

THE TREASURE OF FRANCHARD.

CHAPTER I. BY THE DYING MOUNTEBANK.

They had sent for the doctor from Bourron before six. About eight some villagers came round for the performance, and were told how matters stood. It seemed a liberty for a mountebank to fall ill like real people, and they made off again in dudgeon. By ten Madame Tentailon was gravely alarmed, and had sent down the street for Doctor Desprez.

The Doctor was at work over his manuscripts in one corner of the little dining-room, and his wife was asleep over the fire in another, when the messenger arrived.

'Sapristi!' said the Doctor, 'you should have sent for me before. It was a case for hurry.' And he followed the messenger as he was, in his slippers and skull-cap.

The inn was not thirty yards away, but the messenger did not stop there; he went in at one door and out by another into the court, and then led the way by a flight of steps beside the stable, to the loft where the mountebank lay sick. If Doctor Desprez were to live a thousand years, he would never forget his arrival in that room; for not only was the scene picturesque, but the moment made a date in his existence. We reckon our

lives, I hardly know why, from the date of our first sorry appearance in society, as if from a first humiliation; for no actor can come upon the stage with a worse grace. Not to go further back, which would be judged too curious, there are subsequently many moving and decisive accidents in the lives of all, which would make as logical a period as this of birth. And here, for instance, Doctor Desprez, a man past forty, who had made what is called a failure in life, and was moreover married, found himself at a new point of departure when he opened the door of the loft above Tentaillon's stable.

It was a large place, lighted only by a single candle set upon the floor. The mountebank lay on his back upon a pallet; a large man, with a Quixotic nose inflamed with drinking. Madame Tentaillon stooped over him, applying a hot water and mustard embrocation to his feet; and on a chair close by sat a little fellow of eleven or twelve, with his feet dangling. These three were the only occupants, except the shadows. But the shadows were a company in themselves; the extent of the room exaggerated them to a gigantic size, and from the low position of the candle the light struck upwards and produced deformed foreshortenings. The mountebank's profile was enlarged upon the wall in caricature, and it was strange to see his nose shorten and lengthen as the flame was blown about by draughts. As for Madame Tentaillon, her shadow was no more than a gross hump of shoulders, with now and again a hemisphere of head. The chair legs were spindled out as long as stilts, and the boy set perched atop of them, like a cloud, in the corner of the roof.

It was the boy who took the Doctor's fancy. He had a great arched skull, the forehead and the hands of a musician, and a pair of haunting eyes. It was not merely that these eyes were large, or steady, or the softest ruddy brown. There was a look in them, besides, which thrilled the Doctor, and made him half uneasy. He was sure he had seen such a look before, and yet he could not remember how or where. It was as if this boy, who was quite a stranger to him, had the eyes of an old friend or an old enemy. And the boy would give him no peace; he seemed profoundly indifferent to what was going on, or rather abstracted from it in a superior contemplation, beating gently with his feet against the bars of the chair, and holding his hands folded on his lap. But, for all that, his eyes kept following the Doctor about the room with a thoughtful fixity of gaze. Desprez could not tell whether he was fascinating the boy, or the boy was fascinating him. He busied himself over the sick man: he put questions, he felt the pulse, he jested, he grew a little hot and swore: and still, whenever he looked round, there were the brown eyes waiting for his with the same inquiring, melancholy gaze.

At last the Doctor hit on the solution at a leap. He remembered the look now. The little fellow, although he was as straight as a dart, had the eyes that go usually with a crooked back; he was not at all deformed, and yet a deformed person seemed to be looking at you from below his brows. The Doctor drew a long breath, he was so much relieved to find a theory (for he loved theories) and to explain away his interest.

For all that, he despatched the invalid with unusual haste, and, still kneeling with one knee on the floor, turned a little round and looked the

boy over at his leisure. The boy was not in the least put out, but looked placidly back at the Doctor.

'Is this your father?' asked Desprez.

'Oh, no,' returned the boy; 'my master.'

'Are you fond of him?' continued the Doctor.

'No, sir,' said the boy.

Madame Tentailon and Desprez exchanged expressive glances.

'That is bad, my man,' resumed the latter, with a shade of sternness.

'Every one should be fond of the dying, or conceal their sentiments; and your master here is dying. If I have watched a bird a little while stealing my cherries, I have a thought of disappointment when he flies away over my garden wall, and I see him steer for the forest and vanish. How much more a creature such as this, so strong, so astute, so richly endowed with faculties! When I think that, in a few hours, the speech will be silenced, the breath extinct, and even the shadow vanished from the wall, I who never saw him, this lady who knew him only as a guest, are touched with some affection.'

The boy was silent for a little, and appeared to be reflecting.

'You did not know him,' he replied at last, 'he was a bad man.'

'He is a little pagan,' said the landlady. 'For that matter, they are all the same, these mountebanks, tumblers, artists, and what not. They have no interior.'

But the Doctor was still scrutinising the little pagan, his eyebrows knotted and uplifted.

'What is your name?' he asked.

'Jean-Marie,' said the lad.

Desprez leaped upon him with one of his sudden flashes of excitement, and felt his head all over from an ethnological point of view.

'Celtic, Celtic!' he said.

'Celtic!' cried Madame Tentaillon, who had perhaps confounded the word with hydrocephalous. 'Poor lad! is it dangerous?'

'That depends,' returned the Doctor grimly. And then once more addressing the boy: 'And what do you do for your living, Jean-Marie?' he inquired.

'I tumble,' was the answer.

'So! Tumble?' repeated Desprez. 'Probably healthful. I hazard the

guess, Madame Tentailon, that tumbling is a healthful way of life. And have you never done anything else but tumble?'

'Before I learned that, I used to steal,' answered Jean-Marie gravely.

'Upon my word!' cried the doctor. 'You are a nice little man for your age. Madame, when my confrere comes from Bourron, you will communicate

my unfavourable opinion. I leave the case in his hands; but of course, on any alarming symptom, above all if there should be a sign of rally, do not hesitate to knock me up. I am a doctor no longer, I thank God; but I have been one. Good night, madame. Good sleep to you, Jean-Marie.'

CHAPTER II. MORNING TALK

Doctor Desprez always rose early. Before the smoke arose, before the first cart rattled over the bridge to the day's labour in the fields, he was to be found wandering in his garden. Now he would pick a bunch of grapes; now he would eat a big pear under the trellice; now he would draw all sorts of fancies on the path with the end of his cane; now he would go down and watch the river running endlessly past the timber landing-place at which he moored his boat. There was no time, he used to say, for making theories like the early morning. 'I rise earlier than any one else in the village,' he once boasted. 'It is a fair consequence that I know more and wish to do less with my knowledge.'

The Doctor was a connoisseur of sunrises, and loved a good theatrical effect to usher in the day. He had a theory of dew, by which he could predict the weather. Indeed, most things served him to that end: the sound of the bells from all the neighbouring villages, the smell of the forest, the visits and the behaviour of both birds and fishes, the look of the plants in his garden, the disposition of cloud, the colour of the light, and last, although not least, the arsenal of meteorological instruments in a louvre-boarded hutch upon the lawn. Ever since he had settled at Gretz, he had been growing more and more into the local meteorologist, the unpaid champion of the local climate. He thought at first there was no place so healthful in the arrondissement. By the end of the second year, he protested there was none so wholesome in the whole

department. And for some time before he met Jean-Marie he had been prepared to challenge all France and the better part of Europe for a rival to his chosen spot.

'Doctor,' he would say--'doctor is a foul word. It should not be used to ladies. It implies disease. I remark it, as a flaw in our civilisation, that we have not the proper horror of disease. Now I, for my part, have washed my hands of it; I have renounced my laureation; I am no doctor; I am only a worshipper of the true goddess Hygieia. Ah, believe me, it is she who has the cestus! And here, in this exiguous hamlet, has she placed her shrine: here she dwells and lavishes her gifts; here I walk with her in the early morning, and she shows me how strong she has made the peasants, how fruitful she has made the fields, how the trees grow up tall and comely under her eyes, and the fishes in the river become clean and agile at her presence.--Rheumatism!' he would cry, on some malapert interruption, 'O, yes, I believe we do have a little rheumatism. That could hardly be avoided, you know, on a river. And of course the place stands a little low; and the meadows are marshy, there's no doubt. But, my dear sir, look at Bourron! Bourron stands high. Bourron is close to the forest; plenty of ozone there, you would say. Well, compared with Gretz, Bourron is a perfect shambles.'

The morning after he had been summoned to the dying mountebank, the Doctor visited the wharf at the tail of his garden, and had a long look at the running water. This he called prayer; but whether his adorations were addressed to the goddess Hygieia or some more orthodox deity, never plainly appeared. For he had uttered doubtful oracles, sometimes

declaring that a river was the type of bodily health, sometimes extolling it as the great moral preacher, continually preaching peace, continuity, and diligence to man's tormented spirits. After he had watched a mile or so of the clear water running by before his eyes, seen a fish or two come to the surface with a gleam of silver, and sufficiently admired the long shadows of the trees falling half across the river from the opposite bank, with patches of moving sunlight in between, he strolled once more up the garden and through his house into the street, feeling cool and renovated.

The sound of his feet upon the causeway began the business of the day; for the village was still sound asleep. The church tower looked very airy in the sunlight; a few birds that turned about it, seemed to swim in an atmosphere of more than usual rarity; and the Doctor, walking in long transparent shadows, filled his lungs amply, and proclaimed himself well contented with the morning.

On one of the posts before Tentailon's carriage entry he espied a little dark figure perched in a meditative attitude, and immediately recognised Jean-Marie.

'Aha!' he said, stopping before him humorously, with a hand on either knee. 'So we rise early in the morning, do we? It appears to me that we have all the vices of a philosopher.'

The boy got to his feet and made a grave salutation.

'And how is our patient?' asked Desprez.

It appeared the patient was about the same.

'And why do you rise early in the morning?' he pursued.

Jean-Marie, after a long silence, professed that he hardly knew.

'You hardly know?' repeated Desprez. 'We hardly know anything, my man, until we try to learn. Interrogate your consciousness. Come, push me this inquiry home. Do you like it?'

'Yes,' said the boy slowly; 'yes, I like it.'

'And why do you like it?' continued the Doctor. '(We are now pursuing the Socratic method.) Why do you like it?'

'It is quiet,' answered Jean-Marie; 'and I have nothing to do; and then I feel as if I were good.'

Doctor Desprez took a seat on the post at the opposite side. He was beginning to take an interest in the talk, for the boy plainly thought before he spoke, and tried to answer truly. 'It appears you have a taste for feeling good,' said the Doctor. 'Now, there you puzzle me extremely; for I thought you said you were a thief; and the two are incompatible.'

'Is it very bad to steal?' asked Jean-Marie.

'Such is the general opinion, little boy,' replied the Doctor.

'No; but I mean as I stole,' explained the other. 'For I had no choice. I think it is surely right to have bread; it must be right to have bread, there comes so plain a want of it. And then they beat me cruelly if I returned with nothing,' he added. 'I was not ignorant of right and wrong; for before that I had been well taught by a priest, who was very kind to me.' (The Doctor made a horrible grimace at the word 'priest.') 'But it seemed to me, when one had nothing to eat and was beaten, it was a different affair. I would not have stolen for tartlets, I believe; but any one would steal for baker's bread.'

'And so I suppose,' said the Doctor, with a rising sneer, 'you prayed God to forgive you, and explained the case to Him at length.'

'Why, sir?' asked Jean-Marie. 'I do not see.'

'Your priest would see, however,' retorted Desprez.

'Would he?' asked the boy, troubled for the first time. 'I should have thought God would have known.'

'Eh?' snarled the Doctor.

'I should have thought God would have understood me,' replied the other. 'You do not, I see; but then it was God that made me think so, was it

not?'

'Little boy, little boy,' said Dr. Desprez, 'I told you already you had the vices of philosophy; if you display the virtues also, I must go. I am a student of the blessed laws of health, an observer of plain and temperate nature in her common walks; and I cannot preserve my equanimity in presence of a monster. Do you understand?'

'No, sir,' said the boy.

'I will make my meaning clear to you,' replied the doctor. 'Look there at the sky--behind the belfry first, where it is so light, and then up and up, turning your chin back, right to the top of the dome, where it is already as blue as at noon. Is not that a beautiful colour? Does it not please the heart? We have seen it all our lives, until it has grown in with our familiar thoughts. Now,' changing his tone, 'suppose that sky to become suddenly of a live and fiery amber, like the colour of clear coals, and growing scarlet towards the top--I do not say it would be any the less beautiful; but would you like it as well?'

'I suppose not,' answered Jean-Marie.

'Neither do I like you,' returned the Doctor, roughly. 'I hate all odd people, and you are the most curious little boy in all the world.'

Jean-Marie seemed to ponder for a while, and then he raised his head

again and looked over at the Doctor with an air of candid inquiry. 'But are not you a very curious gentleman?' he asked.

The Doctor threw away his stick, bounded on the boy, clasped him to his bosom, and kissed him on both cheeks. 'Admirable, admirable imp!' he cried. 'What a morning, what an hour for a theorist of forty-two! No,' he continued, apostrophising heaven, 'I did not know such boys existed; I was ignorant they made them so; I had doubted of my race; and now! It is like,' he added, picking up his stick, 'like a lovers' meeting. I have bruised my favourite staff in that moment of enthusiasm. The injury, however, is not grave.' He caught the boy looking at him in obvious wonder, embarrassment, and alarm. 'Hullo!' said he, 'why do you look at me like that? Egad, I believe the boy despises me. Do you despise me, boy?'

'O, no,' replied Jean-Marie, seriously; 'only I do not understand.'

'You must excuse me, sir,' returned the Doctor, with gravity; 'I am still so young. O, hang him!' he added to himself. And he took his seat again and observed the boy sardonically. 'He has spoiled the quiet of my morning,' thought he. 'I shall be nervous all day, and have a febricule when I digest. Let me compose myself.' And so he dismissed his pre-occupations by an effort of the will which he had long practised, and let his soul roam abroad in the contemplation of the morning. He inhaled the air, tasting it critically as a connoisseur tastes a vintage, and prolonging the expiration with hygienic gusto. He counted the little flecks of cloud along the sky. He followed the movements of the birds

round the church tower--making long sweeps, hanging poised, or turning airy somersaults in fancy, and beating the wind with imaginary pinions.

And in this way he regained peace of mind and animal composure, conscious

of his limbs, conscious of the sight of his eyes, conscious that the air had a cool taste, like a fruit, at the top of his throat; and at last, in complete abstraction, he began to sing. The Doctor had but one air--, 'Malbrouck s'en va-t-en guerre;' even with that he was on terms of mere politeness; and his musical exploits were always reserved for moments when he was alone and entirely happy.

He was recalled to earth rudely by a pained expression on the boy's face.

'What do you think of my singing?' he inquired, stopping in the middle of a note; and then, after he had waited some little while and received no answer, 'What do you think of my singing?' he repeated, imperiously.

'I do not like it,' faltered Jean-Marie.

'Oh, come!' cried the Doctor. 'Possibly you are a performer yourself?'

'I sing better than that,' replied the boy.

The Doctor eyed him for some seconds in stupefaction. He was aware that he was angry, and blushed for himself in consequence, which made him angrier. 'If this is how you address your master!' he said at last, with a shrug and a flourish of his arms.

'I do not speak to him at all,' returned the boy. 'I do not like him.'

'Then you like me?' snapped Doctor Desprez, with unusual eagerness.

'I do not know,' answered Jean-Marie.

The Doctor rose. 'I shall wish you a good morning,' he said. 'You are too much for me. Perhaps you have blood in your veins, perhaps celestial ichor, or perhaps you circulate nothing more gross than respirable air; but of one thing I am inexpugnably assured:--that you are no human being. No, boy'--shaking his stick at him--'you are not a human being. Write, write it in your memory--"I am not a human being--I have no pretension to be a human being--I am a dive, a dream, an angel, an acrostic, an illusion--what you please, but not a human being." And so accept my humble salutations and farewell!'

And with that the Doctor made off along the street in some emotion, and the boy stood, mentally gaping, where he left him.

CHAPTER III. THE ADOPTION.

Madame Desprez, who answered to the Christian name of Anastasie, presented an agreeable type of her sex; exceedingly wholesome to look upon, a stout brune, with cool smooth cheeks, steady, dark eyes, and hands that neither art nor nature could improve. She was the sort of person over whom adversity passes like a summer cloud; she might, in the worst of conjunctions, knit her brows into one vertical furrow for a moment, but the next it would be gone. She had much of the placidity of a contented nun; with little of her piety, however; for Anastasie was of a very mundane nature, fond of oysters and old wine, and somewhat bold pleasantries, and devoted to her husband for her own sake rather than for his. She was imperturbably good-natured, but had no idea of self-sacrifice. To live in that pleasant old house, with a green garden behind and bright flowers about the window, to eat and drink of the best, to gossip with a neighbour for a quarter of an hour, never to wear stays or a dress except when she went to Fontainebleau shopping, to be kept in a continual supply of racy novels, and to be married to Doctor Desprez and have no ground of jealousy, filled the cup of her nature to the brim. Those who had known the Doctor in bachelor days, when he had aired quite as many theories, but of a different order, attributed his present philosophy to the study of Anastasie. It was her brute enjoyment that he rationalised and perhaps vainly imitated.

Madame Desprez was an artist in the kitchen, and made coffee to a nicety.

She had a knack of tidiness, with which she had infected the Doctor; everything was in its place; everything capable of polish shone gloriously; and dust was a thing banished from her empire. Aline, their single servant, had no other business in the world but to scour and burnish. So Doctor Desprez lived in his house like a fatted calf, warmed and cosseted to his heart's content.

The midday meal was excellent. There was a ripe melon, a fish from the river in a memorable Bearnaise sauce, a fat fowl in a fricassee, and a dish of asparagus, followed by some fruit. The Doctor drank half a bottle plus one glass, the wife half a bottle minus the same quantity, which was a marital privilege, of an excellent Cote-Rotie, seven years old. Then the coffee was brought, and a flask of Chartreuse for madame, for the Doctor despised and distrusted such decoctions; and then Aline left the wedded pair to the pleasures of memory and digestion.

'It is a very fortunate circumstance, my cherished one,' observed the Doctor--'this coffee is adorable--a very fortunate circumstance upon the whole--Anastasia, I beseech you, go without that poison for to-day; only one day, and you will feel the benefit, I pledge my reputation.'

'What is this fortunate circumstance, my friend?' inquired Anastasia, not heeding his protest, which was of daily recurrence.

'That we have no children, my beautiful,' replied the Doctor. 'I think of it more and more as the years go on, and with more and more gratitude towards the Power that dispenses such afflictions. Your health, my

darling, my studious quiet, our little kitchen delicacies, how they would all have suffered, how they would all have been sacrificed! And for what? Children are the last word of human imperfection. Health flees before their face. They cry, my dear; they put vexatious questions; they demand to be fed, to be washed, to be educated, to have their noses blown; and then, when the time comes, they break our hearts, as I break this piece of sugar. A pair of professed egoists, like you and me, should avoid offspring, like an infidelity.'

'Indeed!' said she; and she laughed. 'Now, that is like you--to take credit for the thing you could not help.'

'My dear,' returned the Doctor, solemnly, 'we might have adopted.'

'Never!' cried madame. 'Never, Doctor, with my consent. If the child were my own flesh and blood, I would not say no. But to take another person's indiscretion on my shoulders, my dear friend, I have too much sense.'

'Precisely,' replied the Doctor. 'We both had. And I am all the better pleased with our wisdom, because--because--' He looked at her sharply.

'Because what?' she asked, with a faint premonition of danger.

'Because I have found the right person,' said the Doctor firmly, 'and shall adopt him this afternoon.'

Anastasie looked at him out of a mist. 'You have lost your reason,' she said; and there was a clang in her voice that seemed to threaten trouble.

'Not so, my dear,' he replied; 'I retain its complete exercise. To the proof: instead of attempting to cloak my inconsistency, I have, by way of preparing you, thrown it into strong relief. You will there, I think, recognise the philosopher who has the ecstasy to call you wife. The fact is, I have been reckoning all this while without an accident. I never thought to find a son of my own. Now, last night, I found one. Do not unnecessarily alarm yourself, my dear; he is not a drop of blood to me that I know. It is his mind, darling, his mind that calls me father.'

'His mind!' she repeated with a titter between scorn and hysterics. 'His mind, indeed! Henri, is this an idiotic pleasantry, or are you mad? His mind! And what of my mind?'

'Truly,' replied the Doctor with a shrug, 'you have your finger on the hitch. He will be strikingly antipathetic to my ever beautiful Anastasie. She will never understand him; he will never understand her. You married the animal side of my nature, dear and it is on the spiritual side that I find my affinity for Jean-Marie. So much so, that, to be perfectly frank, I stand in some awe of him myself. You will easily perceive that I am announcing a calamity for you. Do not,' he broke out in tones of real solicitude--'do not give way to tears after a meal, Anastasie. You will certainly give yourself a false digestion.'

Anastasie controlled herself. 'You know how willing I am to humour you,'

she said, 'in all reasonable matters. But on this point--'

'My dear love,' interrupted the Doctor, eager to prevent a refusal, 'who wished to leave Paris? Who made me give up cards, and the opera, and the boulevard, and my social relations, and all that was my life before I knew you? Have I been faithful? Have I been obedient? Have I not borne my doom with cheerfulness? In all honesty, Anastasie, have I not a right to a stipulation on my side? I have, and you know it. I stipulate my son.'

Anastasie was aware of defeat; she struck her colours instantly. 'You will break my heart,' she sighed.

'Not in the least,' said he. 'You will feel a trifling inconvenience for a month, just as I did when I was first brought to this vile hamlet; then your admirable sense and temper will prevail, and I see you already as content as ever, and making your husband the happiest of men.'

'You know I can refuse you nothing,' she said, with a last flicker of resistance; 'nothing that will make you truly happier. But will this? Are you sure, my husband? Last night, you say, you found him! He may be the worst of humbugs.'

'I think not,' replied the Doctor. 'But do not suppose me so unwary as to adopt him out of hand. I am, I flatter myself, a finished man of the world; I have had all possibilities in view; my plan is contrived to meet them all. I take the lad as stable boy. If he pilfer, if he grumble, if

he desire to change, I shall see I was mistaken; I shall recognise him for no son of mine, and send him tramping.'

'You will never do so when the time comes,' said his wife; 'I know your good heart.'

She reached out her hand to him, with a sigh; the Doctor smiled as he took it and carried it to his lips; he had gained his point with greater ease than he had dared to hope; for perhaps the twentieth time he had proved the efficacy of his trusty argument, his Excalibur, the hint of a return to Paris. Six months in the capital, for a man of the Doctor's antecedents and relations, implied no less a calamity than total ruin. Anastasie had saved the remainder of his fortune by keeping him strictly in the country. The very name of Paris put her in a blue fear; and she would have allowed her husband to keep a menagerie in the back garden, let alone adopting a stable-boy, rather than permit the question of return to be discussed.

About four of the afternoon, the mountebank rendered up his ghost; he had never been conscious since his seizure. Doctor Desprez was present at his last passage, and declared the farce over. Then he took Jean-Marie by the shoulder and led him out into the inn garden where there was a convenient bench beside the river. Here he sat him down and made the boy place himself on his left.

'Jean-Marie,' he said very gravely, 'this world is exceedingly vast; and even France, which is only a small corner of it, is a great place for a

little lad like you. Unfortunately it is full of eager, shouldering people moving on; and there are very few bakers' shops for so many eaters. Your master is dead; you are not fit to gain a living by yourself; you do not wish to steal? No. Your situation then is undesirable; it is, for the moment, critical. On the other hand, you behold in me a man not old, though elderly, still enjoying the youth of the heart and the intelligence; a man of instruction; easily situated in this world's affairs; keeping a good table--a man, neither as friend nor host, to be despised. I offer you your food and clothes, and to teach you lessons in the evening, which will be infinitely more to the purpose for a lad of your stamp than those of all the priests in Europe. I propose no wages, but if ever you take a thought to leave me, the door shall be open, and I will give you a hundred francs to start the world upon. In return, I have an old horse and chaise, which you would very speedily learn to clean and keep in order. Do not hurry yourself to answer, and take it or leave it as you judge aright. Only remember this, that I am no sentimentalist or charitable person, but a man who lives rigorously to himself; and that if I make the proposal, it is for my own ends--it is because I perceive clearly an advantage to myself. And now, reflect.'

'I shall be very glad. I do not see what else I can do. I thank you, sir, most kindly, and I will try to be useful,' said the boy.

'Thank you,' said the Doctor warmly, rising at the same time and wiping his brow, for he had suffered agonies while the thing hung in the wind. A refusal, after the scene at noon, would have placed him in a ridiculous

light before Anastasie. 'How hot and heavy is the evening, to be sure! I have always had a fancy to be a fish in summer, Jean-Marie, here in the Loing beside Gretz. I should lie under a water-lily and listen to the bells, which must sound most delicately down below. That would be a life--do you not think so too?'

'Yes,' said Jean-Marie.

'Thank God you have imagination!' cried the Doctor, embracing the boy with his usual effusive warmth, though it was a proceeding that seemed to disconcert the sufferer almost as much as if he had been an English schoolboy of the same age. 'And now,' he added, 'I will take you to my wife.'

Madame Desprez sat in the dining-room in a cool wrapper. All the blinds were down, and the tile floor had been recently sprinkled with water; her eyes were half shut, but she affected to be reading a novel as they entered. Though she was a bustling woman, she enjoyed repose between whiles and had a remarkable appetite for sleep.

The Doctor went through a solemn form of introduction, adding, for the benefit of both parties, 'You must try to like each other for my sake.'

'He is very pretty,' said Anastasie. 'Will you kiss me, my pretty little fellow?'

The Doctor was furious, and dragged her into the passage. 'Are you a

fool, Anastasie?' he said. 'What is all this I hear about the tact of women? Heaven knows, I have not met with it in my experience. You address my little philosopher as if he were an infant. He must be spoken to with more respect, I tell you; he must not be kissed and Georgy-porgy'd like an ordinary child.'

'I only did it to please you, I am sure,' replied Anastasie; 'but I will try to do better.'

The Doctor apologised for his warmth. 'But I do wish him,' he continued, 'to feel at home among us. And really your conduct was so idiotic, my cherished one, and so utterly and distantly out of place, that a saint might have been pardoned a little vehemence in disapproval. Do, do try--if it is possible for a woman to understand young people--but of course it is not, and I waste my breath. Hold your tongue as much as possible at least, and observe my conduct narrowly; it will serve you for a model.'

Anastasie did as she was bidden, and considered the Doctor's behaviour. She observed that he embraced the boy three times in the course of the evening, and managed generally to confound and abash the little fellow out of speech and appetite. But she had the true womanly heroism in little affairs. Not only did she refrain from the cheap revenge of exposing the Doctor's errors to himself, but she did her best to remove their ill-effect on Jean-Marie. When Desprez went out for his last breath of air before retiring for the night, she came over to the boy's side and took his hand.

'You must not be surprised nor frightened by my husband's manners,' she said. 'He is the kindest of men, but so clever that he is sometimes difficult to understand. You will soon grow used to him, and then you will love him, for that nobody can help. As for me, you may be sure, I shall try to make you happy, and will not bother you at all. I think we should be excellent friends, you and I. I am not clever, but I am very good-natured. Will you give me a kiss?'

He held up his face, and she took him in her arms and then began to cry. The woman had spoken in complaisance; but she had warmed to her own words, and tenderness followed. The Doctor, entering, found them enlaced: he concluded that his wife was in fault; and he was just beginning, in an awful voice, 'Anastasië--,' when she looked up at him, smiling, with an upraised finger; and he held his peace, wondering, while she led the boy to his attic.

CHAPTER IV. THE EDUCATION OF A PHILOSOPHER.

The installation of the adopted stable-boy was thus happily effected, and the wheels of life continued to run smoothly in the Doctor's house. Jean-Marie did his horse and carriage duty in the morning; sometimes helped in the housework; sometimes walked abroad with the Doctor, to drink wisdom from the fountain-head; and was introduced at night to the sciences and the dead tongues. He retained his singular placidity of mind and manner; he was rarely in fault; but he made only a very partial progress in his studies, and remained much of a stranger in the family.

The Doctor was a pattern of regularity. All forenoon he worked on his great book, the 'Comparative Pharmacopoeia, or Historical Dictionary of all Medicines,' which as yet consisted principally of slips of paper and pins. When finished, it was to fill many personable volumes, and to combine antiquarian interest with professional utility. But the Doctor was studious of literary graces and the picturesque; an anecdote, a touch of manners, a moral qualification, or a sounding epithet was sure to be preferred before a piece of science; a little more, and he would have written the 'Comparative Pharmacopoeia' in verse! The article 'Mummiæ,' for instance, was already complete, though the remainder of the work had not progressed beyond the letter A. It was exceedingly copious and entertaining, written with quaintness and colour, exact, erudite, a literary article; but it would hardly have afforded guidance to a practising physician of to-day. The feminine good sense of his wife had

led her to point this out with uncompromising sincerity; for the Dictionary was duly read aloud to her, betwixt sleep and waning, as it proceeded towards an infinitely distant completion; and the Doctor was a little sore on the subject of mummies, and sometimes resented an allusion with asperity.

After the midday meal and a proper period of digestion, he walked, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by Jean-Marie; for madame would have preferred any hardship rather than walk.

She was, as I have said, a very busy person, continually occupied about material comforts, and ready to drop asleep over a novel the instant she was disengaged. This was the less objectionable, as she never snored or grew distempered in complexion when she slept. On the contrary, she looked the very picture of luxurious and appetising ease, and woke without a start to the perfect possession of her faculties. I am afraid she was greatly an animal, but she was a very nice animal to have about. In this way, she had little to do with Jean-Marie; but the sympathy which had been established between them on the first night remained unbroken; they held occasional conversations, mostly on household matters; to the extreme disappointment of the Doctor, they occasionally sallied off together to that temple of debasing superstition, the village church; madame and he, both in their Sunday's best, drove twice a month to Fontainebleau and returned laden with purchases; and in short, although the Doctor still continued to regard them as irreconcilably anti-pathetic, their relation was as intimate, friendly, and confidential

as their natures suffered.

I fear, however, that in her heart of hearts, madame kindly despised and pitied the boy. She had no admiration for his class of virtues; she liked a smart, polite, forward, roguish sort of boy, cap in hand, light of foot, meeting the eye; she liked volubility, charm, a little vice--the promise of a second Doctor Desprez. And it was her indefeasible belief that Jean-Marie was dull. 'Poor dear boy,' she had said once, 'how sad it is that he should be so stupid!' She had never repeated that remark, for the Doctor had raged like a wild bull, denouncing the brutal bluntness of her mind, bemoaning his own fate to be so unequally mated with an ass, and, what touched Anastasie more nearly, menacing the table china by the fury of his gesticulations. But she adhered silently to her opinion; and when Jean-Marie was sitting, stolid, blank, but not unhappy, over his unfinished tasks, she would snatch her opportunity in the Doctor's absence, go over to him, put her arms about his neck, lay her cheek to his, and communicate her sympathy with his distress. 'Do not mind,' she would say; 'I, too, am not at all clever, and I can assure you that it makes no difference in life.'

The Doctor's view was naturally different. That gentleman never wearied of the sound of his own voice, which was, to say the truth, agreeable enough to hear. He now had a listener, who was not so cynically indifferent as Anastasie, and who sometimes put him on his mettle by the most relevant objections. Besides, was he not educating the boy? And education, philosophers are agreed, is the most philosophical of duties. What can be more heavenly to poor mankind than to have one's hobby grow

into a duty to the State? Then, indeed, do the ways of life become ways of pleasantness. Never had the Doctor seen reason to be more content with his endowments. Philosophy flowed smoothly from his lips. He was so agile a dialectician that he could trace his nonsense, when challenged, back to some root in sense, and prove it to be a sort of flower upon his system. He slipped out of antinomies like a fish, and left his disciple marvelling at the rabbi's depth.

Moreover, deep down in his heart the Doctor was disappointed with the ill-success of his more formal education. A boy, chosen by so acute an observer for his aptitude, and guided along the path of learning by so philosophic an instructor, was bound, by the nature of the universe, to make a more obvious and lasting advance. Now Jean-Marie was slow in all things, impenetrable in others; and his power of forgetting was fully on a level with his power to learn. Therefore the Doctor cherished his peripatetic lectures, to which the boy attended, which he generally appeared to enjoy, and by which he often profited.

Many and many were the talks they had together; and health and moderation proved the subject of the Doctor's divagations. To these he lovingly returned.

'I lead you,' he would say, 'by the green pastures. My system, my beliefs, my medicines, are resumed in one phrase--to avoid excess. Blessed nature, healthy, temperate nature, abhors and exterminates excess. Human law, in this matter, imitates at a great distance her

provisions; and we must strive to supplement the efforts of the law. Yes, boy, we must be a law to ourselves and for ourselves and for our neighbours--lex armata--armed, emphatic, tyrannous law. If you see a crapulous human ruin snuffing, dash from him his box! The judge, though in a way an admission of disease, is less offensive to me than either the doctor or the priest. Above all the doctor--the doctor and the purulent trash and garbage of his pharmacopoeia! Pure air--from the neighbourhood of a pinetum for the sake of the turpentine--unadulterated wine, and the reflections of an unsophisticated spirit in the presence of the works of nature--these, my boy, are the best medical appliances and the best religious comforts. Devote yourself to these. Hark! there are the bells of Bourron (the wind is in the north, it will be fair). How clear and airy is the sound! The nerves are harmonised and quieted; the mind attuned to silence; and observe how easily and regularly beats the heart! Your unenlightened doctor would see nothing in these sensations; and yet you yourself perceive they are a part of health.--Did you remember your cinchona this morning? Good. Cinchona also is a work of nature; it is, after all, only the bark of a tree which we might gather for ourselves if we lived in the locality.--What a world is this! Though a professed atheist, I delight to bear my testimony to the world. Look at the gratuitous remedies and pleasures that surround our path! The river runs by the garden end, our bath, our fishpond, our natural system of drainage. There is a well in the court which sends up sparkling water from the earth's very heart, clean, cool, and, with a little wine, most wholesome. The district is notorious for its salubrity; rheumatism is the only prevalent complaint, and I myself have never had a touch of it. I tell you--and my opinion is based upon the coldest, clearest processes

of reason--if I, if you, desired to leave this home of pleasures, it would be the duty, it would be the privilege, of our best friend to prevent us with a pistol bullet.'

One beautiful June day they sat upon the hill outside the village. The river, as blue as heaven, shone here and there among the foliage. The indefatigable birds turned and flickered about Gretz church tower. A healthy wind blew from over the forest, and the sound of innumerable thousands of tree-tops and innumerable millions on millions of green leaves was abroad in the air, and filled the ear with something between whispered speech and singing. It seemed as if every blade of grass must hide a cigale; and the fields rang merrily with their music, jingling far and near as with the sleigh-bells of the fairy queen. From their station on the slope the eye embraced a large space of poplar'd plain upon the one hand, the waving hill-tops of the forest on the other, and Gretz itself in the middle, a handful of roofs. Under the bestriding arch of the blue heavens, the place seemed dwindled to a toy. It seemed incredible that people dwelt, and could find room to turn or air to breathe, in such a corner of the world. The thought came home to the boy, perhaps for the first time, and he gave it words.

'How small it looks!' he sighed.

'Ay,' replied the Doctor, 'small enough now. Yet it was once a walled city; thriving, full of furred burgesses and men in armour, humming with affairs;--with tall spires, for aught that I know, and portly towers along the battlements. A thousand chimneys ceased smoking at the curfew

bell. There were gibbets at the gate as thick as scarecrows. In time of war, the assault swarmed against it with ladders, the arrows fell like leaves, the defenders sallied hotly over the drawbridge, each side uttered its cry as they plied their weapons. Do you know that the walls extended as far as the Commanderie? Tradition so reports. Alas, what a long way off is all this confusion--nothing left of it but my quiet words spoken in your ear--and the town itself shrunk to the hamlet underneath us! By-and-by came the English wars--you shall hear more of the English, a stupid people, who sometimes blundered into good--and Gretz was taken, sacked, and burned. It is the history of many towns; but Gretz never rose again; it was never rebuilt; its ruins were a quarry to serve the growth of rivals; and the stones of Gretz are now erect along the streets of Nemours. It gratifies me that our old house was the first to rise after the calamity; when the town had come to an end, it inaugurated the hamlet.'

'I, too, am glad of that,' said Jean-Marie.

'It should be the temple of the humbler virtues,' responded the Doctor with a savoury gusto. 'Perhaps one of the reasons why I love my little hamlet as I do, is that we have a similar history, she and I. Have I told you that I was once rich?'

'I do not think so,' answered Jean-Marie. 'I do not think I should have forgotten. I am sorry you should have lost your fortune.'

'Sorry?' cried the Doctor. 'Why, I find I have scarce begun your

education after all. Listen to me! Would you rather live in the old Gretz or in the new, free from the alarms of war, with the green country at the door, without noise, passports, the exactions of the soldiery, or the jangle of the curfew-bell to send us off to bed by sundown?'

'I suppose I should prefer the new,' replied the boy.

'Precisely,' returned the Doctor; 'so do I. And, in the same way, I prefer my present moderate fortune to my former wealth. Golden mediocrity! cried the adorable ancients; and I subscribe to their enthusiasm. Have I not good wine, good food, good air, the fields and the forest for my walk, a house, an admirable wife, a boy whom I protest I cherish like a son? Now, if I were still rich, I should indubitably make my residence in Paris--you know Paris--Paris and Paradise are not convertible terms. This pleasant noise of the wind streaming among leaves changed into the grinding Babel of the street, the stupid glare of plaster substituted for this quiet pattern of greens and greys, the nerves shattered, the digestion falsified--picture the fall! Already you perceive the consequences; the mind is stimulated, the heart steps to a different measure, and the man is himself no longer. I have passionately studied myself--the true business of philosophy. I know my character as the musician knows the ventages of his flute. Should I return to Paris, I should ruin myself gambling; nay, I go further--I should break the heart of my Anastasie with infidelities.'

This was too much for Jean-Marie. That a place should so transform the most excellent of men transcended his belief. Paris, he protested, was

even an agreeable place of residence. 'Nor when I lived in that city did I feel much difference,' he pleaded.

'What!' cried the Doctor. 'Did you not steal when you were there?'

But the boy could never be brought to see that he had done anything wrong when he stole. Nor, indeed, did the Doctor think he had; but that gentleman was never very scrupulous when in want of a retort.

'And now,' he concluded, 'do you begin to understand? My only friends were those who ruined me. Gretz has been my academy, my sanatorium, my

heaven of innocent pleasures. If millions are offered me, I wave them back: Retro, Sathanas!--Evil one, begone! Fix your mind on my example; despise riches, avoid the debasing influence of cities.

Hygiene--hygiene and mediocrity of fortune--these be your watchwords during life!

The Doctor's system of hygiene strikingly coincided with his tastes; and his picture of the perfect life was a faithful description of the one he was leading at the time. But it is easy to convince a boy, whom you supply with all the facts for the discussion. And besides, there was one thing admirable in the philosophy, and that was the enthusiasm of the philosopher. There was never any one more vigorously determined to be pleased; and if he was not a great logician, and so had no right to convince the intellect, he was certainly something of a poet, and had a fascination to seduce the heart. What he could not achieve in his

customary humour of a radiant admiration of himself and his circumstances, he sometimes effected in his fits of gloom.

'Boy,' he would say, 'avoid me to-day. If I were superstitious, I should even beg for an interest in your prayers. I am in the black fit; the evil spirit of King Saul, the hag of the merchant Abudah, the personal devil of the mediaeval monk, is with me--is in me,' tapping on his breast. 'The vices of my nature are now uppermost; innocent pleasures woo me in vain; I long for Paris, for my wallowing in the mire. See,' he would continue, producing a handful of silver, 'I denude myself, I am not to be trusted with the price of a fare. Take it, keep it for me, squander it on deleterious candy, throw it in the deepest of the river--I will homologate your action. Save me from that part of myself which I disown. If you see me falter, do not hesitate; if necessary, wreck the train! I speak, of course, by a parable. Any extremity were better than for me to reach Paris alive.'

Doubtless the Doctor enjoyed these little scenes, as a variation in his part; they represented the Byronic element in the somewhat artificial poetry of his existence; but to the boy, though he was dimly aware of their theatricality, they represented more. The Doctor made perhaps too little, the boy possibly too much, of the reality and gravity of these temptations.

One day a great light shone for Jean-Marie. 'Could not riches be used well?' he asked.

'In theory, yes,' replied the Doctor. 'But it is found in experience that no one does so. All the world imagine they will be exceptional when they grow wealthy; but possession is debasing, new desires spring up; and the silly taste for ostentation eats out the heart of pleasure.'

'Then you might be better if you had less,' said the boy.

'Certainly not,' replied the Doctor; but his voice quavered as he spoke.

'Why?' demanded pitiless innocence.

Doctor Desprez saw all the colours of the rainbow in a moment; the stable universe appeared to be about capsizing with him. 'Because,' said he--affecting deliberation after an obvious pause--'because I have formed my life for my present income. It is not good for men of my years to be violently dissevered from their habits.'

That was a sharp brush. The Doctor breathed hard, and fell into taciturnity for the afternoon. As for the boy, he was delighted with the resolution of his doubts; even wondered that he had not foreseen the obvious and conclusive answer. His faith in the Doctor was a stout piece of goods. Desprez was inclined to be a sheet in the wind's eye after dinner, especially after Rhone wine, his favourite weakness. He would then remark on the warmth of his feeling for Anastasie, and with inflamed cheeks and a loose, flustered smile, debate upon all sorts of topics, and be feebly and indiscreetly witty. But the adopted stable-boy would not permit himself to entertain a doubt that savoured of ingratitude. It is

quite true that a man may be a second father to you, and yet take too much to drink; but the best natures are ever slow to accept such truths.

The Doctor thoroughly possessed his heart, but perhaps he exaggerated his influence over his mind. Certainly Jean-Marie adopted some of his master's opinions, but I have yet to learn that he ever surrendered one of his own. Convictions existed in him by divine right; they were virgin, unwrought, the brute metal of decision. He could add others indeed, but he could not put away; neither did he care if they were perfectly agreed among themselves; and his spiritual pleasures had nothing to do with turning them over or justifying them in words. Words were with him a mere accomplishment, like dancing. When he was by himself, his pleasures were almost vegetable. He would slip into the woods towards Acheres, and sit in the mouth of a cave among grey birches. His soul stared straight out of his eyes; he did not move or think; sunlight, thin shadows moving in the wind, the edge of firs against the sky, occupied and bound his faculties. He was pure unity, a spirit wholly abstracted. A single mood filled him, to which all the objects of sense contributed, as the colours of the spectrum merge and disappear in white light.

So while the Doctor made himself drunk with words, the adopted stable-boy bemused himself with silence.

CHAPTER V. TREASURE TROVE.

The Doctor's carriage was a two-wheeled gig with a hood; a kind of vehicle in much favour among country doctors. On how many roads has one not seen it, a great way off between the poplars!--in how many village streets, tied to a gate-post! This sort of chariot is affected--particularly at the trot--by a kind of pitching movement to and fro across the axle, which well entitles it to the style of a Noddy. The hood describes a considerable arc against the landscape, with a solemnly absurd effect on the contemplative pedestrian. To ride in such a carriage cannot be numbered among the things that appertain to glory; but I have no doubt it may be useful in liver complaint. Thence, perhaps, its wide popularity among physicians.

One morning early, Jean-Marie led forth the Doctor's noddy, opened the gate, and mounted to the driving-seat. The Doctor followed, arrayed from top to toe in spotless linen, armed with an immense flesh-coloured umbrella, and girt with a botanical case on a baldric; and the equipage drove off smartly in a breeze of its own provocation. They were bound for Franchard, to collect plants, with an eye to the 'Comparative Pharmacopoeia.'

A little rattling on the open roads, and they came to the borders of the forest and struck into an unfrequented track; the noddy yawed softly over

the sand, with an accompaniment of snapping twigs. There was a great, green, softly murmuring cloud of congregated foliage overhead. In the arcades of the forest the air retained the freshness of the night. The athletic bearing of the trees, each carrying its leafy mountain, pleased the mind like so many statues; and the lines of the trunk led the eye admiringly upward to where the extreme leaves sparkled in a patch of azure. Squirrels leaped in mid air. It was a proper spot for a devotee of the goddess Hygieia.

'Have you been to Franchard, Jean-Marie?' inquired the Doctor. 'I fancy not.'

'Never,' replied the boy.

'It is ruin in a gorge,' continued Desprez, adopting his expository voice; 'the ruin of a hermitage and chapel. History tells us much of Franchard; how the recluse was often slain by robbers; how he lived on a most insufficient diet; how he was expected to pass his days in prayer. A letter is preserved, addressed to one of these solitaries by the superior of his order, full of admirable hygienic advice; bidding him go from his book to praying, and so back again, for variety's sake, and when he was weary of both to stroll about his garden and observe the honey bees. It is to this day my own system. You must often have remarked me leaving the "Pharmacopoeia"--often even in the middle of a phrase--to come forth into the sun and air. I admire the writer of that letter from my heart; he was a man of thought on the most important subjects. But, indeed, had I lived in the Middle Ages (I am heartily glad that I did not) I should

have been an eremite myself--if I had not been a professed buffoon, that is. These were the only philosophical lives yet open: laughter or prayer; sneers, we might say, and tears. Until the sun of the Positive arose, the wise man had to make his choice between these two.'

'I have been a buffoon, of course,' observed Jean-Marie.

'I cannot imagine you to have excelled in your profession,' said the Doctor, admiring the boy's gravity. 'Do you ever laugh?'

'Oh, yes,' replied the other. 'I laugh often. I am very fond of jokes.'

'Singular being!' said Desprez. 'But I divagate (I perceive in a thousand ways that I grow old). Franchard was at length destroyed in the English wars, the same that levelled Gretz. But--here is the point--the hermits (for there were already more than one) had foreseen the danger and carefully concealed the sacrificial vessels. These vessels were of monstrous value, Jean-Marie--monstrous value--priceless, we may say; exquisitely worked, of exquisite material. And now, mark me, they have never been found. In the reign of Louis Quatorze some fellows were digging hard by the ruins. Suddenly--tock!--the spade hit upon an obstacle. Imagine the men fooling one to another; imagine how their hearts bounded, how their colour came and went. It was a coffer, and in Franchard the place of buried treasure! They tore it open like famished beasts. Alas! it was not the treasure; only some priestly robes, which, at the touch of the eating air, fell upon themselves and instantly wasted into dust. The perspiration of these good fellows turned cold upon them,

Jean-Marie. I will pledge my reputation, if there was anything like a cutting wind, one or other had a pneumonia for his trouble.'

'I should like to have seen them turning into dust,' said Jean-Marie. 'Otherwise, I should not have cared so greatly.'

'You have no imagination,' cried the Doctor. 'Picture to yourself the scene. Dwell on the idea--a great treasure lying in the earth for centuries: the material for a giddy, copious, opulent existence not employed; dresses and exquisite pictures unseen; the swiftest galloping horses not stirring a hoof, arrested by a spell; women with the beautiful faculty of smiles, not smiling; cards, dice, opera singing, orchestras, castles, beautiful parks and gardens, big ships with a tower of sailcloth, all lying unborn in a coffin--and the stupid trees growing overhead in the sunlight, year after year. The thought drives one frantic.'

'It is only money,' replied Jean-Marie. 'It would do harm.'

'O, come!' cried Desprez, 'that is philosophy; it is all very fine, but not to the point just now. And besides, it is not "only money," as you call it; there are works of art in the question; the vessels were carved. You speak like a child. You weary me exceedingly, quoting my words out of all logical connection, like a parroquet.'

'And at any rate, we have nothing to do with it,' returned the boy submissively.

They struck the Route Ronde at that moment; and the sudden change to the rattling causeway combined, with the Doctor's irritation, to keep him silent. The noddy jiggled along; the trees went by, looking on silently, as if they had something on their minds. The Quadrilateral was passed; then came Franchard. They put up the horse at the little solitary inn, and went forth strolling. The gorge was dyed deeply with heather; the rocks and birches standing luminous in the sun. A great humming of bees about the flowers disposed Jean-Marie to sleep, and he sat down against a clump of heather, while the Doctor went briskly to and fro, with quick turns, culling his simples.

The boy's head had fallen a little forward, his eyes were closed, his fingers had fallen lax about his knees, when a sudden cry called him to his feet. It was a strange sound, thin and brief; it fell dead, and silence returned as though it had never been interrupted. He had not recognised the Doctor's voice; but, as there was no one else in all the valley, it was plainly the Doctor who had given utterance to the sound. He looked right and left, and there was Desprez, standing in a niche between two boulders, and looking round on his adopted son with a countenance as white as paper.

'A viper!' cried Jean-Marie, running towards him. 'A viper! You are bitten!'

The Doctor came down heavily out of the cleft, and, advanced in silence to meet the boy, whom he took roughly by the shoulder.

'I have found it,' he said, with a gasp.

'A plant?' asked Jean-Marie.

Desprez had a fit of unnatural gaiety, which the rocks took up and mimicked. 'A plant!' he repeated scornfully. 'Well--yes--a plant. And here,' he added suddenly, showing his right hand, which he had hitherto concealed behind his back--'here is one of the bulbs.'

Jean-Marie saw a dirty platter, coated with earth.

'That?' said he. 'It is a plate!'

'It is a coach and horses,' cried the Doctor. 'Boy,' he continued, growing warmer, 'I plucked away a great pad of moss from between these boulders, and disclosed a crevice; and when I looked in, what do you suppose I saw? I saw a house in Paris with a court and garden, I saw my wife shining with diamonds, I saw myself a deputy, I saw you--well, I--I saw your future,' he concluded, rather feebly. 'I have just discovered America,' he added.

'But what is it?' asked the boy.

'The Treasure of Franchard,' cried the Doctor; and, throwing his brown straw hat upon the ground, he whooped like an Indian and sprang upon Jean-

Marie, whom he suffocated with embraces and bedewed with tears. Then he flung himself down among the heather and once more laughed until the valley rang.

But the boy had now an interest of his own, a boy's interest. No sooner was he released from the Doctor's accolade than he ran to the boulders, sprang into the niche, and, thrusting his hand into the crevice, drew forth one after another, encrusted with the earth of ages, the flagons, candlesticks, and patens of the hermitage of Franchard. A casket came last, tightly shut and very heavy.

'O what fun!' he cried.

But when he looked back at the Doctor, who had followed close behind and was silently observing, the words died from his lips. Desprez was once more the colour of ashes; his lip worked and trembled; a sort of bestial greed possessed him.

'This is childish,' he said. 'We lose precious time. Back to the inn, harness the trap, and bring it to yon bank. Run for your life, and remember--not one whisper. I stay here to watch.'

Jean-Marie did as he was bid, though not without surprise. The noddy was brought round to the spot indicated; and the two gradually transported the treasure from its place of concealment to the boot below the driving seat. Once it was all stored the Doctor recovered his gaiety.

'I pay my grateful duties to the genius of this dell,' he said. 'O, for a live coal, a heifer, and a jar of country wine! I am in the vein for sacrifice, for a superb libation. Well, and why not? We are at Franchard. English pale ale is to be had--not classical, indeed, but excellent. Boy, we shall drink ale.'

'But I thought it was so unwholesome,' said Jean-Marie, 'and very dear besides.'

'Fiddle-de-dee!' exclaimed the Doctor gaily. 'To the inn!'

And he stepped into the noddy, tossing his head, with an elastic, youthful air. The horse was turned, and in a few seconds they drew up beside the palings of the inn garden.

'Here,' said Desprez--'here, near the table, so that we may keep an eye upon things.'

They tied the horse, and entered the garden, the Doctor singing, now in fantastic high notes, now producing deep reverberations from his chest. He took a seat, rapped loudly on the table, assailed the waiter with witticisms; and when the bottle of Bass was at length produced, far more charged with gas than the most delirious champagne, he filled out a long glassful of froth and pushed it over to Jean-Marie. 'Drink,' he said; 'drink deep.'

'I would rather not,' faltered the boy, true to his training.

'What?' thundered Desprez.

'I am afraid of it,' said Jean-Marie: 'my stomach--'

'Take it or leave it,' interrupted Desprez fiercely; 'but understand it once for all--there is nothing so contemptible as a precisian.'

Here was a new lesson! The boy sat bemused, looking at the glass but not tasting it, while the Doctor emptied and refilled his own, at first with clouded brow, but gradually yielding to the sun, the heady, prickling beverage, and his own predisposition to be happy.

'Once in a way,' he said at last, by way of a concession to the boy's more rigorous attitude, 'once in a way, and at so critical a moment, this ale is a nectar for the gods. The habit, indeed, is debasing; wine, the juice of the grape, is the true drink of the Frenchman, as I have often had occasion to point out; and I do not know that I can blame you for refusing this outlandish stimulant. You can have some wine and cakes. Is the bottle empty? Well, we will not be proud; we will have pity on your glass.'

The beer being done, the Doctor chafed bitterly while Jean-Marie finished his cakes. 'I burn to be gone,' he said, looking at his watch. 'Good God, how slow you eat!' And yet to eat slowly was his own particular prescription, the main secret of longevity!

His martyrdom, however, reached an end at last; the pair resumed their places in the buggy, and Desprez, leaning luxuriously back, announced his intention of proceeding to Fontainebleau.

'To Fontainebleau?' repeated Jean-Marie.

'My words are always measured,' said the Doctor. 'On!'

The Doctor was driven through the glades of paradise; the air, the light, the shining leaves, the very movements of the vehicle, seemed to fall in tune with his golden meditations; with his head thrown back, he dreamed a series of sunny visions, ale and pleasure dancing in his veins. At last he spoke.

'I shall telegraph for Casimir,' he said. 'Good Casimir! a fellow of the lower order of intelligence, Jean-Marie, distinctly not creative, not poetic; and yet he will repay your study; his fortune is vast, and is entirely due to his own exertions. He is the very fellow to help us to dispose of our trinkets, find us a suitable house in Paris, and manage the details of our installation. Admirable Casimir, one of my oldest comrades! It was on his advice, I may add, that I invested my little fortune in Turkish bonds; when we have added these spoils of the mediaeval church to our stake in the Mahometan empire, little boy, we shall positively roll among doubloons, positively roll! Beautiful forest,' he cried, 'farewell! Though called to other scenes, I will not forget thee. Thy name is graven in my heart. Under the influence of prosperity I become dithyrambic, Jean-Marie. Such is the impulse of the natural soul;

such was the constitution of primaeval man. And I--well, I will not refuse the credit--I have preserved my youth like a virginity; another, who should have led the same snoozing, countryfied existence for these years, another had become rusted, become stereotype; but I, I praise my happy constitution, retain the spring unbroken. Fresh opulence and a new sphere of duties find me unabated in ardour and only more mature by knowledge. For this prospective change, Jean-Marie--it may probably have shocked you. Tell me now, did it not strike you as an inconsistency? Confess--it is useless to dissemble--it pained you?

'Yes,' said the boy.

'You see,' returned the Doctor, with sublime fatuity, 'I read your thoughts! Nor am I surprised--your education is not yet complete; the higher duties of men have not been yet presented to you fully. A hint--till we have leisure--must suffice. Now that I am once more in possession of a modest competence; now that I have so long prepared myself in silent meditation, it becomes my superior duty to proceed to Paris. My scientific training, my undoubted command of language, mark me out for the service of my country. Modesty in such a case would be a snare. If sin were a philosophical expression, I should call it sinful. A man must not deny his manifest abilities, for that is to evade his obligations. I must be up and doing; I must be no skulker in life's battle.'

So he rattled on, copiously greasing the joint of his inconsistency with words; while the boy listened silently, his eyes fixed on the horse, his

mind seething. It was all lost eloquence; no array of words could unsettle a belief of Jean-Marie's; and he drove into Fontainebleau filled with pity, horror, indignation, and despair.

In the town Jean-Marie was kept a fixture on the driving-seat, to guard the treasure; while the Doctor, with a singular, slightly tipsy airiness of manner, fluttered in and out of cafes, where he shook hands with garrison officers, and mixed an absinthe with the nicety of old experience; in and out of shops, from which he returned laden with costly fruits, real turtle, a magnificent piece of silk for his wife, a preposterous cane for himself, and a kepi of the newest fashion for the boy; in and out of the telegraph office, whence he despatched his telegram, and where three hours later he received an answer promising a visit on the morrow; and generally pervaded Fontainebleau with the first fine aroma of his divine good humour.

The sun was very low when they set forth again; the shadows of the forest trees extended across the broad white road that led them home; the penetrating odour of the evening wood had already arisen, like a cloud of incense, from that broad field of tree-tops; and even in the streets of the town, where the air had been baked all day between white walls, it came in whiffs and pulses, like a distant music. Half-way home, the last gold flicker vanished from a great oak upon the left; and when they came forth beyond the borders of the wood, the plain was already sunken in pearly greyness, and a great, pale moon came swinging skyward through the filmy poplars.

The Doctor sang, the Doctor whistled, the Doctor talked. He spoke of the woods, and the wars, and the deposition of dew; he brightened and babbled of Paris; he soared into cloudy bombast on the glories of the political arena. All was to be changed; as the day departed, it took with it the vestiges of an outworn existence, and to-morrow's sun was to inaugurate the new. 'Enough,' he cried, 'of this life of maceration!' His wife (still beautiful, or he was sadly partial) was to be no longer buried; she should now shine before society. Jean-Marie would find the world at his feet; the roads open to success, wealth, honour, and post-humous renown. 'And O, by the way,' said he, 'for God's sake keep your tongue quiet! You are, of course, a very silent fellow; it is a quality I gladly recognise in you--silence, golden silence! But this is a matter of gravity. No word must get abroad; none but the good Casimir is to be trusted; we shall probably dispose of the vessels in England.'

'But are they not even ours?' the boy said, almost with a sob--it was the only time he had spoken.

'Ours in this sense, that they are nobody else's,' replied the Doctor.

'But the State would have some claim. If they were stolen, for instance, we should be unable to demand their restitution; we should have no title; we should be unable even to communicate with the police. Such is the monstrous condition of the law. {263} It is a mere instance of what remains to be done, of the injustices that may yet be righted by an ardent, active, and philosophical deputy.'

Jean-Marie put his faith in Madame Desprez; and as they drove forward

down the road from Bourron, between the rustling poplars, he prayed in his teeth, and whipped up the horse to an unusual speed. Surely, as soon as they arrived, madame would assert her character, and bring this waking nightmare to an end.

Their entrance into Gretz was heralded and accompanied by a most furious barking; all the dogs in the village seemed to smell the treasure in the noddy. But there was no one in the street, save three lounging landscape painters at Tentaillon's door. Jean-Marie opened the green gate and led in the horse and carriage; and almost at the same moment Madame Desprez came to the kitchen threshold with a lighted lantern; for the moon was not yet high enough to clear the garden walls.

'Close the gates, Jean-Marie!' cried the Doctor, somewhat unsteadily alighting. 'Anastasie, where is Aline?'

'She has gone to Montereau to see her parents,' said madame.

'All is for the best!' exclaimed the Doctor fervently. 'Here, quick, come near to me; I do not wish to speak too loud,' he continued.

'Darling, we are wealthy!'

'Wealthy!' repeated the wife.

'I have found the treasure of Franchard,' replied her husband. 'See, here are the first fruits; a pineapple, a dress for my ever-beautiful--it will suit her--trust a husband's, trust a lover's, taste! Embrace me,

darling! This grimy episode is over; the butterfly unfolds its painted wings. To-morrow Casimir will come; in a week we may be in Paris--happy at last! You shall have diamonds. Jean-Marie, take it out of the boot, with religious care, and bring it piece by piece into the dining-room. We shall have plate at table! Darling, hasten and prepare this turtle; it will be a whet--it will be an addition to our meagre ordinary. I myself will proceed to the cellar. We shall have a bottle of that little Beaujolais you like, and finish with the Hermitage; there are still three bottles left. Worthy wine for a worthy occasion.'

'But, my husband; you put me in a whirl,' she cried. 'I do not comprehend.'

'The turtle, my adored, the turtle!' cried the doctor; and he pushed her towards the kitchen, lantern and all.

Jean-Marie stood dumfounded. He had pictured to himself a different scene--a more immediate protest, and his hope began to dwindle on the spot.

The Doctor was everywhere, a little doubtful on his legs, perhaps, and now and then taking the wall with his shoulder; for it was long since he had tasted absinthe, and he was even then reflecting that the absinthe had been a misconception. Not that he regretted excess on such a glorious day, but he made a mental memorandum to beware; he must not, a second time, become the victim of a deleterious habit. He had his wine out of the cellar in a twinkling; he arranged the sacrificial vessels,

some on the white table-cloth, some on the sideboard, still crusted with historic earth. He was in and out of the kitchen, plying Anastasie with vermouth, heating her with glimpses of the future, estimating their new wealth at ever larger figures; and before they sat down to supper, the lady's virtue had melted in the fire of his enthusiasm, her timidity had disappeared; she, too, had begun to speak disparagingly of the life at Gretz; and as she took her place and helped the soup, her eyes shone with the glitter of prospective diamonds.

All through the meal, she and the Doctor made and unmade fairy plans. They bobbed and bowed and pledged each other. Their faces ran over with smiles; their eyes scattered sparkles, as they projected the Doctor's political honours and the lady's drawing-room ovations.

'But you will not be a Red!' cried Anastasie.

'I am Left Centre to the core,' replied the Doctor.

'Madame Gastein will present us--we shall find ourselves forgotten,' said the lady.

'Never,' protested the Doctor. 'Beauty and talent leave a mark.'

'I have positively forgotten how to dress,' she sighed.

'Darling, you make me blush,' cried he. 'Yours has been a tragic marriage!'

'But your success--to see you appreciated, honoured, your name in all the papers, that will be more than pleasure--it will be heaven!' she cried.

'And once a week,' said the Doctor, archly scanning the syllables, 'once a week--one good little game of baccarat?'

'Only once a week?' she questioned, threatening him with a finger.

'I swear it by my political honour,' cried he.

'I spoil you,' she said, and gave him her hand.

He covered it with kisses.

Jean-Marie escaped into the night. The moon swung high over Gretz. He went down to the garden end and sat on the jetty. The river ran by with eddies of oily silver, and a low, monotonous song. Faint veils of mist moved among the poplars on the farther side. The reeds were quietly nodding. A hundred times already had the boy sat, on such a night, and watched the streaming river with untroubled fancy. And this perhaps was to be the last. He was to leave this familiar hamlet, this green, rustling country, this bright and quiet stream; he was to pass into the great city; his dear lady mistress was to move bedizened in saloons; his good, garrulous, kind-hearted master to become a brawling deputy; and both be lost for ever to Jean-Marie and their better selves. He knew his own defects; he knew he must sink into less and less consideration in the

turmoil of a city life, sink more and more from the child into the servant. And he began dimly to believe the Doctor's prophecies of evil. He could see a change in both. His generous incredulity failed him for this once; a child must have perceived that the Hermitage had completed what the absinthe had begun. If this were the first day, what would be the last? 'If necessary, wreck the train,' thought he, remembering the Doctor's parable. He looked round on the delightful scene; he drank deep of the charmed night air, laden with the scent of hay. 'If necessary, wreck the train,' he repeated. And he rose and returned to the house.

CHAPTER VI. A CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION, IN TWO PARTS.

The next morning there was a most unusual outcry, in the Doctor's house. The last thing before going to bed, the Doctor had locked up some valuables in the dining-room cupboard; and behold, when he rose again, as he did about four o'clock, the cupboard had been broken open, and the valuables in question had disappeared. Madame and Jean-Marie were summoned from their rooms, and appeared in hasty toilets; they found the Doctor raving, calling the heavens to witness and avenge his injury, pacing the room bare-footed, with the tails of his night-shirt flirting as he turned.

'Gone!' he said; 'the things are gone, the fortune gone! We are paupers once more. Boy! what do you know of this? Speak up, sir, speak up. Do you know of it? Where are they?' He had him by the arm, shaking him like a bag, and the boy's words, if he had any, were jolted forth in inarticulate murmurs. The Doctor, with a revulsion from his own violence, set him down again. He observed Anastasie in tears.

'Anastasie,' he said, in quite an altered voice, 'compose yourself, command your feelings. I would not have you give way to passion like the vulgar. This--this trifling accident must be lived down. Jean-Marie, bring me my smaller medicine chest. A gentle laxative is indicated.'

And he dosed the family all round, leading the way himself with a double quantity. The wretched Anastasie, who had never been ill in the whole

course of her existence, and whose soul recoiled from remedies, wept floods of tears as she sipped, and shuddered, and protested, and then was bullied and shouted at until she sipped again. As for Jean-Marie, he took his portion down with stoicism.

'I have given him a less amount,' observed the Doctor, 'his youth protecting him against emotion. And now that we have thus parried any morbid consequences, let us reason.'

'I am so cold,' wailed Anastasie.

'Cold!' cried the Doctor. 'I give thanks to God that I am made of fierier material. Why, madam, a blow like this would set a frog into a transpiration. If you are cold, you can retire; and, by the way, you might throw me down my trousers. It is chilly for the legs.'

'Oh, no!' protested Anastasie; 'I will stay with you.'

'Nay, madam, you shall not suffer for your devotion,' said the Doctor. 'I will myself fetch you a shawl.' And he went upstairs and returned more fully clad and with an armful of wraps for the shivering Anastasie. 'And now,' he resumed, 'to investigate this crime. Let us proceed by induction. Anastasie, do you know anything that can help us?' Anastasie knew nothing. 'Or you, Jean-Marie?'

'Not I,' replied the boy steadily.

'Good,' returned the Doctor. 'We shall now turn our attention to the material evidences. (I was born to be a detective; I have the eye and the systematic spirit.) First, violence has been employed. The door was broken open; and it may be observed, in passing, that the lock was dear indeed at what I paid for it: a crow to pluck with Master Goguelat. Second, here is the instrument employed, one of our own table-knives, one of our best, my dear; which seems to indicate no preparation on the part of the gang--if gang it was. Thirdly, I observe that nothing has been removed except the Franchard dishes and the casket; our own silver has been minutely respected. This is wily; it shows intelligence, a knowledge of the code, a desire to avoid legal consequences. I argue from this fact that the gang numbers persons of respectability--outward, of course, and merely outward, as the robbery proves. But I argue, second, that we must have been observed at Franchard itself by some occult observer, and dogged throughout the day with a skill and patience that I venture to qualify as consummate. No ordinary man, no occasional criminal, would have shown himself capable of this combination. We have in our neighbourhood, it is far from improbable, a retired bandit of the highest order of intelligence.'

'Good heaven!' cried the horrified Anastasie. 'Henri, how can you?'

'My cherished one, this is a process of induction,' said the Doctor. 'If any of my steps are unsound, correct me. You are silent? Then do not, I beseech you, be so vulgarly illogical as to revolt from my conclusion. We have now arrived,' he resumed, 'at some idea of the composition of the gang--for I incline to the hypothesis of more than one--and we now leave

this room, which can disclose no more, and turn our attention to the court and garden. (Jean-Marie, I trust you are observantly following my various steps; this is an excellent piece of education for you.) Come with me to the door. No steps on the court; it is unfortunate our court should be paved. On what small matters hang the destiny of these delicate investigations! Hey! What have we here? I have led on to the very spot,' he said, standing grandly backward and indicating the green gate. 'An escalade, as you can now see for yourselves, has taken place.'

Sure enough, the green paint was in several places scratched and broken; and one of the panels preserved the print of a nailed shoe. The foot had slipped, however, and it was difficult to estimate the size of the shoe, and impossible to distinguish the pattern of the nails.

'The whole robbery,' concluded the Doctor, 'step by step, has been reconstituted. Inductive science can no further go.'

'It is wonderful,' said his wife. 'You should indeed have been a detective, Henri. I had no idea of your talents.'

'My dear,' replied Desprez, condescendingly, 'a man of scientific imagination combines the lesser faculties; he is a detective just as he is a publicist or a general; these are but local applications of his special talent. But now,' he continued, 'would you have me go further? Would you have me lay my finger on the culprits--or rather, for I cannot promise quite so much, point out to you the very house where they consort? It may be a satisfaction, at least it is all we are likely to

get, since we are denied the remedy of law. I reach the further stage in this way. In order to fill my outline of the robbery, I require a man likely to be in the forest idling, I require a man of education, I require a man superior to considerations of morality. The three requisites all centre in Tentailon's boarders. They are painters, therefore they are continually lounging in the forest. They are painters, therefore they are not unlikely to have some smattering of education. Lastly, because they are painters, they are probably immoral. And this I prove in two ways. First, painting is an art which merely addresses the eye; it does not in any particular exercise the moral sense. And second, painting, in common with all the other arts, implies the dangerous quality of imagination. A man of imagination is never moral; he outsoars literal demarcations and reviews life under too many shifting lights to rest content with the invidious distinctions of the law!

'But you always say--at least, so I understood you'--said madame, 'that these lads display no imagination whatever.'

'My dear, they displayed imagination, and of a very fantastic order, too,' returned the Doctor, 'when they embraced their beggarly profession. Besides--and this is an argument exactly suited to your intellectual level--many of them are English and American. Where else should we expect to find a thief?--And now you had better get your coffee. Because we have lost a treasure, there is no reason for starving. For my part, I shall break my fast with white wine. I feel unaccountably heated and thirsty to-day. I can only attribute it to the shock of the discovery.'

And yet, you will bear me out, I supported the emotion nobly.'

The Doctor had now talked himself back into an admirable humour; and as he sat in the arbour and slowly imbibed a large allowance of white wine and picked a little bread and cheese with no very impetuous appetite, if a third of his meditations ran upon the missing treasure, the other two-thirds were more pleasingly busied in the retrospect of his detective skill.

About eleven Casimir arrived; he had caught an early train to Fontainebleau, and driven over to save time; and now his cab was stabled at Tentaillon's, and he remarked, studying his watch, that he could spare an hour and a half. He was much the man of business, decisively spoken, given to frowning in an intellectual manner. Anastasie's born brother, he did not waste much sentiment on the lady, gave her an English family kiss, and demanded a meal without delay.

'You can tell me your story while we eat,' he observed. 'Anything good to-day, Stasie?'

He was promised something good. The trio sat down to table in the arbour, Jean-Marie waiting as well as eating, and the Doctor recounted what had happened in his richest narrative manner. Casimir heard it with explosions of laughter.

'What a streak of luck for you, my good brother,' he observed, when the tale was over. 'If you had gone to Paris, you would have played dick-

duck-drake with the whole consignment in three months. Your own would have followed; and you would have come to me in a procession like the last time. But I give you warning--Stasie may weep and Henri ratiocinate--it will not serve you twice. Your next collapse will be fatal. I thought I had told you so, Stasie? Hey? No sense?

The Doctor winced and looked furtively at Jean-Marie; but the boy seemed apathetic.

'And then again,' broke out Casimir, 'what children you are--vicious children, my faith! How could you tell the value of this trash? It might have been worth nothing, or next door.'

'Pardon me,' said the Doctor. 'You have your usual flow of spirits, I perceive, but even less than your usual deliberation. I am not entirely ignorant of these matters.'

'Not entirely ignorant of anything ever I heard of,' interrupted Casimir, bowing, and raising his glass with a sort of pert politeness.

'At least,' resumed the Doctor, 'I gave my mind to the subject--that you may be willing to believe--and I estimated that our capital would be doubled.' And he described the nature of the find.

'My word of honour!' said Casimir, 'I half believe you! But much would depend on the quality of the gold.'

'The quality, my dear Casimir, was--' And the Doctor, in default of language, kissed his finger-tips.

'I would not take your word for it, my good friend,' retorted the man of business. 'You are a man of very rosy views. But this robbery,' he continued--'this robbery is an odd thing. Of course I pass over your nonsense about gangs and landscape-painters. For me, that is a dream. Who was in the house last night?'

'None but ourselves,' replied the Doctor.

'And this young gentleman?' asked Casimir, jerking a nod in the direction of Jean-Marie.

'He too'--the Doctor bowed.

'Well; and if it is a fair question, who is he?' pursued the brother-in-law.

'Jean-Marie,' answered the Doctor, 'combines the functions of a son and stable-boy. He began as the latter, but he rose rapidly to the more honourable rank in our affections. He is, I may say, the greatest comfort in our lives.'

'Ha!' said Casimir. 'And previous to becoming one of you?'

'Jean-Marie has lived a remarkable existence; his experience his been

eminently formative,' replied Desprez. 'If I had had to choose an education for my son, I should have chosen such another. Beginning life with mountebanks and thieves, passing onward to the society and friendship of philosophers, he may be said to have skimmed the volume of human life.'

'Thieves?' repeated the brother-in-law, with a meditative air.

The Doctor could have bitten his tongue out. He foresaw what was coming, and prepared his mind for a vigorous defence.

'Did you ever steal yourself?' asked Casimir, turning suddenly on Jean-Marie, and for the first time employing a single eyeglass which hung round his neck.

'Yes, sir,' replied the boy, with a deep blush.

Casimir turned to the others with pursed lips, and nodded to them meaningly. 'Hey?' said he; 'how is that?'

'Jean-Marie is a teller of the truth,' returned the Doctor, throwing out his bust.

'He has never told a lie,' added madame. 'He is the best of boys.'

'Never told a lie, has he not?' reflected Casimir. 'Strange, very strange. Give me your attention, my young friend,' he continued. 'You

knew about this treasure?'

'He helped to bring it home,' interposed the Doctor.

'Desprez, I ask you nothing but to hold your tongue,' returned Casimir.

'I mean to question this stable-boy of yours; and if you are so certain of his innocence, you can afford to let him answer for himself. Now, sir,' he resumed, pointing his eyeglass straight at Jean-Marie. 'You knew it could be stolen with impunity? You knew you could not be prosecuted? Come! Did you, or did you not?'

'I did,' answered Jean-Marie, in a miserable whisper. He sat there changing colour like a revolving pharos, twisting his fingers hysterically, swallowing air, the picture of guilt.

'You knew where it was put?' resumed the inquisitor.

'Yes,' from Jean-Marie.

'You say you have been a thief before,' continued Casimir. 'Now how am I to know that you are not one still? I suppose you could climb the green gate?'

'Yes,' still lower, from the culprit.

'Well, then, it was you who stole these things. You know it, and you dare not deny it. Look me in the face! Raise your sneak's eyes, and

answer!

But in place of anything of that sort Jean-Marie broke into a dismal howl and fled from the harbour. Anastasie, as she pursued to capture and reassure the victim, found time to send one Parthian arrow--'Casimir, you are a brute!'

'My brother,' said Desprez, with the greatest dignity, 'you take upon yourself a licence--'

'Desprez,' interrupted Casimir, 'for Heaven's sake be a man of the world. You telegraph me to leave my business and come down here on yours. I come, I ask the business, you say "Find me this thief!" Well, I find him; I say "There he is!" You need not like it, but you have no manner of right to take offence.'

'Well,' returned the Doctor, 'I grant that; I will even thank you for your mistaken zeal. But your hypothesis was so extravagantly monstrous--'

'Look here,' interrupted Casimir; 'was it you or Stasie?'

'Certainly not,' answered the Doctor.

'Very well; then it was the boy. Say no more about it,' said the brother-in-law, and he produced his cigar-case.

'I will say this much more,' returned Desprez: 'if that boy came and told

me so himself, I should not believe him; and if I did believe him, so implicit is my trust, I should conclude that he had acted for the best.'

'Well, well,' said Casimir, indulgently. 'Have you a light? I must be going. And by the way, I wish you would let me sell your Turks for you. I always told you, it meant smash. I tell you so again. Indeed, it was partly that that brought me down. You never acknowledge my letters--a most unpardonable habit.'

'My good brother,' replied the Doctor blandly, 'I have never denied your ability in business; but I can perceive your limitations.'

'Egad, my friend, I can return the compliment,' observed the man of business. 'Your limitation is to be downright irrational.'

'Observe the relative position,' returned the Doctor with a smile. 'It is your attitude to believe through thick and thin in one man's judgment--your own. I follow the same opinion, but critically and with open eyes. Which is the more irrational?--I leave it to yourself.'

'O, my dear fellow!' cried Casimir, 'stick to your Turks, stick to your stable-boy, go to the devil in general in your own way and be done with it. But don't ratiocinate with me--I cannot bear it. And so, ta-ta. I might as well have stayed away for any good I've done. Say good-bye from me to Stasie, and to the sullen hang-dog of a stable-boy, if you insist on it; I'm off.'

And Casimir departed. The Doctor, that night, dissected his character before Anastasie. 'One thing, my beautiful,' he said, 'he has learned one thing from his lifelong acquaintance with your husband: the word ratiocinate. It shines in his vocabulary, like a jewel in a muck-heap. And, even so, he continually misapplies it. For you must have observed he uses it as a sort of taunt, in the sense of to ergotise, implying, as it were--the poor, dear fellow!--a vein of sophistry. As for his cruelty to Jean-Marie, it must be forgiven him--it is not his nature, it is the nature of his life. A man who deals with money, my dear, is a man lost.'

With Jean-Marie the process of reconciliation had been somewhat slow. At first he was inconsolable, insisted on leaving the family, went from paroxysm to paroxysm of tears; and it was only after Anastasie had been closeted for an hour with him, alone, that she came forth, sought out the Doctor, and, with tears in her eyes, acquainted that gentleman with what had passed.

'At first, my husband, he would hear of nothing,' she said. 'Imagine! if he had left us! what would the treasure be to that? Horrible treasure, it has brought all this about! At last, after he has sobbed his very heart out, he agrees to stay on a condition--we are not to mention this matter, this infamous suspicion, not even to mention the robbery. On that agreement only, the poor, cruel boy will consent to remain among his friends.'

'But this inhibition,' said the Doctor, 'this embargo--it cannot possibly

apply to me?'

'To all of us,' Anastasie assured him.

'My cherished one,' Desprez protested, 'you must have misunderstood. It cannot apply to me. He would naturally come to me.'

'Henri,' she said, 'it does; I swear to you it does.'

'This is a painful, a very painful circumstance,' the Doctor said, looking a little black. 'I cannot affect, Anastasie, to be anything but justly wounded. I feel this, I feel it, my wife, acutely.'

'I knew you would,' she said. 'But if you had seen his distress! We must make allowances, we must sacrifice our feelings.'

'I trust, my dear, you have never found me averse to sacrifices,' returned the Doctor very stiffly.

'And you will let me go and tell him that you have agreed? It will be like your noble nature,' she cried.

So it would, he perceived--it would be like his noble nature! Up jumped his spirits, triumphant at the thought. 'Go, darling,' he said nobly, 'reassure him. The subject is buried; more--I make an effort, I have accustomed my will to these exertions--and it is forgotten.'

A little after, but still with swollen eyes and looking mortally sheepish, Jean-Marie reappeared and went ostentatiously about his business. He was the only unhappy member of the party that sat down that night to supper. As for the Doctor, he was radiant. He thus sang the requiem of the treasure:--

'This has been, on the whole, a most amusing episode,' he said. 'We are not a penny the worse--nay, we are immensely gainers. Our philosophy has been exercised; some of the turtle is still left--the most wholesome of delicacies; I have my staff, Anastasie has her new dress, Jean-Marie is the proud possessor of a fashionable kepi. Besides, we had a glass of Hermitage last night; the glow still suffuses my memory. I was growing positively niggardly with that Hermitage, positively niggardly. Let me take the hint: we had one bottle to celebrate the appearance of our visionary fortune; let us have a second to console us for its occultation. The third I hereby dedicate to Jean-Marie's wedding breakfast.'

CHAPTER VII. THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF DESPREZ.

The Doctor's house has not yet received the compliment of a description, and it is now high time that the omission were supplied, for the house is itself an actor in the story, and one whose part is nearly at an end. Two stories in height, walls of a warm yellow, tiles of an ancient ruddy brown diversified with moss and lichen, it stood with one wall to the street in the angle of the Doctor's property. It was roomy, draughty, and inconvenient. The large rafters were here and there engraven with rude marks and patterns; the handrail of the stair was carved in countrified arabesque; a stout timber pillar, which did duty to support the dining-room roof, bore mysterious characters on its darker side, runes, according to the Doctor; nor did he fail, when he ran over the legendary history of the house and its possessors, to dwell upon the Scandinavian scholar who had left them. Floors, doors, and rafters made a great variety of angles; every room had a particular inclination; the gable had tilted towards the garden, after the manner of a leaning tower, and one of the former proprietors had buttressed the building from that side with a great strut of wood, like the derrick of a crane. Altogether, it had many marks of ruin; it was a house for the rats to desert; and nothing but its excellent brightness--the window-glass polished and shining, the paint well scoured, the brasses radiant, the very prop all wreathed about with climbing flowers--nothing but its air of a well-tended, smiling veteran, sitting, crutch and all, in the sunny corner of a garden, marked it as a house for comfortable people to

inhabit. In poor or idle management it would soon have hurried into the blackguard stages of decay. As it was, the whole family loved it, and the Doctor was never better inspired than when he narrated its imaginary story and drew the character of its successive masters, from the Hebrew merchant who had re-edified its walls after the sack of the town, and past the mysterious engraver of the runes, down to the long-headed, dirty-handed boor from whom he had himself acquired it at a ruinous expense. As

for any alarm about its security, the idea had never presented itself. What had stood four centuries might well endure a little longer.

Indeed, in this particular winter, after the finding and losing of the treasure, the Desprez' had an anxiety of a very different order, and one which lay nearer their hearts. Jean-Marie was plainly not himself. He had fits of hectic activity, when he made unusual exertions to please, spoke more and faster, and redoubled in attention to his lessons. But these were interrupted by spells of melancholia and brooding silence, when the boy was little better than unbearable.

'Silence,' the Doctor moralised--'you see, Anastasie, what comes of silence. Had the boy properly unbosomed himself, the little disappointment about the treasure, the little annoyance about Casimir's incivility, would long ago have been forgotten. As it is, they prey upon him like a disease. He loses flesh, his appetite is variable and, on the whole, impaired. I keep him on the strictest regimen, I exhibit the most powerful tonics; both in vain.'

'Don't you think you drug him too much?' asked madame, with an irrepressible shudder.

'Drug?' cried the Doctor; 'I drug? Anastasie, you are mad!'

Time went on, and the boy's health still slowly declined. The Doctor blamed the weather, which was cold and boisterous. He called in his confrere from Bourron, took a fancy for him, magnified his capacity, and was pretty soon under treatment himself--it scarcely appeared for what complaint. He and Jean-Marie had each medicine to take at different periods of the day. The Doctor used to lie in wait for the exact moment, watch in hand. 'There is nothing like regularity,' he would say, fill out the doses, and dilate on the virtues of the draught; and if the boy seemed none the better, the Doctor was not at all the worse.

Gunpowder Day, the boy was particularly low. It was scowling, squally weather. Huge broken companies of cloud sailed swiftly overhead; raking gleams of sunlight swept the village, and were followed by intervals of darkness and white, flying rain. At times the wind lifted up its voice and bellowed. The trees were all scourging themselves along the meadows, the last leaves flying like dust.

The Doctor, between the boy and the weather, was in his element; he had a theory to prove. He sat with his watch out and a barometer in front of him, waiting for the squalls and noting their effect upon the human pulse. 'For the true philosopher,' he remarked delightedly, 'every fact in nature is a toy.' A letter came to him; but, as its arrival coincided

with the approach of another gust, he merely crammed it into his pocket, gave the time to Jean-Marie, and the next moment they were both counting their pulses as if for a wager.

At nightfall the wind rose into a tempest. It besieged the hamlet, apparently from every side, as if with batteries of cannon; the houses shook and groaned; live coals were blown upon the floor. The uproar and terror of the night kept people long awake, sitting with pallid faces giving ear.

It was twelve before the Desprez family retired. By half-past one, when the storm was already somewhat past its height, the Doctor was awakened from a troubled slumber, and sat up. A noise still rang in his ears, but whether of this world or the world of dreams he was not certain. Another clap of wind followed. It was accompanied by a sickening movement of the whole house, and in the subsequent lull Desprez could hear the tiles pouring like a cataract into the loft above his head. He plucked Anastasie bodily out of bed.

'Run!' he cried, thrusting some wearing apparel into her hands; 'the house is falling! To the garden!'

She did not pause to be twice bidden; she was down the stair in an instant. She had never before suspected herself of such activity. The Doctor meanwhile, with the speed of a piece of pantomime business, and undeterred by broken shins, proceeded to rout out Jean-Marie, tore Aline from her virgin slumbers, seized her by the hand, and tumbled downstairs

and into the garden, with the girl tumbling behind him, still not half awake.

The fugitives rendezvous'd in the arbour by some common instinct. Then came a bull's-eye flash of struggling moonshine, which disclosed their four figures standing huddled from the wind in a raffle of flying drapery, and not without a considerable need for more. At the humiliating spectacle Anastasie clutched her nightdress desperately about her and burst loudly into tears. The Doctor flew to console her; but she elbowed him away. She suspected everybody of being the general public, and thought the darkness was alive with eyes.

Another gleam and another violent gust arrived together; the house was seen to rock on its foundation, and, just as the light was once more eclipsed, a crash which triumphed over the shouting of the wind announced its fall, and for a moment the whole garden was alive with skipping tiles and brickbats. One such missile grazed the Doctor's ear; another descended on the bare foot of Aline, who instantly made night hideous with her shrieks.

By this time the hamlet was alarmed, lights flashed from the windows, hails reached the party, and the Doctor answered, nobly contending against Aline and the tempest. But this prospect of help only awakened Anastasie to a more active stage of terror.

'Henri, people will be coming,' she screamed in her husband's ear.

'I trust so,' he replied.

'They cannot. I would rather die,' she wailed.

'My dear,' said the Doctor reprovingly, 'you are excited. I gave you some clothes. What have you done with them?'

'Oh, I don't know--I must have thrown them away! Where are they?' she sobbed.

Desprez groped about in the darkness. 'Admirable!' he remarked; 'my grey velveteen trousers! This will exactly meet your necessities.'

'Give them to me!' she cried fiercely; but as soon as she had them in her hands her mood appeared to alter--she stood silent for a moment, and then pressed the garment back upon the Doctor. 'Give it to Aline,' she said--'poor girl.'

'Nonsense!' said the Doctor. 'Aline does not know what she is about. Aline is beside herself with terror; and at any rate, she is a peasant. Now I am really concerned at this exposure for a person of your housekeeping habits; my solicitude and your fantastic modesty both point to the same remedy--the pantaloons.' He held them ready.

'It is impossible. You do not understand,' she said with dignity.

By this time rescue was at hand. It had been found impracticable to

enter by the street, for the gate was blocked with masonry, and the nodding ruin still threatened further avalanches. But between the Doctor's garden and the one on the right hand there was that very picturesque contrivance--a common well; the door on the Desprez' side had chanced to be unbolted, and now, through the arched aperture a man's bearded face and an arm supporting a lantern were introduced into the world of windy darkness, where Anastasie concealed her woes. The light struck here and there among the tossing apple boughs, it glinted on the grass; but the lantern and the glowing face became the centre of the world. Anastasie crouched back from the intrusion.

'This way!' shouted the man. 'Are you all safe?' Aline, still screaming, ran to the new comer, and was presently hauled head-foremost through the wall.

'Now, Anastasie, come on; it is your turn,' said the husband.

'I cannot,' she replied.

'Are we all to die of exposure, madame?' thundered Doctor Desprez.

'You can go!' she cried. 'Oh, go, go away! I can stay here; I am quite warm.'

The Doctor took her by the shoulders with an oath.

'Stop!' she screamed. 'I will put them on.'

She took the detested lendings in her hand once more; but her repulsion was stronger than shame. 'Never!' she cried, shuddering, and flung them far away into the night.

Next moment the Doctor had whirled her to the well. The man was there and the lantern; Anastasie closed her eyes and appeared to herself to be about to die. How she was transported through the arch she knew not; but once on the other side she was received by the neighbour's wife, and enveloped in a friendly blanket.

Beds were made ready for the two women, clothes of very various sizes for the Doctor and Jean-Marie; and for the remainder of the night, while madame dozed in and out on the borderland of hysterics, her husband sat beside the fire and held forth to the admiring neighbours. He showed them, at length, the causes of the accident; for years, he explained, the fall had been impending; one sign had followed another, the joints had opened, the plaster had cracked, the old walls bowed inward; last, not three weeks ago, the cellar door had begun to work with difficulty in its grooves. 'The cellar!' he said, gravely shaking his head over a glass of mulled wine. 'That reminds me of my poor vintages. By a manifest providence the Hermitage was nearly at an end. One bottle--I lose but one bottle of that incomparable wine. It had been set apart against Jean-Marie's wedding. Well, I must lay down some more; it will be an interest in life. I am, however, a man somewhat advanced in years. My great work is now buried in the fall of my humble roof; it will never be completed--my name will have been writ in water. And yet you find me

calm--I would say cheerful. Can your priest do more?'

By the first glimpse of day the party sallied forth from the fireside into the street. The wind had fallen, but still charioted a world of troubled clouds; the air bit like frost; and the party, as they stood about the ruins in the rainy twilight of the morning, beat upon their breasts and blew into their hands for warmth. The house had entirely fallen, the walls outward, the roof in; it was a mere heap of rubbish, with here and there a forlorn spear of broken rafter. A sentinel was placed over the ruins to protect the property, and the party adjourned to Tentailon's to break their fast at the Doctor's expense. The bottle circulated somewhat freely; and before they left the table it had begun to snow.

For three days the snow continued to fall, and the ruins, covered with tarpaulin and watched by sentries, were left undisturbed. The Desprez' meanwhile had taken up their abode at Tentailon's. Madame spent her time in the kitchen, concocting little delicacies, with the admiring aid of Madame Tentailon, or sitting by the fire in thoughtful abstraction. The fall of the house affected her wonderfully little; that blow had been parried by another; and in her mind she was continually fighting over again the battle of the trousers. Had she done right? Had she done wrong? And now she would applaud her determination; and anon, with a horrid flush of unavailing penitence, she would regret the trousers. No juncture in her life had so much exercised her judgment. In the meantime the Doctor had become vastly pleased with his situation. Two of the summer boarders still lingered behind the rest, prisoners for lack of a

remittance; they were both English, but one of them spoke French pretty fluently, and was, besides, a humorous, agile-minded fellow, with whom the Doctor could reason by the hour, secure of comprehension. Many were the glasses they emptied, many the topics they discussed.

'Anastasie,' the Doctor said on the third morning, 'take an example from your husband, from Jean-Marie! The excitement has done more for the boy than all my tonics, he takes his turn as sentry with positive gusto. As for me, you behold me. I have made friends with the Egyptians; and my Pharaoh is, I swear it, a most agreeable companion. You alone are hipped. About a house--a few dresses? What are they in comparison to the "Pharmacopoeia"--the labour of years lying buried below stones and sticks in this depressing hamlet? The snow falls; I shake it from my cloak! Imitate me. Our income will be impaired, I grant it, since we must rebuild; but moderation, patience, and philosophy will gather about the hearth. In the meanwhile, the Tentailons are obliging; the table, with your additions, will pass; only the wine is execrable--well, I shall send for some to-day. My Pharaoh will be gratified to drink a decent glass; aha! and I shall see if he possesses that acme of organisation--a palate. If he has a palate, he is perfect.'

'Henri,' she said, shaking her head, 'you are a man; you cannot understand my feelings; no woman could shake off the memory of so public a humiliation.' The Doctor could not restrain a titter. 'Pardon me, darling,' he said; 'but really, to the philosophical intelligence, the incident appears so small a trifle. You looked extremely well--'

'Henri!' she cried.

'Well, well, I will say no more,' he replied. 'Though, to be sure, if you had consented to indue--A propos,' he broke off, 'and my trousers! They are lying in the snow--my favourite trousers!' And he dashed in quest of Jean-Marie.

Two hours afterwards the boy returned to the inn with a spade under one arm and a curious sop of clothing under the other.

The Doctor ruefully took it in his hands. 'They have been!' he said. 'Their tense is past. Excellent pantaloons, you are no more! Stay, something in the pocket,' and he produced a piece of paper. 'A letter! ay, now I mind me; it was received on the morning of the gale, when I was absorbed in delicate investigations. It is still legible. From poor, dear Casimir! It is as well,' he chuckled, 'that I have educated him to patience. Poor Casimir and his correspondence--his infinitesimal, timorous, idiotic correspondence!'

He had by this time cautiously unfolded the wet letter; but, as he bent himself to decipher the writing, a cloud descended on his brow.

'Bigre!' he cried, with a galvanic start.

And then the letter was whipped into the fire, and the Doctor's cap was on his head in the turn of a hand.

'Ten minutes! I can catch it, if I run,' he cried. 'It is always late. I go to Paris. I shall telegraph.'

'Henri! what is wrong?' cried his wife.

'Ottoman Bonds!' came from the disappearing Doctor; and Anastasie and Jean-Marie were left face to face with the wet trousers. Desprez had gone to Paris, for the second time in seven years; he had gone to Paris with a pair of wooden shoes, a knitted spencer, a black blouse, a country nightcap, and twenty francs in his pocket. The fall of the house was but a secondary marvel; the whole world might have fallen and scarce left his family more petrified.

CHAPTER VIII. THE WAGES OF PHILOSOPHY.

On the morning of the next day, the Doctor, a mere spectre of himself, was brought back in the custody of Casimir. They found Anastasie and the boy sitting together by the fire; and Desprez, who had exchanged his toilette for a ready-made rig-out of poor materials, waved his hand as he entered, and sank speechless on the nearest chair. Madame turned direct to Casimir.

'What is wrong?' she cried.

'Well,' replied Casimir, 'what have I told you all along? It has come. It is a clean shave, this time; so you may as well bear up and make the best of it. House down, too, eh? Bad luck, upon my soul.'

'Are we--are we--ruined?' she gasped.

The Doctor stretched out his arms to her. 'Ruined,' he replied, 'you are ruined by your sinister husband.'

Casimir observed the consequent embrace through his eyeglass; then he turned to Jean-Marie. 'You hear?' he said. 'They are ruined; no more pickings, no more house, no more fat cutlets. It strikes me, my friend, that you had best be packing; the present speculation is about worked out.' And he nodded to him meaningly.

'Never!' cried Desprez, springing up. 'Jean-Marie, if you prefer to leave me, now that I am poor, you can go; you shall receive your hundred francs, if so much remains to me. But if you will consent to stay'--the Doctor wept a little--'Casimir offers me a place--as clerk,' he resumed. 'The emoluments are slender, but they will be enough for three. It is too much already to have lost my fortune; must I lose my son?'

Jean-Marie sobbed bitterly, but without a word.

'I don't like boys who cry,' observed Casimir. 'This one is always crying. Here! you clear out of this for a little; I have business with your master and mistress, and these domestic feelings may be settled after I am gone. March!' and he held the door open.

Jean-Marie slunk out, like a detected thief.

By twelve they were all at table but Jean-Marie.

'Hey?' said Casimir. 'Gone, you see. Took the hint at once.'

'I do not, I confess,' said Desprez, 'I do not seek to excuse his absence. It speaks a want of heart that disappoints me sorely.'

'Want of manners,' corrected Casimir. 'Heart, he never had. Why, Desprez, for a clever fellow, you are the most gullible mortal in creation. Your ignorance of human nature and human business is beyond

belief. You are swindled by heathen Turks, swindled by vagabond children, swindled right and left, upstairs and downstairs. I think it must be your imagination. I thank my stars I have none.'

'Pardon me,' replied Desprez, still humbly, but with a return of spirit at sight of a distinction to be drawn; 'pardon me, Casimir. You possess, even to an eminent degree, the commercial imagination. It was the lack of that in me--it appears it is my weak point--that has led to these repeated shocks. By the commercial imagination the financier forecasts the destiny of his investments, marks the falling house--'

'Egad,' interrupted Casimir: 'our friend the stable-boy appears to have his share of it.'

The Doctor was silenced; and the meal was continued and finished principally to the tune of the brother-in-law's not very consolatory conversation. He entirely ignored the two young English painters, turning a blind eyeglass to their salutations, and continuing his remarks as if he were alone in the bosom of his family; and with every second word he ripped another stitch out of the air balloon of Desprez's vanity. By the time coffee was over the poor Doctor was as limp as a napkin.

'Let us go and see the ruins,' said Casimir.

They strolled forth into the street. The fall of the house, like the loss of a front tooth, had quite transformed the village. Through the gap the eye commanded a great stretch of open snowy country, and the

place shrank in comparison. It was like a room with an open door. The sentinel stood by the green gate, looking very red and cold, but he had a pleasant word for the Doctor and his wealthy kinsman.

Casimir looked at the mound of ruins, he tried the quality of the tarpaulin. 'H'm,' he said, 'I hope the cellar arch has stood. If it has, my good brother, I will give you a good price for the wines.'

'We shall start digging to-morrow,' said the sentry. 'There is no more fear of snow.'

'My friend,' returned Casimir sententiously, 'you had better wait till you get paid.'

The Doctor winced, and began dragging his offensive brother-in-law towards Tentaillon's. In the house there would be fewer auditors, and these already in the secret of his fall.

'Hullo!' cried Casimir, 'there goes the stable-boy with his luggage; no, egad, he is taking it into the inn.'

And sure enough, Jean-Marie was seen to cross the snowy street and enter Tentaillon's, staggering under a large hamper.

The Doctor stopped with a sudden, wild hope.

'What can he have?' he said. 'Let us go and see.' And he hurried on.

'His luggage, to be sure,' answered Casimir. 'He is on the move--thanks to the commercial imagination.'

'I have not seen that hamper for--for ever so long,' remarked the Doctor.

'Nor will you see it much longer,' chuckled Casimir; 'unless, indeed, we interfere. And by the way, I insist on an examination.'

'You will not require,' said Desprez, positively with a sob; and, casting a moist, triumphant glance at Casimir, he began to run.

'What the devil is up with him, I wonder?' Casimir reflected; and then, curiosity taking the upper hand, he followed the Doctor's example and took to his heels.

The hamper was so heavy and large, and Jean-Marie himself so little and so weary, that it had taken him a great while to bundle it upstairs to the Desprez' private room; and he had just set it down on the floor in front of Anastasie, when the Doctor arrived, and was closely followed by the man of business. Boy and hamper were both in a most sorry plight; for the one had passed four months underground in a certain cave on the way to Acheres, and the other had run about five miles as hard as his legs would carry him, half that distance under a staggering weight.

'Jean-Marie,' cried the Doctor, in a voice that was only too seraphic to be called hysterical, 'is it--? It is!' he cried. 'O, my son, my son!'

And he sat down upon the hamper and sobbed like a little child.

'You will not go to Paris now,' said Jean-Marie sheepishly.

'Casimir,' said Desprez, raising his wet face, 'do you see that boy, that angel boy? He is the thief; he took the treasure from a man unfit to be entrusted with its use; he brings it back to me when I am sobered and humbled. These, Casimir, are the Fruits of my Teaching, and this moment is the Reward of my Life.'

'Tiens,' said Casimir.

Footnotes

{5} Boggy.

{15} Clock

{16} Enjoy.

{140} To come forrit--to offer oneself as a communicant.

{144} It was a common belief in Scotland that the devil appeared as a black man. This appears in several witch trials and I think in Law's Memorials, that delightful store-house of the quaint and grisly.

{263} Let it be so, for my tale!