exhausted devotees, who, no longer capable of protecting their own lives, coolly sacrificed them, as did Piard, after a merry supper. Our brigands were doomed to die.

Their appeal was rejected, but the municipal authorities were not the first to learn of this. The condemned men were warned by three shots fired beneath the walls of their dungeon. The Commissioner of the Executive Directory, who had assumed the rôle of Public Prosecutor at the trial, alarmed at this obvious sign of connivance, requisitioned a squad of armed men of whom my uncle was then commander. At six o'clock in the morning sixty horsemen were drawn up before the iron gratings of the prison yard.

Although the jailers had observed all possible precautions in entering the dungeon where these four unfortunate men were confined, and whom they had left the preceding day tightly pinioned and heavily loaded with chains, they were unable to offer them a prolonged resistance. The prisoners were free and armed to the teeth. They came forth without difficulty, leaving their guardians under bolts and bars, and, supplied with the keys, they quickly traversed the space that separated them from the prison yard. Their appearance must have been terrifying to the populace awaiting them before the iron gates.

To assure perfect freedom of action, or perhaps to affect an appearance of security more menacing even than the renown for strength and intrepidity with which their names were associated, or possibly even to conceal the flow of blood which reveals itself so readily beneath white linen, and betrays the last agonies of a mortally wounded man, their breasts were bared. Their braces crossed upon the chest--their wide red belts bristling with arms--their cry of attack and rage, all that must have given a decidedly fantastic touch to the scene. Arrived in the square, they perceived the gendarmerie drawn up in motionless ranks, through which it would have been impossible to force a passage. They halted an instant and seemed to consult together. Leprêtre, who was, as I have said, their senior and their chief, saluted the guard with his hand, saying with that noble grace of manner peculiar to him:

"Very well, gentlemen of the gendarmerie!"

Then after a brief, energetic farewell to his comrades, he stepped in front of them and blew out his brains. Guyon, Amiet and Hyvert assumed a defensive position, their double-barrelled pistols levelled upon their armed

opponents. They did not fire; but the latter, considering this demonstration as a sign of open hostility, fired upon them. Guyon fell dead upon Leprêtre's body, which had not moved. Amiet's hip was broken near the groin. The "Biographie des Contemporains" says that he was executed. I have often heard it said that he died at the foot of the scaffold. Hyvert was left alone, his determined brow, his terrible eye, the pistol in each practiced and vigorous hand threatening death to the spectators. Perhaps it was involuntary admiration, in his desperate plight, for this handsome young man with his waving locks, who was known never to have shed blood, and from whom the law now demanded the expiation of blood; or perhaps it was the sight of those three corpses over which he sprang like a wolf overtaken by his hunters, and the frightful novelty of the spectacle, which for an instant restrained the fury of the troop. He perceived this and temporized with them for a compromise.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I go to my death! I die with all my heart! But let no one approach me or I shall shoot him--except this gentleman," he continued, pointing to the executioner. "This is an affair that concerns us alone and merely needs a certain understanding between us."

This concession was readily accorded, for there was no one present who was not suffering from the prolongation of this horrible tragedy, and anxious to see it finished. Perceiving their assent, he placed one of his pistols between his teeth, and drawing a dagger from his belt, plunged it in his breast up to the hilt. He still remained standing and seemed greatly surprised. There was a movement toward him.

"Very well, gentlemen!" cried he, covering the men who sought to surround him with his pistols, which he had seized again, while the blood spurted freely from the wound in which he had left his poniard. "You know our agreement; either I die alone or three of us will die together. Forward, march!" He walked straight to the guillotine, turning the knife in his breast as he did so.

"Faith," said he, "my soul must be centred in my belly! I cannot die. See if you can fetch it out."

This last was addressed to his executioner. An instant later his head fell. Be it accident or some peculiar phenomenon of the vitality, it rebounded and rolled beyond the circle of the scaffolding, and they will still tell you at Bourg, that Hyvert's head spoke.

Before I had finished reading I had decided to abandon René d'Argonne for the Companions of Jehu. On the morrow I came down with my travelling bag under my arm.

"You are leaving?" said Alexandre to me.

"Yes."

"Where are you going?"

"To Bourg, in Bresse."

"What are you going to do there?"

"Study the neighborhood and consult with the inhabitants who saw Leprêtre, Amiet, Guyon and Hyvert executed."

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There are two roads to Bourg--from Paris, of course; one may leave the train at Mâcon, and take stage from Mâcon to Bourg, or, continuing as far as Lyons, take train again from Lyons to Bourg.

I was hesitating between these two roads when one of the travellers who was temporarily occupying my compartment decided me. He was going to Bourg, where he frequently had business. He was going by way of Lyons; therefore, Lyons was the better way.

I resolved to travel by the same route. I slept at Lyons, and on the morrow by ten in the morning I was at Bourg.

A paper published in the second capital of the kingdom met my eye. It contained a spiteful article about me. Lyons has never forgiven me since 1833, I believe, some twenty-four years ago, for asserting that it was not a literary city. Alas! I have in 1857 the same opinion of Lyons as I had in 1833. I do not easily change my opinion. There is another city in France that is almost as bitter against me as Lyons, that is Rouen. Rouen has hissed all my plays, including Count Hermann.

One day a Neapolitan boasted to me that he had hissed Rossini and Malibran, "The Barbiere" and "Desdemona."

"That must be true," I answered him, "for Rossini and Malibran on their side boast of having been hissed by Neapolitans."

So I boast that the Rouenese have hissed me. Nevertheless, meeting a full-blooded Rouenese one day I resolved to discover why I had been hissed at Rouen. I like to understand these little things.

My Rouenese informed me: "We hiss you because we are down on you."

Why not? Rouen was down on Joan of Arc. Nevertheless it could not be for the same reason. I asked my Rouenese why he and his compatriots were ill-disposed to me; I had never said anything evil of apple sugar, I had treated M. Barbet with respect during his entire term as mayor, and, when a

delegate from the Society of Letters at the unveiling of the statue of the great Corneille, I was the only one who thought to bow to him before beginning my speech. There was nothing in that which could have reasonably incurred the hatred of the Rouenese.

Therefore to this haughty reply, "We hiss you because we have a grudge against you," I asked humbly:

"But, great Heavens! why are you down on me?"

"Oh, you know very well," replied my Rouenese.

"I?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, you."

"Well, never mind; pretend I do not know."

"You remember the dinner the city gave you, in connection with that statue of Corneille?"

"Perfectly. Were they annoyed because I did not return it?"

"No, it is not that."

"What is it then?"

"Well, at that dinner they said to you: 'M. Dumas, you ought to write a play for Rouen based upon some subject taken from its own history.'"

"To which I replied: 'Nothing easier; I will come at your first summons and spend a fortnight in Rouen. You can suggest the subject, and during that fortnight I will write the play, the royalties of which I shall devote to the poor.'"

"That is true, you said that."

"I see nothing sufficiently insulting in that to incur the hatred of the Rouenese."

"Yes, but they added: 'Will you write it in prose?' To which you replied--Do you remember what you answered?"

"My faith! no."

"You replied: 'I will write it in verse; it is soonest done.'"

"That sounds like me. Well, what then?"

"Then! That was an insult to Corneille, M. Dumas; that is why the Rouenese are down on you, and will be for a long time."

Verbatim!

Oh, worthy Rouenese! I trust that you will never serve me so ill as to forgive and applaud me.

The aforesaid paper observed that M. Dumas had doubtless spent but one night in Lyons because a city of such slight literary standing was not worthy of his longer sojourn. M. Dumas had not thought about this at all. He had spent but one night at Lyons because he was in a hurry to reach Bourg. And no sooner had M. Dumas arrived at Bourg than he asked to be directed to the office of its leading newspaper.

I knew that it was under the management of a distinguished archeologist, who was also the editor of my friend Baux's work on the church of Brou.

I asked for M. Milliet. M. Milliet appeared. We shook hands and I explained the object of my visit.

"I can fix you perfectly," said he to me. "I will take you to one of our magistrates, who is at present engaged upon a history of the department."

"How far has he got in this history?"

"1822."

"Then that's all right. As the events I want to relate occurred in 1799, and my heroes were executed in 1800, he will have covered that epoch, and can furnish me with the desired information. Let us go to your magistrate."

On the road, M. Milliet told me that this same magisterial historian was also a noted gourmet. Since Brillat-Savarin it has been the fashion for magistrates to be epicures. Unfortunately, many are content to be gourmands, which is not at all the same thing.

We were ushered into the magistrate's study. I found a man with a shiny face and a sneering smile. He greeted me with that protecting air which historians deign to assume toward poets.

"Well, sir," he said to me, "so you have come to our poor country in search of material for your novel?"

"No, sir; I have my material already. I have come simply to consult your historical documents."

"Good! I did not know that it was necessary to give one's self so much trouble in order to write novels."

"There you are in error, sir; at least in my instance. I am in the habit of making exhaustive researches upon all the historical events of which I treat."

"You might at least have sent some one else."

"Any person whom I might send, sir, not being so completely absorbed in my subject, might have overlooked many important facts. Then, too, I make use of many localities which I cannot describe unless I see them."

"Oh, then this is a novel which you intend writing yourself?"

"Yes, certainly, sir. I allowed my valet to write my last; but he had such immense success that the rogue asked so exorbitant an increase of wages that, to my great regret, I was unable to keep him."

The magistrate bit his lips. Then, after a moment's silence, he said:

"Will you kindly tell me, sir, how I can assist you in this important work?"

"You can direct my researches, sir. As you have compiled the history of the department, none of the important event which have occurred in its capital can be unknown to you."

"Truly, sir, I believe that in this respect I am tolerably well informed."

"Then, sir, in the first place, your department was the centre of the operations of the Company of Jehu."

"Sir, I have heard speak of the Companions of Jesus," replied the magistrate with his jeering smile.

"The Jesuits, you mean? That is not what I am seeking, sir."

"Nor is it of them that I am speaking. I refer to the stage robbers who infested the highroads from 1797 to 1800."

"Then, sir, permit me to tell you they are precisely the ones I have come to Bourg about, and that they were called the Companions of Jehu, and not the Companions of Jesus."

"What is the meaning of this title 'Companions of Jehu'? I like to get at the bottom of everything."

"So do I, sir; that is why I did not wish to confound these highwaymen with the Apostles."

"Truly, that would not have been very orthodox."

"But it is what you would have done, nevertheless, sir, if I, a poet, had not come here expressly to correct the mistake you, as historian, have made."

"I await your explanation, sir," resumed the magistrate, pursing his lips.

"It is short and simple. Elisha consecrated Jehu, King of Israel, on condition that he exterminate the house of Ahab; Elisha was Louis XVIII.; Jehu was Cadoudal; the house of Ahab, the Revolution. That is why these pillagers of diligences, who filched the government money to support the war in the Vendée, were called the Companions of Jehu."

"Sir, I am happy to learn something at my age."

"Oh, sir! One can always learn, at all times and at all ages; during life one learns man; in death one learns God."

"But, after all," my interlocutor said to me with a gesture of impatience, "may I know in what I can assist you?"

"Thus, sir. Four of these young men, leaders of the Companions of Jehu, were executed at Bourg, on the Place du Bastion."

"In the first place, sir, in Bourg executions do not take place at the Bastion; they execute on the Fair grounds."

"Now, sir--these last fifteen or twenty years, it is true--since Peytel. But before, especially during the Revolution, they executed on the Place du Bastion."

"That is possible."

"It is so. These four young men were called Guyon, Leprêtre, Amiet, and Hyvert."

"This is the first time I have heard those names."

"Yet their names made a certain noise at Bourg."

"Are you sure, sir, that these men were executed here?"

"I am positive."

"From whom have you derived your information?"

"From a man whose uncle, then in command of the gendarmerie, was present at the execution."

"Will you tell me this man's name?"

"Charles Nodier."

"Charles Nodier, the novelist, the poet?"

"If he were a historian I would not be so insistent, sir. Recently, during a trip to Varennes, I learned what dependence to place upon historians. But precisely because he is a poet, a novelist, I do insist."

"You are at liberty to do so; but I know nothing of what you desire to learn, and I dare even assert that, if you have come to Bourg solely to obtain information concerning the execution of--what did you call them?"

"Guyon, Leprêtre, Amiet, and Hyvert."

"You have undertaken a futile voyage. For these last twenty years, sir, I have been searching the town archives, and I have never seen anything relating to what you have just told me."

"The town archives are not those of the registrar, sir; perhaps at the record office I may be able to find what I am seeking."

"Ah! sir, if you can find anything among those archives you will be a very clever man! The record office is a chaos, a veritable chaos. You would have to spend a month here, and then--then--"

"I do not expect to stay here more than a day, sir; but if in that day I should find what I am seeking will you permit me to impart it to you?"

"Yes, sir; yes, sir; and you will render me a great service by doing so."

"No greater than the one I asked of you. I shall merely give you some information about a matter of which you were ignorant, that is all."

You can well understand that on leaving my magistrate, my honor was piqued. I determined, cost what it might, to procure this information about the Companions of Jehu. I went back to Milliet, and cornered him.

"Listen," he said. "My brother-in-law is a lawyer."

"He's my man! Let's go find the brother-in-law."

"He's in court at this hour."

"Then let us go to court."

"Your appearance will create a sensation, I warn you."

"Then go alone--tell him what we want, and let him make a search. I will visit the environs of the town to base my work on the localities. We will meet at four o'clock at the Place du Bastion, if you are agreed."

"Perfectly."

"It seems to me that I saw a forest, coming here."

"The forest of Seillon."

"Bravo!"

"Do you need a forest?"

"It is absolutely indispensable to me."

"Then permit me--"

"What?"

"I am going to take you to a friend of mine, M. Leduc, a poet who in his spare moments is an inspector."

"Inspector of what?"

"Of the forest."

"Are there any ruins in the forest?"

"The Chartreuse, which is not in the forest, but merely some hundred feet from it."

"And in the forest?"

"There is a sort of hermitage which is called La Correrie, belonging to the Chartreuse, with which it communicates by a subterranean passage."

"Good! Now, if you can provide me with a grotto you will overwhelm me."

"We have the grotto of Ceyzeriat, but that is on the other side of the Reissouse."

"I don't mind. If the grotto won't come to me, I will do like Mahomet--I will go to the grotto. In the meantime let us go to M. Leduc."

Five minutes later we reached M. Leduc's house. He, on learning what we wanted, placed himself, his horse, and his carriage at my disposal. I accepted all. There are some men who offer their services in such a way that they place you at once at your ease.

We first visited the Chartreuse. Had I built it myself it could not have suited me better. A deserted cloister, devastated garden, inhabitants almost savages. Chance, I thank thee!

From there we went to the Correrie; it was the supplement of the Chartreuse. I did not yet know what I could do with it; but evidently it might be useful to me.

"Now, sir," I said to my obliging guide, "I need a pretty site, rather gloomy, surrounded by tall trees, beside a river. Have you anything like that in the neighborhood?"

"What do you want to do with it?"

"To build a château there."

"What kind of a château?"

"Zounds! of cards! I have a family to house, a model mother, a melancholy young girl, a mischievous brother, and a poaching gardener."

"There is a place called Noires-Fontaines."

"In the first place the name is charming."

"But there is no château there."

"So much the better, for I should have been obliged to demolish it."

"Let us go to Noires-Fontaines."

We started; a quarter of an hour later we descended at the ranger's lodge.

"Shall we take this little path?" said M. Leduc; "it will take us where you want to go."

It led us, in fact, to a spot planted with tall trees which overshadowed three or four rivulets.

"We call this place Noires-Fontaines," M. Leduc explained.

"And here Madame de Montrevel, Amélie and little Edouard will dwell. Now what are those villages which I see in front of me?"

"Here, close at hand, is Montagnac; yonder, on the mountain side, Ceyzeriat."

"Is that where the grotto is?"

"Yes. But how did you know there was a grotto at Ceyzeriat?"

"Never mind, go on. The name of those other villages, if you please."

"Saint-Just, Tréconnas, Ramasse, Villereversure."

"That will do."

"Have you enough?"

"Yes."

I drew out my note-book, sketched a plan of the locality and wrote about in their relative positions the names of the villages which M. Leduc had just pointed out to me.

"That's done!" said I.

"Where shall we go now?"

"Isn't the church of Brou near this road?"

"Yes."

"Then let us go to the church of Brou."

"Do you need that in your novel?"

"Yes, indeed; you don't imagine I am going to lay my scene in a country which contains the architectural masterpiece of the sixteenth century without utilizing that masterpiece, do you?"

"Let us go to the church of Brou."

A quarter of an hour later the sacristan showed us into this granite jewel-case which contains the three marble gems called the tombs of Marguerite of Austria, Marguerite or Bourbon, and of Philibert le Beau."

"How is it," I asked the sacristan, "that all these masterpieces were not reduced to powder during the Revolution?"

"Ah! sir, the municipality had an idea."

"What was it?"

"That of turning the church into a storage house for fodder."

"Yes, and the hay saved the marble; you are right, my friend, that _was_ an idea."

"Does this idea of the municipality afford you another?" asked M. Leduc.

"Faith, yes, and I shall have poor luck if I don't make something out of it."

I looked at my watch. "Three o'clock! Now for the prison. I have an appointment with M. Milliet at four on the Place du Bastion."

"Wait; there is one thing more."

"What is that?"

"Have you noticed Marguerite of Austria's motto?"

"No; where is it?"

"Oh, all over. In the first place, look above her tomb."

"'Fortune, infortune, fort'une.'"

"Exactly."

"Well, what does this play of words mean?"

"Learned men translate it thus: 'Fate persecutes a woman much.'"

"Explain that a little."

"You must, in the first place, assume that it is derived from the Latin."

"True, that is probable."

"Well, then: 'Fortuna infortunat--'"

"Oh! Oh! 'Infortunat.'"

"Bless me!"

"That strongly resembles a solecism!"

"What do you want?"

"An explanation."

"Explain it yourself."

"Well; 'Fortuna, infortuna, forti una.' 'Fortune and misfortune are alike to the strong.'"

"Do you know, that may possibly be the correct translation?"

"Zounds! See what it is not to be learned, my dear sir; we are endowed with common-sense, and that sees clearer than science. Have you anything else to tell me?"

"No."

"Then let us go to the prison."

We got into the carriage and returned to the city, stopping only at the gate of the prison. I glanced out of the window.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "they have spoiled it for me."

"What! They've spoiled it for you?"

"Certainly, it was not like this in my prisoners' time. Can I speak to the jailer?"

"Certainly."

"Then let us consult him."

We knocked at the door. A man about forty opened it. He recognized M. Leduc.

"My dear fellow," M. Leduc said to him, "this is one of my learned friends--"

"Come, come," I exclaimed, interrupting him, "no nonsense."

"Who contends," continued M. Leduc, "that the prison is no longer the same as it was in the last century?"

"That is true, M. Leduc, it was torn down and rebuilt in 1816."

"Then the interior arrangements are no longer the same?"

"Oh! no, sir, everything was changed."

"Could I see the old plan?"

"M. Martin, the architect, might perhaps be able to find one for you."

"Is he any relation to M. Martin, the lawyer?"

"His brother."

"Very well, my friend, then I can get my plan."

"Then we have nothing more to do here?" inquired M. Leduc.

"Nothing."

"Then I am free to go home?"

"I shall be sorry to leave you, that is all."

"Can you find your way to the Bastion without me?"

"It is close by."

"What are you going to do this evening?"

"I will spend it with you, if you wish."

"Very good! You will find a cup of tea waiting for you at nine."

"I shall be on hand for it."

I thanked M. Leduc. We shook hands and parted.

I went down the Rue des Lisses (meaning Lists, from a combat which took place in the square to which it leads), and skirting the Montburon Garden, I reached the Place du Bastion. This is a semicircle now used as the town marketplace. In the midst stands the statue of Bichat by David d'Angers. Bichat, in a frockcoat--why that exaggeration of realism?--stands with his hand upon the heart of a child about nine or ten years old, perfectly nude--why that excess of ideality? Extended at Bichat's feet lies a dead body. It is Bichat's book "Of Life and of Death" translated into bronze. I was studying this statue, which epitomizes the defects and merits of David d'Angers, when I felt some one touch my shoulder. I turned around; it was M. Milliet. He held a paper in his hand.

"Well?" I asked.

"Well, victory!"

"What is that you have there?"

"The minutes of the trial and execution."

"Of whom?"

"Of your men."

"Of Guyon, Leprêtre, Amiet--!"

"And Hyvert."

"Give it to me."

"Here it is."

I took it and read:

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REPORT OF THE DEATH AND EXECUTION OF LAURENT GUYON, ETIENNE

HYVERT, FRANÇOIS AMIET, ANTOINE LEPRÊTRE. Condemned the twentieth

Thermidor of the year VIII., and executed the twenty-third

Vendemiaire of the year IX. To-day, the twenty-third Vendemiaire of the year IX., the

government commissioner of the tribunal, who received at eleven

of the evening the budget of the Minister of Justice, containing

the minutes of the trial and the judgment which condemns to

death Laurent Guyon, Etienne Hyvert, François Amiet and Antoine

Leprêtre;--the decision of the Court of Appeals of the sixth

inst., rejecting the appeal against the sentence of the

twenty-first Thermidor of the year VIII., I did notify by letter,

between seven and eight of the morning, the four accused that their sentence of death would take effect to-day at eleven o'clock. In the interval which elapsed before eleven o'clock, the four accused shot themselves with pistols and stabbed themselves with blows from a poinard in prison. Leprêtre and Guyon, according to public rumor, were dead; Hyvert fatally wounded and dying; Amiet fatally wounded, but still conscious. All four, in this state, were conveyed to the scaffold, and, living or dead, were guillotined. At half after eleven, the sheriff, Colin, handed in the report of their execution to the Municipality for registration upon the death roll: The captain of gendarmerie remitted to the Justice of the Peace a report of what had occurred in the prison, of which he was a witness. I, who was not present, do certify to what I have learned by hearsay only. (Signed) DUBOST, _Clerk_. Bourg, 23d Vendemiaire of the year IX.-

Ah! so it was the poet who was right and not the historian! The captain of gendarmerie, who remitted the report of the proceedings in the prison to the Justice of the Peace, at which he was present, was Nodier's uncle. This report handed to the Justice of the Peace was the story which, graven upon the young man's mind, saw the light some forty years later unaltered, in that masterpiece entitled "Souvenirs de la Révolution." The entire series of papers was in the record office. M. Martin offered to have them copied for me; inquiry, trial and judgment.

I had a copy of Nodier's "Souvenirs of the Revolution" in my pocket. In my hand I held the report of the execution which confirmed the facts therein stated.

"Now let us go to our magistrate," I said to M. Milliet.

"Let us go to our magistrate," he repeated.

The magistrate was confounded, and I left him convinced that poets know history as well as historians--if not better.

ALEX. DUMAS.

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PROLOGUE

THE CITY OF AVIGNON

We do not know if the prologue we are going to present to our readers' eyes be very useful, nevertheless we cannot resist the desire to make of it, not the first chapter, but the preface of this book.

The more we advance in life, the more we advance in art, the more convinced we become that nothing is abrupt and isolated; that nature and society progress by evolution and not by chance, and that the event, flower joyous or sad, perfumed or fetid, beneficent or fatal, which unfolds itself to-day before our eyes, was sown in the past, and had its roots sometimes in days anterior to ours, even as it will bear its fruits in the future.

Young, man accepts life as it comes, enamored of yestereen, careless of the day, heeding little the morrow. Youth is the springtide with its dewy dawns and its beautiful nights; if sometimes a storm clouds the sky, it gathers, mutters and disperses, leaving the sky bluer, the atmosphere purer, and Nature more smiling than before. What use is there in reflecting on this storm that passes swift as a caprice, ephemeral as a fancy? Before we have discovered the secret of the meteorological enigma, the storm will have disappeared.

But it is not thus with the terrible phenomena, which at the close of summer, threaten our harvests; or in the midst of autumn, assail our vintages; we ask whither they go, we query whence they come, we seek a means to prevent them.

To the thinker, the historian, the poet, there is a far deeper subject for reflection in revolutions, these tempests of the social atmosphere which drench the earth with blood, and crush an entire generation of men, than in those upheavals of nature which deluge a harvest, or flay the vineyards with hail--that is to say, the fruits of a single harvest, wreaking an injury, which can at the worst be repaired the ensuing year; unless the Lord be in His days of wrath.

Thus, in other days, be it forgetfulness, heedlessness or ignorance perhaps--(blessed he who is ignorant! a fool he who is wise!)--in other days in relating the story which I am going to tell you to-day I would, without pausing at the place where the first scene of this book occurs, have accorded it but a superficial mention, and traversing the Midi like any other province, have named Avignon like any other city.

But to-day it is no longer the same; I am no longer tossed by the flurries of spring, but by the storms of summer, the tempests of autumn. To-day when I name Avignon, I evoke a spectre; and, like Antony displaying Cæsar's toga, say:

"Look! in this place ran Cassius' dagger through;

See what a rent the envious Casca made;

Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed--"

So, seeing the bloody shroud of the papal city, I say: "Behold the blood of the Albigenses, and here the blood of the Cevennais; behold the blood of the Republicans, and here the blood of the Royalists; behold the blood of Lescuyer; behold the blood of Maréchal Brune."

And I feel myself seized with a profound sadness, and I begin to write, but at the first lines I perceive that, without suspecting it, the historian's chisel has superseded the novelist's pen in my hand.

Well, let us be both. Reader, grant me these ten, fifteen, twenty pages to the historian; the novelist shall have the rest.

Let us say, therefore, a few words about Avignon, the place where the first scene of the new book which we are offering to the public, opens. Perhaps, before reading what we have to say, it would be well to cast a glance at what its native historian, François Nouguier, says of it.

"Avignon," he writes, "a town noble for its antiquity, pleasing in its site, superb for its walls, smiling for the fertility of its soil, charming for the gentleness of its inhabitants, magnificent for its palace, beautiful in its broad streets, marvellous in the construction of its bridge, rich because of its commerce, and known to all the world."

May the shade of François Nouguier pardon us if we do not at first see his city with the same eyes as he does. To those who know Avignon be it to say who has best described it, the historian or the novelist.

It is but just to assert in the first place that Avignon is a town by itself, that is to say, a town of extreme passions. The period of religious dissensions, which culminated for her in political hatreds, dates from the twelfth century. After his flight from Lyons, the valleys of Mont Ventoux sheltered Pierre de

Valdo and his Vaudois, the ancestors of those Protestants who, under the name of the Albigenses, cost the Counts of Toulouse, and transferred to the papacy, the seven châteaux which Raymond VI. possessed in Languedoc.

Avignon, a powerful republic governed by podestats, refused to submit to the King of France. One morning Louis VIII., who thought it easier to make a crusade against Avignon like Simon de Montfort, than against Jerusalem like Philippe Auguste; one morning, we say, Louis VIII. appeared before the gates of Avignon, demanding admission with lances at rest, visor down, banners unfurled and trumpets of war sounding.

The bourgeois refused. They offered the King of France, as a last concession, a peaceful entrance, lances erect, and the royal banner alone unfurled. The King laid siege to the town, a siege which lasted three months, during which, says the chronicler, the bourgeois of Avignon returned the French soldiers arrow for arrow, wound for wound, death for death.

The city capitulated at length. Louis VIII. brought the Roman Cardinal-Legate, Saint-Angelo, in his train. It was he who dictated the terms, veritable priestly terms, hard and unconditional. The Avignonese were commanded to demolish their ramparts, to fill their moats, to raze three hundred towers, to sell their vessels, and to burn their engines and machines of war. They had moreover to pay an enormous impost, to abjure the Vaudois heresy, and maintain thirty men fully armed and equipped, in Palestine, to aid in delivering the tomb of Christ. And finally, to watch over the fulfillment of these terms, of which the bull is still extant in the city archives, a brotherhood of penitents was founded which, reaching down through six centuries, still exists in our days.

In opposition to these penitents, known as the "White Penitents," the order of the "Black Penitents" was founded, imbued with the spirit of opposition of Raymond of Toulouse.

From that day forth the religious hatreds developed into political hatreds. It was not sufficient that Avignon should be the land of heresy. She was destined to become the theatre of schisms.

Permit us, in connection with this French Rome, a short historical digression. Strictly speaking, it is not essential to the subject of which we treat, and we were perhaps wiser to launch ourselves immediately into the heart of the drama; but we trust that we will be forgiven. We write more particularly for those who, in a novel, like occasionally to meet with something more than fiction.

In 1285 Philippe le Bel ascended the throne.

It is a great historical date, this date of 1285. The papacy which, in the person of Gregory VII., successfully opposed the Emperor of Germany; the papacy which, vanquished in matters temporal by Henry IV., yet vanquished him morally. This papacy was slapped by a simple Sabine gentleman, and the steel gauntlet of Colonna reddened the cheek of Boniface VIII. But the King of France, whose hand had really dealt this blow, what happened to him under the successor of Boniface VIII.?

This successor was Benedict XI., a man of low origin, but who might perhaps have developed into a man of genius, had they allowed him the time. Too weak for an open struggle with Philippe le Bel, he found a means which would have been the envy of the founder of a celebrated order two hundred years later. He pardoned Colonna openly.

To pardon Colonna was to declare Colonna culpable, since culprits alone have need of pardon. If Colonna were guilty, the King of France was at least his accomplice.

There was some danger in supporting such an argument; also Benedict XI. was pope but eight months. One day a veiled woman, a pretended lay-sister of Sainte-Petronille at Perugia, came to him while he was at table, offering him a basket of figs. Did it conceal an asp like Cleopatra's? The fact is that on the morrow the Holy See was vacant.

Then Philippe le Bel had a strange idea; so strange that it must, at first, have seemed an hallucination.

It was to withdraw the papacy from Rome, to install it in France, to put it in jail, and force it to coin money for his profit.

The reign of Philippe le Bel was the advent of gold. Gold! that was the sole and unique god of this king who had slapped a pope. Saint Louis had a priest, the worthy Abbé Suger, for minister; Philippe le Bel had two bankers, two Florentines, Biscio and Musiato.

Do you expect, dear reader, that we are about to fall into the philosophical commonplace of anathematizing gold? You are mistaken.

In the thirteenth century gold meant progress. Until then nothing was known but the soil. Gold was the soil converted into money, the soil mobilized, exchangeable, transportable, divisible, subtilized, spiritualized, as it were.

So long as the soil was not represented by gold, man, like the god Thermes, that landmark of the fields, had his feet imprisoned by the earth. Formerly the earth bore man, to-day man bears the earth.

But this gold had to be abstracted from its hiding-place, and it was hidden far otherwise than in the mines of Chile or Mexico. All the gold was in the possession of the churches and the Jews. To extract it from this double mine it needed more than a king; it required a pope.

And that is why Philippe le Bel, that great exploiter of gold, resolved to have a pope of his own. Benedict XI. dead, a conclave was held at Perugia; at this conclave the French cardinals were in the majority. Philippe le Bel cast his eyes upon the Archbishop of Bordeaux, Bertrand de Got, and to him he gave rendezvous in a forest near Saint-Jean d'Angely.

Bertrand de Got took heed not to miss that appointment.

The King and the Archbishop heard mass there, and at the moment when the Host was elevated, they bound themselves by this God they glorified to absolute secrecy. Bertrand de Got was still ignorant of the matter in question. Mass over, Philippe le Bel said:

"Archbishop, I have it in my power to make thee pope."

Bertrand de Got listened no longer, but cast himself at the King's feet, saying:

"What must I do to obtain this?"

"Accord me the six favors which I shall ask of thee," replied Philippe le Bel.

"It's for thee to command and for me to obey," said the future Pope.

The vow of servitude was taken.

The King raised Bertrand de Got, and, kissing him on the mouth, said:

"The six favors which I demand of thee are these: First, thou shalt reconcile me completely with the Church, and grant me pardon for the misdeed that I committed toward Boniface VIII. Second, thou shalt restore to me and mine the right of communion of which the Court of Rome deprived me. Third, thou shalt grant me the clergy's tithe in my kingdom for the next five years, to help defray the expenses of the war in Flanders. Fourth, thou shalt destroy and annul the memory of Pope Boniface VIII. Fifth, thou shalt

bestow the dignity of cardinal upon Messires Jacopo and Pietro de Colonna. As to the sixth favor and promise, that I shall reserve to speak to thee thereof in its time and place."

Bertrand de Got swore to the promises and favors known, and to the promise and favor unknown. This last, which the King had not dared to mention in connection with the others, was the abolition of the Knights Templar. Besides the promises made on the Corpus Domini, Bertrand de Got gave as hostages his brother and two of his nephews. The King swore on his side that he should be elected pope.

This scene, set in the deep shadows of a crossroad in the forest, resembled rather an evocation between magician and demon than an agreement entered upon between king and pope.

Also the coronation of the King, which took place shortly afterward at Lyons, and which began the Church's captivity, seemed but little agreeable to God. Just as the royal procession was passing, a wall crowded with spectators fell, wounding the King and killing the Duc de Bretagne. The Pope was thrown to the ground, and his tiara rolled in the mud.

Bertrand de Got was elected pope under the name of Clement V.

Clement V. paid all that Bertrand de Got had promised. Philippe was absolved, Holy Communion restored to him and his, the purple again descended upon the shoulders of the Colonna, the Church was obliged to defray the expenses of the war in Flanders and Philippe de Valois's crusade against the Greek Empire. The memory of Pope Boniface VIII. was, if not destroyed and annulled, at least besmirched; the walls of the Temple were razed, and the Templars burned on the open space of the Pont Neuf.

All these edicts--they were no longer called bulls from the moment the temporal power dictated them--all these edicts were dated at Avignon.

Philippe le Bel was the richest of all the kings of the French monarchy; he possessed an inexhaustible treasury, that is to say, his pope. He had purchased him, he used him, he put him to the press, and as cider flows from apples, so did this crushed pope bleed gold. The pontificate, struck by the Colonna in the person of Boniface VIII., abdicated the empire of the world in the person of Clement V.

We have related the advent of the king of blood and the pope of gold. We know how they ended. Jacques de Molay, from his funeral pyre, adjured them both to appear before God within the year. _Ae to geron sithullia_, says Aristophanes. "Dying hoary heads possess the souls of sibyls."

Clement V. departed first. In a vision he saw his palace in flames. "From that moment," says Baluze, "he became sad and lasted but a short time."

Seven months later it was Philippe's turn. Some say that he was killed while bunting, overthrown by a wild boar. Dante is among their number. "He," said he, "who was seen near the Seine falsifying the coin of the realm shall die by the tusk of a boar." But Guillaume de Nangis makes the royal counterfeiter die of a death quite otherwise providential.

"Undermined by a malady unknown to the physicians, Philippe expired," said he, "to the great astonishment of everybody, without either his pulse or his urine revealing the cause of his malady or the imminence of the danger."

The King of Debauchery, the King of Uproar, Louis X., called the Hutin, succeeded his father, Philippe le Bel; John XXII. to Clement V.

Avignon then became in truth a second Rome. John XXII. and Clement VI. anointed her queen of luxury. The manners and customs of the times made her queen of debauchery and indulgence. In place of her towers, razed by Romain de Saint-Angelo, Hernandez de Héredi, grand master of Saint-Jean of Jerusalem, girdled her with a belt of walls. She possessed dissolute monks, who transformed the blessed precincts of her convents into places of

debauchery and licentiousness; her beautiful courtesans tore the diamonds from the tiara to make of them bracelets and necklaces; and finally she possessed the echoes of Vaucluse, which wafted the melodious strains of Petrarch's songs to her.

This lasted until King Charles V., who was a virtuous and pious prince, having resolved to put an end to the scandal, sent the Maréchal de Boucicaut to drive out the anti-pope, Benedict XIII., from Avignon. But at sight of the soldiers of the King of France the latter remembered that before being pope under the name of Benedict XIII. he had been captain under the name of Pierre de Luna. For five months he defended himself, pointing his engines of war with his own hands from the heights of the château walls, engines otherwise far more murderous than his pontifical bolts. At last forced to flee, he left the city by a postern, after having ruined a hundred houses and killed four thousand Avignonese, and fled to Spain, where the King of Aragon offered him sanctuary.

There each morning, from the summit of a tower, assisted by the two priests who constituted his sacred college, he blessed the whole world, which was none the better for it, and excommunicated his enemies, who were none the worse for it. At last, feeling himself nigh to death, and fearing lest the schism die with him, he elected his two vicars cardinals on the condition that after his death one of the two would elect the other pope. The election was made. The new pope, supported by the cardinal who made him, continued the schism for awhile. Finally both entered into negotiations with Rome, made honorable amends, and returned to the fold of Holy Church, one with the title of Arch bishop of Seville, the other as Archbishop of Toledo.

From this time until 1790 Avignon, widowed of her popes, was governed by legates and vice-legates. Seven sovereign pontiffs had resided within her walls some seven decades; she had seven hospitals, seven fraternities of penitents, seven monasteries, seven convents, seven parishes, and seven cemeteries.

To those who know Avignon there was at that epoch--there is yet--two cities within a city: the city of the priests, that is to say, the Roman city, and the

city of the merchants, that is to say, the, French city. The city of the priests, with its papal palace, its hundred churches, its innumerable bell-towers, ever ready to sound the tocsin of conflagration, the knell of slaughter. The town of the merchants, with its Rhone, its silk-workers, its crossroads, extending north, east, south and west, from Lyons to Marseilles, from Nimes to Turin. The French city, the accursed city, longing for a king, jealous of its liberties, shuddering beneath its yoke of vassalage, a vassalage of the priests with the clergy for its lord.

The clergy--not the pious clergy, tolerantly austere in the practice of its duty and charity, living in the world to console and edify it, without mingling in its joys and passions--but a clergy such as intrigue, cupidity, and ambition had made it; that is to say, the court abbés, rivalling the Roman priests, indolent, libertine, elegant, impudent, kings of fashion, autocrats of the salon, kissing the hands of those ladies of whom they boasted themselves the paramours, giving their hands to kiss to the women of the people whom they honored by making their mistresses.

Do you want a type of those abbés? Take the Abbé Maury. Proud as a duke, insolent as a lackey, the son of a shoemaker, more aristocratic than the son of a great lord.

One understands that these two categories of inhabitants, representing the one heresy, the other orthodoxy; the one the French party, the other the Roman party; the one the party of absolute monarchy, the other that of progressive constitutionalism, were not elements conducive to the peace and security of this ancient pontifical city. One understands, we say, that at the moment when the revolution broke out in Paris, and manifested itself by the taking of the Bastille, that the two parties, hot from the religious wars of Louis XIV., could not remain inert in the presence of each other.

We have said, Avignon, city of priests; let us add, city of hatreds. Nowhere better than in convent towns does one learn to hate. The heart of the child, everywhere else free from wicked passions, was born there full of paternal hatreds, inherited from father to son for the last eight hundred years, and after a life of hate, bequeathed in its turn, a diabolical heritage, to his children.

Therefore, at the first cry of liberty which rang through France the French town rose full of joy and hope. The moment had come at last for her to contest aloud that concession made by a young queen, a minor, in expiation of her sins, of a city and a province, and with it half a million souls. By what right had she sold these souls in æternum to the hardest and most exacting of all masters, the Roman Pontiff?

All France was hastening to assemble in the fraternal embrace of the Federation at the Champ de Mars. Was she not France? Her sons ejected delegates to wait upon the legate and request him respectfully to leave the city, giving him twenty-four hours in which to do so.

During the night the papists amused themselves by hanging from a gibbet an effigy of straw wearing the tri-color cockade.

The course of the Rhone has been controlled, the Durance canalled, dikes have been built to restrain the fierce torrents, which, at the melting of the snows, pour in liquid avalanches from the summits of Mt. Ventoux. But this terrible flood, this living flood, this human torrent that rushed leaping through the rapid inclines of the streets of Avignon, once released, once flooding, not even God Himself has yet sought to stay it.

At sight of this manikin with the national colors, dancing at the end of a cord, the French city rose upon its very foundations with terrible cries of rage. Four papist, suspected of this sacrilege, two marquises, one burgher, and a workman, were torn from their homes and hung in the manikin's stead. This occurred the eleventh of June, 1790.

The whole French town wrote to the National Assembly that she gave herself to France, and with her the Rhone, her commerce, the Midi, and the half of Provence.

The National Assembly was in one of its reactionary moods. It did not wish to quarrel with the Pope; it dallied with the King, and the matter was adjourned. From that moment the rising became a revolt, and the Pope was free to do with Avignon what the court might have done with Paris, if the Assembly had delayed its proclamation of the Rights of Man. The Pope ordered the annulment of all that had occurred at the Comtat Venaissin, the re-establishment of the privileges of the nobles and clergy, and the reinstallation of the Inquisition in all its rigor. The pontifical decrees were affixed to the walls.

One man, one only, in broad daylight dared to go straight to the walls, in face of all, and tear down the decree. His name was Lescuyer. He was not a young man; and therefore it was not the fire of youth that impelled him. No, he was almost an old man who did not even belong to the province. He was a Frenchman from Picardy, ardent yet reflective, a former notary long since established at Avignon.

It was a crime that Roman Avignon remembered; a crime so great that the Virgin wept!

You see Avignon is another Italy. She must have her miracles, and if God will not perform them, so surely will some one be at hand to invent them. Still further, the miracle must be a miracle pertaining to the Virgin. La Madonna! the mind, the heart, the tongue of the Italians are full of these two words.

It was in the Church of the Cordeliers that this miracle occurred. The crowd rushed there. It was much that the Virgin should weep; but a rumor spread at the same time that brought the excitement to a climax. A large coffer, tightly sealed, had been carried through the city; this chest had excited the curiosity of all Avignon. What did it contain? Two hours later it was no longer a coffer; but eighteen trunks had been seen going toward the Rhone. As for their contents, a porter had revealed that; they contained articles from the Mont-de-Piété that the French party were taking with them into exile. Articles from the Mont-de-Piété, that is to say, the spoils of the poor! The poorer the city the richer its pawn-shops. Few could boast such wealth as those of Avignon. It was no longer a factional affair, it was a theft, an

infamous theft. Whites and Reds rushed to the Church of the Cordeliers, shouting that the municipality must render them an accounting.

Lescuyer was the secretary of the municipality. His name was thrown to the crowd, not for having torn down the pontifical decrees--from that moment he would have had defenders--but for having signed the order to the keeper of the Mont-de-Piété permitting the removal of the articles in pawn.

Four men were sent to seize Lescuyer and bring him to the church. They found him in the street on his way to the municipality. The four men fell upon him and dragged him to the church with the most ferocious cries. Once there, Lescuyer understood from the flaming eyes that met his, from the clinched fists threatening him, the shrieks demanding his death; Lescuyer understood that instead of being in the house of the Lord he was in one of those circles of hell forgotten by Dante.

The only idea that occurred to him as to this hatred against him was that he had caused it by tearing down the pontifical decrees. He climbed into the pulpit, expecting to convert it into a seat of justice, and in the voice of a man who not only does not blame himself, but who is even ready to repeat his action, he said:

"Brothers, I consider the revolution necessary; consequently I have done all in my power--"

The fanatics understood that if Lescuyer explained, Lescuyer was saved. That was not what they wanted. They flung themselves upon him, tore him from the pulpit, and thrust him into the midst of this howling mob, who dragged him to the altar with that sort of terrible cry which combines the hiss of the serpent and the roar of the tiger, the murderous zou! zou! peculiar to the people of Avignon.

Lescuyer recognized that fatal cry; he endeavored to gain refuge at the foot of the altar. He found none; he fell there.

A laborer, armed with a stick, dealt him such a blow on the head that the stick broke in two pieces. Then the people hurled themselves upon the poor body, and, with that mixture of gayety and ferocity peculiar to Southern people, the men began to dance on his stomach, singing, while the women, that he might better expiate his blasphemies against the Pope, cut or rather scalloped his lips with their scissors.

And out of the midst of this frightful group came a cry, or rather a groan; this death groan said: "In the name of Heaven! in the name of the Virgin! in the name of humanity! kill me at once."

This cry was heard, and by common consent the assassins stood aside. They left the unfortunate man bleeding, disfigured, mangled, to taste of his death agony.

This lasted five hours, during which, amid shouts of laughter, insults, and jeers from the crowd, this poor body lay palpitating upon the steps of the altar. That is how they kill at Avignon.

Stay! there is yet another way. A man of the French party conceived the idea of going to the Mont-de-Piété for information. Everything was in order there, not a fork or a spoon had been removed. It was therefore not as an accomplice of theft that Lescuyer had just been so cruelly murdered, it was for being a patriot.

There was at that time in Avignon a man who controlled the populace. All these terrible leaders of the Midi have acquired such fatal celebrity that it suffices to name them for every one, even the least educated, to know them. This man was Jourdan. Braggart and liar, he had made the common people believe that it was he who had cut off the head of the governor of the Bastille. So they called him Jourdan, Coupe-tête. That was not his real name, which was Mathieu Jouve. Neither was he a Provencal; he came from Puy-en-Velay. He had formerly been a muleteer on those rugged heights which surround his native town; then a soldier without going to war--war

had perhaps made him more human; after that he had kept a drink-shop in Paris. In Avignon he had been a vendor of madder.

He collected three hundred men, carried the gates of the town, left half of his troop to guard them, and with the remainder marched upon the Church of the Cordeliers, preceded by two pieces of cannon. These he stationed in front of the church and fired them into it at random. The assassins fled like a flock of frightened birds, leaving some few dead upon the church steps. Jourdan and his men trampled over the bodies and entered the holy precincts. No one was there but the Virgin, and the wretched Lescuyer, still breathing. Jourdan and his comrades took good care not to despatch Lescuyer; his death agony was a supreme means of exciting the mob. They picked up this remnant of a sentient being, three-quarters dead, and carried it along, bleeding, quivering, gasping, with them.

Every one fled from the sight, closing doors and windows. At the end of an hour, Jourdan and his three hundred men were masters of the town.

Lescuyer was dead, but what of that; they no longer needed his agony. Jourdan profited by the terror he had inspired to arrest or have arrested eighty people, murderers, or so-called murderers of Lescuyer. Thirty, perhaps, had never even set foot within the church. But when one has such a good opportunity to be rid of one's enemies, one must profit by it; good opportunities are rare.

These eighty people were huddled into the Trouillas Tower. Historically it is known as the Tower de la Glacière; but why change this name of the Trouillas Tower? The name is unclean and harmonizes well with the unclean deed which was now to be perpetrated there.

It had been the scene of the inquisitorial tortures. One can still see on the walls the greasy soot which rose from the smoke of the funeral pyre where human bodies were consumed. They still show you to-day the instruments of torture which they have carefully preserved--the caldron, the oven, the wooden horse, the chains, the dungeons, and even the rotten bones. Nothing is wanting.

It was in this tower, built by Clement V., that they now confined the eighty prisoners. These eighty men, once arrested and locked up in the Trouillas Tower, became most embarrassing. Who was to judge them? There were no legally constituted courts except those of the Pope. Could they kill these unfortunates as they had killed Lescuyer?

We have said that a third, perhaps half of them, had not only taken no part in the murder, but had not even set foot in the church. How should they kill them? The killing must be placed upon the basis of reprisals. But the killing of these eighty people required a certain number of executioners.

A species of tribunal was improvised by Jourdan and held session in one of the law-courts. It had a clerk named Raphel; a president, half Italian, half French; an orator in the popular dialect named Barbe Savournin de la Roua, and three or four other poor devils, a baker, a pork butcher--their names are lost in the multitude of events.

These were the men who cried: "We must kill all! If one only escapes he will be a witness against us."

But, as we have said, executioners were wanting. There were barely twenty men at hand in the courtyard, all belonging to the petty tradesfolk of Avignon--a barber, a shoemaker, a cobbler, a mason, and an upholsterer--all insufficiently armed at random, the one with a sabre, the other with a bayonet, a third with an iron bar, and a fourth with a bit of wood hardened by fire. All of these people were chilled by a fine October rain. It would be difficult to turn them into assassins.

Pooh! Is anything too difficult for the devil?

There comes an hour in such crises when God seems to abandon the earth. Then the devil's chance comes.

The devil in person entered this cold, muddy courtyard. Assuming the features, form and face of an apothecary of the neighborhood named Mendes, he prepared a table lighted by two lanterns, on which he placed glasses, jugs, pitchers and bottles.

What infernal beverage did these mysterious and curiously formed receptacles contain? No one ever knew, but the result is well known. All those who drank that diabolical liquor were suddenly seized with a feverish rage, a lust of blood and murder. From that moment it was only necessary to show them the door; they hurtled madly into the dungeon.

The massacre lasted all night; all night the cries, the sobs, the groans of the dying sounded through the darkness. All were killed, all slaughtered, men and women. It was long in doing; the killers, we have said, were drunk and poorly armed. But they succeeded.

Among these butchers was a child remarked for his bestial cruelty, his immoderate thirst for blood. It was Lescuyer's son. He killed and then killed again; he boasted of having with his childish hand alone killed ten men and four women.

"It's all right! I can kill as I like," said he. "I am not yet fifteen, so they can do nothing to me for it."

As the killing progressed, they threw their victims, the living, dead and wounded, into the Trouillas Tower, some sixty feet, down into the pit. The men were thrown in first, and the women later. The assassins wanted time to violate the bodies of those who were young and pretty. At nine in the morning, after twelve hours of massacre, a voice was still heard crying from the depths of the sepulchre:

"For pity's sake, come kill me! I cannot die."

A man, the armorer Bouffier, bent over the pit and looked down. The others did not dare.

"Who was that crying?" they asked.

"That was Lami," replied Bouffier. Then, when he had returned, they asked him:

"Well, what did you see at the bottom?"

"A queer marmalade," said he. "Men and women, priests and pretty girls, all helter-skelter. It's enough to make one die of laughter."

"Decidedly man is a vile creature," said the Count of Monte-Cristo to M. de Villefort.

Well, it is in this town, still reeking with blood, still warm, still stirred by these last massacres, that we now introduce two of the principal personages of our story,