THE CORSICAN BROTHERS

BY

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

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CHAPTER I.

IN the beginning of March, 1841, I was travelling in Corsica.

Nothing is more picturesque and more easy to accomplish than a journey in Corsica. You can embark at Toulon, in twenty hours you will be in Ajaccio, and then in twenty-four hours more you are at Bastia.

Once there you can hire or purchase a horse. If you wish to hire a horse you can do so for five francs a-day; if you purchase one you can have a good animal for one hundred and fifty francs. And don't sneer at the moderate price, for the horse hired or purchased will perform as great feats as the famous Gascon horse which leaped over the Pont Neuf, which neither Prospero nor Nautilus, the heroes of Chantilly and the Champ de Mars could do. He will traverse roads which Balmat himself could not cross without *crampons,* and will go over bridges upon which Auriol would need a balancing pole.

As for the traveller, all he has to do is to give the horse his head and let him go as he pleases; he does not mind the danger. We may add that with this horse, which can go anywhere, the traveller can accomplish his fifteen leagues a day without stopping to bait.

From time to time, while the tourist may be halting to examine some ancient castle, built by some old baron or legendary hero, or to sketch a tower built ages ago by the Genoese, the horse will be contented to graze by the road side, or to pluck the mosses from the rocks in the vicinity.

As to lodging for the night, it is still more simple in Corsica. The traveller having arrived at a village, passes down through the principal street, and making his own choice of the house wherein he will rest, he knocks at the door. An instant after, the master or mistress will appear upon the threshold, invite the traveller to dismount; offer him a share of the family supper and the whole of his own bed, and next morning, when seeing him safely resume his journey, will thank him for the preference he has accorded to his house.

As for remuneration, such a thing is never hinted at. The master would regard it as an insult if the subject were broached. If, however, the servant happen to be a young girl, one may fitly offer her a coloured handkerchief, with which she can make up a picturesque coiffure for a fête day. If the domestic be a male he will gladly accept a poignard, with which he can kill his enemy, should he meet him.

There is one thing more to remark, and that is, as sometimes happens, the servants of the house are relatives of the owner, and the former being in reduced circumstances, offer their services to the latter in consideration of board and lodging and a few piastres per month.

And it must not be supposed that the masters are not well served by their cousins to the fifteenth and sixteenth degree, because the contrary is the case, and the custom is not thought anything of. Corsica is a French Department certainly, but Corsica is very far from being France.

As for robbers, one never hears of them, yet there are bandits in abundance; but these gentlemen must in no wise be confounded one with another.

So go without fear to Ajaccio, to Bastia, with a purse full of money hanging to your saddle-bow, and you may traverse the whole island without a shadow of danger, but do not go from Oceana to Levaco, if you happen to have an enemy who has declared the Vendetta against you, for I would not answer for your safety during that short journey of six miles.

Well, then, I was in Corsica, as I have said, at the beginning of the month of March, and I was alone; Jadin having remained at Rome.

I had come across from Elba, had disembarked at Bastia, and there had purchased a horse at the above-mentioned price.

I had visited Corte and Ajaccio, and just then I was traversing the province of Sartène.

On the particular day of which I am about to speak I was riding from Sartène to Sullacaro.

The day's journey was short, perhaps a dozen leagues, in consequence of detours, and on account of my being obliged to climb the slopes of the mountain chain, which, like a

backbone, runs through the island. I had a guide with me, for fear I should lose my way in the maquis.

It was about five o'clock in the afternoon when we arrived at the summit of the hill, which at the same time overlooks Olmeto and Sullacaro. There we stopped a moment to look about us.

"Where would your Excellency wish to stay the night?" asked the guide.

I looked down upon the village, the streets of which appeared almost deserted. Only a few women were visible, and they walked quickly along, and frequently looked cautiously around them.

As in virtue of the rules of Corsican hospitality, to which I have already referred, it was open to me to choose for my resting place any one of the hundred or hundred and twenty houses of which the village was composed, I therefore carried my eyes from house to house till they lighted upon one which promised comfortable quarters. It was a square mansion, built in a fortified sort of style and machicolated in front of the windows and above the door.

This was the first time I had seen these domestic fortifications; but I may mention that the province of Sartène is the classic ground of the Vendetta.

"Ah, good!" said my guide, as he followed the direction of my hand—"that is the house of Madame Savilia de Franchi. Go on, go on, Signor, you have not made a bad choice, and I can see you do not want for experience in these matters."

I should note here that in this 86th department of France Italian is universally spoken.

"But," I said, "may it not be inconvenient if I demand hospitality from a lady, for if I understand you rightly, this house belongs to a lady."

"No doubt," he replied, with an air of astonishment; "but what inconvenience does your lordship think you will cause?"

"If the lady be young," I replied, moved by a feeling of propriety—or, perhaps, let us say, of Parisian self-respect—"a night passed under her roof might compromise her."

“Compromise her!” repeated the guide, endeavouring to probe the meaning of the word I had rendered in Italian with all the emphasis which one would hazard a word in a strange tongue.

“Yes, of course,” I replied, beginning to feel impatient; “the lady is a widow, I suppose?”

“Yes, Excellency.”

“Well, then, will she receive a young man into her house?”

In 1841 I was thirty-six years old, or thereabouts, and was entitled to call myself young.

“Will she receive a young man!” exclaimed the guide; “why, what difference can it make whether you are young or old?”

I saw that I should get no information out of him by this mode of interrogation, so I resumed—

“How old is Madame Savilia?”

“Forty, or nearly so.”

“Ah,” I said, replying more to my thoughts than to my guide, “all the better. She has children, no doubt?”

“Yes, two sons—fine young men both.”

“Shall I see them?”

“You will see one of them—he lives at home.”

“Where is the other, then?”

“He lives in Paris.”

“How old are these sons?”

“Twenty-one.”

“What, both?”

“Yes, they are twins.”

“What professions do they follow?”

“The one in Paris is studying law.”

“And the other?”

“The other is a Corsican.”

“Indeed!” was my reply to this characteristic answer, made in the most matter-of-fact tone. “Well, now, let us push on for the house of Madame Savilia de Franchi.”

We accordingly resumed our journey, and entered the village about ten minutes afterwards.

I now remarked what I had not noticed from the hill, namely, that every house was fortified similarly to Madame Savilia’s. Not so completely, perhaps, for that the poverty of the inhabitants could not attain to, but purely and simply with oaken planks, by which the windows were protected, loop-holes only being left for rifle barrels; some apertures were simply bricked up.

I asked my guide what he called these loop-holes, and he said they were known as *archères*—a reply which convinced me that they were used anterior to the invention of firearms.

As we advanced through the streets we were able the more fully to comprehend the profound character of the solitude and sadness of the place.

Many houses appeared to have sustained a siege, and the marks of the bullets dotted the walls.

From time to time as we proceeded we caught sight of a curious eye flashing upon us from an embrasure; but it was impossible to distinguish whether the spectator were a man or a woman.

We at length reached the house which I had indicated to my guide, and which was evidently the most considerable in the village.

As we approached it more nearly, one thing struck me, and that was, fortified to all outward appearance as it was, it was not so in reality, for there were neither oaken planks, bricks, nor loop-holes, but simple squares of glass, protected at night by wooden shutters.

It is true that the shutters showed holes which could only have been made by the passage of a bullet; but they were of old date, and could not have been made within the previous ten years.

Scarcely had my guide knocked, when the door was opened, not hesitatingly, nor in a timid manner, but widely, and a valet, or rather I should say a man appeared.

It is the livery that makes the valet, and the individual who then opened the door to us wore a velvet waistcoat, trowsers of the same material, and leather gaiters. The breeches were fastened at the waist by a parti-coloured silk sash, from the folds of which protruded the handle of a Spanish knife.

“My friend,” I said, “is it indiscreet of me, who knows nobody in Sullacaro, to ask hospitality of your mistress?”

“Certainly not, your Excellency,” he replied; “the stranger does honour to the house before which he stops.” “Maria,” he continued, turning to a servant, who was standing behind him, “will you inform Madame Savilia that a French traveller seeks hospitality?”

As he finished speaking he came down the eight rough ladder-like steps which led to the entrance door, and took the bridle of my horse.

I dismounted.

“Your Excellency need have no further concern,” he said; “all your luggage will be taken to your room.”

I profited by this gracious invitation to idleness—one of the most agreeable which can be extended to a traveller.

CHAPTER II.

I SLOWLY ascended the steps and entered the house, and at a corner of the corridor I found myself face to face with a tall lady dressed in black.

I understood at once that this lady of thirty-eight or forty years of age, and still beautiful, was the mistress of the house.

“Madame,” said I, bowing deeply, “I am afraid you will think me intrusive, but the custom of the country may be my excuse, and your servant’s invitation my authority to enter.”

“You are welcome to the mother,” replied Madame de Franchi, “and you will almost immediately be welcomed by the son. From this moment, sir, the house belongs to you; use it as if it were your own.”

“I come but to beg hospitality for one night, madame,” I answered; “to-morrow morning, at daybreak, I will take my departure.”

“You are free to do as you please, sir; but I hope that you will change your mind, and that we shall have the honour of your company for a longer period.”

I bowed again, and Madame continued—

“Maria, show this gentleman to my son Louis’ chamber; light the fire at once, and carry up some hot water. You will excuse me,” she said, turning againto me as the servant departed, “but I always fancy that the first wants of a tired traveller are warm water and a fire. Will you please to follow my maid, sir; and you need have no hesitation in asking her for anything you may require. We shall sup in an hour, and my son, who will be home by that time, will have the honour to wait upon you.”

“I trust you will excuse my travelling dress, madame.”

“Yes, sir,” she replied smiling; “but on condition that you, on your part, will excuse the rusticity of your reception.”

I bowed my thanks, and followed the servant upstairs.

The room was situated on the first floor, and looked out towards the rear of the house, upon a pretty and extensive garden, well planted with various trees, and watered by a charming little stream, which fell into the Tavaro.

At the further end the prospect was bounded by a hedge, so thick as to appear like a wall. As is the case in almost all Italian houses, the walls of the rooms were white-washed and frescoed.

I understood immediately that Madame de Franchi had given me this, her absent son's chamber, because it was the most comfortable one in the house.

While Maria was lighting the fire and fetching the hot water, I took it into my head to make an inventory of the room, and try to arrive at an estimation of the character of its usual occupant by those means.

I immediately put this idea into execution, and beginning with the left hand, I took mental notes of the various objects by which I was surrounded.

The furniture all appeared to be modern, a circumstance which in that part of the island, where civilization had not then taken deep root, appeared to indicate no inconsiderable degree of luxury. It was composed of an iron bedstead and bedding, a sofa, four arm-chairs, six other occasional chairs, a wardrobe, half book case and half bureau, all of mahogany, from the first cabinet maker in Ajaccio.

The sofas and chairs were covered with chintz, and curtains of similar material fell before the windows, and hung round the bed.

I had got so far with my inventory when Maria left the room, and I was enabled to push my investigation a little closer.

I opened the book-case, and found within a collection of the works of our greatest poets. I noticed Corneille, Racine, Molière, La Fontaine, Ronsard, Victor Hugo, and Lamartine.

Our moralists—Montaigne, Pascal, Labruyère.

Our historians—Mezeray, Chateaubriand, Augustin Thierry.

Our philosophers—Cuvier, Beudant, Elie de Beaumont.

Besides these there were several volumes of romances and other books, amongst which I recognized, with a certain pride, my own “Impression of Travel.”

The keys were in the drawer of the bureau. I opened one of them.

Here I found fragments of a history of Corsica, a work upon the best means of abolishing the Vendetta, some French verses, and some Italian sonnets, all in manuscript. This was more than I expected, and I had the presumption to conclude that I need not seek much farther to form my opinion of the character of Monsieur Louis de Franchi.

He appeared to be a quiet, studious young man, a partizan of the French reformers, and then I understood why he had gone to Paris to become an advocate.

There was, without doubt, a great future for him in this course. I made all these reflections as I was dressing. My toilette, as I had hinted to Madame de Franchi, although not wanting in a certain picturesqueness, demanded that some allowance should be made for it.

It was composed of a vest of black velvet, open at seams of the sleeves, so as to keep me cooler during the heat of the day, and slashed *à l’Espagnole,* permitting a silken chemise to appear underneath. My legs were encased in velvet breeches to the knee, and thence protected by Spanish gaiters, embroidered in Spanish silk. A felt hat, warranted to take any shape, but particularly that of a sombrero, completed my costume.

I recommend this dress to all travellers as being the most convenient I am acquainted with, and I was in the act of dressing, when the same man who had introduced me appeared at the door.

He came to announce that his young master, Monsieur Lucien de Franchi, had that instant arrived, and who desired to pay his respects to me if I were ready to receive him.

I replied that I was at the disposal of Monsieur Lucien de Franchi if he would do me the honour to come up.

An instant afterwards I heard a rapid step approaching my room, and almost immediately afterwards I was face to face with my host.

CHAPTER III.

HE was, as my guide had told me, a young man of about twenty-one years of age, with black hair and eyes, his face browned by the sun, rather under than over the average height, but remarkably well-proportioned.

In his haste to welcome me he had come up, just as he was, in his riding-costume, which was composed of a redingote of green cloth, to which a cartridge-pouch gave a somewhat military air, grey pantaloons with leather let in on the inner side of the legs, boots and spurs. His head-dress was a cap similar to those worn by our Chasseurs d'Afrique.

From either side of his pouch there hung a gourd and a pistol, and he carried an English carbine in addition.

Notwithstanding the youthful appearance of my host, whose upper lip was as yet scarcely shaded by a moustache, he wore an air of independence and resolution, which struck me very forcibly.

Here was a man fitted for strife, and accustomed to live in the midst of danger, but without despising it, grave because he was solitary, calm because he was strong.

With a single glance he took me all in, my luggage, my arms, the dress I had just taken off, and that which I had just donned.

His glance was as rapid and as sure as that of a man whose very life may depend upon a hasty survey of his surroundings.

"I trust you will excuse me if I disturb you," he said; "but I come with good intentions. I wish to see if you require anything. I am always somewhat uneasy when any of you gentlemen from the continent pay us a visit, for we are still so uncivilized, we Corsicans, that it is really with fear and trembling that we exercise, particularly to Frenchmen, our own hospitality, which will, I fear, soon be the only thing that will remain to us."

"You have no reason to fear," I replied; "it would be difficult to say what more a traveller can require beyond what Madame de Franchi has supplied. Besides," I continued, glancing round the apartment, "I must confess I do not perceive any of the

want of civilization you speak of so frankly, and were it not for the charming prospect from those windows, I should fancy myself in an apartment in the Chaussee d'Antin."

"Yes," returned the young man, "it is rather a mania with my poor brother Louis; he is so fond of living *à la Française;* but I very much doubt whether, when he leaves Paris, the poor attempt at civilization here will appear to him sufficient on his return home as it formerly did."

"Has your brother been long away from Corsica?" I inquired.

"For the last ten months."

"You expect him back soon?"

"Oh, not for three or four years."

"That is a very long separation for two brothers, who probably were never parted before."

"Yes, and particularly if they love each other as we do."

"No doubt he will come to see you before he finishes his studies?"

"Probably; he has promised us so much, at least."

"In any case, nothing need prevent you from paying him a visit?"

"No, I never leave Corsica."

There was in his tone, as he made this reply, that love of country which astonishes the rest of the universe.

I smiled.

"It appears strange to you," he said, smiling in his turn, "when I tell you that I do not wish to leave a miserable country like ours; but you must know that I am as much a growth of the island as the oak or the laurel; the air I breathe must be impregnated with the odours of the sea and of the mountains. I must have torrents to cross, rocks

to scale, forests to explore. I must have space; liberty is necessary to me, and if you were to take me to live in a town I believe I should die."

"But how is it there is such a great difference between you and your brother in this respect?"

"And you would add with so great a physical resemblance, if you knew him."

"Are you, then, so very much alike?"

"So much so, that when we were children our parents were obliged to sew a distinguishing mark upon our clothes."

"And as you grew up?" I suggested.

"As we grew up our habits caused a very slight change in our appearance, that is all. Always in a study, poring over books and drawings, my brother grew somewhat pale, while I, being always in the open air, became bronzed, as you see."

"I hope," I said, "that you will permit me to judge of this resemblance, and if you have any commission for Monsieur Louis, you will charge me with it."

"Yes, certainly, with great pleasure, if you will be so kind. Now, will you excuse me? I see you are more advanced in your toilet than I, and supper will be ready in a quarter of an hour."

"You surely need not trouble to change on my account."

"You must not reproach me with this, for you have yourself set me the example; but, in any case, I am now in a riding dress, and must change it for a mountaineer's costume, as, after supper, I have to make an excursion in which boots and spurs would only serve to hinder me."

"You are going out after supper, then?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied, "to a rendezvous."

I smiled.

"Ah, not in the sense you understand it—this is a matter of business."

“Do you think me so presumptuous as to believe I have a right to your conscience?”

“Why not? One should live so as to be able to proclaim what one has done. I never had a mistress, and I never shall have one. If my brother should marry, and have children, it is probable that I shall never take a wife. If, on the contrary, he does not marry, perhaps I shall, so as to prevent our race from becoming extinct. Did I not tell you,” he added, laughing, “that I am a regular savage, and had come into the world a hundred years too late? But I continue to chatter here like a crow, and I shall not be ready by the time supper is on the table.”

“But cannot we continue the conversation?” I said. “Your chamber, I believe, is opposite, and we can talk through the open doors.”

“We can do better than that; you can come into my room while I dress. You are a judge of arms, I fancy. Well, then, you shall look at mine. There are some there which are valuable—from an historical point of view, I mean.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE suggestion quite accorded with my inclination to compare the chambers of the brothers, and I did not hesitate to adopt it. I followed my host, who, opening the door, paused in front of me to show me the way.

This time I found myself in a regular arsenal. All the furniture was of the fifteenth or sixteenth century—the carved and canopied bedstead, supported by great posts, was draped with green damask *à fleur d'or;* the window curtains were of the same material. The walls were covered with Spanish leather, and in the open spaces were sustained trophies of Gothic and modern arms.

There was no mistaking the tastes of the occupant of this room: they were as warlike as those of his brother were peaceable.

"Look here," he said, passing into an inner room, "here you are in three centuries at once—see! I will dress while you amuse yourself, for I must make haste or supper will be announced."

"Which are the historic arms of which you spoke amongst all these swords, arquebuses, and poignards?" I asked.

"There are three. Let us take them in order. If you look by the head of my bed you will find a poignard with a very large hilt—the pommel forms a seal."

"Yes, I have it."

"That is the dagger of Sampietro."

"The famous Sampietro, the assassin of Vanina?"

"The assassin! No, the avenger."

"It is the same thing, I fancy."

"To the rest of the world, perhaps—not in Corsica."

"And is the dagger authentic?"

“Look for yourself. It carries the arms of Sampietro—only the fleur-de-lis of France is missing. You know that Sampietro was not authorized to wear the lily until after the siege of Perpignan.”

“No, I was not aware of that fact. And how did you become possessed of this poignard?”

“Oh! it has been in our family for three hundred years. It was given to a Napoleon de Franchi by Sampietro himself.”

“Do you remember on what occasion?”

“Yes. Sampietro and my ancestor fell into an ambuscade of Genoese, and defended themselves like lions. Sampietro’s helmet was knocked off, and a Genoese on horseback was about to kill Sampietro with his mace when my ancestor plunged his dagger into a joint in his enemy’s armour. The rider feeling himself wounded spurred his horse, carrying away in his flight the dagger so firmly embedded in his armour that he was unable to withdraw it, and as my ancestor very much regretted the loss of his favourite weapon Sampietro gave him his own. Napoleon took great care of it, for it is of Spanish workmanship, as you see, and will penetrate two five-franc pieces one on top of another.”

“May I make the attempt?”

“Certainly.”

Placing the coins upon the floor, I struck a sharp blow with the dagger. Lucien had not deceived me.

When I withdrew the poignard I found both pieces pierced through and through, fixed upon the point of the dagger.

“This is indeed the dagger of Sampietro,” I said. “But what astonishes me is that being possessed of such a weapon he should have employed the cord to kill his wife.”

“He did not possess it at that time,” replied Lucien; “he had given it to my ancestor.”

“Ah! true!”

“Sampietro was more than sixty years old when he hastened from Constantinople to Aix to teach that lesson to the world, viz., that women should not meddle in state affairs.”

I bowed in assent, and replaced the poignard.

“Now,” said I to Lucien, who all this time had been dressing, “let us pass on from Sampietro to some one else.”

“You see those two portraits close together?”

“Yes, Paoli and Napoleon.”

“Well, near the portrait of Paoli is a sword.”

“Precisely so.”

“That is his sword.”

“Paoli’s sword? And is it as authentic as the poignard of Sampietro?”

“Yes, at least as authentic; though he did not give it to one of my male ancestors, but to one of the ladies.”

“To one of your female ancestors?”

“Yes. Perhaps you have heard people speak of this woman, who in the war of independence presented herself at the Tower of Sullacaro, accompanied by a young man?”

“No, tell me the story.”

“Oh, it is a very short one.”

“So much the worse.”

“Well, you see, we have not much time to talk now.”

“I am all attention.”

“Well, this woman and this young man presented themselves before the Tower of Sullacaro and requested to speak with Paoli; but as he was engaged writing, he declined to admit them; and then, as the woman insisted, the two sentinels repulsed her, when Paoli, who had heard the noise, opened the door and inquired the cause.”

“ ‘It is I,’ said the woman; ‘I wish to speak to you.’

“ ‘What have you to say to me?’

“ ‘I have come to tell you that I have two sons. I heard yesterday that one had been killed for defending his country, and I have come twenty leagues to bring you the other!!!’ ”

“You are relating an incident of Sparta,” I said.

“Yes, it does appear very like it.”

“And who was this woman?”

“She was my ancestress.”

“Paoli took off his sword and gave it to her.

“ ‘Take it,’ he said, ‘I like time to make my excuses to woman.’ ”

“She was worthy of both—is it not so?”

“And now this sabre?”

“That is the one Buonaparte carried at the battle of the Pyramids.”

“No doubt it came into your family in the same manner as the poignard and the sword.”

“Entirely. After the battle Buonaparte gave the order to my grandfather, who was an officer in the Guides, to charge with fifty men a number of Mamelukes who were at bay around a wounded chieftain. My grandfather dispersed the Mamelukes and took the chief back a prisoner to the First Consul. But when he wished to sheath his sword

he found the blade had been so bent in his encounter with the Mamelukes that it would not go into the scabbard. My grandfather therefore threw sabre and sheath away as useless, and, seeing this, Buonaparte gave him his own."

"But," I said, "in your place I would rather have had my grandfather's sabre, all bent as it was, instead of that of the general's, which was in good condition."

"Look before you and you will find it. The First Consul had it recovered, and caused that large diamond to be inserted in the hilt. He then sent it to my family with the inscription which you can read on the blade."

I advanced between the windows, where, hanging half-drawn from its scabbard, which it could not fully enter, I perceived the sabre bent and hacked, bearing the simple inscription—

"Battle of the Pyramids, 21st of July, 1798."

At that moment the servant came to announce that supper was served.

"Very well, Griffo," replied the young man; "tell my mother that we are coming down."

As he spoke he came forth from the inner room, dressed, as he said, like a mountaineer; that is to say, with a round velvet coat, trowsers, and gaiters; of his other costume he had only retained his pouch.

He found me occupied in examing two carbines hanging opposite each other, and both inscribed—

"21st September, 1819: 11 A.M."

"Are these carbines also historical?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered. "For us, at least, they bear a historical significance. One was my father's—"

He hesitated.

"And the other," I suggested.

“And the other,” he said, laughing, “is my mother’s. But let us go downstairs; my mother will be awaiting us.”

Then passing in front of me to show me the way he courteously signed to me to follow him.

CHAPTER V.

I MUST confess that as I descended to the supper-room I could not help thinking of Lucien’s last remark, “The other is my mother’s carbine;” and this circumstance compelled me to regard Madame de Franchi more closely than I had hitherto done.

When her son entered the *salle à manger,* he respectfully kissed her hand, and she received this homage with queenly dignity.

“I am afraid that we have kept you waiting, mother,” said Lucien; “I must ask your pardon.”

“In any case, that would be my fault, madame,” I said, bowing to her. “Monsieur Lucien has been telling me and pointing out many curious things, and by my reiterated questions I have delayed him.”

“Rest assured,” she said, “I have not been kept waiting; I have but this moment come downstairs. But,” she continued, addressing Lucien, “I was rather anxious to ask you what news there was of Louis.”

“Your son has been ill, madame?” I asked.

“Lucien is afraid so,” she said.

“Have you received a letter from your brother?” I inquired.

“No,” he replied, “and that is the very thing that makes me uneasy.”

“But, then, how can you possibly tell that he is out of sorts?”

“Because during the last few days I have been suffering myself.”

“I hope you will excuse my continual questions; but, really, your answer does not make matters any clearer.”

“Well, you know that we are twins, don’t you?”

“Yes, my guide told me as much.”

“Were you also informed that when we came into the world we were joined together?”

“No; I was ignorant of that circumstance.”

“Well, then, it was a fact, and we were obliged to be cut asunder. So that, you see, however distant we may be, we have ever the same body, so that any impression, physical or moral, which one may receive is immediately reflected in the other. During the last few days I felt *triste,* morose, dull, and without any predisposing cause, so far as I am aware. I have experienced terrible pains in the region of the heart, and palpitations, so it is evident to me that my brother is suffering some great grief.”

I looked with astonishment at this young man, who affirmed such a strange thing without the slightest fear of contradiction, and his mother also appeared to entertain the same conviction as he did.

Madame de Franchi smiled sadly, and said, “The absent are in the hands of God, the great point is that you are certain that he is alive.”

“Yes,” replied Lucien, calmly, “for if he were dead I should have seen him.”

“And you would have told me, would you not, my son?”

“Oh, of course, mother, at once.”

“I am satisfied. Excuse me, monsieur,” she continued, turning to me, “I trust you will pardon my maternal anxiety. Not only are Louis and Lucien my sons, but they are the last of their race. Will you please take the chair at my right hand? Lucien, sit here.”

She indicated to the young man the vacant place at her left hand.

We seated ourselves at the extremity of a long table, at the opposite end of which were laid six other covers, destined for those who in Corsica are called the family; that is to say, the people who in large establishments occupy a position between the master and the servants.

The table was abundantly supplied with good cheer. But I confess that although at the moment blessed with a very good appetite, I contented myself with eating and drinking as it were mechanically, for my senses were not in any way attracted by the pleasures of the table. For, indeed, it appeared to me that I had entered into a strange world when I came into that house, and that I was now living in a dream.

Who could this woman be who was accustomed to carry a carbine like a soldier?

What sort of person could this brother be, who felt the same grief that his brother experienced at a distance of three hundred leagues?

What sort of mother could this be who made her son declare that if he saw the spirit of his dead brother he would tell her at once?

These were the questions that perplexed me, and it will be readily understood they gave me ample food for thought.

However, feeling that continual silence was not polite, I made an effort to collect my ideas. I looked up.

The mother and son at the same instant perceived that I wished to enter into conversation.

“So,” said Lucien to me, as if he were continuing his remarks, “so you made up your mind to come to Corsica?”

“Yes, as you see, I had for a long time had a desire to do so, and at last I have accomplished it.”

"*Ma foi!* you have done well not to delay your visit; for with the successive encroachments of French tastes and manners those who come to look for Corsica in a few years will not find it."

"However," I replied, "if the ancient national spirit retires before civilization and takes refuge in any corner of the island, it certainly will be in the province of Sartène, and in the valley of the Tavaro."

"Do you think so, really?" said the young man, smiling.

"Yes, and it appears to me that here at the present moment there is a beautiful and noble tablet of ancient Corsican manners."

"Yes, and nevertheless, even here, between my mother and myself, in the face of four hundred years of reminiscences of this old fortified mansion, the French spirit has come to seek out my brother—has carried him away to Paris, when he will return to us a lawyer. He will live in Ajaccio instead of dwelling in his ancestral home. He will plead—if he possess the talent—he may be nominated *procureur du roi* perhaps; then he will pursue the poor devils who have 'taken a skin,' as they say here. He will confound the assassin with the avenger—as you yourself have done already. He will demand, in the name of the law, the heads of those who had done what their fathers would have considered themselves dishonoured *not* to have done. He will substitute the judgment of men for the justice of God; and in the evening, when he shall have claimed a head for the scaffold, he will believe that he has performed his duty, and has brought his stone as a tribute to the temple of Civilization, as our préfect says. Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!"

The young man raised his eyes to heaven, as Hannibal is reported to have done after the battle of Zama.

"But," I replied, "you must confess that it is the will of God to equalize these things, since in making your brother a proselyte of the new order He has kept you here as a representative of the old manners and customs."

"Yes; but what is there to prove that my brother will not follow the example of his uncle instead of following mine? And even I myself may be about to do something unworthy of a de Franchi."

"You!" I exclaimed, with astonishment.

“Yes, I. Do you wish me to tell you why you have come into this province of Sartène?”

“Yes, tell me.”

“You have come here to satisfy your curiosity as a man of the world, an artist, or a poet. I do not know what you are, nor do I ask; you can tell us when you leave, if you wish; if not, you need not inform us; you are perfectly free to do as you like. Well, you have come in the hope of seeing some village Vendetta, of being introduced to some original bandit, such as Mr. Merimée has described in ‘Columba.’ ”

“Well, it appears to me that I have not made such a bad choice, for if my eyes do not deceive me, your house is the only one in the village that is not fortified.”

“That only proves I have degenerated, as I have said. My father, my grandfather, and my ancestors for many generations have always taken one side or the other in the disputes which in the last ten years have divided the village. And do you know what I have become in the midst of musket shots and stabs? Well, I am the arbitrator. You have come into the province of Sartène to see bandits; is not that the fact? So come with me this evening and I will show you one.”

“What! will you really allow me to go with you this evening?”

“Certainly, if it will amuse you. It entirely depends upon yourself.”

“I accept, then, with much pleasure.”

“Our guest is fatigued,” said Madame de Franchi, looking meaningly at her son, as if she felt ashamed Corsica had so far degenerated.

“No, mother, no, he had better come; and when in some Parisian *salon* people talk of the terrible Vendettas, of the implacable Corsican bandits who strike terror into the hearts of children in Bastia and Ajaccio, he will be able to tell them how things actually are.”

“But what is the great motive for this feud, which, as I understand, is now by your intercession to be for ever extinguished?”

“Oh,” replied Lucien, “in a quarrel it is not the motive that matters, it is the result. If a fly causes a man’s death the man is none the less dead because a fly caused it.”

I saw that he hesitated to tell me the cause of this terrible war, which for the last ten years had desolated the village of Sullacaro.

But, as may be imagined, the more he attempted to conceal it the more anxious I was to discover it.

“But,” said I, “this quarrel must have a motive; is that motive a secret?”

“Good gracious, no! The mischief arose between the Orlandi and the Colona.”

“On what occasion?”

“Well, a fowl escaped from the farm yard of the Orlandi and flew into that of the Colona.

“The Orlandi attempted to get back the hen, the Colona declared it belonged to them. The Orlandi then threatened to bring the Colona before the judge and make them declare on oath it was theirs. And then the old woman in whose house the hen had taken refuge wrung its neck, and threw the dead fowl into her neighbour’s face, saying—

“ ‘Well, then, if it belongs to you, eat it.’

“Then one of the Orlandi picked up the fowl by the feet, and attempted to beat the person who had thrown it in his sister’s face; but just as he was about to do so, one of the Colona appeared, who, unfortunately, carried a loaded gun, and he immediately sent a bullet through the Orlandi’s heart.”

“And how many lives have been sacrificed since?”

“Nine people have been killed altogether.”

“And all for a miserable hen not worth twelve sous?”

“Yes, but as I said just now, it is not the cause, but the effect that we have to look at.”

“Since there were nine people killed, then, there might easily be a dozen.”

“Yes, very likely there would be if they had not appointed me as arbitrator.”

“At the intercession of one of the two families no doubt?”

“Oh! dear no, at my brother’s request, who heard of the matter at the Chancellor’s house. I asked him what on earth they had to do in Paris with the affairs of an out-of-the-way little village in Corsica; but it seems the préfect mentioned it when he wrote to Paris, and said that if I were to say a word the whole thing would finish like a farce, by a marriage and a public recitation; so my brother took the hint, and replied he would answer for me. What could I do?” added the young man, throwing back his head proudly; “it shall never be said that a de Franchi passed his word for his brother, and that his brother did not fulfil the engagement.”

“And so you have arranged everything?”

“I am afraid so.”

“And we shall see the chief of one of these two parties this evening, no doubt?”

“Just so; last night I saw the other.”

“Are we going to see an Orlandi or a Colona?”

“An Orlandi.”

“Is it far from here?”

“In the ruins of the Castle of Vicentello d’Istria.”

“Ah! yes—they told me those ruins were close by.”

“Yes, they are about a league from here.”

“So in three-quarters of an hour we shall be there?”

“Yes, in about that time.”

“Lucien,” said Madame de Franchi, “remember you speak for yourself. For a mountaineer as you are it is scarcely three-quarters of an hour distance, but recollect that our guest may not be able to proceed so quickly.”

“That is true; we had better allow ourselves an hour and a half at least.”

“In that case you have no time to lose,” said Madame de Franchi, as she glanced at the clock.

“Mother,” said Lucien as he rose, “you will excuse our leaving you, will you not?”

She extended her hand to him, and the young man kissed it with the same respect as he had previously done.

Then turning to me, Lucien said—

“If you prefer to finish your supper quietly, and to smoke your cigar afterwards——”

“No, no!” I cried; “hang it, you have promised me a bandit, and I must have one.”

“Well, then, let us take our guns and be off.”

I bowed respectfully to Madame de Franchi, and we left the room, preceded by Griffo, who carried a light.

Our preparations did not occupy us very long.

I clasped a travelling belt round my waist, from which was suspended a sort of hunting-knife, and in the folds of which I carried powder and ball.

Lucien soon re-appeared with his cartridge case, and carrying a double-barrelled Manton, and a sort of peaked cap, woven for him by some Penelope of Sullacaro.

“Shall I go with your Excellency?” asked Griffo.

“No, it will be useless,” replied Lucien; “but you may as well loose Diamond, as we might put up a pheasant, and the moon is so clear we should be able to shoot as well as in daylight.”

An instant afterwards a great spaniel bounded out, and jumped joyously around its master.

We had not gone many paces from the house when Lucien turned round and said—

“By-the-by, Griffo, tell them if they hear any shots on the mountain that it is we who have fired them.”

“Very well, your Excellency.”

“If we did not take some such precautions,” said Lucien, “they would think that hostilities had recommenced, and we should soon hear our shots echoing in the streets of Sullacaro. A little farther on you will see a footpath to the right that will lead us directly up the mountain.”

CHAPTER VI.

ALTHOUGH it was only the beginning of the month of March the weather was beautiful, and we should have said that it was hot, had it not been for a refreshing breeze which carried with it a savour of the sea.

The moon was rising brilliantly behind Mount Cagna, and the cascades of light were falling upon the southern slope which separates Corsica into two parts, and in a measure forms two different nations, which are always at war, or at least, detest one another heartily.

As we mounted we could see the gorge in which the Tavaro was buried in profound darkness, impossible to penetrate, but we could view the calm Mediterranean, like a vast steel mirror extending into the horizon.

There are certain noises one hears only at night, for during the day they are overcome by other sounds, or it may be they awake only with the darkness, and these produced not upon Lucien, who was familiar with them, but upon me, who was a stranger to them, curious sensations of surprise, and awoke in me a powerful interest in all that I saw.

When we reached the place where the path united with another—one going up the mountain direct, and the other to the right, Lucien turned to me and said—

“Are you anything of a mountaineer?”

“Yes, a little, as far as walking goes.”

“You are likely to get giddy, then.”

“I am afraid so. The precipice has an irresistible attraction for me.”

“Then we had better take this foot-path where there are no precipices, but merely rough walking.”

“I am quite equal to that.”

“Very well, then, we have three-quarters of an hour’s walk before us.”

“Let us take the path.”

Lucien then went first, and crossed through a little oak wood, into which I followed him.

Diamond trotted fifty or sixty paces away, beating right and left, and occasionally coming back to us, wagging his tail as much as to inform us that we might trust to him and continue our route in safety.

I saw that as some people like to possess a horse, equally for riding or driving, so Diamond had apparently been trained to hunt the biped or the quadruped, the bandit or the boar. I did not wish to appear altogether strange to Corsican manners, so I said as much to Lucien.

“You are mistaken,” he replied; “Diamond is very useful in hunting men or animals, but he never chases bandits. It is the triple red of the gendarmes, the voltigeur, and the volunteer that he hunts.”

“Then I suppose Diamond is a bandit’s dog?”

“He is. He belongs to an Orlandi, to whom I sometimes used to send him into the country with bread, powder, bullets, or whatever he required. He was shot by a Colona, and the next day the dog came to me, for being accustomed to come to the house, he looked upon me as a friend.”

“But,” I said, “I fancied I saw another dog at your house.”

“Yes, that is Brucso, he possesses the same qualities as Diamond, only he came to me from a Colona who was killed by an Orlandi, and so when I pay a visit to a Colona I take Brucso, but when I have business with an Orlandi I take Diamond. If I were to make a mistake and loose them both together they would kill each other. So,” continued Lucien, with a bitter smile, “men can make it up, and will receive the sacrament together; the dogs will never eat from the same platter.”

“Well,” I said, laughing; “here are two regular Corsican dogs, but it seems to me that Diamond, like all other modest creatures, has gone out of earshot while we are speaking of him. I am afraid he has missed us.”

“Oh, do not be alarmed,” said Lucien, “I know where he is.”

“May I inquire where?”

“He is at the Mucchio.”

I was about to hazard another question, even at the risk of tiring my companion, when a long howl was heard, so lamentable, so sad, and so prolonged, that I shivered and stopped.

“What can that be?” I said.

“Nothing, it is only Diamond crying.”

“What is he crying for?”

“His master. Do you not know that dogs do not forget those they have loved?”

“Ah, I understand,” I said, as another prolonged howl rose through the night.

“Yes,” I continued, “his master was shot, you say, and I suppose we are approaching the place where he was killed?”

“Just so, and Diamond has left us to go to Mucchio.”

“That is where the man’s tomb is?”

“Yes, that is to say, the monument which passers-by have raised to his memory, in the form of a cairn; so it follows that the tomb of the victim gradually grows larger, a symbol of the increasing vengeance of his relations.”

Another long howl from Diamond’s throat made me shudder again, though I was perfectly well aware of the cause of the noise.

At the next turn of the path we came upon the wayside tomb or cairn. A heap of stones formed a pyramid of four or five feet in height.

At the foot of this strange monument Diamond was lying with extended neck and open mouth. Lucien picked up a stone, and taking off his cap approached the mucchio.

I did the same, following his example closely.

When he had come close to the pyramid he broke a branch from a young oak and threw, first, the stone and then the branch upon the heap. He rapidly made the sign of the cross.

I imitated him exactly, and we resumed our route in silence, but Diamond remained behind.

About ten minutes afterwards we heard another dismal howling, and then almost immediately Diamond passed us, head and tail drooping, to a point about a hundred paces in front, when he suddenly resumed his hunting.

CHAPTER VII.

WE still kept advancing steadily, but, as Lucien had warned me, the path became rougher and more difficult.

I slung my gun over my shoulder, for I perceived that I should soon need both hands to assist me. As for my friend, he continued to press forward with the same easy gait, and did not appear to be at all inconvenienced by the difficult nature of the ground.

After some minutes' climbing over rocks, aided by bushes and roots, we reached a species of platform surmounted by some ruined walls. These ruins were those of the Castle of Vicentello d'Istria, our destination.

In about five minutes we had climbed up to the last terrace, Lucien in advance, and as he extended his hand to assist me he said:—

"Well done, well done; you have not climbed badly for a Parisian."

"Supposing that the Parisian you have assisted has already had some little experience in mountain scrambling?"

"Ah, true!" said Lucien, laughing. "Have you not a mountain near Paris called Montmartre?"

"Yes, but there are others beside Montmartre which I have ascended. For instance, the Rigi, the Faulhorn, the Gemmi, Vesuvius, Stromboli and Etna."

"Indeed! Now I suppose you will despise me because I have never done more than surmount Monte Rotundo! Well, here we are! Four centuries ago my ancestors would have opened the portal to you and bade you welcome to the castle. Now their descendants can only show you the place where the door used to be, and say to you, 'Welcome to the ruins!' "

"I suppose the chateau has been in possession of your family since the death of Vicentello d'Istria?" I said, taking up the conversation at the point at which we had dropped it previously.

"No, but before his birth. It was the last dwelling-place of our famous ancestress Savilia, the widow of Lucien de Franchi."

“Is there not some terrible history connected with this woman?”

“Yes; were it daylight I could now show you from this spot the ruins of the Castle of Valle. There lived the lord of Guidice, who was as much hated as she (Savilia) was beloved, as ugly as she was beautiful. He became enamoured of her, and as she did not quickly respond to his desires, he gave her to understand that if she did not accept him in a given time he would come and carry her off by force. Savilia made pretence of consenting, and invited Guidice to come to dinner at the castle. Guidice was overcome with joy at this, and forgetting that the invitation had only been extorted by menace, accepted it, and came attended only by a few body servants. The gate was closed behind them, and in a few minutes Guidice was a prisoner, and cast into a dungeon, yonder.”

I passed on in the direction indicated, and found myself in a species of square court.

The moonlight streamed through the apertures time had made in the once solid walls, and threw dark and well-defined shadows upon the ground. All other portions of the ruins remained in the deep shade of the overhanging walls round about.

Lucien looked at his watch.

“Ah! we are twenty minutes too soon,” he exclaimed. “Let us sit down; you are very likely tired.”

We sat down; indeed, we extended ourselves at full length upon the grassy sward, in a position facing the great breach in the wall.

“But,” said I to my companion, “it seems to me that you have not finished the story you began just now.”

“No,” replied Lucien. “Every morning and every evening Savilia came down to the dungeon in which Giudice was confined, and then separated from him only by a grating, she would undress herself, and expose herself naked to him, a captive.’

“ ‘Giudice,’ she would say, ‘how do you expect that such an ugly man as you are can ever hope to possess all this?’

“This trial lasted for three months, and was repeated twice a day. But at the end of that period, thanks to a waiting woman whom he had bribed, Guidice was enabled to

escape. He soon returned with all his men, who were much more numerous than those Savilia could assemble, and took the castle by assault, and having first possessed himself of Savilia, he subsequently exposed her naked in an iron cage at the cross roads in the Bocca di Cilaccia, offering, himself, the key to any passer by who might be tempted to enter. After three days of this public prostitution Savilia died."

"Well," I said, "it seems to me that your ancestors had a very pretty idea of revenging themselves, and that in finishing off their enemies with dagger or gunshot their descendants have in a manner degenerated!"

"Without mentioning that the day may come when we shall not kill them at all!" replied Lucien. "But it has not come to that yet. The two sons of Savilia," he continued, "who were at Ajaccio with their uncle, were true Corsicans, and continued to make war against the sons of Guidice. This war lasted for four hundred years, and only finished, as you saw, by the dates upon the carbines of my parents, on the 21st September, 1819, at eleven o'clock A.M."

"Oh, yes, I remember the inscription; but I had not time to inquire its meaning, as just then we were summoned to supper."

"Well, this is the explanation: Of the family of Guidice there remained, in 1819, only two brothers. Of the de Franchi family there remained only my father, who had married his cousin. Three months after that the Guidice determined to exterminate us with one stroke. One of the brothers concealed himself on the road to Olmedo to await my father's coming home to Sartène—while the other, taking advantage of his absence, determined to attack our house. This plan was carried out, but with a different result to what had been anticipated. My father, being warned of the plot, was on his guard; my mother, who had also got a hint of the affair, assembled the shepherds, &c., so that when the attack was made the intended victims were prepared for it—my father on the mountains, my mother in the mansion. The consequence was that the two Guidici fell, one shot by my father, the other by my mother. On seeing his foe fall, my father drew out his watch and saw it was eleven o'clock. When my mother shot her assailant she turned to the timepiece and noticed that it was also eleven o'clock. The whole thing had taken place exactly at the same moment. There were no more Guidici left, the family was extinct, and our victorious family is now left in peace; and considering we carried on a war for four hundred years, we didn't want to meddle with it any more. My father had the dates engraved upon the carbines, and hung the pieces up on each side of the clock, as you saw. Seven months later my mother gave

birth to twins, of whom one is your very humble servant, the Corsican Lucien; the other, the philanthropist, Louis, his brother."

As he ceased speaking, I noticed a shadow of a man accompanied by a dog projected in the doorway.

The shadows were those of the bandit Orlandi and his friend Diamond.

At that moment the village clock of Sullacaro was heard striking nine with measured strokes.

Evidently the Orlandi was of Louis XV.'s opinion, that punctuality is the politeness of kings!

It would have been impossible to have been more exact than was that king of the mountain, with whom Lucien had appointed a meeting at nine o'clock.

We both rose from our reclining posture when we saw the bandit approaching.

CHAPTER VIII.

“YOU are not alone, Monsieur Lucien,” said the bandit.

“Do not let that disturb you, Orlandi. This gentleman is a friend of mine, who has heard me speak of you, and wished to pay you a visit. I could not think of refusing him that pleasure.”

“Monsieur is welcome to the country,” said the bandit, bowing as he advanced towards us.

I returned his salute with the most punctilious politeness.

“You must have been waiting here some time,” continued Orlandi.

“Yes, about twenty minutes.”

“Quite so. I heard Diamond howling at Mucchio, and he has been with me quite a quarter of an hour since then; he is a good and faithful dog, is he not, Monsieur Lucien?”

“Yes, indeed he is, Orlandi,” replied Lucien, as he patted the animal.

“But,” said I, “since you knew that Monsieur Lucien was here, why did you not come sooner?”

“Because our appointment was for nine o’clock,” said the bandit, “and it is just as unpunctual to be a quarter of an hour too soon as to arrive a quarter of an hour too late.”

“That is meant for a hit at me, Orlandi,” said Lucien, laughing.

“No, sir; you no doubt have your reasons; besides you have a companion, and it is likely on his account you may have started earlier, for I know your punctual habits, Monsieur Lucien, and I know also that you have been good enough to put yourself to inconvenience on my account frequently.”

“Oh, do not say anything about that, Orlandi; this will probably be the last time.”

“Have we not some few words to exchange upon that subject, Monsieur Lucien,” said the bandit.

“Yes, if you will have the goodness to follow me.”

“I am at your orders.”

Lucien turned towards me, and said:

“Will you excuse me a moment?”

“Of course;” I replied.

The men then went away together, and ascending the breach through which Orlandi had appeared halted at the top of it, their figures standing out in strong relief in the moonlight.

Then I was able to take more particular note of this Orlandi. He was a tall man, who had fashioned his beard in exactly the same manner as young de Franchi, and was clothed like him; but his dress showed traces of more frequent contact with the bushes through which he was obliged to fly, and of the earth upon which he was obliged to lie, than did those of Lucien.

I could not hear what the men were talking about, and had I heard it I could not have understood it, as they spoke in the Corsican dialect.

But I was enabled to perceive by their gestures that the bandit was refuting with some heat a series of arguments which the young man was setting forth with an impartiality that did him honour.

At length the gestures of the Orlandi became less frequent and more energetic. His voice became subdued, and he at last bowed his head and held out his hand to the young man.

I concluded the conference was now over, and the men descended together towards me.

“My dear, sir,” said Lucien, “Orlandi wishes to shake you by the hand, and to thank you.”

“And for what?” I said.

“For being so good as to be one of his sponsors. I have answered for you!”

“If you have answered for me I will readily accept, without even asking what is in question.”

I extended my hand to the bandit, who did me the honour to touch it with the tips of his fingers.

“You will now be able to tell my brother that all has been arranged according to his wishes,” said Lucien, “and that you have signed the contract.”

“Is there, then, a marriage about to take place?”

“No, not yet; but perhaps there may be shortly.”

A disdainful smile passed over the bandit’s face as he replied,

“We have made peace, Monsieur Lucien, because you wished it; but marriage is not included in the compact.”

“No,” replied Lucien, “it is only written in the future amongst the probabilities; but let us talk of something else. Did you not hear anything while I was talking with Orlandi?” he said, turning to me.

“Of what you were saying, do you mean?”

“No, but what you might have thought was a pheasant close by?”

“Well, I fancied I did hear a bird crow, but I thought I must have been mistaken!”

“No, you were not mistaken, there is a cock perched in the great chestnut tree you saw about a hundred paces from here. I heard him just now as I was passing.”

“Well, then,” said Lucien, “we must eat him tomorrow.”

“He would have already been laid low,” said Orlandi, “if I had not thought that in the village they would believe I was shooting at something besides a pheasant.”

“I have provided against that,” said Lucien. “By-the-by,” he added, turning to me and throwing on his shoulder the gun he had already unslung, “the shot by courtesy belongs to you.”

“One moment,” I said. “I am not so sure of my aim as you, and I will be quite content to do my part in eating the bird. So do you fire.”

“I suppose you are not so used to shooting at night as we are,” replied Lucien, “and you would probably fire too low. But if you have nothing particular to do to-morrow you can come and take your revenge.”

CHAPTER IX.

WE left the ruins on the side opposite to that on which we had entered, Lucien going first.

As soon as we had got into the brushwood a pheasant once more loudly announced his presence.

He was about eighty paces from us, roosting in the branches of the chestnut tree, the approach to which was prevented on all sides by the undergrowth.

“I do not quite see how you are going to get him,” I said to Lucien; “it does not appear a very easy shot.”

“No,” he replied; “but if I could just see him, I would fire from here.”

“You do not mean to say that your gun will kill a pheasant at eighty yards?”

“Not with shot,” he replied; “it will with a bullet.”

“Ah! that is a different thing altogether. I did not know you were loaded with ball. You were right to undertake the shot.”

“Would you like to see the pheasant?” asked Orlandi.

“Yes,” said Lucien, “I confess that I should.”

“Wait a moment, then;” and Orlandi began to imitate the clucking of the hen pheasant.

Then, without our being able to see the bird, we perceived a movement in the leaves of the chestnut-tree. The pheasant was evidently mounting branch by branch as he replied to the call of the hen imitated by Orlandi.

At length he arrived at the end of a branch, and was quite visible in the moonlight.

Orlandi ceased, and the pheasant remained motionless.

At the same moment Lucien levelled his gun, and, with a quick aim, fired.

The pheasant fell like a stone.

“Fetch it!” said Lucien to Diamond.

The dog rushed into the brushwood, and soon returned with the bird, pierced by the bullet, in his mouth.

“That is a good shot,” I said. “I congratulate you upon it, particularly with a fowling-piece.”

“Oh,” said Lucien, “I do not deserve your praise, for one barrel is rifled, and carries a ball like a carbine.”

“Never mind, such a shot with a carbine deserves honourable mention.”

“Bah!” said Orlandi; “why, with a carbine, Monsieur Lucien could hit a five-franc piece at three hundred paces.”

“And can you shoot with a pistol as well as with a gun?”

“Yes,” said Lucien, “very nearly. At twenty-five paces I can always divide six balls out of twelve on the blade of a knife.”

I took off my hat and saluted the speaker, saying,

“Is your brother an equally good shot?”

“My brother?” he replied. “Poor Louis! he has never handled gun nor pistol in his life. My great fear is that he will get mixed up in some affair in Paris, and, brave as he undoubtedly is, he will be killed to sustain the honour of the country.”

Lucien, as he spoke, thrust the pheasant into the great pocket of his velveteen coat.

“Now,” he said, “my dear Orlandi, till to-morrow farewell.”

“Till to-morrow, Monsieur Lucien?”

“I count upon your punctuality. At ten o’clock your friends and relatives will be at the end of the street. On the opposite side Colona, with his friends, will be likewise present, and we shall be on the steps of the church.”

“That is agreed, Monsieur Lucien. Many thanks for your trouble; and to you, monsieur,” he added, turning to me, “I am obliged for the honour you have done me.”

After this exchange of compliments we separated, Orlandi disappearing in the brushwood, while we took our way back to the village.

As for Diamond, he was puzzled which to follow, and he stood looking right and left at the Orlandi and ourselves alternately. After hesitating for about five minutes, he did us the honour to accompany Lucien and me.

I must confess that while I had been scaling the ruined walls I had had my misgivings as to how I should descend, for the descent is usually more difficult, under such circumstances, than the ascent.

But I was glad to see that Lucien, apparently divining my thoughts, took another route home. This road, also, was advantageous in another respect, for it was not so rough, and conversation was easier.

At length, finding the path quite smooth, I continued my questions to my companion, in accordance with my usual custom, and said—

“Now peace is made, I suppose?”

“Yes, and as you see, it has not been concluded without some trouble. I have been obliged to represent all the advances as having been made by the Colona; for, you see, they have had five men killed, while the Orlandi have lost but four. The former consented to the arrangement yesterday, and the latter to-day. The upshot of it all is that the Colona have agreed to hand over a live hen to the Orlandi, a concession which will prove them in the wrong. This last consideration has settled the matter.”

“And to-morrow this touching reconciliation will be effected?”

“Yes, to-morrow, at ten o’clock. You are still unfortunate; you hoped to see a Vendetta?”

The young man smiled bitterly as he continued—“But this is a finer thing than a Vendetta! isn’t it? For four hundred years, in Corsica, they have been talking of nothing else. Now you will see a reconciliation. I assure you it is a much rarer sight than a Vendetta!”

I could not help laughing.

“There, you see, you are laughing at us,” he said. “And you are right, after all. We are really a very droll people.”

“No,” I replied, “I was laughing at another strange thing, and that is, to see that you are annoyed with yourself because you have succeeded so well in bringing about a reconciliation.”

“Ah!” he replied. “If you had understood what we said you would have admired my eloquence. But come back in ten years’ time, and you will find us all speaking French.”

“You would make a first-rate pleader.”

“No, no—I am a referee—an arbitrator. What the deuce do you expect? Must not an arbitrator reconcile opposing factions? They might nominate me the arbiter between Heaven and Hell, that I might teach them to be reconciled, although, in my own heart, I should feel that I was a fool for my pains.”

I perceived that this conversation was only irritating to my new acquaintance, so I let it drop, and as he did not attempt to resume it, we proceeded in silence, and did not speak again until we had reached his house.

CHAPTER X.

GRIFFO was in attendance when we arrived, and before his master said a word the servant had taken the pheasant from Lucien's pocket. The valet had heard and had understood the object of the shot.

Madame de Franchi had not yet retired to rest, although she had gone upstairs, and she had left a message with Griffo to request her son to go into her room before she went to bed.

The young man first inquiring whether I was in want of anything, and on my reply in the negative, begged to be excused, to wait upon his mother.

Of course I acknowledged the politeness, and leaving him, went up to my own room.

I entered it with a certain feeling of self congratulation. I was pleased that I had divined the character of Louis, as I had found out Lucien's.

I undressed deliberately, and having taken down a volume of Victor Hugo's works, I lay down and enjoyed myself thoroughly with *Les Orientales.*

For the hundredth time I came upon *Le Feu du ciel,* and re-read it once more. I was fully occupied thus, when I fancied I heard a step upon the staircase, which stopped at my door. I suspected that my host had paused outside, wishing to bid me good-night, but scarcely liking to venture in for fear I should be asleep; so I cried out "Come in," and put my book upon the table.

In fact, as I spoke the door opened, and Lucien appeared.

"I trust you will excuse me," he said; "but it seems to me that I have been somewhat rude this evening, and I did not like to retire without making my excuses to you. So I have come to make the *amende honorable*—and as I daresay you have a number of questions to ask I am quite at your disposal."

"A thousand thanks," I replied; "but, thanks to your good nature, I am already well informed upon most topics concerning which I desired information, and there only remains one question, which I have made up my mind *not* to ask."

"Why?"

“Because it would appear too impertinent. However, if you remain here I confess I cannot answer for myself. I give you fair warning!”

“Well, then, go on. Curiosity unsatisfied is an uncomfortable companion, and awakens all kinds of suppositions; and two, at least, out of every three guesses concerning a fact are sure to be quite wide of the mark, and more likely to prejudice the object than to arrive at the truth concerning it.”

“Well, you may rest easy. My worst suspicions concerning you lead me to regard you as a sorcerer!”

The young man laughed loudly.

“The devil! You have inoculated me with some of your curiosity: tell me why, I entreat you—speak out!”

“Well, then, you have had the kindness to clear up many things which were before obscure to me; but one thing you did not touch upon. You have shown me your beautiful weapons, which I should like to examine again before my departure.”

“Granted. That’s one reason.”

“You have explained to me the inscriptions upon the carbines.”

“That’s another reason.”

“You have made it clear to me that, thanks to the phenomenon of your birth, you always experience—although far away from him, the same sensations that agitate your brother, and no doubt he feels equally your troubles.”

“That is a third reason for your belief in my sorcery!”

“Yes, but Madame de Franchi, when referring to the sadness you lately have experienced, and which leads you to think that some misfortune threatens your brother, asked you if you were sure he were not dead, and you replied ‘No, for then I should have seen him.’ ”

“Yes, I remember I did say so.”

“Well, then, if such an explanation may be entrusted to a stranger, will you explain to me how this could happen?”

The young man’s face had assumed a very grave expression as I was speaking, and I hesitated to pronounce the last words.

He was silent for a moment after I ceased to speak, and I said—

“I am afraid that I have been too indiscreet; pray forget that I spoke on the subject at all.”

“No,” he replied, quietly; “no, but you are a man of the world, and as such inclined to be somewhat incredulous. So, you see, I am rather afraid you will treat as a superstition an old family tradition which has been handed down for centuries.”

“Listen,” I said. “I can declare one thing, and that is that no one is more easily convinced than I am on all questions of legendary or traditionary lore—and I am always ready to give credence to things regarded as impossible!”

“So you believe in ghosts?”

“Do you wish to hear me tell how I saw one?”

“Yes, that will encourage me.”

“My father died in 1807, when I was three and a-half years old. When the doctor announced his speedy death I was sent away to the house of an old cousin in the country.

“She had made up a bed for me opposite her own, to which I was sent at the usual time, and, notwithstanding the trouble hanging over me, I feel fast asleep.

“I was suddenly awakened by three violent blows upon the door of the chamber; I got out of bed and walked across the floor to open it.

“ ‘Where are you going?’ asked my cousin.

“She had herself been awakened by the noise, but could not overcome her terror, knowing very well that as the front door was fastened no one would be likely to come to the room in which we were sleeping.

“ ‘I am going to open the door to my father, who has come to bid me adieu,’ I replied.

“It was then she jumped out of bed and insisted upon my lying down again. I cried for a long time and very bitterly, saying, ‘Papa is at the door, and I want to see papa again before he goes away for ever.’ ”

“And has the apparition ever returned since?” asked Lucien.

“No, although I have often called upon it; but, perhaps, Providence permitted to the innocence and purity of the child what it declines to accord to the sinfulness of the man.”

“Well, then,” said Lucien smiling, “in our family we are more fortunate than you.”

“Then you are enabled to see your deceased parents?”

“Yes, always when any great event is about to happen or has been accomplished.”

“And to what do you attribute this privilege?”

“I will tell you the tradition that has been handed down. You remember that I told you that Savilia died leaving two sons.”

“Yes, I recollect.”

“Well, these children grew up concentrating on each other the affection they would have bestowed on other relatives had any been alive. They swore nothing should separate them, not even death, and after some incantation or other they wrote with their blood on two pieces of parchment, which they exchanged, the reciprocal oath that whichever died first should appear to the other at the moment of his own death, and, subsequently, at every important epoch of his brother’s life. Three months afterwards one of the two brothers was killed in an ambuscade at the moment when the survivor was sealing a letter addressed to him. Just as he was pressing the signet upon the burning wax he heard a sigh behind him, and, turning round, perceived his brother standing behind him, and touching his shoulder, although he felt no pressure from the hand. Then, by a mechanical movement, he held out the letter that was

destined for his brother, the spirit took the letter and disappeared. On the night before the survivor's death, the ghost appeared again.

"There is no doubt that the brothers not only made this engagement for themselves, but it applies also to their descendants, for spirits have appeared not only at the moment of the death of those who had passed away, but also on the eve of any great event in their lives."

"And have you never seen any apparition?"

"No; but like my father, who, during the night preceding his death, was warned by his father that he was about to die, so I presume my brother and I inherit the privilege of our ancestors, not having done anything to forfeit it."

"And is this privilege accorded to the males of the family only?"

"Yes."

"That is strange."

"It is as I say."

I looked at the young man as he was speaking to me. He was cool, calm, and grave, and I could not help repeating with Hamlet—

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,

Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

In Paris I should have thought that this young man was hoaxing me; but here in Corsica, in a little unknown village, one must look upon him either as a foolish person endeavouring to deceive one for his own purposes, or as a privileged being amongst other men.

"And now," he said, after a long silence, "are you satisfied?"

"Yes, thank you," I answered. "I appreciate your confidence, and will promise to keep your secret."

“Oh, goodness,” he said, laughing, “there is no secret in the matter—the first peasant you meet would tell you all I have told you; I only hope that in Paris my brother has not boasted of this privilege, which would only cause men to laugh, and would frighten the ladies.”

So saying, he bade me good-night, and retired to his room.

Although fatigued, I was not able to sleep for some time, and when I did at last sleep I was restless.

I appeared to see in a confused manner in my dreams all the people with whom I had come in contact that day. It was only when day broke that I fell into a sound sleep, and was awakened by the striking of a clock, close to my bed, apparently.

I rang the bell, without rising, for my lazy predecessor had provided a bell-rope close at hand, the only one probably in the village.

Griffo immediately appeared, carrying some warm water; I saw that this valet had been well drilled.

Lucien, he said, had twice inquired whether I was awake, and had told him that if I did not ring before half-past nine he would call me.

It was now twenty-five minutes past nine, so it would not be long before he came.

He soon made his appearance, dressed very elegantly in French style, with a black frock coat and white trowsers.

He noticed that I looked at him with some surprise.

“I hope you are admiring my dress,” he said; “another proof that I am becoming civilized.”

“Yes, indeed,” I replied, “and I confess I am considerably astonished to find that you possess such a tailor in Ajaccio. I shall look quite the country bumpkin beside you.”

“I assure you my dress is quite Parisian, my dear friend. You see my brother and I being exactly the same height, he for a joke sent me a regular outfit, which I only wear on

grand occasions, to receive the prefect, for instance, or when the commandant makes his departmental inspection; or, better still, when I receive a guest like yourself, and when that pleasure is combined with such important business as we are about to accomplish to-day."

There was in this young man's manner of speaking a polished irony, and good-nature withal, which at once set people at their ease, and never passed the bounds of perfect politeness.

I simply bowed in reply, while he carefully inducted his hands into a pair of kid gloves of Paris manufacture.

As now attired, he looked a thorough Parisian.

All this time I was dressing rapidly.

A quarter to ten struck.

"Come along," said Lucien, "if you wish to see the play. I think it is time we took our seats, unless, indeed, you would rather have breakfast first, which appears to me only reasonable."

"Thank you, I seldom eat before eleven or twelve, so I am ready to face both operations."

"Come along, then."

I took up my hat and followed him upstairs.

CHAPTER XI.

FROM the top of the steps by which one reached the door of the chateau usually inhabited by Madame de Franchi and her son, one could look over the square.

This square, so silent the night before, was now full of people, but curiously enough there was not a man to be seen, the crowd was composed of women and children under twelve.

On the lowest step of the church door we could perceive a man girdled with a tri-coloured sash. This was the mayor.

Under the portico, another man clothed in black was seated at a table. This was the notary, and the written paper under his hand was the act of reconciliation.

I took my place beside the table with the sponsors of the Orlandi. On the other sida were the sponsors of the Colona faction. Lucien stood behind the notary so as to show that he acted for both.

In the choir of the church one could perceive the priests ready to solemnize the mass.

The clock struck ten.

At that moment a shiver pervaded the crowd and all eyes were turned towards the end of the street, if one could so call the unequal interval between the houses.

Immediately on the mountain side appeared the Orlandi, and in the direction of the river was the Colona, each followed by his partisans, but as had been arranged neither party carried arms.

The two chiefs presented a very vivid contrast.

Orlandi, as I said, was tall, brown, agile and thin.

Colona, on the other hand, was short, stoutish, and vigorous; he had red hair and beard, both of which wore short and curly.

Both men carried olive branches, the symbol of peace, which was the idea of the worthy mayor.

But besides this olive branch, the Colona held a white fowl by the feet; this bird was destined to replace that which had given rise to the quarrel, and the fowl was alive.

This last was a point that had long been discussed, and had very nearly upset the whole arrangement. The Colona looked upon it as a double humiliation to have to render back a living fowl for the one which his aunt had thrown dead in the face of the cousin of the Orlandi.

However, by force of reasoning, Lucien had persuaded the Colona to provide the fowl, as he had managed to induce the Orlandi to accept it.

When the two rivals appeared, the bells, which until now had been silent, broke forth into a merry peal.

When they caught sight of each other both Orlandi and his brother made a similar movement of repulsion, but, nevertheless, they both continued their way.

Just opposite the church door they stopped, a few paces only dividing them.

If three days previously these men had caught sight of each other within a hundred paces, one of the two certainly would have remained on the field.

For about five minutes there was a profound silence, a silence which, notwithstanding the peaceful nature of the ceremony, was anything but pacific.

Then at length the mayor spoke.

“Well, Colona,” he said, “do you not know that you have to speak first?”

Colona made an effort and muttered some words in the Corsican patois.

I fancied I understood him to say that he regretted having been in Vendetta with his good neighbour Orlandi, and that he offered in reparation the white hen which he held in his hand.

Orlandi waited until his adversary had finished speaking, and replied in some words which I took to be a promise that he would forget everything but the solemn reconciliation that had that day taken place in the presence of Monsieur Lucien and the notary.

After that the rivals preserved a dogged silence.

“Now, gentlemen,” said the mayor, “you have only got to shake hands.”

By a simultaneous movement the rivals clasped their hands behind their backs.

The mayor descended from his elevated seat, and seizing the hand of Colona sought for the hand of the Orlandi, and having possessed himself of both he, with some effort, which he endeavoured to conceal with a smile, succeeded in joining the two hands.

The notary seized the moment, while the mayor held the two hands together, to stand up and read the deed declaring the feud to be at an end. The document was as follows:—

“In the presence of us, Giuseppe Antonia Sarrola, Notary Royal of Sullacaro in the Province of Sartène.

“In the grand place of the village opposite the church, in the presence of the mayor, the sponsors, and all the population.

“Between Gaetano Orso Orlandi, called Orlandini.

“And Marco Vincenzio Colona, called Schioppone.

“It is solemnly ratified as follows:—

“From this day, 4th of March, 1841, the Vendetta declared between the families shall cease.

“From the same period they shall live together as good neighbours and friends, as their relatives did before the unhappy disunion which has so long alienated their families.

“In witness whereof they have signed these presents under the portico of the village church, with Monsieur Polo Arbori, mayor of the commune, Monsieur Lucien de Franchi, arbitrator, the sponsors of the two contracting parties, and ourselves the Notary.

“Sullacaro, 4th of March, 1841.”

I note with admiration that the mayor had very prudently omitted all mention of the hen which had put the Colona in such a bad position with the Orlandi.

So the face of the Colona got brighter in proportion as the figure of the Orlandi clouded; the latter looked at the hen which he was holding in his hand as if he had a great idea to throw it in the face of the Colona. But a glance from Lucien de Franchi checked this intention in the bud.

The mayor saw that he had no time to lose; he stepped back, holding the hands of the rivals, and without loosing them for a moment.

Then, in order to anticipate any discussion at the moment of signature, in view of each considering it a concession to sign before the other, he took the pen and wrote his own name first, and thus converting the shame into an honour, passed the pen to Orlandi, who took it, signed, and passed it to Lucien, who in his turn handed it to Colona, who made a cross.

At that moment the Te Deum was chanted as if for a victory.

We all signed afterwards, without distinction of rank or title, as the nobility of France a hundred years before had signed the protestation against Monsieur le Due du Maine.

Then the heroes of the day entered the church, and knelt in the places appointed for them.

I saw that from this moment Lucien appeared perfectly at ease. All had been finished satisfactorily: the reconciliation had taken place not only before man but before Heaven.

The service terminated without any incident worth recording; and when it was over, Orlandi and Colona passed out with the same ceremony as before.

At the church door, at the instance of the mayor, they once again shook hands; and then each one, attended by his friends and relatives, made his way to his house, which for three years he had not entered.

Lucien and myself went back to Madame de Franchi's house, where dinner awaited us.

It is not difficult to perceive by the attentions I received that Lucien had read my name over my shoulder when I was signing the paper, and the name was not altogether unknown to him.

In the morning I had announced to Lucien my intention to depart after dinner. I was urgently recalled to Paris by the rehearsals of “Un Mariage sous Louis XV.,” and notwithstanding the importunities of mother and son, I persisted in adhering to my first determination.

Lucien then asked permission to take advantage of my offer, and to take a letter to his brother; and Madame Franchi made me promise that I would hand this letter myself to her son.

There was really no trouble in the matter, for Louis de Franchi, like a true Parisian as he was, lived at No. 7, Rue du Helder.

I asked permission to see Lucien’s room once again, and he himself conducted me thither, explaining everything to me.

“You know,” he said, “if anything strikes you I hope you will take it, it is yours.”

I unhooked a small poignard hanging in an obscure corner, as if to show that it had no value attached to it; and as I had seen Lucien notice with some curiosity my hunting-belt and its appurtenances, I begged him to accept it, and he had the good taste to take it without being pressed.

At that moment Griffo appeared to tell me that the horse was saddled and the guide waiting.

I put aside the little present I had intended to give to Griffo, which consisted of a hunting-knife and two pistols attached to it, the barrels of which were hidden in the hilt.

I never saw anybody so delighted as he was at this present.

I descended, and found Madame de Franchi at the bottom of the staircase, where she was waiting to bid me good-bye, in the same place where she had bade me welcome. I kissed her hand, feeling great respect for such a simple-minded and yet so dignified a woman.

Lucien accompanied me to the door.

“On any other day,” he said, “I would saddle my horse, and ride with you beyond the mountain, but to-day I dare not quit Sullacaro for fear that one or other of the newly-made friends might commit some folly.”

“You are quite right,” I said; “and for my own part, I am very glad to have assisted at a ceremony so new to Corsica.”

“Yes,” he said, “you may well congratulate yourself, for you have to-day witnessed a thing which is enough to make our ancestors turn in their graves.”

“I understand—their word was sufficient; they did not need a notary to reconcile them, I suppose?”

“They were never reconciled at all.”

He then shook me by the hand.

“Have you no message for your brother?” I said.

“Yes, certainly, if it will not incommode you to deliver it.”

“Well, then, let us embrace. I can only deliver that which I am able to receive.”

So we embraced each other.

“We shall see you again some day?” I said.

“Yes, if you come to Corsica.”

“No, but won’t you come to Paris?”

“I shall never go there,” replied Lucien.

“In any case, you will find my card on the mantelpiece in your brother’s room—do not forget the address.”

“I will promise you that should any event call me to the Continent you shall have my first visit.”

“Very well, that is agreed.”

We shook hands once again and parted; but I noticed, so long as he could see me, he followed me with his eyes.

All was quiet in the village, although, of course, there was the usual agitation which follows the completion of a great public act; and as I went along the street I sought my friend Orlandi, who had never addressed a word to me, nor even thanked me; and so I passed the last house in the village, and entered the open country without having seen any one like him.

I thought he had entirely forgotten me, and under the circumstances I quite excused him, but before I got very far out of the village I perceived a man stride from the underwood, and place himself in the middle of the road. I recognized him at once as the man who in my great regard for appearances, and in my impatience, I had accused of ingratitude.

He was dressed in the same costume as he had appeared in the previous evening in the ruins of Vicentello.

When I was about twenty paces distant from him he took off his hat; while I spurred my horse so as not to keep Orlandi waiting.

“Monsieur,” he said, “I did not wish you to quit Sullacaro without accepting my thanks for the kindness you have shown to a poor peasant like myself, and as in the village I had not the heart, and could not command the language, to thank you, I waited for you here.”

“I am obliged to you,” I said; “but it was not necessary to take any trouble about it, and all the honour has been mine.”

“And after all, monsieur,” continued the bandit, “the habit of four years is not easily overcome. The mountain air is strong at first, almost suffocating—but now when I go to sleep in a house I should be afraid the roof would fall upon me.”

“But surely,” I said, “you will now resume your former habits. I understand you have a house, a field, and a vineyard.”

“Yes, but my sister looks after the house; but the Lucquois are there to work in the field, and to raise the grapes. We Corsicans do not work.”

“What do you do, then?”

“We overlook the labourers. We walk about with a gun upon our shoulders.”

“Well, my dear Monsieur Orlandi,” I said, extending my hand, “I wish you good luck; but recollect that my honour as well as your own will be compromised if you fire at anything but game or wild animals. You must never on any account draw a trigger on the Colona family.”

“Ah! your Excellency,” he replied, with an expression of countenance which I never remarked except amongst the natives of Normandy, “that hen they gave us was a very thin one.”

And without another word he disappeared in the brushwood.

I continued my journey thinking that it was very likely that the meagre fowl would be the cause of another rupture between the Orlandi and the Colona.

That evening I slept at Albitucia, next day I reached Ajaccio.

Eight days afterwards I was in Paris.

CHAPTER XII.

THE day I arrived in Paris I called upon M. Louis de Franchi. He was not at home.

I left my card, with an intimation that I had just returned from Sullacaro, and that I was the bearer of a letter from M. Lucien, his brother. I inquired when he would be at home, as I had undertaken to deliver the letter with my own hand.

To conduct me to his master's study, where I wished to write a note, the valet led me through the dining-room and the *salon.*

I looked around me as I proceeded with a curiosity which will be understood, and I recognized the influence of the same taste which I had already perceived at Sullacaro; only the taste was here set off by true Parisian elegance. M. Louis de Franchi certainly appeared to have a very charming lodging for a bachelor.

Next morning, about eleven o'clock, my servant announced M. Louis de Franchi. I told the man to offer my visitor the papers and to say that I would wait on him as soon as I was dressed.

In five minutes I presented myself.

M. Louis do Franchi who was, no doubt from a sense of courtesy, reading a tale I had contributed to *La Presse,* raised his head as the door opened, and I entered.

I stood perfectly astounded at the resemblance between the two brothers. He rose.

"Monsieur," he said, "I could scarcely credit my good fortune when I read your note yesterday on my return home. I have pictured you twenty times so as to assure myself that it was in accord with your portraits, and at last I, this morning, determined to present myself at your house without considering the hour, and I fear I have been too early."

"I hope you will excuse me if I do not at once acknowledge your kindness in suitable terms, but may I inquire whether I have the honour to address M. Louis or M. Lucien de Franchi?"

“Are you serious? Yes, the resemblance is certainly wonderful, and when I was last at Sullacaro nearly every one mistook one of us for the other, yet, if he has not abjured the Corsican dress, you have seen him in a costume, which would make a considerable difference in our appearance.”

“And justly so,” I replied; “but as chance would have it, he was, when I left, dressed exactly as you are now, except that he wore white trowsers, so that I was not able to separate your presence from his memory with the difference in dress of which you speak, but,” I continued, taking the letter from my pocket-book, “I can quite understand you are anxious to have news from home, so pray read this which I would have left at your house yesterday had I not promised Madame de Franchi to give it to you myself.”

“They were all quite well when you left, I hope?”

“Yes, but somewhat anxious.”

“On my account?”

“Yes; but read that letter, I beg of you.”

“If you will excuse me.”

So Monsieur Franchi read the letter while I made some cigarettes. I watched him as his eyes travelled rapidly over the paper, and I heard him murmur, “Dear Lucien, Darling Mother——yes——yes——I understand.”

I had not yet recovered from the surprise the strange resemblance between the brothers had caused me, but now I noticed what Lucien had told me, that Louis was paler, and spoke French better than he did.

“Well,” I said when he had finished reading the letter, and had lighted the cigarette, “You see, as I told you, that they are anxious about you, and I am glad that their fears are unfounded.”

“Well, no,” he said gravely, “not altogether; I have not been ill, it is true, but I have been out of sorts, and my indisposition has been augmented by this feeling that my brother is suffering with me.”

“Monsieur Lucien has already told me as much, and had I been sceptical I should now have been quite sure that what he said was a fact. I should require no further proof than I now have. So you, yourself, are convinced, monsieur, that your brother’s health depends to a certain extent on your own.”

“Yes, perfectly so.”

“Then,” I continued, “as your answer will doubly interest me, may I ask, not from mere curiosity, if this indisposition of which you speak is likely soon to pass away?”

“Oh, you know, monsieur, that the greatest griefs give way to time, and that my heart, even if seared, will heal. Meantime, however, pray accept my thanks once more, and permit me to call on you occasionally to have a chat about Sullacaro.”

“With the greatest pleasure,” I replied; “but why not now continue our conversation, which is equally agreeable to both of us. My servant is about to announce breakfast. Will you do me the honour to join me, and we can talk at our ease?”

“I regret that it is impossible; I have an appointment with the Chancellor at twelve o’clock, and you will understand that such a young advocate as I am cannot afford to stay away.”

“Ah, it is probably only about that Orlandi and Colona affair, as you, no doubt, are aware, and I can re-assure you on that point, for I myself signed the contract as sponsor for this Orlandi.”

“Yes, my brother said as much.”

“But,” he added, looking at his watch, “it is nearly twelve o’clock; I must go and inform the Chancellor that my brother has redeemed my word.”

“Ah, yes, most religiously, I can answer for that.”

“Dear Lucien, I knew quite well, though our sentiments do not agree on this point, that he would do it for me.”

“Yes, and I assure you it cost him something to comply.”

“We will speak of all this later, for you can well understand how pleasant it is for me to re-visit with your assistance my mother, my brother, and our home surroundings, so if you will tell me when you are disengaged——”

“That will be somewhat difficult; for this next few days I shall be very busy, but will you tell me where I am likely to find you.”

“Listen,” he said, “to-morrow is Mi-Careme, is it not?”

“To-morrow?”

“Yes.”

“Well?”

“Are you going to the Opera Ball?”

“Yes and No. Yes, if you will meet me there. No, if I have no object in going.”

“I must go, I am obliged to be there.”

“Ah, yes,” I said laughing, “I understand, as you said just now, time heals up the greatest griefs, and your seared heart must be healed.”

“You are under a misapprehension, for I shall probably sustain new tortures by going.”

“Then do not go.”

“But what is one to do in this world? We cannot always do what we want; I am dragged thither by fate in spite of myself. I know I had better not go, and nevertheless I shall go.”

“Well, then, to-morrow, at the Opera.”

“Yes, agreed.”

“At what time?”

“Half-past twelve midnight, if that will suit you.”

“And whereabouts?”

“In the *foyer*—at one, I will be in front of the clock.”

“That is understood.”

We then shook hands and he left the house quickly. It was on the stroke of twelve.

As for me, I occupied myself all the afternoon and all the next day in those employments as a man is obliged to undertake on his return from a lengthened tour.

At half-past twelve o’clock at night I was at the rendezvous.

Louis had been waiting some time—he had been following a mask which he thought he recognized, but the lady had been lost in the crowd, and he had not been able to rejoin her.

I wished to speak of Corsica, but Louis was too absent to follow out such a grave subject of conversation. His eyes were constantly fixed on the clock, and suddenly he rushed away from my side, exclaiming:

“Ah, there is my bouquet of violets.”

He pushed through the crowd to join a woman who, evidently with a purpose, was holding a large bouquet of violets in her hand.

There were bouquets of every species in the foyer, and I myself was soon accosted by a bouquet of camellias, which congratulated me upon my safe return to Paris.

To the camellias succeeded a bouquet of rose-pompons.

To these succeeded a bouquet of heliotrope.

In fact I was engaged with my fifteenth bouquet when I encountered D——.

“Ah, is it you, *mon cher?*” he cried. “Welcome back; you have returned just in time. I have a little supper party this evening—so-and-so and so-and-so—and we shall count upon you.”

“A thousand thanks, my dear fellow; but though I am strongly tempted to accept your invitation, I can’t. I am engaged to somebody.”

“Yes; but everyone else will bring somebody also,” said D——. “It is quite understood that there are to be six water-bottles, whose destiny it is to refresh bouquets.”

“Ah, you are mistaken. I shall have no bouquet to put in a water-bottle; I am with a friend.”

“Well, you know the proverb, ‘Friends of our friends.’ ”

“It is a young gentleman whom you do not know.”

“Well, then, we will make his acquaintance.”

“I will tell him of his good fortune.”

“Yes, and if he decline, bring him by force.”

“I will do what I can, I promise you. At what time?”

“Three o’clock; but as supper will remain on table till six you have ample margin.”

“Very well.”

A bouquet of myosotis, which perhaps had heard the latter portion of our conversation, then took D——’s arm and walked on with him.

Shortly afterwards I met Louis, who had by this time got rid of his violets.

As the lady who honoured me with her attention just then was a trifle dull, I despatched her to one of my friends, and took Louis’ arm.

“Well,” I said, “have you learnt what you wanted to know?”

“Oh, yes! You know that at a masked ball people talk of the very things they ought to leave you in ignorance of.”

“My poor friend,” I said, “pardon me for thus addressing you; but it appears to me that I know you since I have known your brother. Look here—you are unhappy, are not you? Now what is it?”

“Oh, my goodness! Nothing worth talking about.”

I saw that he did not wish to speak on the subject, so I said no more.

We took two or three turns in silence.—I was quite indifferent, for I expected nobody, but he was anxiously examining every domino that passed.

At length I said, “Do you know what you might do to-night?”

He started like a man suddenly aroused.

“I! No. I beg your pardon; what did you say?”

“I was about to propose a distraction which it seems to me you need.”

“What is it?”

“Come to supper with a friend of mine, with me.”

“Oh, no—I am not in a festive humour.”

“Bah! They will talk nothing but nonsense, and that will amuse you.”

“Well—but I am not invited!”

“You mistake—for you are.”

“It is very kind on your part—but ’pon my word I am not worthy of—”

Just then we crossed D——. He seemed very much engaged with his bouquet of myosotis. Nevertheless he saw me.

“Well,” he said, “is it settled? Three o’clock.”

“Less settled than ever,” I replied—“I cannot join you.”

“Go to the Devil, then!”

And with this pious ejaculation he continued his course.

“Who is that gentleman?” inquired Louis.

“That is D——, one of my friends; a very cheerful youth, though he is the manager of one of our most respectable papers.”

“Monsieur D——!” exclaimed Louis. “Do you know *him?*”

“Certainly. I have known him for some years.”

“And is he the person with whom you are invited to sup this evening?”

“Yes, the same.”

“Then it was to his house you intended to take me?”

“Yes.”

“Then that alters the case. I accept, and with very great pleasure.”

“All right. That settles the question.”

“Perhaps, after all, I ought not to go,” muttered Louis, smiling sadly. “But you remember what I said yesterday about my destiny. Here is the proof. I should have done better not to have come here this evening.”

At this moment we again encountered D——. “My dear fellow,” I said, “I have changed my mind!”

“And you will join us?”

“Yes.”

“Bravo! But I ought to mention one thing.”

“That is?”

“That whoever sups with us to-night, sups with us again to-morrow evening.”

“By what law of society is that?”

“By the laws of the wager made with Chateau Renaud.”

I felt Louis’ arm quiver as it rested on mine—I turned round; but though his face was deadly pale, it was impassable.

“What is the wager?” I inquired.

“Oh, it would occupy too much time to repeat here, and, besides, some one interested might overhear, and it might thus be lost.”

“What wonderful discretion you possess! At three, then.”

“At three!”

Once more we separated, and as I glanced at the clock I saw it then was thirty-five minutes past two.

“Do you know this M. de Chateau Renaud?” asked Louis, who vainly attempted to command his voice, and to conceal his emotion.

“Only by sight. I have met him occasionally in society.”

“Then he is not a friend of yours?”

“Not even an acquaintance.”

“Ah, so much the better,” replied Louis.

“Why so?”

“For no particular reason.”

“But do you know him?”

“Indirectly.”

Notwithstanding this evasive answer, it was easy to perceive that between Louis and Chateau Renaud there existed one of those mysterious bonds which could only be forged by a woman. An instinctive feeling assured me that it would be best for all if he and I returned home quietly.

“Will you take my advice, Monsieur de Franchi,” I said.

“About what? tell me!”

“Do not go to supper at D——’s house.”

“Why not? Does he not expect us. Have you not told him that you will bring a friend?”

“Yes, but that is not the point.”

“What is the point then?”

“I am sure you had better not go, that is all!”

“But surely you have some reason to give for your change of opinion; just now you were insisting on my presence at D——’s against my will.”

“I did not then know that we should meet Chateau Renaud.”

“But that is all the better. I believe he is a very pleasant companion, and I shall be glad to make his acquaintance.”

“Very well,” I replied—“so be it. Shall we go now?”

We accordingly went downstairs for our paletots.

D—— lived within a short distance of the opera house, the morning was very fine, and I hoped that the open air would enliven my companion. So I proposed that we should walk, and this he agreed to.

CHAPTER XIII.

WE found many of my friends assembled—habitués of the opera lobbies and of the greenroom, and, as I had expected, a few unmasked “bouquets” anxious for the time to come when the water-bottles would be used—supper time!

I introduced Louis to several friends, and it is needless to say that he was politely received and welcomed.

Ten minutes after our arrival D—— entered, accompanied by his bouquet of myosotis, who unmasked herself with a freedom and precision which argued a long acquaintance with these sort of parties.

I introduced Louis to D——.

“Now,” said B——, “if all the presentations have been made, I suggest that we present ourselves at table.”

“All the presentations are made, but all the guests have not arrived,” replied D——.

“Who is expected then?”

“Chateau Renaud is still wanting to complete the party.”

“Ah, just so. By-the-by, was there not some bet?”

“Yes. We laid a wager of a supper for twelve, that he would not bring a certain lady here to-night.”

“And who is the lady,” asked the bouquet of myosotis, “who is so very shy as to be made the subject of a bet?”

I looked at Louis de Franchi. He was outwardly composed, but pale as a corpse.

“Faith, I don’t know that there is any great harm in telling you her name, especially as none of you know her I think. She is Madame——”

Louis placed his hand upon D——’s arm.

“Monsieur,” he said; “will you grant me a favour? As a new acquaintance I venture to ask it!”

“What is it, monsieur?”

“Do not name the lady who is expected with M. de Chateau Renaud, you know she is a married woman!”

“Oh yes, but her husband is at Smyrna, in the East Indies, in Mexico, or some such place. When a husband lives so far away it is nearly the same as having no husband at all.”

“Her husband will return in a few days. I know him. He is a gallant fellow. I would wish, if possible, to spare him the chagrin of learning on his return that his wife had made one at this supper-party.”

“Excuse me, monsieur,” said D——, “I was not aware that you are acquainted with the lady, and I did not think she was married. But since you know her and her husband——”

“I do know them.”

“Then we must exercise greater discretion. Ladies and gentlemen, whether Chateau Renaud comes or not—whether he wins or loses his bet, I must beg of you all to keep this adventure secret.”

We all promised, not because our moral senses were offended, but because we were hungry and wished to begin our supper.

“Thank you, monsieur,” said Louis to D——, holding out his hand to him. “I assure you you are acting like a thorough gentleman in this matter.”

We then passed into the supper-room, and each one took his allotted place. Two chairs were vacant, those reserved for Chateau Renaud and his expected companion.

The servant was about to remove them.

“No,” said the master, “let them remain; Chateau Renaud has got until four o’clock to decide his wager. At four o’clock if he is not here he will have lost.”

I could not keep my eyes from Louis de Franchi; I saw him watching the timepiece anxiously. It was then 3.40 A.M.

“Is that clock right?” asked Louis.

“That is not my concern,” said D——, laughing. “I set it by Chateau Renaud’s watch, so that there may be no mistake.”

“Well, gentlemen,” said the bouquet of myosotis, “it seems we cannot talk of anything but Chateau Renaud and his unknown fair one. We are getting horribly ‘slow,’ I think.”

“You are quite right, my dear,” replied V——. “There are so many women of whom we can speak, and who are only waiting to be spoken to——”

“Let us drink their health,” cried D——.

So we did, and then the champagne went round briskly; every guest had a bottle at his or her elbow.

I noticed that Louis scarcely tasted his wine; “Drink, man!” I whispered: “don’t you see that she will not come?”

“It still wants a quarter to four,” said he; “at four o’clock, even though I shall be late in commencing, I promise you I will overtake some of you.”

“Oh, very well!” I replied.

While we had been exchanging these few words in a low tone, the conversation had become general around the table. Occasionally D—— and Louis glanced at the clock, which ticked regularly on without any care for the impatience of the two men who were so intent upon its movements.

At five minutes to four I looked at Louis.

“To your health,” I said.

He took his glass, smiled, and raised it to his lips. He had drunk about half its contents when a ring was heard at the front door.

I did not think it possible that Louis could become any paler than he was, but I saw my mistake then.

“ ’Tis he,” he muttered.

“Yes, but perhaps he may have come alone,” I replied.

”We shall see in a moment.”

The sound of the bell had attracted everybody’s attention, and the most profound silence suddenly succeeded the buzz of conversation which had till then prevailed.

Then the sound of talking was heard in the anteroom.

D—— rose and opened the door.

“I can recognize her voice,” said Louis, as he grasped my arm with a vice-like grip.

“We shall see! wait! be a man!” I answered. “It must be evident that if she has thus come to supper with a man, of her own will, to the house of a stranger, she is not worthy your sympathy.”

“I beg, madam, that you will enter,” said D——’s voice in the outer room. “We are all friends here I assure you.”

“Yes, come in, my dear Emily,” said M. de Chateau Renaud, “you need not take off your mask if you do not wish to do so.”

“The wretch,” muttered Louis.

At that moment a lady entered, dragged in rather than assisted by D——, who fancied he was doing the honours, and by Chateau Renaud.

“Three minutes to four,” said Chateau Renaud to D——, in a low voice.

“Quite right, my dear fellow, you have won.”

“Not yet, monsieur,” said the young unknown addressing Chateau Renaud, and drawing herself up to her full height. “I can now understand your persistence. You laid a wager that I would sup here. Is that so?”

Chateau Renaud was silent. Then addressing D——, she continued.

“Since this man cannot answer, will you, monsieur, reply. Did not M. de Chateau Renaud wager that he would bring me here to supper to-night?”

“I will not hide from you, madame, that he flattered us with that hope,” replied D——.

“Well, then, M. de Chateau Renaud has lost, for I was quite unaware he was bringing me here. I believed we were to sup at the house of a friend of my own. So it appears to me that M. de Chateau Renaud has not won his wager.”

“But now you are here, my dear Emily, you may as well remain; won’t you? See, we have a good company and some pleasant young ladies too!”

“Now that I am here,” replied the unknown, “I will thank the gentleman who appears to be the master of the house for the courtesy with which he has treated me. But as, unfortunately, I cannot accept his polite invitation I will beg M. Louis de Franchi to see me home.”

Louis with a bound placed himself between the speaker and Chateau Renaud.

“I beg to observe, madam,” said the latter between his shut teeth, “that I brought you hither and consequently I am the proper person to conduct you home.”

“Gentlemen,” said the unknown, “you are five, I put myself into your honourable care. I trust you will defend me from the violence of M. de Chateau Renaud!”

Chateau Renaud made a movement. We all rose at once.

“Very good, madame,” he said. “You are at liberty. I know with whom I have to reckon.”

“If you refer to me, sir,” replied Louis de Franchi with an air of hauteur impossible to describe, “you will find me all day to-morrow at the Rue du Helder, No. 7.”

“Very well, monsieur. Perhaps I shall not have the pleasure to call upon you myself, but I hope that two friends of mine may be as cordially received in my place.”

“That was all that was necessary,” said Louis, shrugging his shoulders disdainfully. “A challenge before a lady! Come, madame,” he continued, offering his arm. “Believe me, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the honour you do me.”

And then they left the room, amidst the most profound silence.

“Well, gentlemen, so it seems I have lost,” said Chateau Renaud, when the door closed. “That’s all settled! To-morrow evening all of you sup with me at the Frères Provençaux.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next day, or rather the same day, at ten o'clock, I called upon M. Louis de Franchi.

As I was ascending the staircase, I met two young men coming down. One was evidently a civilian, the other wore the Legion of Honour, and though in*mufti* I could see he was an officer.

I had, no doubt, that these gentlemen had just been with M. de Franchi, and I watched them downstairs. Then I continued my way to Louis' apartments and rang the bell.

The servant opened the door. His master was in his study.

When the man announced me, Louis, who was writing, looked up and exclaimed—

"Ah, welcome! I was just writing to you. I am very glad to see you. Joseph, I am not at home to any one."

The servant went out and left us alone.

"Didn't you meet two gentlemen upon the stairs?" asked Louis, as he placed a chair.

"Yes, one of them was decorated."

"The same."

"I fancied they had called upon you."

"You are quite right."

"Did they come on behalf of M. de Chateau Renaud?"

"They are his seconds."

"Ah! so he has taken this matter seriously it seems."

"He could scarcely do otherwise," replied Louis.

"So they came to——."

“To request me to name two friends who would confer with them; I thought of you.”

“I am really honoured by your kindness. But I cannot go alone.”

“I have also written to ask an old friend, the Baron Giordano Martelli, to breakfast here. He will come at eleven. We will breakfast together, and at twelve, perhaps, you will be kind enough to go and see these gentlemen who have promised to remain at home until three o’clock. Here are their names and addresses.”

Louis handed me two cards as he spoke.

One card represented the Baron René de Chateaugrand, the other M. Adrien de Boissy.

The former lived in the Rue de la Paix, No. 12.

The latter, who I now saw, belonged to the army, was a lieutenant of Chasseurs d’Afrique, and lived in the Rue de Lille, No. 29.

I turned the cards over and over in my fingers.

“Well, what embarrasses you?” asked Louis.

“I should like to be told frankly if you look upon this as a serious matter. You know we must mould our conduct upon that.”

“Indeed, I do consider it a very serious matter. You heard me place myself at M. de Chateau Renaud’s disposal, he has sent to me. I must now go with the current.”

“Yes, of course, but after all——”

“Go on,” said Louis, smilingly.

“After all,” I continued, “we must know what you are going to fight for. We cannot put two men up to cut and slash each other without having some ground for the encounter.”

“Very well, let me tell you in as few words as possible, the head and front of the offending.

“When I first arrived in Paris I was introduced by a friend of mine, a captain in the navy, to his wife. She was young and beautiful. She made a deep impression upon me, and as I was really afraid I might end by falling in love with her, I very rarely went to my friend’s house, although frequently pressed to do so.

“My friend was rather piqued at my absence, and at last I frankly told him the truth, that his wife being so charming I was rather afraid to go to his house. He laughed, shook hands with me, and asked me, even pressed me, to dine with him that same evening.

“ ‘My dear Louis,’ said he, after dinner. ‘In a few weeks I shall sail for Mexico. I may be absent three months, perhaps six—or longer. We sailors sometimes know when we shall sail, but never when we may return. To you, I commend Emily during my absence. Emily, I beg of you to look upon M. Louis de Franchi as a brother.’

“The lady gave me her hand in token of agreement. I was stupefied! I did not know what to say, and I daresay I appeared very stupid to my future sister.

“Three weeks after this my friend sailed.

“During those three weeks he insisted that I should dine at least once a week with them *en famille.*

“Emily’s mother then came to live with her. I need scarcely say that her husband’s confidence was not abused, and though I loved her dearly I regarded her simply as a sister.

“Six months elapsed.

“Emily’s mother still remained with her, but when he went away, her husband had entreated her to receive as usual. There was nothing my poor friend had a greater horror of than to appear as a jealous husband. He adored Emily and had every confidence in her.

“So Emily continued to receive, and they were very friendly receptions. But her mother’s presence silenced all scandal or cause for it, and no one could say a word against her reputation.

“At the end of three months or so M. de Chateau Renaud appeared.

“You believe in presentiments, I daresay. When I first saw that man I disliked him and would not speak to him. I hated him.

“But why I disliked him I cannot tell you. I did!

“Most likely because I saw that even at his first appearance Emily seemed inclined to like him, and he evidently admired her. Perhaps I am mistaken, but, as at the bottom of my heart I had never ceased to love Emily, I suspect I was jealous.

“So on the next occasion I did not lose sight of M. de Chateau Renaud. Perhaps he noticed my looks and it seemed to me that he was chatting in undertones to Emily and holding me up to ridicule.

“Had I yielded to my feelings I would have challenged him that evening, but I reflected that such conduct would be absurd, and restrained myself.

“Every Wednesday thenceforth was a greater trial than the last.

“M. de Chateau Renaud is quite a man of the world, a dandy—a lion—I know how superior he is to me in many respects. But it seems to me that Emily values him more highly than he deserves.

“Soon I found out that I was not the only one who remarked her preference for M. de Chateau Renaud, and this preference increased to such an extent and became so obvious that one day Giordano, who like me was an habitué of the house, spoke to me about it.

“From that moment my resolution was taken. I determined to speak to Emily on the subject, convinced that she was only acting thoughtlessly and I had but to call her attention to the matter to have it remedied.

“But to my great astonishment she took my remonstrances in joke, pretended that I was mad, and that those who agreed with me were as stupid as I was.

“However, I insisted.

“Emily only replied, that she would leave to my own decision as to whether a man in love was not necessarily a prejudiced judge.

“I remained perfectly stupefied; her husband must have told her everything.

“Now you will understand that under these circumstances, and being an unhappy and jealous lover, and only making myself objectionable to the lady, I ceased to visit at the house.

“But although I did not go to her parties I did not the less hear the gossip that was afloat, nor was I the less unhappy, for these reports were assuming a tangible shape.

“I resolved therefore to write to her, and beg her in the strongest language of which I was capable, for her own and her husband’s sake, to be careful. She never answered my letter.

“Some time afterwards I heard it publicly stated that Emily was actually the mistress of Chateau Renaud. What I suffered I cannot express.

“It was then my poor brother became conscious of my grief.

“Then, after about a fortnight, you came back to Paris. The very day you called upon me I received an anonymous letter from a lady unknown appointing a meeting at the Opera Ball.

“This woman said that she had certain information to convey to me respecting a lady friend of mine, whose Christian name only she would mention.

“The name was Emily.

“My correspondent said I should recognize her by her carrying a bouquet of violets.

“I told you at the time that I did not wish to go to the ball, but I repeat I was hurried thither by fate.

“I went as you know. I found my domino at the place at the hour indicated. She confirmed what I had already heard respecting Chateau Renaud and Emily, and if I wished proof, she would give it me, for Chateau Renaud had made a bet that he would take his new mistress to supper at M. D——’s house that evening.

“Chance revealed to me that you knew M. D——, you suggested that I should accompany you. I accepted, you know the rest.”

“Now, what more could I do but await and accept the proposals that were made to me?”

“But,” I said, at length, as a sensation of fear crossed my mind, “I am afraid I heard your brother say that you had never handled a sword or a pistol.”

“That is quite true!”

“Then you are absolutely at the mercy of your adversary!”

“I cannot help it. I am in the hands of Providence.”

CHAPTER XV.

AS Louis was speaking, the servant announced the Baron Giordano Martelli.

He was a young Corsican from Sartène. He had served in the 11th Regiment, in which his gallantry had secured him promotion at the age of twenty-three.

“Well,” he said, after having bowed to me, “so things have come to a crisis, and no doubt you will soon have a visit from the seconds of Monsieur de Chateau Renaud.”

“They have been here already.”

“I suppose they have left their names and addresses?”

“Here are their cards.”

“Good.”

“Well, your servant has just told me that breakfast is waiting. Suppose we sit down, and after breakfast we can return their visit.”

We entered the *salle à manger,* and put aside all business for the present.

During the meal Louis questioned me closely concerning my journey in Corsica, and I told him all the incidents with which the reader is acquainted. He made me repeat, over and over again, all that his mother and brother had said. He was quite touched, knowing the true Corsican instincts of Lucien, with the care he had to taken to reconcile the Orlandi and the Colona.

The clock struck twelve.

“I do not wish to hurry you, gentlemen,” said Louis, “but I think you should return the visit of those gentlemen. It will not do to put ourselves in the wrong.”

“Oh, you may be quite easy on that point,” I said, “we have plenty of time before us.”

“No matter,” said the Baron Giordano, “Louis is right.”

“Now,” said I, “we must know whether you prefer to fight with sword or pistol?”

“Ah,” he replied, “it is all the same to me; I know as little about one as the other. Besides, Monsieur de Chateau Renaud will save me all trouble in choosing; he looks upon himself, no doubt, as the offended party, and as such will retain the choice of weapons.”

“However, the offence is doubtful, you only offered your arm, as you were asked to do.”

“My opinion is,” said Louis, “that all discussion should tend towards a peaceable arrangement of this matter. My tastes are not warlike, as you know. Far from being a duellist, this is the first affair of the kind I have had, and just for this very reason I wish to come well out of it.”

“That is very easy to say, my friend, but you have to play for your life, and you leave to us and before your family the responsibility of the result.”

“Ah, as to that you may make your mind quite easy, I know my mother and brother well enough; they would only ask whether I had conducted myself as a brave man, and if you replied in the affirmative they would be satisfied.”

“But, hang it, we must know which arm you prefer.”

“Well, if they propose pistols, accept them at once.”

“That is my advice, also,” said the Baron.

“Very well, then, the pistol be it,” I replied, “since that is the advice of both of you, but the pistol is a horrible weapon.”

“Have I time to learn to fence between this and to-morrow?”

“No, unless, perhaps, you studied Grissier, and then you might learn enough to defend yourself.”

Louis smiled.

“Believe me,” said he, “that what will happen tomorrow is already written on high, and whatever we may do we cannot alter that.”

We then shook hands with him and went downstairs.

Our first visit was naturally to the nearer of the two gentlemen who had called on behalf of our adversary.

We, therefore, visited Monsieur René de Chateaugrand, who lived, as we have said, at 12, Rue de la Paix.

Any other visitors were forbidden while we were calling, and we were at once introduced to his presence.

We found Monsieur de Chateaugrand a perfect man of the world—he would not for one moment give us the trouble of calling upon Monsieur de Boissy—he sent his own servant for him.

While we were waiting his appearance, we spoke of everything but the subject which had brought us thither, and in about ten minutes Monsieur de Boissy arrived.

The two gentlemen did not advance any pretensions to the choice of arms, the sword or pistol was equally familiar to M. de Chateau Renaud. They were quite willing to leave the selection to M. de Franchi, or to toss up. A louis was thrown into the air, face for sword, reverse for pistols. The coin came down reverse.

So it was decided. The combat was arranged to take place next morning at nine o'clock, in the wood of Vincennes, where the adversaries would be placed at twenty paces, and after the third signal given by clapping the hands they were to fire.

We returned to convey this decision to Louis de Franchi.

On my return home the same evening, I found the cards of MM. de Chateaugrand and de Boissy.

CHAPTER XVI.

AT eight o'clock that evening I called upon M. Louis de Franchi, to inquire whether he had anything to confide to me. But he begged me to wait till next morning, saying:

"The night will bring counsel with it."

Next morning, therefore, instead of calling at eight, which would have given us plenty of time to go to the meeting, I called at half-past seven.

Louis was already writing in his study.

He looked up as I entered, and I noticed how very pale he was.

"Excuse me," he said, "I am writing to my mother. You will find the morning papers there; if you can amuse yourself with them you will see a charming feuilleton by M. Mèry in the *Presse.*"

I took the paper thus indicated, and contrasted the livid pallor of the speaker with his calm and sweet voice.

I endeavoured to read, but I could not fix my attention, the letters brought no meaning with them.

In about five minutes Louis said,

"There, I have finished." And he rang for his valet.

"Joseph," said he, "I am at home to no one, not even to the Baron Giordano. If he calls, ask him to wait in the *salon.* I wish to be alone with this gentlemen for ten minutes."

The valet shut the door and disappeared.

"Now, my dear Alexander, listen. Giordano is a Corsican, and has Corsican ideas. I cannot, therefore, confide all I desire to him. I will ask him to keep the secret, that's all. But as regards yourself, I wish you, if you will permit me, to request that you will promise to observe my instructions."

“Certainly. Is not that the duty of a second?”

“A duty more real than you imagine, for you can save our family a second misfortune if you will.”

“A second misfortune!” I exclaimed.

“Wait. Read this letter.”

I took the letter addressed to Madame de Franchi, and read as follows, with growing astonishment:—

> “MY DEAREST MOTHER,—
>
> “If I did not know that you possessed Spartan fortitude allied with Christian submission, I would have used means to prepare you for the blow in store for you—for when you receive this letter you will have but one son!
>
> “Lucien, my dear brother, love our mother for *both* in future.
>
> “For some time I have been suffering from brain fever. I paid no attention to the premonitory symptoms—the doctor came too late. Darling mother, there is no hope for me now. I cannot be saved but by a miracle, and what right have I to suppose that Providence will work a miracle on my behalf?
>
> “I am writing to you in a lucid interval. If I die, this letter will be posted immediately after my death; for in the selfishness of my love for you I wish thatyou should know that I am dead without regretting anything in the world except your tenderness and my brother’s.
>
> “Adieu, mother!
>
> “Do not weep for me. It is the soul that lives, not the body, and when the latter perishes the former will still live and love you.
>
> “Adieu, Lucien! Never leave our mother; and remember that she has you only to look to now.
>
> “Your Son,

"Your Brother,

"LOUIS DE FRANCHI."

When I had finished the letter I turned to the writer and said—

"Well, and what does this mean?"

"Do you not understand?" he said.

"No!"

"I am going to be shot at ten minutes past nine."

"You are going to be shot?"

"Yes."

"You are mad! Why, what has put such an idea into your head?"

"I am not mad, my dear friend. I have been warned—that's all."

"Warned! By whom?"

"My brother has already told you, I think, that the male members of our family enjoy a singular privilege?"

"True," I replied, shuddering, in spite of myself. "He spoke to me about apparitions."

"Quite so. Well, then, my father appeared to me last night. That is why you find me so pallid. The sight of the dead pales the living!"

I gazed at him with astonishment, not unmixed with terror.

"You saw your father last night, you say?"

"Yes."

"And he spoke to you?"

"He announced my death!"

“Oh, it was some terrible dream!”

“It was a terrible *reality.*”

“You were asleep, my friend.”

“I was wide awake. Do you not believe that a father can appear to his son?”

I hung my head, for at the bottom of my heart I *did* believe in the possibility.

“What passed between you?” I asked.

“It is a very simple and very natural story. I was reading, expecting my father—for I knew if any danger threatened that he would appear to me—and at midnight the lamp burnt low, the door opened slowly, and my father appeared.”

“In what form?” I asked.

“Just as if he were alive—dressed in his usual manner—only he was very pale, and his eyes were without expression.”

“Good heavens!” I ejaculated.

“He slowly approached my bed. I raised myself with my elbow, and said, ‘You are welcome, father.’

“He came close, and regarded me fixedly, and it then appeared to me as if some sort of paternal solicitude was expressed in his face.”

“Go on,” I said; “this is terrible!”

“Then his lips moved, and, though I could hear no sound, I seemed to hear his words distinctly, though distant as an echo.”

“What did he say?”

“ ‘Think of God, my son!’

“ ‘I shall be killed in this duel, then?’ I asked.

“I saw the tears roll down the pallid visage of the spectre.

“ ‘And at what hour?’

“He pointed towards the timepiece. I followed the direction of his finger. The clock showed ten minutes past nine.

“ ‘So be it, my father,’ I said; ‘God’s will be done. I leave my mother, but I rejoin you.’

“Then a faint smile passed over his face, he waved me a sign of farewell and glided away.

“The door opened as he advanced towards it, and when he had disappeared it shut of its own accord.”

This recital was so simply and so naturally told, that it was evident to me the event had occurred just as de Franchi had related it, or he was the victim of an illusion, which he had believed to be real in consequence of the pre-occupation of his mind, and was therefore all the more terrible.

I wiped the perspiration from my forehead.

“Now,” continued Louis; “you know my brother, don’t you?”

“Yes.”

“What do you think he will do when he learns that I have been killed in a duel?”

“He will leave Sullacaro at once to challenge the man who has killed you.”

“Just so, and if he is killed in his turn, my mother will be thrice a widow; widowed by the loss of her husband, widowed by the loss of her two sons.”

“Ah! I understand. This is fearful!”

“Well, this must be avoided, and that is why I have written this letter. Believing that I have died from brain fever my brother will not seek to avenge me, and my mother will

be the more easily consoled, knowing it was the will of God, and that I did not fall by the hand of man. At least——”

“At least what?” I repeated.

“Oh, nothing,” replied Louis. “I hope that will not come to pass.”

I saw that he was referring to some personal fear, and I did not insist farther.

At this moment the door opened, and the Baron de Giordano entered.

“My dear de Franchi,” he said, “I respect your privacy more than anything, but it is past eight, and the meeting is appointed for nine; we have quite a league and a half to drive, and we should start at once.”

“I am ready, my dear fellow,” said Louis. “I have told my friend here all I had to say to him.”

He put his finger on his lips as our eyes met.

“For you, my friend,” he continued, turning to the table and taking up a sealed letter, “there is this; if anything should happen to me read this letter, and I pray you to carry out my request contained in it.”

“To the very letter,” replied the Baron.

“You were to provide the arms,” said Louis.

“Yes,” I replied, “but just as I was coming away I found that one of the dogs did not bark properly, so we shall be obliged to get a case of pistols from Devisme.”

Louis looked at me, smiled, and held out his hand. He knew quite well that I did not wish to see him killed with my pistols.

“Have you a carriage?” he asked; “if not I will send Joseph for one.”

“My coupé is here,” said the Baron, “and can carry three at a pinch; besides, my horses will take us more quickly than a *fiacre.*”

“Let us go,” said Louis.

We went downstairs. Joseph was waiting at the door.

“Shall I accompany you, sir?” he said.

“No, Joseph,” replied his master, “I shall not require your services to-day.”

Then, stepping back a pace and pressing a roll of gold into the man’s hand, he said, “Take this, and if at any time I have appeared brusque to you, pardon my ill-humour.”

“Oh, monsieur!” said Joseph, with tears in his eyes, “what is the meaning of this?”

“Chut!” said Louis, and he sprang into the carriage.

“He is a good servant,” he murmured, “and if either of you can ever be of use to him I shall be obliged.”

“Is he about to leave you?” said the Baron.

“No,” said Louis, smiling; “I am leaving him, that is all!”

We stopped at Devismes just long enough to secure a case of pistols, powder and bullets, and then resumed our way at a brisk trot.

CHAPTER XVII.

WE reached Vincennes at five minutes to nine.

Another carriage, that of Chateau Renaud, arrived at the same time.

We proceeded into the wood by different paths. Our carriages were to await us in the broad avenue. A few minutes later we met at the rendezvous.

“Gentlemen,” said Louis, “recollect that no arrangement is possible now.”

“Nevertheless——,” I said

“Oh, my dear sir,” he replied, “after what I have told you, you should be the last person to think that any reconciliation is possible.”

I bowed before this absolute will, which for me was supreme.

We left Louis near the carriages, and advanced towards M. de Boissy and M. de Chateaugrand.

The Baron de Giordano carried the case of pistols.

The seconds exchanged salutes.

“Gentlemen,” said the Baron, “under these circumstances the shortest compliments are the best, for we may be interrupted any moment. We were requested to provide weapons—here they are. Examine them if you please. We have just procured them from the gunsmith, and we give you our word of honour that M. Louis de Franchi has not even seen them.”

“Such an assurance is unnecessary, gentlemen,” replied Chateaugrand, “we know with whom we have to deal,” and taking one pistol, while M. de Boissy took the other, the seconds examined the bore.

“These are ordinary pistols, and have never been used,” said the Baron; “now the question is, how shall the principals fire.”

“My advice,” said M. de Boissy, “is that they should fire just as they are accustomed to do, together.”

“Very well,” said the Baron Giordano, “then all chances are equalized.”

“Will you advise M. de Franchi, then, and we will tell M. de Chateau Renaud, monsieur.”

“Now that is settled, will you have the goodness to load the pistols?”

Each one took a pistol, measured carefully the charges of powder, took two bullets at hazard, and rammed them home.

While the weapons were being loaded, I approached Louis, who received me with a smile.

“You won’t forget what I asked you?” he said, “and you will obtain from Giordano a promise that he will say nothing to my mother, or even to my brother. Will you take care, also, that this affair does not get into the papers, or, if it does, that no names are mentioned.”

“You are still of opinion, then, this duel will prove fatal to you?” I said.

“I am more than ever convinced of it,” he replied, “but you will do me this justice at least, that I met death like a true Corsican.”

“My dear de Franchi, your calmness is so astounding that it gives me hopes that you yourself are not convinced on this point.”

Louis took out his watch.

“I have but seven minutes to live,” he said; “here is my watch, keep it, I beg of you, in remembrance of me.” I took the watch, and shook my friend’s hand.

“In eight minutes I hope to restore it to you,” I said.

“Don’t speak of that,” he replied. “See, here are the others.”

“Gentlemen,” said the Viscount de Chateaugrand, “a little distance from here, on the right, is an open space where I had a little practice of my own last year; shall we proceed thither—we shall be less liable to interruption.”

“If you will lead the way,” said the Baron Giordano, “we will follow.”

The Viscount preceded us to the spot indicated. It was about thirty paces distant, at the bottom of a gentle slope surrounded on all sides by a screen of brushwood, and seemed fitted by nature as the theatre of such an event as was about to take place.

“M. Martelli,” said the Viscount, “will you measure the distance by me?” The Baron assented, and thus side by side he and M. de Chateaugrand measured twenty ordinary paces.

I was then left for a few seconds alone with M. de Franchi.

“*Apropos,*” he said, “you will find my will on the table where I was writing when you came in this morning.”

“Good,” I replied, “you may rest quite easy on that score.”

“When you are ready, gentlemen,” said the Viscount de Chateaugrand.

“I am here,” replied Louis. “Adieu, dear friend! thank you for all the trouble you have taken for me, without counting all you will have to do for me later on.” I pressed his hand. It was cold, but perfectly steady.

“Now,” I said, “forget the apparition of last night, and aim your best.”

“You remember de Freyschutz?”

“Yes.”

“Well, you know, then, that every bullet has its billet. Adieu!”

He met the Baron Giordano, who handed him the pistol; he took it, and, without looking at it, went and placed himself at the spot marked by the handkerchief.

M. de Chateau Renaud had already taken up his position.

There was a moment of mournful silence, during which the young men saluted their seconds, then their adversary’s seconds, and finally each other.

M. de Chateau Renaud appeared perfectly accustomed to these affairs, and was smiling like a man sure of success; perhaps, also, he was aware that Louis de Franchi never had fired a pistol in his life.

Louis was calm and collected, his fine head looked almost like a marble bust.

“Well, gentlemen,” said Chateau Renaud, “you see we are waiting.”

Louis gave me one last glance, and smiling, raised his eyes to heaven.

“Now, gentlemen, make ready,” said Chateaugrand. Then, striking his hands one against the other, he cried—

“One! Two! Three!”

The two shots made but one detonation.

An instant afterwards I saw Louis de Franchi turn round twice and then fall upon one knee.

M. de Chateau Renaud remained upright. The lappel of his coat had been shot through.

I rushed towards Louis de Franchi.

“You are wounded?” I said.

He attempted to reply, but in vain. A red froth appeared upon his lips.

At the same moment he let fall his pistol, and pressed his hand against his right side.

On looking closely, we perceived a tiny hole not large enough for the point of a little finger.

I begged the Baron to hasten to the barracks, and bring the surgeon of the regiment.

But de Franchi collected all his strength, and stopping Giordano, signed that all assistance would be useless. This exertion caused him to fall on both knees.

M. de Chateau Renaud kept at a distance, but his seconds now approached the wounded man.

Meanwhile, we had opened his coat and torn away his waistcoat and shirt.

The ball had entered the right side, below the sixth rib, and had come out a little above the left hip.

At each breath the wounded man drew, the blood welled out. It was evident he was mortally hurt.

“M. de Franchi,” said the Viscount de Chateaugrand, “we regret extremely the issue of this sad affair. We trust you bear no malice against M. de Chateau Renaud.”

“Yes, yes,” murmured the wounded man, “I forgive him.”

Then turning towards me with an effort he said,

“Remember your promise!”

“I swear to you I will do all you wish.”

“And now,” he said, smiling, “look at the watch!”

He breathed a long sigh, and fell back. That sigh was his last.

I looked at the watch, it was exactly ten minutes past nine.

I turned to Louis de Franchi—he was dead.

We took back the body to the Rue de Helder, and while the Baron went to make the usual declaration to the Commissary of Police, I went upstairs with Joseph.

The poor lad was weeping bitterly.

As I entered, my eyes unconsciously turned towards the timepiece; it marked ten minutes past nine.

No doubt he had forgotten to wind it, and it had stopped at that hour.

The Baron Giordano returned almost immediately with the officers, who put the seals on the property.

The Baron wished to advise the relatives and friends of the affair, but I begged him, before he did so, to read the letter that Louis had handed to him before we set out that morning.

The letter contained his request that the cause of his death should be concealed from his brother, and that his funeral should be as quiet as possible.

The Baron Giordano charged himself with these details, and I sought MM. de Boissy and de Chateaugrand, to request their silence respecting the unhappy affair, and to induce Chateau Renaud to leave Paris for a time, without mentioning my reason for this last suggestion.

They promised me to do all they could to meet my views, and as I walked to Chateau Renaud's house I posted the letter to Madame de Franchi, informing her that her son had died of brain fever.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONTRARY to custom, the duel was very little talked about; even the papers were silent on the subject.

A few intimate friends followed the body to Père la Chaise. Chateau Renaud refused to quit Paris, although pressed to do so.

At one time I thought of following Louis' letter to Corsica with one from myself, but although my intentions were good, the misleading statements I should have to make were so repugnant to me that I did not do so. Besides, I was quite convinced that Louis himself had fully weighed before he had decided upon his course of action.

So at the risk of being thought indifferent, or even ungrateful, I kept silence, and I was sure that the Baron Giordano had done as much.

Five days after the duel, at about eleven o'clock in the evening, I was seated by my table in a rather melancholy frame of mind, when my servant entered and shutting the door quickly behind him said, in an agitated whisper, that M. de Franchi desired to speak with me.

I looked at him steadily; he was quite pale.

"Whom did you say, Victor?" I asked.

"Oh, monsieur, in truth I hardly know myself."

"What M. de Franchi wishes to speak to me?"

"Monsieur's friend. The gentleman who was here two or three times."

"You are mad, my good man. Do you not know that I had the misfortune to lose my friend five days ago?"

"Yes, sir; and that is the reason I am so upset. He rang, I was in the ante-chamber, and opened the door, but recoiled at his appearance. However, he entered, and asked if you were at home. I replied that you were, and then he said, 'Go and announce M. de Franchi, who wishes to speak with your master,' and so I came."

“You are stupid, Victor, the ante-chamber is not properly lighted. You were asleep, no doubt, and did not hear correctly. Go, and ask the gentleman his name.”

“It would be useless, sir. I swear to you I am not deceived. I heard him, and saw him, distinctly.”

“Then go and show him in.”

Victor turned tremblingly to the door, opened it, and then standing still in the room, said—

“Will monsieur be kind enough to come in?”

I immediately heard the footsteps of my visitor crossing the ante-chamber, and sure enough, at the door there appeared M. de Franchi.

I confess that I was terrified, and took a step backwards as he approached.

“I trust you will excuse my appearance so late,” said my visitor; “I only arrived ten minutes ago, and you will understand that I could not wait till tomorrow without seeing you.”

“Oh, my dear Lucien,” I exclaimed, advancing quickly, and embracing him. “Then it is really you.” And, in spite of myself, tears really came into my eyes.

“Yes,” he said, “it is I.”

I made a calculation of the time that had elapsed, and could scarcely imagine that he had received the letter—it could hardly have reached Ajaccio yet.

“Good Heavens! then you do not know what has happened?” I exclaimed.

“I know all,” was his reply.

“Victor,” I said, turning towards my servant, who was still rather embarrassed, “leave us, and return in a quarter of an hour with some supper. You will have something to eat, and will sleep here of course.”

“With great pleasure,” he replied. “I have eaten nothing since we left Auxerre. Then, as to lodgings, as nobody knew me in the Rue de Helder, or rather,” he added, with a sad smile, “as everybody recognized me there, they declined to let me in, so I left the whole house in a state of alarm.”

“In fact, my dear Lucien, your resemblance to Louis is so very striking that even I myself was just now taken aback.”

“How,” exclaimed Victor, who had not yet ventured to leave us. “Is monsieur the brother——”

“Yes,” I replied, “go and get supper.”

Victor went out, and we found ourselves alone.

I took Lucien by the hand, and leading him to an easy chair seated myself near him.

“I suppose (I began) you were on your way to Paris when the fatal news met you?”

“No, I was at Sullacaro!”

“Impossible! Why your brother’s letter could not have reached you.”

“You forget the ballad of *Burger,* my dear Alexander—*the dead travel fast!*”

I shuddered! “I do not understand,” I said.

“Have you forgotten what I told you about the apparitions familiar to our family?”

“Do you mean to say that you have *seen* your dead brother?”—“Yes.”—“When?”

“On the night of the 16th inst.”

“And he told you everything?”—“All!”

“That he was dead?”

“He told me that he had been killed. The dead never lie!”

“And he said in what way?”

“In a duel.”

“By whom?”

“By M. de Chateau Renaud.”

“Oh no, Lucien, that cannot be,” I exclaimed, “you have obtained your information in some other way.”

“Do you think I am likely to joke at such a time?”

“I beg your pardon. But truly what you tell me is so strange, and everything that relates to you and your brother so out of ordinary nature, that——”

“That you hesitate to believe it. Well, I can understand the feeling. But wait. My brother was hit here,” he continued, as he opened his shirt and showed me the blue mark of the bullet on his flesh, “he was wounded above the sixth rib on the right side—do you believe that?”

“As a matter of fact,” I replied, “that is the very spot where he was hit.”

“And the bullet went out here,” continued Lucien, putting his finger just above his left hip.

“It is miraculous,” I exclaimed.

“And now,” he went on, “do you wish me to tell you the time he died?”

“Tell me!”

“At ten minutes past nine.”

“That will do, Lucien;” I said, “but I lose myself in questions. Give me a connected narrative of the events. I should prefer it.”

CHAPTER XIX.

LUCIEN settled himself comfortably in his arm-chair and looking at me fixedly, resumed:—

“It is very simple. The day my brother was killed I was riding very early, and went out to visit the shepherds, when soon after I had looked at my watch and replaced it in my pocket, I received a blow in the side, so violent that I fainted. When I recovered I found myself lying on the ground in the arms of the Orlandini, who was bathing my face with water. My horse was close by.

“ ‘Well,’ said Orlandini, ‘what has happened?’

“ ‘I know no more about it than you do. Did you not hear a gun fired?’

“ ‘No.’

“ ‘It appears to me that I have received a ball in the side,’ and I put my hand upon the place where I felt pain.

“ ‘In the first place,’ replied he ‘there has been no shot fired, and besides, there is no mark of a bullet on your clothes.’

“ ‘Then,’ I replied, ‘it must be my brother who is killed.’

“ ‘Ah, indeed,’ he replied, ‘that is a different thing.’ I opened my coat and I found a mark, only at first it was quite red and not blue as I showed you just now.

“For an instant I was tempted to return to Sullacaro, feeling so upset both mentally and bodily, but I thought of my mother, who did not expect me before supper time, and I should be obliged to give her a reason for my return, and I had no reason to give.

“On the other hand, I did not wish to announce my brother’s death to her until I was absolutely certain of it. So I continued my way, and returned home about six o’clock in the evening.

“My poor mother received me as usual. She evidently had no suspicion that anything was wrong.

“Immediately after supper, I went upstairs, and as I passed through the corridor the wind blew my candle out.

“I was going downstairs to get a light when, passing my brother’s room, I noticed a gleam within.

“I thought that Griffo had been there and left a lamp burning.

“I pushed open the door; I saw a taper burning near my brother’s bed, and on the bed my brother lay extended, naked and bleeding.

“I remained for an instant, I confess, motionless with terror, then I approached.

“I touched the body, he was already dead.

“He had received a ball through the body, which had struck in the same place where I had felt the blow, and some drops of blood were still falling from the wound.

“It was evident to me that my brother had been shot.

“I fell on my knees, and leaning my head against the bed, I prayed fervently.

“When I opened my eyes again the room was in total darkness, the taper had been extinguished, the vision had disappeared.

“I felt all over the bed, it was empty.

“Now I believe I am as brave as most people, but when I tottered out of that room I declare to you my hair was standing on end and the perspiration pouring from my forehead.

“I went downstairs for another candle. My mother noticed me, and uttered a cry of surprise.

“ ‘What is the matter with you,’ she said, ‘and why are you so pale?’

“ ‘There is nothing the matter,’ I replied, as I returned upstairs.

“This time the candle was not extinguished. I looked into my brother’s room; it was empty.

“The taper had completely disappeared, nor was there any trace of the body on the bed.

“On the ground was my first candle, which I now relighted.

“Notwithstanding this absence of proof, I had seen enough to be convinced that at ten minutes past nine that morning my brother had been killed. I went to bed in a very agitated frame of mind.

“As you may imagine, I did not sleep very well, but at length fatigue conquered my agitation and I got a little rest.

“Then all the circumstances came before me in the form of a dream. I saw the scene as it had passed. I saw the man who had killed him. I heard his name. He is called M. de Chateau Renaud.”

“Alas! that is all too true,” I replied; “but what have you come to Paris for?”

“I have come to kill the man who has killed my brother.”

“To kill him?”

“Oh, you may rest assured, not in the Corsican fashion from behind a wall or through a hedge, but in the French manner, with white gloves on, a frilled shirt, and white cuffs.”

“And does Madame de Franchi know you have come to Paris with this intention?”

“She does.”

“And she has let you come?”

“She kissed me, and said, ‘Go.’ My mother is a true Corsican.”

“And so you came.”

“Here I am.”

“But your brother would not wish to be avenged were he alive.”

“Well, then,” replied Lucien, smiling bitterly, “he must have changed his mind since he died.”

At this moment the valet entered, carrying the supper tray.

Lucien ate like a man without a care in the world.

After supper I showed him to his room. He thanked me, shook me by the hand, and wished me good-night.

Next morning he came into my room as soon as the servant told him I was up.

“Will you accompany me to Vincennes?” he said. “If you are engaged I will go alone.”

“Alone!” I replied. “How will you be able to find the spot?”

“Oh, I shall easily recognize it. Do you not remember that I saw it in my dream?”

I was curious to know how far he was correct in this. “Very well,” I said, “I will go with you.”

“Get ready, then, while I write to Giordano. You will let Victor take the note for me, will you not?”

“He is at your disposal.”

“Thank you.”

Ten minutes afterwards the letter was despatched. I then sent for a cabriolet and we drove to Vincennes.

When we reached the cross-paths Lucien said, “We are not far off now, I think.”

“No; twenty paces further on we shall be at the spot where we entered the forest.”

“Here we are,” said the young man, as he stopped the carriage.

It was, indeed, the very spot!

Lucien entered the wood without the least hesitation, and as if he had known the place for years. He walked straight to the dell, and when there turned to the eastward, and then advancing he stopped at the place where his brother had fallen: stooping down he perceived the grass wore the red tinge of blood.

“This is the place,” he said.

Then he lightly kissed the spot where his brother had lain.

Rising with flashing eyes he paced the dell to the spot whence Chateau Renaud had fired.

“This is where he stood,” he said, stamping his foot, “and here he shall lie to-morrow.”

“How!” I exclaimed. “To-morrow!”

“Yes, unless he is a coward. For to-morrow he shall give me my revenge.”

“But, my dear Lucien,” I said, “the custom in France is, as you are aware, that a duel cannot take place without a certain reason. Chateau Renaud called out your brother who had provoked him, but he has had nothing to do with you.”

“Ah, really! So Chateau Renaud had the right to quarrel with my brother because he offered his arm to a woman whom Chateau Renaud had scandalously deceived, and according to you he had the right to challenge my brother. M. de Chateau Renaud killed my brother, who had never handled a pistol: he shot him with the same sense of security that a man would shoot a hare; and yet you say I have no right to challenge Chateau Renaud. Nonsense!”

I bowed without speaking.

“Besides,” he continued, “you have nothing to do with it. You may be quite easy. I wrote to Giordano this morning, and when we return to Paris all will have been arranged. Do you think that M. de Chateau Renaud will refuse?”

“M. de Chateau Renaud has unfortunately a reputation for courage which may serve to remove any doubt you may entertain on that score.”

“All the better,” said Lucien. “Let us go to breakfast.”

We returned to the road, and entering the cabriolet, I told the man to drive to the Rue Rivoli.

“No,” said Lucien, “you shall breakfast with me. Coachman, the *Café de Paris;* is not that the place where my brother usually dined?”

“I believe so,” I replied.

“Well, that is where I requested Giordano to meet us.”

“To the Café de Paris, then.”

In half an hour we were set down at the restaurant.

CHAPTER XX.

LUCIEN'S appearance created quite a sensation in consequence of his remarkable likeness to his brother.

The news of Louis' death had gone abroad—not, perhaps, in all its details, but it was known, and Lucien's appearance astonished many.

I requested a private room, saying that we were expecting the Baron Giordano, and we got a room at the end.

Lucien began to read the papers carelessly, as if he were oblivious of everything.

While we were seated at breakfast Giordano arrived.

The two young men had not met for four or five years, nevertheless, a firm clasp of the hand was the only demonstration they permitted themselves.

"Well, everything is settled," he said.

"Then M. de Chateau Renaud has accepted?"

"Yes, on condition, however, that after he has fought you he shall be left in peace."

"Oh, he may be quite easy; I am the last of the de Franchi. Have you seen him, or his seconds?"

"I saw him; he will notify MM. de Boissy and de Chateaugrand. The weapons, the hour and the place will be the same."

"Capital, sit down and have some breakfast."

The Baron seated himself, and we spoke on indifferent topics.

After breakfast Lucien begged us to introduce him to the Commissioner of Police, who had sealed up his brother's property, and to the proprietors of the house at which his brother had lived, for he wished to sleep that night, the last night that separated him from his vengeance, in Louis' room.

All these arrangements took up time, so it was not till five o'clock that Lucien entered his brother's apartment. Respecting his grief, we left him there alone.

We had arranged to meet him again next morning at eight o'clock, and he begged me to bring the same pistols, and to buy them if they were for sale.

I went to Devismes and purchased the weapons. Next morning, at eight o'clock I was with Lucien.

When I entered, he was seated writing at the same table, where his brother had sat writing. He smiled when he saw me, but he was very pale.

"Good morning," he said, "I am writing to my mother."

"I hope you will be able to write her a less doleful letter than poor Louis wrote eight days ago."

"I have told her that she may rest happy, for her son is avenged."

"How are you able to speak with such certainty?"

"Did not my brother announce to you his own approaching death? Well, then, I announce to you the death of M. de Chateau Renaud."

He rose as he spoke, and touching me on the temple, said—

"There, that's where I shall put my bullet."

"And yourself?"

"I shall not be touched."

"But, at least, wait for the issue of the duel, before you send your letter."

"It would be perfectly useless."

He rang, the servant appeared.

"Joseph," said he, "take this letter to the post."

“But have you seen your dead brother?”

“Yes,” he answered.

It is a very strange thing the occurrence of these two duels so close together, and in each of which one of the two combatants was doomed. While we were talking the Baron Giordano arrived. It was eight o’clock, so we started.

Lucien was very anxious to arrive first, so we were on the field ten minutes before the hour.

Our adversaries arrived at nine o’clock punctually. They came on horseback, followed by a groom also on horseback.

M. de Chateau Renaud had his hand in the breast of his coat. I at first thought he was carrying his arm in a sling.

The gentlemen dismounted twenty paces from us, and gave their bridles to the groom.

Monsieur de Chateau Renaud remained apart, but looked steadfastly at Lucien, and I thought he became paler. He turned aside and amused himself knocking off the little flowers with his riding whip.

“Well, gentlemen, here we are!” said MM. de Chateaugrand and de Boissy, “but you know our conditions. This duel is to be the last, and no matter what the issue may be, M. de Chateau Renaud shall not have to answer to any one for the double result.”

“That is understood,” we replied. Then Lucien bowed assent.

“You have the weapons, gentlemen?” said the Viscount.

“Here are the same pistols.”

“And they are unknown to M. de Franchi?”

“Less known to him than to M. de Chateau Renaud who has already used them once. M. de Franchi has not even seen them.”

“That is sufficient, gentlemen. Come, Chateau Renaud!”

We immediately entered the wood, and each one felt, as he revisited the fatal spot, that a tragedy more terrible still was about to be enacted.

We soon arrived in the little dell.

M. de Chateau Renaud, thanks to his great self-command, appeared quite calm, but those who had seen both encounters could appreciate the difference.

From time to time he glanced under his lids at Lucien, and his furtive looks denoted a disquietude approaching to fear.

Perhaps it was the great resemblance between the brothers that struck him, and he thought he saw in Lucien the avenging shade of Louis.

While they were loading the pistols I saw him draw his hand from the breast of his coat. The fingers were enveloped in a handkerchief as if to prevent their twitching.

Lucien waited calmly, like a man who was sure of his vengeance.

Without being told, Lucien walked to the place his brother had occupied, which compelled Chateau Renaud to take up his position as before.

Lucien received his weapon with a joyous smile.

When Chateau Renaud took his pistol he became deadly pale. Then he passed his hand between his cravat and his neck as if he were suffocating.

No one can conceive with what feelings of terror I regarded this young man, handsome, rich, and elegant, who but yesterday believed he had many years still before him, and who to-day, with the sweat on his brow and agony at his heart, felt he was condemned.

“Are you ready, gentlemen?” asked M. de Chateaugrand.

“Yes,” replied Lucien.

M. de Chateau Renaud made a sign in the affirmative.

As for me I was obliged to turn away, not daring to look upon the scene.

I heard the two successive clappings of the hands, and at the third the simultaneous reports of the pistols. I turned round.

Chateau Renaud was lying on the ground, stark dead; he had not uttered a sound nor made a movement.

I approached the body, impelled by that invincible curiosity which compels one to see the end of a catastrophe.

The bullet had entered the dead man's temple, at the very spot that Lucien had indicated to me previously.

I ran to him, he was calm and motionless, but seeing me coming towards him he let fall the pistol, and threw himself into my arms.

"Ah, my brother, my poor brother!" he cried as he burst into a passion of sobs.

These were the first tears that the young man had shed.