

CINQ MARS - V2

ALFRED DE VIGNY*

BOOK 2.

CHAPTER V

THE MARTYRDOM

La torture interroge, et la douleur repond.
RAYNOURARD, Les Templiers.

The continuous interest of this half-trial, its preparations, its interruptions, all had held the minds of the people in such attention that no private conversations had taken place. Some irrepressible cries had been uttered, but simultaneously, so that no man could accuse his neighbor. But when the people were left to themselves, there was an explosion of clamorous sentences.

There was at this period enough of primitive simplicity among the lower classes for them to be persuaded by the mysterious tales of the political agents who were deluding them; so that a large portion of the throng in the hall of trial, not venturing to change their judgment, though upon the manifest evidence just given them, awaited in painful suspense the return of the judges, interchanging with an air of mystery and inane importance the usual remarks prompted by imbecility on such occasions.

"One does not know what to think, Monsieur?"

"Truly, Madame, most extraordinary things have happened."

"We live in strange times!"

"I suspected this; but, i' faith, it is not wise to say what one thinks."

"We shall see what we shall see," and so on—the unmeaning chatter of the crowd, which merely serves to show that it is at the command of the first who chooses to sway it. Stronger words were heard from the group in

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black.

"What! shall we let them do as they please, in this manner? What! dare to burn our letter to the King!"

"If the King knew it!"

"The barbarian impostors! how skilfully is their plot contrived! What! shall murder be committed under our very eyes? Shall we be afraid of these archers?"

"No, no, no!" rang out in trumpet-like tones.

Attention was turned toward the young advocate, who, standing on a branch, began tearing to pieces a roll of paper; then he cried:

"Yes, I tear and scatter to the winds the defence I had prepared for the accused. They have suppressed discussion; I am not allowed to speak for him. I can only speak to you, people; I rejoice that I can do so. You heard these infamous judges. Which of them can hear the truth? Which of them is worthy to listen to an honest man? Which of them will dare to meet his gaze? But what do I say? They all know the truth. They carry it in their guilty breasts; it stings their hearts like a serpent. They tremble in their lair, where doubtless they are devouring their victim; they tremble because they have heard the cries of three deluded women. What was I about to do? I was about to speak in behalf of Urbain Grandier! But what eloquence could equal that of those unfortunates? What words could better have shown you his innocence? Heaven has taken up arms for him in bringing them to repentance and to devotion; Heaven will finish its work—"

"Vade retro, Satanas," was heard through a high window in the hall.

Fournier stopped for a moment, then said:

"You hear these voices parodying the divine language? If I mistake not, these instruments of an infernal power are, by this song, preparing some new spell."

"But," cried those who surrounded him, "what shall we do? What have they done with him?"

"Remain here; be immovable, be silent," replied the young advocate. "The inertia of a people is all-powerful; that is its true wisdom, that its strength. Observe them closely, and in silence; and you will make them tremble."

"They surely will not dare to appear here again," said the Comte du Lude.

"I should like to look once more at the tall scoundrel in red," said Grand-Ferre, who had lost nothing of what had occurred.

"And that good gentleman, the Cure," murmured old Father Guillaume Leroux, looking at all his indignant parishioners, who were talking together in a low tone, measuring and counting the archers, ridiculing their dress, and beginning to point them out to the observation of the other spectators.

Cinq-Mars, still leaning against the pillar behind which he had first placed himself, still wrapped in his black cloak, eagerly watched all that passed, lost not a word of what was said, and filled his heart with hate and bitterness. Violent desires for slaughter and revenge, a vague desire to strike, took possession of him, despite himself; this is the first impression which evil produces on the soul of a young man. Later, sadness takes the place of fury, then indifference and scorn, later still, a calculating admiration for great villains who have been successful; but this is only when, of the two elements which constitute man, earth triumphs over spirit.

Meanwhile, on the right of the hall near the judges' platform, a group of women were watching attentively a child about eight years old, who had taken it into his head to climb up to a cornice by the aid of his sister Martine, whom we have seen the subject of jest with the young soldier, Grand-Ferre. The child, having nothing to look at after the court had left the hall, had climbed to a small window which admitted a faint light, and which he imagined to contain a swallow's nest or some other treasure for a boy; but after he was well established on the cornice, his hands grasping the bars of an old shrine of Jerome, he wished himself anywhere else, and cried out:

"Oh, sister, sister, lend me your hand to get down!"

"What do you see there?" asked Martine.

"Oh, I dare not tell; but I want to get down," and he began to cry.

"Stay there, my child; stay there!" said all the women. "Don't be afraid; tell us all that you see."

"Well, then, they've put the Cure between two great boards that squeeze his legs, and there are cords round the boards."

"Ah! that is the rack," said one of the townsmen. "Look again, my little friend, what do you see now?"

The child, more confident, looked again through the window, and then, withdrawing his head, said:

"I can not see the Cure now, because all the judges stand round him, and

are looking at him, and their great robes prevent me from seeing. There are also some Capuchins, stooping down to whisper to him."

Curiosity attracted more people to the boy's perch; every one was silent, waiting anxiously to catch his words, as if their lives depended on them.

"I see," he went on, "the executioner driving four little pieces of wood between the cords, after the Capuchins have blessed the hammer and nails. Ah, heavens! Sister, how enraged they seem with him, because he will not speak. Mother! mother! give me your hand, I want to come down!"

Instead of his mother, the child, upon turning round, saw only men's faces, looking up at him with a mournful eagerness, and signing him to go on. He dared not descend, and looked again through the window, trembling.

"Oh! I see Father Lactantius and Father Barre themselves forcing in more pieces of wood, which squeeze his legs. Oh, how pale he is! he seems praying. There, his head falls back, as if he were dying! Oh, take me away!"

And he fell into the arms of the young Advocate, of M. du Lude, and of Cinq-Mars, who had come to support him.

"Deus stetit in synagoga deorum: in medio autem Deus dijudicat—" chanted strong, nasal voices, issuing from the small window, which continued in full chorus one of the psalms, interrupted by blows of the hammer—an infernal deed beating time to celestial songs. One might have supposed himself near a smithy, except that the blows were dull, and manifested to the ear that the anvil was a man's body.

"Silence!" said Fournier, "He speaks. The chanting and the blows stop."

A weak voice within said, with difficulty, "Oh, my fathers, mitigate the rigor of your torments, for you will reduce my soul to despair, and I might seek to destroy myself!"

At this the fury of the people burst forth like an explosion, echoing along the vaulted roofs; the men sprang fiercely upon the platform, thrust aside the surprised and hesitating archers; the unarmed crowd drove them back, pressed them, almost suffocated them against the walls, and held them fast, then dashed against the doors which led to the torture chamber, and, making them shake beneath their blows, threatened to drive them in; imprecations resounded from a thousand menacing voices and terrified the judges within.

"They are gone; they have taken him away!" cried a man who had climbed to the little window.

The multitude at once stopped short, and changing the direction of their

steps, fled from this detestable place and spread rapidly through the streets, where an extraordinary confusion prevailed.

Night had come on during the long sitting, and the rain was pouring in torrents. The darkness was terrifying. The cries of women slipping on the pavement or driven back by the horses of the guards; the shouts of the furious men; the ceaseless tolling of the bells which had been keeping time with the strokes of the question;

[Torture ('Question') was regulated in scrupulous detail by Holy Mother The Church: The ordinary question was regulated for minor infractions and used for interrogating women and children. For more serious crimes the suspect (and sometimes the witnesses) were put to the extraordinary question by the officiating priests. D.W.]

the roll of distant thunder—all combined to increase the disorder. If the ear was astonished, the eyes were no less so. A few dismal torches lighted up the corners of the streets; their flickering gleams showed soldiers, armed and mounted, dashing along, regardless of the crowd, to assemble in the Place de St. Pierre; tiles were sometimes thrown at them on their way, but, missing the distant culprit, fell upon some unoffending neighbor. The confusion was bewildering, and became still more so, when, hurrying through all the streets toward the Place de St. Pierre, the people found it barricaded on all sides, and filled with mounted guards and archers. Carts, fastened to the posts at each corner, closed each entrance, and sentinels, armed with arquebuses, were stationed close to the carts. In the centre of the Place rose a pile composed of enormous beams placed crosswise upon one another, so as to form a perfect square; these were covered with a whiter and lighter wood; an enormous stake arose from the centre of the scaffold. A man clothed in red and holding a lowered torch stood near this sort of mast, which was visible from a long distance. A huge chafing-dish, covered on account of the rain, was at his feet.

At this spectacle, terror inspired everywhere a profound silence; for an instant nothing was heard but the sound of the rain, which fell in floods, and of the thunder, which came nearer and nearer.

Meanwhile, Cinq-Mars, accompanied by MM. du Lude and Fournier and all the more important personages of the town, had sought refuge from the storm under the peristyle of the church of Ste.-Croix, raised upon twenty stone steps. The pile was in front, and from this height they could see the whole of the square. The centre was entirely clear, large streams of water alone traversed it; but all the windows of the houses were gradually lighted up, and showed the heads of the men and women who thronged them.

The young D'Effiat sorrowfully contemplated this menacing preparation. Brought up in sentiments of honor, and far removed from the black

thoughts which hatred and ambition arouse in the heart of man, he could not conceive that such wrong could be done without some powerful and secret motive. The audacity of such a condemnation seemed to him so enormous that its very cruelty began to justify it in his eyes; a secret horror crept into his soul, the same that silenced the people. He almost forgot the interest with which the unhappy Urbain had inspired him, in thinking whether it were not possible that some secret correspondence with the infernal powers had justly provoked such excessive severity; and the public revelations of the nuns, and the statement of his respected tutor, faded from his memory, so powerful is success, even in the eyes of superior men! so strongly does force impose upon men, despite the voice of conscience!

The young traveller was asking himself whether it were not probable that the torture had forced some monstrous confession from the accused, when the obscurity which surrounded the church suddenly ceased. Its two great doors were thrown open; and by the light of an infinite number of flambeaux, appeared all the judges and ecclesiastics, surrounded by guards. Among them was Urbain, supported, or rather carried, by six men clothed as Black Penitents—for his limbs, bound with bandages saturated with blood, seemed broken and incapable of supporting him. It was at most two hours since Cinq-Mars had seen him, and yet he could hardly recognize the face he had so closely observed at the trial. All color, all roundness of form had disappeared from it; a livid pallor covered a skin yellow and shining like ivory; the blood seemed to have left his veins; all the life that remained within him shone from his dark eyes, which appeared to have grown twice as large as before, as he looked languidly around him; his long, chestnut hair hung loosely down his neck and over a white shirt, which entirely covered him—or rather a sort of robe with large sleeves, and of a yellowish tint, with an odor of sulphur about it; a long, thick cord encircled his neck and fell upon his breast. He looked like an apparition; but it was the apparition of a martyr.

Urbain stopped, or, rather, was set down upon the peristyle of the church; the Capuchin Lactantius placed a lighted torch in his right hand, and held it there, as he said to him, with his hard inflexibility:

”Do penance, and ask pardon of God for thy crime of magic.”

The unhappy man raised his voice with great difficulty, and with his eyes to heaven said:

”In the name of the living God, I cite thee, Laubardemont, false judge, to appear before Him in three years. They have taken away my confessor, and I have been fain to pour out my sins into the bosom of God Himself, for my enemies surround me. I call that God of mercy to witness I never have dealt in magic. I have known no mysteries but those of the Catholic religion, apostolic and Roman, in which I die; I have sinned much against myself, but never against God and our Lord—”

"Cease!" cried the Capuchin, affecting to close his mouth ere he could pronounce the name of the Saviour. "Obdurate wretch, return to the demon who sent thee!"

He signed to four priests, who, approaching with sprinklers in their hands, exorcised with holy water the air the magician breathed, the earth he touched, the wood that was to burn him. During this ceremony, the judge-Advocate hastily read the decree, dated the 18th of August, 1639, declaring Urbain Grandier duly attainted and convicted of the crime of sorcery, witchcraft, and possession, in the persons of sundry Ursuline nuns of Loudun, and others, laymen, etc.

The reader, dazzled by a flash of lightning, stopped for an instant, and, turning to M. de Laubardemont, asked whether, considering the awful weather, the execution could not be deferred till the next day.

"The decree," coldly answered Laubardemont, "commands execution within twenty-four hours. Fear not the incredulous people; they will soon be convinced."

All the most important persons of the town and many strangers were under the peristyle, and now advanced, Cinq-Mars among them.

"The magician never has been able to pronounce the name of the Saviour, and repels his image."

Lactantius at this moment issued from the midst of the Penitents, with an enormous iron crucifix in his hand, which he seemed to hold with precaution and respect; he extended it to the lips of the sufferer, who indeed threw back his head, and collecting all his strength, made a gesture with his arm, which threw the cross from the hands of the Capuchin.

"You see," cried the latter, "he has thrown down the cross!"

A murmur arose, the meaning of which was doubtful.

"Profanation!" cried the priests.

The procession moved toward the pile.

Meanwhile, Cinq-Mars, gliding behind a pillar, had eagerly watched all that passed; he saw with astonishment that the cross, in falling upon the steps, which were more exposed to the rain than the platform, smoked and made a noise like molten lead when thrown into water. While the public attention was elsewhere engaged, he advanced and touched it lightly with his bare hand, which was immediately scorched. Seized with indignation, with all the fury of a true heart, he took up the cross with the folds of his cloak, stepped up to Laubardemont, and, striking him with it on the

forehead, cried:

"Villain, I brand thee with the mark of this red-hot iron!"

The crowd heard these words and rushed forward.

"Arrest this madman!" cried the unworthy magistrate.

He was himself seized by the hands of men who cried, "Justice! justice, in the name of the King!"

"We are lost!" said Lactantius; "to the pile, to the pile!"

The Penitents dragged Urbain toward the Place, while the judges and archers reentered the church, struggling with the furious citizens; the executioner, having no time to tie up the victim, hastened to lay him on the wood, and to set fire to it. But the rain still fell in torrents, and each piece of wood had no sooner caught the flame than it became extinguished. In vain did Lactantius and the other canons themselves seek to stir up the fire; nothing could overcome the water which fell from heaven.

Meanwhile, the tumult which had begun in the peristyle of the church extended throughout the square. The cry of "Justice!" was repeated and circulated, with the information of what had been discovered; two barricades were forced, and despite three volleys of musketry, the archers were gradually driven back toward the centre of the square. In vain they spurred their horses against the crowd; it overwhelmed them with its swelling waves. Half an hour passed in this struggle, the guards still receding toward the pile, which they concealed as they pressed closer upon it.

"On! on!" cried a man; "we will deliver him; do not strike the soldiers, but let them fall back. See, Heaven will not permit him to die! The fire is out; now, friend, one effort more! That is well! Throw down that horse! Forward! On!"

The guard was broken and dispersed on all sides. The crowd rushed to the pile, but no more light was there: all had disappeared, even the executioner. They tore up and threw aside the beams; one of them was still burning, and its light showed under a mass of ashes and ensanguined mire a blackened hand, preserved from the fire by a large iron bracelet and chain. A woman had the courage to open it; the fingers clasped a small ivory cross and an image of St. Magdalen.

"These are his remains," she said, weeping.

"Say, the relics of a martyr!" exclaimed a citizen, baring his head.

CHAPTER VI

THE DREAM

Meanwhile, Cinq-Mars, amid the excitement which his outbreak had provoked, felt his left arm seized by a hand as hard as iron, which, drawing him from the crowd to the foot of the steps, pushed him behind the wall of the church, and he then saw the dark face of old Grandchamp, who said to him in a sharp voice:

"Sir, your attack upon thirty musketeers in a wood at Chaumont was nothing, because we were near you, though you knew it not, and, moreover, you had to do with men of honor; but here 'tis different. Your horses and people are at the end of the street; I request you to mount and leave the town, or to send me back to Madame la Marechale, for I am responsible for your limbs, which you expose so freely."

Cinq-Mars was somewhat astonished at this rough mode of having a service done him, was not sorry to extricate himself thus from the affair, having had time to reflect how very awkward it might be for him to be recognized, after striking the head of the judicial authority, the agent of the very Cardinal who was to present him to the King. He observed also that around him was assembled a crowd of the lowest class of people, among whom he blushed to find himself. He therefore followed his old domestic without argument, and found the other three servants waiting for him. Despite the rain and wind he mounted, and was soon upon the highroad with his escort, having put his horse to a gallop to avoid pursuit.

He had, however, hardly left Loudun when the sandy road, furrowed by deep ruts completely filled with water, obliged him to slacken his pace. The rain continued to fall heavily, and his cloak was almost saturated. He felt a thicker one thrown over his shoulders; it was his old valet, who had approached him, and thus exhibited toward him a maternal solicitude.

"Well, Grandchamp," said Cinq-Mars, "now that we are clear of the riot, tell me how you came to be there when I had ordered you to remain at the Abbe's."

"Parbleu, Monsieur!" answered the old servant, in a grumbling tone, "do you suppose that I should obey you any more than I did Monsieur le Marechal? When my late master, after telling me to remain in his tent, found me behind him in the cannon's smoke, he made no complaint, because he had a fresh horse ready when his own was killed, and he only scolded me for a moment in his thoughts; but, truly, during the forty years I served him, I never saw him act as you have in the fortnight I have been with you. Ah!" he added with a sigh, "things are going strangely; and if we continue thus, there's no knowing what will be the end of it."

"But knowest thou, Grandchamp, that these scoundrels had made the crucifix red hot?—a thing at which no honest man would have been less enraged than I."

"Except Monsieur le Marechal, your father, who would not have done at all what you have done, Monsieur."

"What, then, would he have done?"

"He would very quietly have let this cure be burned by the other cures, and would have said to me, 'Grandchamp, see that my horses have oats, and let no one steal them'; or, 'Grandchamp, take care that the rain does not rust my sword or wet the priming of my pistols'; for Monsieur le Marechal thought of everything, and never interfered in what did not concern him. That was his great principle; and as he was, thank Heaven, alike good soldier and good general, he was always as careful of his arms as a recruit, and would not have stood up against thirty young gallants with a dress rapier."

Cinq-Mars felt the force of the worthy servitor's epigrammatic scolding, and feared that he had followed him beyond the wood of Chaumont; but he would not ask, lest he should have to give explanations or to tell a falsehood or to command silence, which would at once have been taking him into confidence on the subject. As the only alternative, he spurred his horse and rode ahead of his old domestic; but the latter had not yet had his say, and instead of keeping behind his master, he rode up to his left and continued the conversation.

"Do you suppose, Monsieur, that I should allow you to go where you please? No, Monsieur, I am too deeply impressed with the respect I owe to Madame la Marquise, to give her an opportunity of saying to me: 'Grandchamp, my son has been killed with a shot or with a sword; why were you not before him?' Or, 'He has received a stab from the stiletto of an Italian, because he went at night beneath the window of a great princess; why did you not seize the assassin?' This would be very disagreeable to me, Monsieur, for I never have been reproached with anything of the kind. Once Monsieur le Marechal lent me to his nephew, Monsieur le Comte, to make a campaign in the Netherlands, because I know Spanish. I fulfilled the duty with honor, as I always do. When Monsieur le Comte received a bullet in his heart, I myself brought back his horses, his mules, his tent, and all his equipment, without so much as a pocket-handkerchief being missed; and I can assure you that the horses were as well dressed and harnessed when we reentered Chaumont as if Monsieur le Comte had been about to go a-hunting. And, accordingly, I received nothing but compliments and agreeable things from the whole family, just in the way I like."

"Well, well, my friend," said Henri d'Effiat, "I may some day, perhaps, have these horses to take back; but in the mean time take this great

purse of gold, which I have well-nigh lost two or three times, and thou shalt pay for me everywhere. The money wearies me.”

”Monsieur le Marechal did not so, Monsieur. He had been superintendent of finances, and he counted every farthing he paid out of his own hand. I do not think your estates would have been in such good condition, or that you would have had so much money to count yourself, had he done otherwise; have the goodness, therefore, to keep your purse, whose contents, I dare swear, you do not know.”

”Faith, not I.”

Grandchamp sent forth a profound sigh at his master’s disdainful exclamation.

”Ah, Monsieur le Marquis! Monsieur le Marquis! When I think that the great King Henri, before my eyes, put his chamois gloves into his pocket to keep the rain from spoiling them; when I think that Monsieur de Rosni refused him money when he had spent too much; when I think—”

”When thou dost think, thou art egregiously tedious, my old friend,” interrupted his master; ”and thou wilt do better in telling me what that black figure is that I think I see walking in the mire behind us.”

”It looks like some poor peasant woman who, perhaps, wants alms of us. She can easily follow us, for we do not go at much of a pace in this sand, wherein our horses sink up to the hams. We shall go to the Landes perhaps some day, Monsieur, and you will see a country all the same as this sandy road, and great, black firs all the way along. It looks like a churchyard; this is an exact specimen of it. Look, the rain has ceased, and we can see a little ahead; there is nothing but furze-bushes on this great plain, without a village or a house. I don’t know where we can pass the night; but if you will take my advice, you will let us cut some boughs and bivouac where we are. You shall see how, with a little earth, I can make a hut as warm as a bed.”

”I would rather go on to the light I see in the horizon,” said Cinq-Mars; ”for I fancy I feel rather feverish, and I am thirsty. But fall back, I would ride alone; rejoin the others and follow.”

Grandchamp obeyed; he consoled himself by giving Germain, Louis, and Etienne lessons in the art of reconnoitring a country by night.

Meanwhile, his young master was overcome with fatigue. The violent emotions of the day had profoundly affected his mind; and the long journey on horseback, the last two days passed almost without nourishment, owing to the hurried pressure of events, the heat of the sun by day, the icy coldness of the night, all contributed to increase his indisposition and to weary his delicate frame. For three hours he rode in silence before his people, yet the light he had seen in the horizon

seemed no nearer; at last he ceased to follow it with his eyes, and his head, feeling heavier and heavier, sank upon his breast. He gave the reins to his tired horse, which of its own accord followed the high-road, and, crossing his arms, allowed himself to be rocked by the monotonous motion of his fellow-traveller, which frequently stumbled against the large stones that strewed the road. The rain had ceased, as had the voices of his domestics, whose horses followed in the track of their master's. The young man abandoned himself to the bitterness of his thoughts; he asked himself whether the bright object of his hopes would not flee from him day by day, as that phosphoric light fled from him in the horizon, step by step. Was it probable that the young Princess, almost forcibly recalled to the gallant court of Anne of Austria, would always refuse the hands, perhaps royal ones, that would be offered to her? What chance that she would resign herself to renounce a present throne, in order to wait till some caprice of fortune should realize romantic hopes, or take a youth almost in the lowest rank of the army and lift him to the elevation she spoke of, till the age of love should be passed? How could he be certain that even the vows of Marie de Gonzaga were sincere?

"Alas!" he said, "perhaps she has blinded herself as to her own sentiments; the solitude of the country had prepared her soul to receive deep impressions. I came; she thought I was he of whom she had dreamed. Our age and my love did the rest. But when at court, she, the companion of the Queen, has learned to contemplate from an exalted position the greatness to which I aspire, and which I as yet see only from a very humble distance; when she shall suddenly find herself in actual possession of the future she aims at, and measures with a more correct eye the long road I have to travel; when she shall hear around her vows like mine, pronounced by lips which could undo me with a word, with a word destroy him whom she awaits as her husband, her lord—oh, madman that I have been!—she will see all her folly, and will be incensed at mine."

Thus did doubt, the greatest misery of love, begin to torture his unhappy heart; he felt his hot blood rush to his head and oppress it. Ever and anon he fell forward upon the neck of his horse, and a half sleep weighed down his eyes; the dark firs that bordered the road seemed to him gigantic corpses travelling beside him. He saw, or thought he saw, the same woman clothed in black, whom he had pointed out to Grandchamp, approach so near as to touch his horse's mane, pull his cloak, and then run off with a jeering laugh; the sand of the road seemed to him a river running beneath him, with opposing current, back toward its source. This strange sight dazzled his worn eyes; he closed them and fell asleep on his horse.

Presently, he felt himself stopped, but he was numbed with cold and could not move. He saw peasants, lights, a house, a great room into which they carried him, a wide bed, whose heavy curtains were closed by Grandchamp; and he fell asleep again, stunned by the fever that whirred in his ears.

Dreams that followed one another more rapidly than grains of sand before the wind rushed through his brain; he could not catch them, and moved restlessly on his bed. Urbain Grandier on the rack, his mother in tears, his tutor armed, Bassompierre loaded with chains, passed before him, making signs of farewell; at last, as he slept, he instinctively put his hand to his head to stay the passing dream, which then seemed to unfold itself before his eyes like pictures in shifting sands.

He saw a public square crowded with a foreign people, a northern people, who uttered cries of joy, but they were savage cries; there was a line of guards, ferocious soldiers—these were Frenchmen. "Come with me," said the soft voice of Marie de Gonzaga, who took his hand. "See, I wear a diadem; here is thy throne, come with me." And she hurried him on, the people still shouting. He went on, a long way. "Why are you sad, if you are a queen?" he said, trembling. But she was pale, and smiled and spoke not. She ascended, step after step, up to a throne, and seated herself. "Mount!" said she, forcibly pulling his hand. But, at every movement, the massive stairs crumbled beneath his feet, so that he could not ascend. "Give thanks to love," she continued; and her hand, now more powerful, raised him to the throne. The people still shouted. He bowed low to kiss that helping hand, that adored hand; it was the hand of the executioner!

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Cinq-Mars, as, heaving a deep sigh, he opened his eyes. A flickering lamp lighted the ruinous chamber of the inn; he again closed his eyes, for he had seen, seated on his bed, a woman, a nun, young and beautiful! He thought he was still dreaming, but she grasped his hand firmly. He opened his burning eyes, and fixed them upon her.

"Is it you, Jeannede Belfiel? The rain has drenched your veil and your black hair! Why are you here, unhappy woman?"

"Hark! awake not my Urbain; he sleeps there in the next room. Ay, my hair is indeed wet, and my feet—see, my feet that were once so white, see how the mud has soiled them. But I have made a vow—I will not wash them till I have seen the King, and until he has granted me Urbain's pardon. I am going to the army to find him; I will speak to him as Grandier taught me to speak, and he will pardon him. And listen, I will also ask thy pardon, for I read it in thy face that thou, too, art condemned to death. Poor youth! thou art too young to die, thy curling hair is beautiful; but yet thou art condemned, for thou hast on thy brow a line that never deceives. The man thou hast struck will kill thee. Thou hast made too much use of the cross; it is that which will bring evil upon thee. Thou hast struck with it, and thou wearest it round thy neck by a hair chain. Nay, hide not thy face; have I said aught to afflict thee, or is it that thou lovest, young man? Ah, reassure thyself, I will not tell all this to thy love. I am mad, but I am gentle, very gentle; and three days ago I was beautiful. Is she also

beautiful? Ah! she will weep some day! Yet, if she can weep, she will be happy!”

And then suddenly Jeanne began to recite the service for the dead in a monotonous voice, but with incredible rapidity, still seated on the bed, and turning the beads of a long rosary.

Suddenly the door opened; she looked up, and fled through another door in the partition.

”What the devil’s that—an imp or an angel, saying the funeral service over you, and you under the clothes, as if you were in a shroud?”

This abrupt exclamation came from the rough voice of Grandchamp, who was so astonished at what he had seen that he dropped the glass of lemonade he was bringing in. Finding that his master did not answer, he became still more alarmed, and raised the bedclothes. Cinq-Mars’s face was crimson, and he seemed asleep, but his old domestic saw that the blood rushing to his head had almost suffocated him; and, seizing a jug full of cold water, he dashed the whole of it in his face. This military remedy rarely fails to effect its purpose, and Cinq-Mars returned to himself with a start.

”Ah! it is thou, Grandchamp; what frightful dreams I have had!”

”Peste! Monsieur le Marquis, your dreams, on the contrary, are very pretty ones. I saw the tail of the last as I came in; your choice is not bad.”

”What dost mean, blockhead?”

”Nay, not a blockhead, Monsieur; I have good eyes, and I have seen what I have seen. But, really ill as you are, Monsieur le Marechal would never—”

”Thou art utterly doting, my friend; give me some drink, I am parched with thirst. Oh, heavens! what a night! I still see all those women.”

”All those women, Monsieur? Why, how many are here?”

”I am speaking to thee of a dream, blockhead. Why standest there like a post, instead of giving me some drink?”

”Enough, Monsieur; I will get more lemonade.” And going to the door, he called over the staircase, ”Germain! Etienne! Louis!”

The innkeeper answered from below: ”Coming, Monsieur, coming; they have been helping me to catch the madwoman.”

"What mad-woman?" said Cinq-Mars, rising in bed.

The host entered, and, taking off his cotton cap, said, respectfully: "Oh, nothing, Monsieur le Marquis, only a madwoman that came here last night on foot, and whom we put in the next room; but she has escaped, and we have not been able to catch her."

"Ah!" exclaimed Cinq-Mars, returning to himself and putting his hand to his eyes, "it was not a dream, then. And my mother, where is she? and the Marechal, and—Ah! and yet it is but a fearful dream! Leave me."

As he said this, he turned toward the wall, and again pulled the clothes over his head.

The innkeeper, in amazement, touched his forehead three times with his finger, looking at Grandchamp as if to ask him whether his master were also mad.

Grandchamp motioned him away in silence, and in order to watch the rest of the night by the side of Cinq-Mars, who was in a deep sleep, he seated himself in a large armchair, covered with tapestry, and began to squeeze lemons into a glass of water with an air as grave and severe as Archimedes calculating the condensing power of his mirrors.

CHAPTER VII

THE CABINET

Men have rarely the courage to be wholly good or wholly bad.
MACHIAVELLI.

Let us leave our young traveller sleeping; he will soon pursue a long and beautiful route. Since we are at liberty to turn to all points of the map, we will fix our eyes upon the city of Narbonne.

Behold the Mediterranean, not far distant, washing with its blue waters the sandy shores. Penetrate into that city resembling Athens; and to find him who reigns there, follow that dark and irregular street, mount the steps of the old archiepiscopal palace, and enter the first and largest of its apartments.

This was a very long salon, lighted by a series of high lancet windows, of which the upper part only retained the blue, yellow, and red panes that shed a mysterious light through the apartment. A large round table occupied its entire breadth, near the great fireplace; around this table, covered with a colored cloth and scattered with papers and portfolios,

were seated, bending over their pens, eight secretaries copying letters which were handed to them from a smaller table. Other men quietly arranged the completed papers in the shelves of a bookcase, partly filled with books bound in black.

Notwithstanding the number of persons assembled in the room, one might have heard the movements of the wings of a fly. The only interruption to the silence was the sound of pens rapidly gliding over paper, and a shrill voice dictating, stopping every now and then to cough. This voice proceeded from a great armchair placed beside the fire, which was blazing, notwithstanding the heat of the season and of the country. It was one of those armchairs that you still see in old castles, and which seem made to read one's self to sleep in, so easy is every part of it. The sitter sinks into a circular cushion of down; if the head leans back, the cheeks rest upon pillows covered with silk, and the seat juts out so far beyond the elbows that one may believe the provident upholsterers of our forefathers sought to provide that the book should make no noise in falling so as to awaken the sleeper.

But we will quit this digression, and speak of the man who occupied the chair, and who was very far from sleeping. He had a broad forehead, bordered with thin white hair, large, mild eyes, a wan face, to which a small, pointed, white beard gave that air of subtlety and finesse noticeable in all the portraits of the period of Louis XIII. His mouth was almost without lips, which Lavater deems an indubitable sign of an evil mind, and it was framed in a pair of slight gray moustaches and a 'royale'—an ornament then in fashion, which somewhat resembled a comma in form. The old man wore a close red cap, a large 'robe-dechambre', and purple silk stockings; he was no less a personage than Armand Duplessis, Cardinal de Richelieu.

Near him, around the small table, sat four youths from fifteen to twenty years of age; these were pages, or domestics, according to the term then in use, which signified familiars, friends of the house. This custom was a relic of feudal patronage, which still existed in our manners. The younger members of high families received wages from the great lords, and were devoted to their service in all things, challenging the first comer at the wish of their patron. The pages wrote letters from the outline previously given them by the Cardinal, and after their master had glanced at them, passed them to the secretaries, who made fair copies. The Duke, for his part, wrote on his knee private notes upon small slips of paper, inserting them in almost all the packets before sealing them, which he did with his own hand.

He had been writing a short time, when, in a mirror before him, he saw the youngest of his pages writing something on a sheet of paper much smaller than the official sheet. He hastily wrote a few words, and then slipped the paper under the large sheet which, much against his inclination, he had to fill; but, seated behind the Cardinal, he hoped that the difficulty with which the latter turned would prevent him from

seeing the little manoeuvre he had tried to exercise with much dexterity. Suddenly Richelieu said to him, dryly, "Come here, Monsieur Olivier."

These words came like a thunder-clap on the poor boy, who seemed about sixteen. He rose at once, however, and stood before the minister, his arms hanging at his side and his head lowered.

The other pages and the secretaries stirred no more than soldiers when a comrade is struck down by a ball, so accustomed were they to this kind of summons. The present one, however, was more energetic than usual.

"What were you writing?"

"My lord, what your Eminence dictated."

"What!"

"My lord, the letter to Don Juan de Braganza."

"No evasions, Monsieur; you were writing something else."

"My lord," said the page, with tears in his eyes, "it was a letter to one of my cousins."

"Let me see it."

The page trembled in every limb and was obliged to lean against the chimney-piece, as he said, in a hardly audible tone, "It is impossible."

"Monsieur le Vicomte Olivier d'Entraigues," said the minister, without showing the least emotion, "you are no longer in my service." The page withdrew. He knew that there was no reply; so, slipping his letter into his pocket, and opening the folding-doors just wide enough to allow his exit, he glided out like a bird escaped from the cage.

The minister went on writing the note upon his knee.

The secretaries redoubled their silent zeal, when suddenly the two wings of the door were thrown back and showed, standing in the opening, a Capuchin, who, bowing, with his arms crossed over his breast, seemed waiting for alms or for an order to retire. He had a dark complexion, and was deeply pitted with smallpox; his eyes, mild, but somewhat squinting, were almost hidden by his thick eyebrows, which met in the middle of his forehead; on his mouth played a crafty, mischievous, and sinister smile; his beard was straight and red, and his costume was that of the order of St. Francis in all its repulsiveness, with sandals on his bare feet, that looked altogether unfit to tread upon carpet.

Such as he was, however, this personage appeared to create a great sensation throughout the room; for, without finishing the phrase, the

line, or even the word begun, every person rose and went out by the door where he was still standing—some saluting him as they passed, others turning away their heads, and the young pages holding their fingers to their noses, but not till they were behind him, for they seemed to have a secret fear of him. When they had all passed out, he entered, making a profound reverence, because the door was still open; but, as soon as it was shut, unceremoniously advancing, he seated himself near the Cardinal, who, having recognized him by the general movement he created, saluted him with a dry and silent inclination of the head, regarding him fixedly, as if awaiting some news and unable to avoid knitting his brows, as at the aspect of a spider or some other disagreeable creature.

The Cardinal could not resist this movement of displeasure, because he felt himself obliged, by the presence of his agent, to resume those profound and painful conversations from which he had for some days been free, in a country whose pure air, favorable to him, had somewhat soothed the pain of his malady; that malady had changed to a slow fever, but its intervals were long enough to enable him to forget during its absence that it must return. Giving, therefore, a little rest to his hitherto indefatigable mind, he had been awaiting, for the first time in his life perhaps, without impatience, the return of the couriers he had sent in all directions, like the rays of a sun which alone gave life and movement to France. He had not expected the visit he now received, and the sight of one of those men, whom, to use his own expression, he "steeped in crime," rendered all the habitual disquietudes of his life more present to him, without entirely dissipating the cloud of melancholy which at that time obscured his thoughts.

The beginning of his conversation was tinged with the gloomy hue of his late reveries; but he soon became more animated and vigorous than ever, when his powerful mind had reentered the real world.

His confidant, seeing that he was expected to break the silence, did so in this abrupt fashion:

"Well, my lord, of what are you thinking?"

"Alas, Joseph, of what should we all think, but of our future happiness in a better life? For many days I have been reflecting that human interests have too much diverted me from this great thought; and I repent me of having spent some moments of my leisure in profane works, such as my tragedies, 'Europe' and 'Mirame,' despite the glory they have already gained me among our brightest minds—a glory which will extend unto futurity."

Father Joseph, full of what he had to say, was at first surprised at this opening; but he knew his master too well to betray his feelings, and, well skilled in changing the course of his ideas, replied:

"Yes, their merit is very great, and France will regret that these

immortal works are not followed by similar productions.”

”Yes, my dear Joseph; but it is in vain that such men as Boisrobert, Claveret, Colletet, Corneille, and, above all, the celebrated Mairet, have proclaimed these tragedies the finest that the present or any past age has produced. I reproach myself for them, I swear to you, as for a mortal sin, and I now, in my hours of repose, occupy myself only with my 'Methode des Controverses', and my book on the 'Perfection du Chretien.' I remember that I am fifty-six years old, and that I have an incurable malady.”

”These are calculations which your enemies make as precisely as your Eminence,” said the priest, who began to be annoyed with this conversation, and was eager to talk of other matters.

The blood mounted to the Cardinal's face.

”I know it! I know it well!” he said; ”I know all their black villainy, and I am prepared for it. But what news is there?”

”According to our arrangement, my lord, we have removed Mademoiselle d'Hautefort, as we removed Mademoiselle de la Fayette before her. So far it is well; but her place is not filled, and the King—”

”Well!”

”The King has ideas which he never had before.”

”Ha! and which come not from me? 'Tis well, truly,” said the minister, with an ironic sneer.

”What, my lord, leave the place of the favorite vacant for six whole days? It is not prudent; pardon me for saying so.”

”He has ideas—ideas!” repeated Richelieu, with a kind of terror; ”and what are they?”

”He talks of recalling the Queen-mother,” said the Capuchin, in a low voice; ”of recalling her from Cologne.”

”Marie de Medicis!” cried the Cardinal, striking the arms of his chair with his hands. ”No, by Heaven, she shall not again set her foot upon the soil of France, whence I drove her, step by step! England has not dared to receive her, exiled by me; Holland fears to be crushed by her; and my kingdom to receive her! No, no, such an idea could not have originated with himself! To recall my enemy! to recall his mother! What perfidy! He would not have dared to think of it.”

Then, having mused for a moment, he added, fixing a penetrating look still full of burning anger upon Father Joseph:

"But in what terms did he express this desire? Tell me his precise words."

"He said publicly; and in the presence of Monsieur: 'I feel that one of the first duties of a Christian is to be a good son, and I will resist no longer the murmurs of my conscience.'"

"Christian! conscience! these are not his expressions. It is Father Caussin—it is his confessor who is betraying me," cried the Cardinal. "Perfidious Jesuit! I pardoned thee thy intrigue with La Fayette; but I will not pass over thy secret counsels. I will have this confessor dismissed, Joseph; he is an enemy to the State, I see it clearly. But I myself have acted with negligence for some days past; I have not sufficiently hastened the arrival of the young d'Effiat, who will doubtless succeed. He is handsome and intellectual, they say. What a blunder! I myself merit disgrace. To leave that fox of a Jesuit with the King, without having given him my secret instructions, without a hostage, a pledge, or his fidelity to my orders! What neglect! Joseph, take a pen, and write what I shall dictate for the other confessor, whom we will choose better. I think of Father Sirmond."

Father Joseph sat down at the large table, ready to write, and the Cardinal dictated to him those duties, of a new kind, which shortly afterward he dared to have given to the King, who received them, respected them, and learned them by heart as the commandments of the Church. They have come down to us, a terrible monument of the empire that a man may seize upon by means of circumstances, intrigues, and audacity:

"I. A prince should have a prime minister, and that minister three qualities: (1) He should have no passion but for his prince; (2) He should be able and faithful; (3) He should be an ecclesiastic.

"II. A prince ought perfectly to love his prime minister.

"III. Ought never to change his prime minister.

"IV. Ought to tell him all things.

"V. To give him free access to his person.

"VI. To give him sovereign authority over his people.

"VII. Great honors and large possessions.

"VIII. A prince has no treasure more precious than his prime minister.

”IX. A prince should not put faith in what people say against his prime minister, nor listen to any such slanders.

”X. A prince should reveal to his prime minister all that is said against him, even though he has been bound to keep it secret.

”XI. A prince should prefer not only the well-being of the State, but also his prime minister, to all his relations.”

Such were the commandments of the god of France, less astonishing in themselves than the terrible naivete which made him bequeath them to posterity, as if posterity also must believe in him.

While he dictated his instructions, reading them from a small piece of paper, written with his own hand, a deep melancholy seemed to possess him more and more at each word; and when he had ended, he fell back in his chair, his arms crossed, and his head sunk on his breast.

Father Joseph, dropping his pen, arose and was inquiring whether he were ill, when he heard issue from the depths of his chest these mournful and memorable words:

”What utter weariness! what endless trouble! If the ambitious man could see me, he would flee to a desert. What is my power? A miserable reflection of the royal power; and what labors to fix upon my star that incessantly wavering ray! For twenty years I have been in vain attempting it. I can not comprehend that man. He dare not flee me; but they take him from me—he glides through my fingers. What things could I not have done with his hereditary rights, had I possessed them? But, employing such infinite calculation in merely keeping one’s balance, what of genius remains for high enterprises? I hold Europe in my hand, yet I myself am suspended by a trembling hair. What is it to me that I can cast my eyes confidently over the map of Europe, when all my interests are concentrated in his narrow cabinet, and its few feet of space give me more trouble to govern than the whole country besides? See, then, what it is to be a prime minister! Envy me, my guards, if you can.”

His features were so distorted as to give reason to fear some accident; and at the same moment he was seized with a long and violent fit of coughing, which ended in a slight hemorrhage. He saw that Father Joseph, alarmed, was about to seize a gold bell that stood on the table, and, suddenly rising with all the vivacity of a young man, he stopped him, saying:

”’Tis nothing, Joseph; I sometimes yield to these fits of depression; but they do not last long, and I leave them stronger than before. As for my health, I know my condition perfectly; but that is not the business in hand. What have you done at Paris? I am glad to know the King has arrived in Bearn, as I wished; we shall be able to keep a closer watch

upon him. How did you induce him to come away?"

"A battle at Perpignan."

"That is not bad. Well, we can arrange it for him; that occupation will do as well as another just now. But the young Queen, what says she?"

"She is still furious against you; her correspondence discovered, the questioning to which you had subjected her—"

"Bah! a madrigal and a momentary submission on my part will make her forget that I have separated her from her house of Austria and from the country of her Buckingham. But how does she occupy herself?"

"In machinations with Monsieur. But as we have his entire confidence, here are the daily accounts of their interviews."

"I shall not trouble myself to read them; while the Duc de Bouillon remains in Italy I have nothing to fear in that quarter. She may have as many petty plots with Gaston in the chimney-corner as she pleases; he never got beyond his excellent intentions, forsooth! He carries nothing into effect but his withdrawal from the kingdom. He has had his third dismissal; I will manage a fourth for him whenever he pleases; he is not worth the pistol-shot you had the Comte de Soissons settled with, and yet the poor Comte had scarce more energy than he."

And the Cardinal, reseating himself in his chair, began to laugh gayly enough for a statesman.

"I always laugh when I think of their expedition to Amiens. They had me between them, Each had fully five hundred gentlemen with him, armed to the teeth, and all going to despatch me, like Concini; but the great Vitry was not there. They very quietly let me talk for an hour with them about the hunt and the Fete Dieu, and neither of them dared make a sign to their cut-throats. I have since learned from Chavigny that for two long months they had been waiting that happy moment. For myself, indeed, I observed nothing, except that little villain, the Abbe de Gondi,— [Afterward Cardinal de Retz.]—who prowled near me, and seemed to have something hidden under his sleeve; it was he that made me get into the coach."

"Apropos of the Abbe, my lord, the Queen insists upon making him coadjutor."

"She is mad! he will ruin her if she connects herself with him; he's a musketeer in canonicals, the devil in a cassock. Read his 'Histoire de Fiesque'; you may see himself in it. He will be nothing while I live."

"How is it that with a judgment like yours you bring another ambitious man of his age to court?"

"That is an entirely different matter. This young Cinq-Mars, my friend, will be a mere puppet. He will think of nothing but his ruff and his shoulder-knots; his handsome figure assures me of this. I know that he is gentle and weak; it was for this reason I preferred him to his elder brother. He will do whatever we wish."

"Ah, my lord," said the monk, with an expression of doubt, "I never place much reliance on people whose exterior is so calm; the hidden flame is often all the more dangerous. Recollect the Marechal d'Effiat, his father."

"But I tell you he is a boy, and I shall bring him up; while Gondi is already an accomplished conspirator, an ambitious knave who sticks at nothing. He has dared to dispute Madame de la Meilleraie with me. Can you conceive it? He dispute with me! A petty priestling, who has no other merit than a little lively small-talk and a cavalier air. Fortunately, the husband himself took care to get rid of him."

Father Joseph, who listened with equal impatience to his master when he spoke of his 'bonnes fortunes' or of his verses, made, however, a grimace which he meant to be very sly and insinuating, but which was simply ugly and awkward; he fancied that the expression of his mouth, twisted about like a monkey's, conveyed, "Ah! who can resist your Eminence?" But his Eminence only read there, "I am a clown who knows nothing of the great world"; and, without changing his voice, he suddenly said, taking up a despatch from the table:

"The Duc de Rohan is dead, that is good news; the Huguenots are ruined. He is a lucky man. I had him condemned by the Parliament of Toulouse to be torn in pieces by four horses, and here he dies quietly on the battlefield of Rheinfeld. But what matters? The result is the same. Another great head is laid low! How they have fallen since that of Montmorency! I now see hardly any that do not bow before me. We have already punished almost all our dupes of Versailles; assuredly they have nothing with which to reproach me. I simply exercise against them the law of retaliation, treating them as they would have treated me in the council of the Queen-mother. The old dotard Bassompierre shall be doomed for perpetual imprisonment, and so shall the assassin Marechal de Vitry, for that was the punishment they voted me. As for Marillac, who counselled death, I reserve death for him at the first false step he makes, and I beg thee, Joseph, to remind me of him; we must be just to all. The Duc de Bouillon still keeps up his head proudly on account of his Sedan, but I shall make him yield. Their blindness is truly marvellous! They think themselves all free to conspire, not perceiving that they are merely fluttering at the ends of the threads that I hold in my hand, and which I lengthen now and then to give them air and space. Did the Huguenots cry out as one man at the death of their dear duke?"

"Less so than at the affair of Loudun, which is happily concluded."

"What! Happily? I hope that Grandier is dead?"

"Yes; that is what I meant. Your Eminence may be fully satisfied. All was settled in twenty-four hours. He is no longer thought of. Only Laubardemont committed a slight blunder in making the trial public. This caused a little tumult; but we have a description of the rioters, and measures have been taken to seek them out."

"This is well, very well. Urbain was too superior a man to be left there; he was turning Protestant. I would wager that he would have ended by abjuring. His work against the celibacy of priests made me conjecture this; and in cases of doubt, remember, Joseph, it is always best to cut the tree before the fruit is gathered. These Huguenots, you see, form a regular republic in the State. If once they had a majority in France, the monarchy would be lost, and they would establish some popular government which might be durable."

"And what deep pain do they daily cause our holy Father the Pope!" said Joseph.

"Ah," interrupted the Cardinal, "I see; thou wouldst remind me of his obstinacy in not giving thee the hat. Be tranquil; I will speak to-day on the subject to the new ambassador we are sending, the Marechal d'Estrees, and he will, on his arrival, doubtless obtain that which has been in train these two years—thy nomination to the cardinalate. I myself begin to think that the purple would become thee well, for it does not show blood-stains."

And both burst into laughter—the one as a master, overwhelming the assassin whom he pays with his utter scorn; the other as a slave, resigned to all the humiliation by which he rises.

The laughter which the ferocious pleasantry of the old minister had excited had hardly subsided, when the door opened, and a page announced several couriers who had arrived simultaneously from different points. Father Joseph arose, and, leaning against the wall like an Egyptian mummy, allowed nothing to appear upon his face but an expression of stolid contemplation. Twelve messengers entered successively, attired in various disguises; one appeared to be a Swiss soldier, another a sutler, a third a master-mason. They had been introduced into the palace by a secret stairway and corridor, and left the cabinet by a door opposite that at which they had entered, without any opportunity of meeting one another or communicating the contents of their despatches. Each laid a rolled or folded packet of papers on the large table, spoke for a moment with the Cardinal in the embrasure of a window and withdrew. Richelieu had risen on the entrance of the first messenger, and, careful to do all himself, had received them all, listened to all, and with his own hand had closed the door upon all. When the last was gone, he signed to Father Joseph, and, without speaking, both proceeded to unfold, or,

rather, to tear open, the packets of despatches, and in a few words communicated to each other the substance of the letters.

"The Duc de Weimar pursues his advantage; the Duc Charles is defeated. Our General is in good spirits; here are some of his lively remarks at table. Good!"

"Monseigneur le Vicomte de Turenne has retaken the towns of Lorraine; and here are his private conversations—"

"Oh! pass over them; they can not be dangerous. He is ever a good and honest man, in no way mixing himself up with politics; so that some one gives him a little army to play at chess with, no matter against whom, he is content. We shall always be good friends."

"The Long Parliament still endures in England. The Commons pursue their project; there are massacres in Ireland. The Earl of Strafford is condemned to death."

"To death! Horrible!"

"I will read: 'His Majesty Charles I has not had the courage to sign the sentence, but he has appointed four commissioners.'"

"Weak king, I abandon thee! Thou shalt have no more of our money. Fall, since thou art ungrateful! Unhappy Wentworth!"

A tear rose in the eyes of Richelieu as he said this; the man who had but now played with the lives of so many others wept for a minister abandoned by his prince. The similarity between that position and his own affected him, and it was his own case he deplored in the person of the foreign minister. He ceased to read aloud the despatches that he opened, and his confidant followed his example. He examined with scrupulous attention the detailed accounts of the most minute and secret actions of each person of any importance—accounts which he always required to be added to the official despatches made by his able spies. All the despatches to the King passed through his hands, and were carefully revised so as to reach the King amended to the state in which he wished him to read them. The private notes were all carefully burned by the monk after the Cardinal had ascertained their contents. The latter, however, seemed by no means satisfied, and he was walking quickly to and fro with gestures expressive of anxiety, when the door opened, and a thirteenth courier entered. This one seemed a boy hardly fourteen years old; he held under his arm a packet sealed with black for the King, and gave to the Cardinal only a small letter, of which a stolen glance from Joseph could collect but four words. The Cardinal started, tore the billet into a thousand pieces, and, bending down to the ear of the boy, spoke to him for a long time; all that Joseph heard was, as the messenger went out:

"Take good heed to this; not until twelve hours from this time."

During this aside of the Cardinal, Joseph was occupied in concealing an infinite number of libels from Flanders and Germany, which the minister always insisted upon seeing, however bitter they might be to him. In this respect, he affected a philosophy which he was far from possessing, and to deceive those around him he would sometimes pretend that his enemies were not wholly wrong, and would outwardly laugh at their pleasantries; but those who knew his character better detected bitter rage lurking under this apparent moderation, and knew that he was never satisfied until he had got the hostile book condemned by the parliament to be burned in the Place de Greve, as "injurious to the King, in the person of his minister, the most illustrious Cardinal," as we read in the decrees of the time, and that his only regret was that the author was not in the place of his book—a satisfaction he gave himself whenever he could, as in the case of Urbain Grandier.

It was his colossal pride which he thus avenged, without avowing it even to himself—nay, laboring for a length of time, sometimes for a whole twelvemonth together, to persuade himself that the interest of the State was concerned in the matter. Ingenious in connecting his private affairs with the affairs of France, he had convinced himself that she bled from the wounds which he received. Joseph, careful not to irritate his ill-temper at this moment, put aside and concealed a book entitled 'Mystres Politiques du Cardinal de la Rochelle'; also another, attributed to a monk of Munich, entitled 'Questions quolibetiques, ajustees au temps present, et Impiete Sanglante du dieu Mars'. The worthy advocate Aubery, who has given us one of the most faithful histories of the most eminent Cardinal, is transported with rage at the mere title of the first of these books, and exclaims that "the great minister had good reason to glorify himself that his enemies, inspired against their will with the same enthusiasm which conferred the gift of rendering oracles upon the ass of Balaam, upon Caiaphas and others, who seemed most unworthy of the gift of prophecy, called him with good reason Cardinal de la Rochelle, since three years after their writing he reduced that town; thus Scipio was called Africanus for having subjugated that PROVINCE!" Very little was wanting to make Father Joseph, who had necessarily the same feelings, express his indignation in the same terms; for he remembered with bitterness the ridiculous part he had played in the siege of Rochelle, which, though not a province like Africa, had ventured to resist the most eminent Cardinal, and into which Father Joseph, piquing himself on his military skill, had proposed to introduce the troops through a sewer. However, he restrained himself, and had time to conceal the libel in the pocket of his brown robe ere the minister had dismissed his young courier and returned to the table.

"And now to depart, Joseph," he said. "Open the doors to all that court which besieges me, and let us go to the King, who awaits me at Perpignan; this time I have him for good."

The Capuchin drew back, and immediately the pages, throwing open the

gilded doors, announced in succession the greatest lords of the period, who had obtained permission from the King to come and salute the minister. Some, even, under the pretext of illness or business, had departed secretly, in order not to be among the last at Richelieu's reception; and the unhappy monarch found himself almost as alone as other kings find themselves on their deathbeds. But with him, the throne seemed, in the eyes of the court, his dying couch, his reign a continual last agony, and his minister a threatening successor.

Two pages, of the first families of France, stood at the door, where the ushers announced each of the persons whom Father Joseph had found in the ante room. The Cardinal, still seated in his great arm chair, remained motionless as the common couriers entered, inclined his head to the more distinguished, and to princes alone put his hands on the elbows of his chair and slightly rose; each person, having profoundly saluted him, stood before him near the fireplace, waited till he had spoken to him, and then, at a wave of his hand, completed the circuit of the room, and went out by the same door at which he had entered, paused for a moment to salute Father Joseph, who aped his master, and who for that reason had been named "his Gray Eminence," and at last quitted the palace, unless, indeed, he remained standing behind the chair, if the minister had signified that he should, which was considered a token of very great favor.

He allowed to pass several insignificant persons, and many whose merits were useless to him; the first whom he stopped in the procession was the Marechal d'Estrees, who, about to set out on an embassy to Rome, came to make his adieux; those behind him stopped short. This circumstance warned the courtiers in the anteroom that a longer conversation than usual was on foot, and Father Joseph, advancing to the threshold, exchanged with the Cardinal a glance which seemed to say, on the one side, "Remember the promise you have just made me," on the other, "Set your mind at rest." At the same time, the expert Capuchin let his master see that he held upon his arm one of his victims, whom he was forming into a docile instrument; this was a young gentleman who wore a very short green cloak, a pourpoint of the same color, close-fitting red breeches, with glittering gold garters below the knee—the costume of the pages of Monsieur. Father Joseph, indeed, spoke to him secretly, but not in the way the Cardinal imagined; for he contemplated being his equal, and was preparing other connections, in case of defection on the part of the prime minister.

"Tell Monsieur not to trust in appearances, and that he has no servant more faithful than I. The Cardinal is on the decline, and my conscience tells me to warn against his faults him who may inherit the royal power during the minority. To give your great Prince a proof of my faith, tell him that it is intended to arrest his friend, Puy-Laurens, and that he had better be kept out of the way, or the Cardinal will put him in the Bastille."

While the servant was thus betraying his master, the master, not to be behindhand with him, betrayed his servant. His self-love, and some remnant of respect to the Church, made him shudder at the idea of seeing a contemptible agent invested with the same hat which he himself wore as a crown, and seated as high as himself, except as to the precarious position of minister. Speaking, therefore, in an undertone to the Marechal d'Estrees, he said:

"It is not necessary to importune Urbain VIII any further in favor of the Capuchin you see yonder; it is enough that his Majesty has deigned to name him for the cardinalate. One can readily conceive the repugnance of his Holiness to clothe this mendicant in the Roman purple."

Then, passing on to general matters, he continued:

"Truly, I know not what can have cooled the Holy Father toward us; what have we done that was not for the glory of our Holy Mother, the Catholic Church?"

"I myself said the first mass at Rochelle, and you see for yourself, Monsieur le Marechal, that our habit is everywhere; and even in your armies, the Cardinal de la Vallette has commanded gloriously in the palatinate."

"And has just made a very fine retreat," said the Marechal, laying a slight emphasis upon the word.

The minister continued, without noticing this little outburst of professional jealousy, and raising his voice, said:

"God has shown that He did not scorn to send the spirit of victory upon his Levites, for the Duc de Weimar did not more powerfully aid in the conquest of Lorraine than did this pious Cardinal, and never was a naval army better commanded than by our Archbishop of Bordeaux at Rochelle."

It was well known that at this very time the minister was incensed against this prelate, whose haughtiness was so overbearing, and whose impertinent ebullitions were so frequent as to have involved him in two very disagreeable affairs at Bordeaux. Four years before, the Duc d'Epéron, then governor of Guyenne, followed by all his train and by his troops, meeting him among his clergy in a procession, had called him an insolent fellow, and given him two smart blows with his cane; whereupon the Archbishop had excommunicated him. And again, recently, despite this lesson, he had quarrelled with the Marechal de Vitry, from whom he had received "twenty blows with a cane or stick, which you please," wrote the Cardinal Duke to the Cardinal de la Vallette, "and I think he would like to excommunicate all France." In fact, he did excommunicate the Marechal's baton, remembering that in the former case the Pope had obliged the Duc d'Epéron to ask his pardon; but M. Vitry, who had caused the Marechal d'Ancre to be assassinated, stood too high at court for

that, and the Archbishop, in addition to his beating, got well scolded by the minister.

M. d'Estrees thought, therefore, sagely that there might be some irony in the Cardinal's manner of referring to the warlike talents of the Archbishop, and he answered, with perfect sang-froid:

"It is true, my lord, no one can say that it was upon the sea he was beaten."

His Eminence could not restrain a smile at this; but seeing that the electrical effect of that smile had created others in the hall, as well as whisperings and conjectures, he immediately resumed his gravity, and familiarly taking the Marechal's arm, said:

"Come, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, you are ready at repartee. With you I should not fear Cardinal Albornos, or all the Borgias in the world—no, nor all the efforts of their Spain with the Holy Father."

Then, raising his voice, and looking around, as if addressing himself to the silent, and, so to speak, captive assembly, he continued:

"I hope that we shall no more be reproached, as formerly, for having formed an alliance with one of the greatest men of our day; but as Gustavus Adolphus is dead, the Catholic King will no longer have any pretext for soliciting the excommunication of the most Christian King. How say you, my dear lord?" addressing himself to the Cardinal de la Vallette, who now approached, fortunately without having heard the late allusion to himself. "Monsieur d'Estrees, remain near our chair; we have still many things to say to you, and you are not one too many in our conversations, for we have no secrets. Our policy is frank and open to all men; the interest of his Majesty and of the State—nothing more."

The Marechal made a profound bow, fell back behind the chair of the minister, and gave place to the Cardinal de la Vallette, who, incessantly bowing and flattering and swearing devotion and entire obedience to the Cardinal, as if to expiate the obduracy of his father, the Duc d'Epernon, received in return a few vague words, to no meaning or purpose, the Cardinal all the while looking toward the door, to see who should follow. He had even the mortification to find himself abruptly interrupted by the minister, who cried at the most flattering period of his honeyed discourse:

"Ah! is that you at last, my dear Fabert? How I have longed to see you, to talk of the siege!"

The General, with a brusque and awkward manner, saluted the Cardinal-Generalissimo, and presented to him the officers who had come from the camp with him. He talked some time of the operations of the siege, and the Cardinal seemed to be paying him court now, in order to prepare him

afterward for receiving his orders even on the field of battle; he spoke to the officers who accompanied him, calling them by their names, and questioning them about the camp.

They all stood aside to make way for the Duc d'Angouleme—that Valois, who, having struggled against Henri IV, now prostrated himself before Richelieu. He solicited a command, having been only third in rank at the siege of Rochelle. After him came young Mazarin, ever supple and insinuating, but already confident in his fortune.

The Duc d'Halluin came after them; the Cardinal broke off the compliments he was addressing to the others, to utter, in a loud voice:

"Monsieur le Duc, I inform you with pleasure that the King has made you a marshal of France; you will sign yourself Schomberg, will you not, at Leucate, delivered, as we hope, by you? But pardon me, here is Monsieur de Montauron, who has doubtless something important to communicate."

"Oh, no, my lord, I would only say that the poor young man whom you deigned to consider in your service is dying of hunger."

"Pshaw! at such a moment to speak of things like this! Your little Corneille will not write anything good; we have only seen 'Le Cid' and 'Les Horaces' as yet. Let him work, let him work! it is known that he is in my service, and that is disagreeable. However, since you interest yourself in the matter, I give him a pension of five hundred crowns on my privy purse."

The Chancellor of the Exchequer retired, charmed with the liberality of the minister, and went home to receive with great affability the dedication of *Cinna*, wherein the great Corneille compares his soul to that of Augustus, and thanks him for having given alms 'a quelques Muses'.

The Cardinal, annoyed by this importunity, rose, observing that the day was advancing, and that it was time to set out to visit the King.

At this moment, and as the greatest noblemen present were offering their arms to aid him in walking, a man in the robe of a referendary advanced toward him, saluting him with a complacent and confident smile which astonished all the people there, accustomed to the great world, seeming to say: "We have secret affairs together; you shall see how agreeable he makes himself to me. I am at home in his cabinet." His heavy and awkward manner, however, betrayed a very inferior being; it was Laubardemont.

Richelieu knit his brows when he saw him, and cast a glance at Joseph; then, turning toward those who surrounded him, he said, with bitter scorn:

"Is there some criminal about us to be apprehended?"

Then, turning his back upon the discomfited Laubardemont, the Cardinal left him redder than his robe, and, preceded by the crowd of personages who were to escort him in carriages or on horseback, he descended the great staircase of the palace.

All the people and the authorities of Narbonne viewed this royal departure with amazement.

The Cardinal entered alone a spacious square litter, in which he was to travel to Perpignan, his infirmities not permitting him to go in a coach, or to perform the journey on horseback. This kind of moving chamber contained a bed, a table, and a small chair for the page who wrote or read for him. This machine, covered with purple damask, was carried by eighteen men, who were relieved at intervals of a league; they were selected among his guards, and always performed this service of honor with uncovered heads, however hot or wet the weather might be. The Duc d'Angouleme, the Marechals de Schomberg and d'Estrees, Fabert, and other dignitaries were on horseback beside the litter; after them, among the most prominent were the Cardinal de la Vallette and Mazarin, with Chavigny, and the Marechal de Vitry, anxious to avoid the Bastille, with which it was said he was threatened.

Two coaches followed for the Cardinal's secretaries, physicians, and confessor; then eight others, each with four horses, for his gentlemen, and twenty-four mules for his luggage. Two hundred musketeers on foot marched close behind him, and his company of men-at-arms of the guard and his light-horse, all gentlemen, rode before and behind him on splendid horses.

Such was the equipage in which the prime minister proceeded to Perpignan; the size of the litter often made it necessary to enlarge the roads, and knock down the walls of some of the towns and villages on the way, into which it could not otherwise enter, "so that," say the authors and manuscripts of the time, full of a sincere admiration for all this luxury—"so that he seemed a conqueror entering by the breach. "We have sought in vain with great care in these documents, for any account of proprietors or inhabitants of these dwellings so making room for his passage who shared in this admiration; but we have been unable to find any mention of such.

CHAPTER VIII

THE INTERVIEW

The pompous cortege of the Cardinal halted at the beginning of the camp. All the armed troops were drawn up in the finest order; and amid the sound of cannon and the music of each regiment the litter traversed a long line of cavalry and infantry, formed from the outermost tent to that of the minister, pitched at some distance from the royal quarters, and which its purple covering distinguished at a distance. Each general of division obtained a nod or a word from the Cardinal, who at length reaching his tent and, dismissing his train, shut himself in, waiting for the time to present himself to the King. But, before him, every person of his escort had repaired thither individually, and, without entering the royal abode, had remained in the long galleries covered with striped stuff, and arranged as became avenues leading to the Prince. The courtiers walking in groups, saluted one another and shook hands, regarding each other haughtily, according to their connections or the lords to whom they belonged. Others whispered together, and showed signs of astonishment, pleasure, or anger, which showed that something extraordinary had taken place. Among a thousand others, one singular dialogue occurred in a corner of the principal gallery.

"May I ask, Monsieur l'Abbe, why you look at me so fixedly?"

"Parbleu! Monsieur de Launay, it is because I'm curious to see what you will do. All the world abandons your Cardinal-Duke since your journey into Touraine; if you do not believe it, go and ask the people of Monsieur or of the Queen. You are behind-hand ten minutes by the watch with the Cardinal de la Vallette, who has just shaken hands with Rochefort and the gentlemen of the late Comte de Soissons, whom I shall regret as long as I live."

"Monsieur de Gondi, I understand you; is it a challenge with which you honor me?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Comte," answered the young Abbe, saluting him with all the gravity of the time; "I sought an occasion to challenge you in the name of Monsieur d'Attichi, my friend, with whom you had something to do at Paris."

"Monsieur l'Abbe, I am at your command. I will seek my seconds; do you the same."

"On horseback, with sword and pistol, I suppose?" added Gondi, with the air of a man arranging a party of pleasure, lightly brushing the sleeve of his cassock.

"If you please," replied the other. And they separated for a time, saluting one another with the greatest politeness, and with profound bows.

A brilliant crowd of gentlemen circulated around them in the gallery. They mingled with it to procure friends for the occasion. All the

elegance of the costumes of the day was displayed by the court that morning—small cloaks of every color, in velvet or in satin, embroidered with gold or silver; crosses of St. Michael and of the Holy Ghost; the ruffs, the sweeping hat-plumes, the gold shoulder-knots, the chains by which the long swords hung: all glittered and sparkled, yet not so brilliantly as did the fiery glances of those warlike youths, or their sprightly conversation, or their intellectual laughter. Amid the assembly grave personages and great lords passed on, followed by their numerous gentlemen.

The little Abbe de Gondi, who was very shortsighted, made his way through the crowd, knitting his brows and half shutting his eyes, that he might see the better, and twisting his moustache, for ecclesiastics wore them in those days. He looked closely at every one in order to recognize his friends, and at last stopped before a young man, very tall and dressed in black from head to foot; his sword, even, was of quite dark, bronzed steel. He was talking with a captain of the guards, when the Abbe de Gondi took him aside.

"Monsieur de Thou," said he, "I need you as my second in an hour, on horseback, with sword and pistol, if you will do me that honor."

"Monsieur, you know I am entirely at your service on all occasions. Where shall we meet?"

"In front of the Spanish bastion, if you please."

"Pardon me for returning to a conversation that greatly interests me. I will be punctual at the rendezvous."

And De Thou quitted him to rejoin the Captain. He had said all this in the gentlest of voices with unalterable coolness, and even with somewhat of an abstracted manner.

The little Abbe squeezed his hand with warm satisfaction, and continued his search.

He did not so easily effect an agreement with the young lords to whom he addressed himself; for they knew him better than did De Thou, and when they saw him coming they tried to avoid him, or laughed at him openly, and would not promise to serve him.

"Ah, Abbe! there you are hunting again; I'll swear it's a second you want," said the Duc de Beaufort.

"And I wager," added M. de la Rochefoucauld, "that it's against one of the Cardinal-Duke's people."

"You are both right, gentlemen; but since when have you laughed at affairs of honor?"

"The saints forbid I should," said M. de Beaufort. "Men of the sword like us ever reverence tierce, quarte, and octave; but as for the folds of the cassock, I know nothing of them."

"Pardieu! Monsieur, you know well enough that it does not embarrass my wrist, as I will prove to him who chooses; as to the gown itself, I should like to throw it into the gutter."

"Is it to tear it that you fight so often?" asked La Rochefoucauld. "But remember, my dear Abbe, that you yourself are within it."

Gondi turned to look at the clock, wishing to lose no more time in such sorry jests; but he had no better success elsewhere. Having stopped two gentlemen in the service of the young Queen, whom he thought ill-affected toward the Cardinal, and consequently glad to measure weapons with his creatures, one of them said to him very gravely:

"Monsieur de Gondi, you know what has just happened; the King has said aloud, 'Whether our imperious Cardinal wishes it or not, the widow of Henri le Grand shall no longer remain in exile.' Imperious! the King never before said anything so strong as that, Monsieur l'Abbe, mark that. Imperious! it is open disgrace. Certainly no one will dare to speak to him; no doubt he will quit the court this very day."

"I have heard this, Monsieur, but I have an affair--"

"It is lucky for you he stopped short in the middle of your career."

"An affair of honor--"

"Whereas Mazarin is quite a friend of yours."

"But will you, or will you not, listen to me?"

"Yes, a friend indeed! your adventures are always uppermost in his thoughts. Your fine duel with Monsieur de Coutenan about the pretty little pin-maker,--he even spoke of it to the King. Adieu, my dear Abbe, we are in great haste; adieu, adieu!" And, taking his friend's arm, the young mocker, without listening to another word, walked rapidly down the gallery and disappeared in the throng.

The poor Abbe was much mortified at being able to get only one second, and was watching sadly the passing of the hour and of the crowd, when he perceived a young gentleman whom he did not know, seated at a table, leaning on his elbow with a pensive air; he wore mourning which indicated no connection with any great house or party, and appeared to await, without any impatience, the time for attending the King, looking with a heedless air at those who surrounded him, and seeming not to notice or to

know any of them.

Gondi looked at him a moment, and accosted him without hesitation:

"Monsieur, I have not the honor of your acquaintance, but a fencing-party can never be unpleasant to a man of honor; and if you will be my second, in a quarter of an hour we shall be on the ground. I am Paul de Gondi; and I have challenged Monsieur de Launay, one of the Cardinal's clique, but in other respects a very gallant fellow."

The unknown, apparently not at all surprised at this address, replied, without changing his attitude: "And who are his seconds?"

"Faith, I don't know; but what matters it who serves him? We stand no worse with our friends for having exchanged a thrust with them."

The stranger smiled nonchalantly, paused for an instant to pass his hand through his long chestnut hair, and then said, looking idly at a large, round watch which hung at his waist:

"Well, Monsieur, as I have nothing better to do, and as I have no friends here, I am with you; it will pass the time as well as anything else."

And, taking his large, black-plumed hat from the table, he followed the warlike Abbe, who went quickly before him, often running back to hasten him on, like a child running before his father, or a puppy that goes backward and forward twenty times before it gets to the end of a street.

Meanwhile, two ushers, attired in the royal livery, opened the great curtains which separated the gallery from the King's tent, and silence reigned. The courtiers began to enter slowly, and in succession, the temporary dwelling of the Prince. He received them all gracefully, and was the first to meet the view of each person introduced.

Before a very small table surrounded with gilt armchairs stood Louis XIII, encircled by the great officers of the crown. His dress was very elegant: a kind of fawn-colored vest, with open sleeves, ornamented with shoulder-knots and blue ribbons, covered him down to the waist. Wide breeches reached to the knee, and the yellow-and-red striped stuff of which they were made was ornamented below with blue ribbons. His riding-boots, reaching hardly more than three inches above the ankle, were turned over, showing so lavish a lining of lace that they seemed to hold it as a vase holds flowers. A small mantle of blue velvet, on which was embroidered the cross of the Holy Ghost, covered the King's left arm, which rested on the hilt of his sword.

His head was uncovered, and his pale and noble face was distinctly visible, lighted by the sun, which penetrated through the top of the tent. The small, pointed beard then worn augmented the appearance of thinness in his face, while it added to its melancholy expression. By

his lofty brow, his classic profile, his aquiline nose, he was at once recognized as a prince of the great race of Bourbon. He had all the characteristic traits of his ancestors except their penetrating glance; his eyes seemed red from weeping, and veiled with a perpetual drowsiness; and the weakness of his vision gave him a somewhat vacant look.

He called around him, and was attentive to, the greatest enemies of the Cardinal, whom he expected every moment; and, balancing himself with one foot over the other, an hereditary habit of his family, he spoke quickly, but pausing from time to time to make a gracious inclination of the head, or a gesture of the hand, to those who passed before him with low reverences.

The court had been thus paying its respects to the King for two hours before the Cardinal appeared; the whole court stood in close ranks behind the Prince, and in the long galleries which extended from his tent. Already longer intervals elapsed between the names of the courtiers who were announced.

"Shall we not see our cousin the Cardinal?" said the King, turning, and looking at Montresor, one of Monsieur's gentlemen, as if to encourage him to answer.

"He is said to be very ill just now, Sire," was the answer.

"And yet I do not see how any but your Majesty can cure him," said the Duc de Beaufort.

"We cure nothing but the king's evil," replied Louis; "and the complaints of the Cardinal are always so mysterious that we own we can not understand them."

The Prince thus essayed to brave his minister, gaining strength in jests, the better to break his yoke, insupportable, but so difficult to remove. He almost thought he had succeeded in this, and, sustained by the joyous air surrounding him, he already privately congratulated himself on having been able to assume the supreme empire, and for the moment enjoyed all the power of which he fancied himself possessed. An involuntary agitation in the depth of his heart had warned him indeed that, the hour passed, all the burden of the State would fall upon himself alone; but he talked in order to divert the troublesome thought, and, concealing from himself the doubt he had of his own inability to reign, he set his imagination to work upon the result of his enterprises, thus forcing himself to forget the tedious roads which had led to them. Rapid phrases succeeded one another on his lips.

"We shall soon take Perpignan," he said to Fabert, who stood at some distance.

"Well, Cardinal, Lorraine is ours," he added to La Vallette. Then,

touching Mazarin's arm:

"It is not so difficult to manage a State as is supposed, eh?"

The Italian, who was not so sure of the Cardinal's disgrace as most of the courtiers, answered, without compromising himself:

"Ah, Sire, the late successes of your Majesty at home and abroad prove your sagacity in choosing your instruments and in directing them, and—"

But the Duc de Beaufort, interrupting him with that self-confidence, that loud voice and overbearing air, which subsequently procured him the surname of Important, cried out, vehemently:

"Pardieu! Sire, it needs only to will. A nation is driven like a horse, with spur and bridle; and as we are all good horsemen, your Majesty has only to choose among us."

This fine sally had not time to take effect, for two ushers cried, simultaneously, "His Eminence!"

The King's face flushed involuntarily, as if he had been surprised en flagrant delit. But immediately gaining confidence, he assumed an air of resolute haughtiness, which was not lost upon the minister.

The latter, attired in all the pomp of a cardinal, leaning upon two young pages, and followed by his captain of the guards and more than five hundred gentlemen attached to his house, advanced toward the King slowly and pausing at each step, as if forced to it by his sufferings, but in reality to observe the faces before him. A glance sufficed.

His suite remained at the entrance of the royal tent; of all those within it, not one was bold enough to salute him, or to look toward him. Even La Vallette feigned to be occupied in a conversation with Montresor; and the King, who desired to give him an unfavorable reception, greeted him lightly and continued a private conversation in a low voice with the Duc de Beaufort.

The Cardinal was therefore forced, after the first salute, to stop and pass to the side of the crowd of courtiers, as if he wished to mingle with them, but in reality to test them more closely; they all recoiled as at the sight of a leper. Fabert alone advanced toward him with the frank, brusque air habitual with him, and, making use of the terms belonging to his profession, said:

"Well, my lord, you make a breach in the midst of them like a cannon-ball; I ask pardon in their name."

"And you stand firm before me as before the enemy," said the Cardinal; "you will have no cause to regret it in the end, my dear Fabert."

Mazarin also approached the Cardinal, but with caution, and, giving to his mobile features an expression of profound sadness, made him five or six very low bows, turning his back to the group gathered around the King, so that in the latter quarter they might be taken for those cold and hasty salutations which are made to a person one desires to be rid of, and, on the part of the Duke, for tokens of respect, blended with a discreet and silent sorrow.

The minister, ever calm, smiled disdainfully; and, assuming that firm look and that air of grandeur which he always wore in the hour of danger, he again leaned upon his pages, and, without waiting for a word or a glance from his sovereign, he suddenly resolved upon his line of conduct, and walked directly toward him, traversing the whole length of the tent. No one had lost sight of him, although all affected not to observe him. Every one now became silent, even those who were conversing with the King. All the courtiers bent forward to see and to hear.

Louis XIII turned toward him in astonishment, and, all presence of mind totally failing him, remained motionless and waited with an icy glance—his sole force, but a force very effectual in a prince.

The Cardinal, on coming close to the monarch, did not bow; and, without changing his attitude, with his eyes lowered and his hands placed on the shoulders of the two boys half bending, he said:

”Sire, I come to implore your Majesty at length to grant me the retirement for which I have long sighed. My health is failing; I feel that my life will soon be ended. Eternity approaches me, and before rendering an account to the eternal King, I would render one to my earthly sovereign. It is eighteen years, Sire, since you placed in my hands a weak and divided kingdom; I return it to you united and powerful. Your enemies are overthrown and humiliated. My work is accomplished. I ask your Majesty’s permission to retire to Citeaux, of which I am abbot, and where I may end my days in prayer and meditation.”

The King, irritated by some haughty expressions in this address, showed none of the signs of weakness which the Cardinal had expected, and which he had always seen in him when he had threatened to resign the management of affairs. On the contrary, feeling that he had the eyes of the whole court upon him, Louis looked upon him with the air of a king, and coldly replied:

”We thank you, then, for your services, Monsieur le Cardinal, and wish you the repose you desire.”

Richelieu was deeply moved, but no indication of his anger appeared upon his countenance. ”Such was the coldness with which you left Montmorency to die,” he said to himself; ”but you shall not escape me thus.” He then continued aloud, bowing at the same time:

"The only recompense I ask for my services is that your Majesty will deign to accept from me, as a gift, the Palais-Cardinal I have erected at my own expense in Paris."

The King, astonished, bowed his assent. A murmur of surprise for a moment agitated the attentive court.

"I also throw myself at your Majesty's feet, to beg that you will grant me the revocation of an act of rigor, which I solicited (I publicly confess it), and which I perhaps regarded too hastily beneficial to the repose of the State. Yes, when I was of this world, I was too forgetful of my early sentiments of personal respect and attachment, in my eagerness for the public welfare; but now that I already enjoy the enlightenment of solitude, I see that I have done wrong, and I repent."

The attention of the spectators was redoubled, and the uneasiness of the King became visible.

"Yes, there is one person, Sire, whom I have always loved, despite her wrong toward you, and the banishment which the affairs of the kingdom forced me to bring about for her; a person to whom I have owed much, and who should be very dear to you, notwithstanding her armed attempts against you; a person, in a word, whom I implore you to recall from exile—the Queen Marie de Medicis, your mother!"

The King uttered an involuntary exclamation, so little did he expect to hear that name. A repressed agitation suddenly appeared upon every face. All waited in silence the King's reply. Louis XIII looked for a long time at his old minister without speaking, and this look decided the fate of France; in that instant he called to mind all the indefatigable services of Richelieu, his unbounded devotion, his wonderful capacity, and was surprised at himself for having wished to part with him. He felt deeply affected at this request, which had probed for the exact cause of his anger at the bottom of his heart, and uprooted it, thus taking from his hands the only weapon he had against his old servant. Filial love brought words of pardon to his lips and tears into his eyes. Rejoicing to grant what he desired most of all things in the world, he extended his hands to the Duke with all the nobleness and kindness of a Bourbon. The Cardinal bowed and respectfully kissed it; and his heart, which should have burst with remorse, only swelled in the joy of a haughty triumph.

The King, deeply touched, abandoning his hand to him, turned gracefully toward his court and said, with a trembling voice:

"We often deceive ourselves, gentlemen, and especially in our knowledge of so great a politician as this."

"I hope he will never leave us, since his heart is as good as his head."

Cardinal de la Vallette instantly seized the sleeve of the King's mantle, and kissed it with all the ardor of a lover, and the young Mazarin did much the same with Richelieu himself, assuming, with admirable Italian suppleness, an expression radiant with joy and tenderness. Two streams of flatterers hastened, one toward the King, the other toward the minister; the former group, not less adroit than the second, although less direct, addressed to the Prince thanks which could be heard by the minister, and burned at the feet of the one incense which was intended for the other. As for Richelieu, bowing and smiling to right and left, he stepped forward and stood at the right hand of the King as his natural place. A stranger entering would rather have thought, indeed, that it was the King who was on the Cardinal's left hand. The Marechal d'Estrees, all the ambassadors, the Duc d'Angouleme, the Due d'Halluin (Schomberg), the Marechal de Chatillon, and all the great officers of the crown surrounded him, each waiting impatiently for the compliments of the others to be finished, in order to pay his own, fearing lest some one else should anticipate him with the flattering epigram he had just improvised, or the phrase of adulation he was inventing.

As for Fabert, he had retired to a corner of the tent, and seemed to have paid no particular attention to the scene. He was chatting with Montresor and the gentlemen of Monsieur, all sworn enemies of the Cardinal, because, out of the throng he avoided, he had found none but these to speak to. This conduct would have seemed extremely tactless in one less known; but although he lived in the midst of the court, he was ever ignorant of its intrigues. It was said of him that he returned from a battle he had gained, like the King's hunting-horse, leaving the dogs to caress their master and divide the quarry, without seeking even to remember the part he had had in the triumph.

The storm, then, seemed entirely appeased, and to the violent agitations of the morning succeeded a gentle calm. A respectful murmur, varied with pleasant laughter and protestations of attachment, was all that was heard in the tent. The voice of the Cardinal arose from time to time: "The poor Queen! We shall, then, soon again see her! I never had dared to hope for such happiness while I lived!" The King listened to him with full confidence, and made no attempt to conceal his satisfaction. "It was assuredly an idea sent to him from on high," he said; "this good Cardinal, against whom they had so incensed me, was thinking only of the union of my family. Since the birth of the Dauphin I have not tasted greater joy than at this moment. The protection of the Holy Virgin is manifested over our kingdom."

At this moment, a captain of the guards came up and whispered in the King's ear.

"A courier from Cologne?" said the King; "let him wait in my cabinet."

Then, unable to restrain his impatience, "I will go! I will go!" he

said, and entered alone a small, square tent attached to the larger one. In it he saw a young courier holding a black portfolio, and the curtains closed upon the King.

The Cardinal, left sole master of the court, concentrated all its homage; but it was observed that he no longer received it with his former presence of mind. He inquired frequently what time it was, and exhibited an anxiety which was not assumed; his hard, unquiet glances turned toward the smaller tent. It suddenly opened; the King appeared alone, and stopped on the threshold. He was paler than usual, and trembled in every limb; he held in his hand a large letter with five black seals.

"Gentlemen," said he, in a loud but broken voice, "the Queen has just died at Cologne; and I perhaps am not the first to hear of it," he added, casting a severe look toward the impassible Cardinal, "but God knows all! To horse in an hour, and attack the lines! Marechals, follow me." And he turned his back abruptly, and reentered his cabinet with them.

The court retired after the minister, who, without giving any sign of sorrow or annoyance, went forth as gravely as he had entered, but now a victor.