

# Ten Years Later

*Alexandre Dumas*

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## Chapter

### **1 In which D'Artagnan finishes by at Length placing his Hand upon his Captain's Commission.**

The reader guesses beforehand whom the usher preceded in announcing the courier from Bretagne. This messenger was easily recognized. It was D'Artagnan, his clothes dusty, his face inflamed, his hair dripping with sweat, his legs stiff; he lifted his feet painfully at every step, on which resounded the clink of his blood-stained spurs. He perceived in the doorway he was passing through, the superintendent coming out. Fouquet bowed with a smile to him who, an hour before, was bringing him ruin and death. D'Artagnan found in his goodness of heart, and in his inexhaustible vigor of body, enough presence of mind to remember the kind reception of this man; he bowed then, also, much more from benevolence and compassion, than from respect. He felt upon his lips the word which had so many times been repeated to the Duc de Guise: "Fly." But to pronounce that word would have been to betray his cause; to speak that word in the cabinet of the king, and before an usher, would have been to ruin himself gratuitously, and could save nobody. D'Artagnan then, contented himself with bowing to Fouquet and entered. At this moment the king floated between the joy the last words of Fouquet had given him, and his pleasure at the return of D'Artagnan. Without being a courtier, D'Artagnan had a glance as sure and as rapid as if he had been one. He read, on his entrance, devouring humiliation on the countenance of Colbert. He even heard the king say these words to him:—

"Ah! Monsieur Colbert; you have then nine hundred thousand livres at the intendance?" Colbert, suffocated, bowed but made no reply. All this scene entered into the mind of D'Artagnan, by the eyes and ears, at once.

The first word of Louis to his musketeer, as if he wished it to contrast with what he was saying at the moment, was a kind "good day." His second was to send away Colbert. The latter left the king's cabinet, pallid and tottering, whilst D'Artagnan twisted up the ends of his mustache.

"I love to see one of my servants in this disorder," said the king, admiring the martial stains upon the clothes of his envoy.

"I thought, sire, my presence at the Louvre was sufficiently urgent to excuse my presenting myself thus before you."

"You bring me great news, then, monsieur?"

"Sire, the thing is this, in two words: Belle-Isle is fortified, admirably fortified; Belle-Isle has a double *enceinte*, a citadel, two detached forts; its ports contain three corsairs; and the side batteries only await their cannon."

"I know all that, monsieur," replied the king.

"What! your majesty knows all that?" replied the musketeer, stupefied.

"I have the plan of the fortifications of Belle-Isle," said the king.

"Your majesty has the plan?"

"Here it is."

"It is really correct, sire: I saw a similar one on the spot."

D'Artagnan's brow became clouded.

"Ah! I understand all. Your majesty did not trust to me alone, but sent some other person," said he in a reproachful tone.

"Of what importance is the manner, monsieur, in which I have learnt what I know, so that I know it?"

"Sire, sire," said the musketeer, without seeking even to conceal his dissatisfaction; "but I must be permitted to say to your majesty, that it is not worth while to make me use such speed, to risk twenty times the breaking of my neck, to salute me on my arrival with such intelligence. Sire, when people are not trusted, or are deemed insufficient, they should scarcely be employed." And D'Artagnan, with a movement perfectly military, stamped with his foot, and left upon the floor dust stained with blood. The king looked at him, inwardly enjoying his first triumph.

"Monsieur," said he, at the expiration of a minute, "not only is Belle-Isle known to me, but, still further, Belle-Isle is mine."

"That is well! that is well, sire, I ask but one thing more," replied D'Artagnan.—"My discharge."

"What! your discharge?"

"Without doubt I am too proud to eat the bread of the king without earning it, or rather by gaining it badly.—My discharge, sire!"

"Oh, oh!"

"I ask for my discharge, or I will take it."

"You are angry, monsieur?"

"I have reason, *mordieux*! Thirty-two hours in the saddle, I ride day and night, I perform prodigies of speed, I arrive stiff as the corpse of a man who has been hung—and another arrives before me! Come, sire, I am a fool!—My discharge, sire!"

"Monsieur d'Artagnan," said Louis, leaning his white hand upon the dusty arm of the musketeer, "what I tell you will not at all affect that which I promised you. A king's word given must be kept." And the king going straight to his table, opened a drawer, and took out a folded paper. "Here is your commission of captain of musketeers; you have won it, Monsieur d'Artagnan."

D'Artagnan opened the paper eagerly, and scanned it twice. He could scarcely believe his eyes.

"And this commission is given you," continued the king, "not only on account of your journey to Belle-Isle but, moreover, for your brave intervention at the Place de Greve. There, likewise, you served me valiantly."

"Ah, ah!" said D'Artagnan, without his self-command being able to prevent a blush from mounting to his eyes—"you know that also, sire?"

"Yes, I know it."

The king possessed a piercing glance and an infallible judgment when it was his object to read men's minds. "You have something to say," said he to the musketeer, "something to say which you do not say. Come, speak freely, monsieur; you know that I told you, once and for all, that you are to be always quite frank with me."

"Well, sire! what I have to say is this, that I would prefer being made captain of the musketeers for having charged a battery at the head of my company, or taken a city, than for causing two wretches to be hung."

"Is this quite true you tell me?"

"And why should your majesty suspect me of dissimulation, I ask?"

"Because I have known you well, monsieur; you cannot repent of having drawn your sword for me."

"Well, in that your majesty is deceived, and greatly; yes, I do repent of having drawn my sword on account of the results that action produced; the poor men who were hung, sire, were neither your enemies nor mine; and they could not defend themselves."

The king preserved silence for a moment. "And your companion, M. d'Artagnan, does he partake of your repentance?"

"My companion?"

"Yes, you were not alone, I have been told."

"Alone, where?"

"At the Place de Greve."

"No, sire, no," said D'Artagnan, blushing at the idea that the king might have a suspicion that he, D'Artagnan, had wished to engross to himself all the glory that belonged to Raoul; "no, *mordieux!* and as your majesty says, I had a companion, and a good companion, too."

"A young man?"

"Yes, sire; a young man. Oh! your majesty must accept my compliments, you are as well informed of things out of doors as things within. It is M. Colbert who makes all these fine reports to the king."

"M. Colbert has said nothing but good of you, M. d'Artagnan, and he would have met with a bad reception if he had come to tell me anything else."

"That is fortunate!"

"But he also said much good of that young man."

"And with justice," said the musketeer.

"In short, it appears that this young man is a fire-eater," said Louis, in order to sharpen the sentiment which he mistook for envy.

"A fire-eater! Yes, sire," repeated D'Artagnan, delighted on his part to direct the king's attention to Raoul.

"Do you not know his name?"

"Well, I think—"

"You know him then?"

"I have known him nearly five-and-twenty years, sire."

"Why, he is scarcely twenty-five years old!" cried the king.

"Well, sire! I have known him ever since he was born, that is all."

"Do you affirm that?"

"Sire," said D'Artagnan, "your majesty questions me with a mistrust in which I recognize another character than your own. M. Colbert, who has so well informed you, has he not forgotten to tell you that this young man is the son of my most intimate friend?"

"The Vicomte de Bragelonne?"

"Certainly, sire. The father of the Vicomte de Bragelonne is M. le Comte de la Fere, who so powerfully assisted in the restoration of King Charles II. Bragelonne comes of a valiant race, sire."

"Then he is the son of that nobleman who came to me, or rather to M. Mazarin, on the part of King Charles II., to offer me his alliance?"

"Exactly, sire."

"And the Comte de la Fere is a great soldier, say you?"

"Sire, he is a man who has drawn his sword more times for the king, your father, than there are, at present, months in the happy life of your majesty."

It was Louis XIV. who now bit his lip.

"That is well, M. d'Artagnan, very well! And M. le Comte de la Fere is your friend, say you?"

"For about forty years; yes, sire. Your majesty may see that I do not speak to you of yesterday."

"Should you be glad to see this young man, M. d'Artagnan?"

"Delighted, sire."

The king touched his bell, and an usher appeared. "Call M. de Bragelonne," said the king.

"Ah! ah! he is here?" said D'Artagnan.

"He is on guard to-day, at the Louvre, with the company of the gentlemen of monsieur le prince."

The king had scarcely ceased speaking, when Raoul presented himself, and, on seeing D'Artagnan, smiled on him with that charming smile which is only found upon the lips of youth.

"Come, come," said D'Artagnan, familiarly, to Raoul, "the king will allow you to embrace me; only tell his majesty you thank him."

Raoul bowed so gracefully, that Louis, to whom all superior qualities were pleasing when they did not overshadow his own, admired his

beauty, strength, and modesty.

"Monsieur," said the king, addressing Raoul, "I have asked monsieur le prince to be kind enough to give you up to me; I have received his reply, and you belong to me from this morning. Monsieur le prince was a good master, but I hope you will not lose by the exchange."

"Yes, yes, Raoul, be satisfied; the king has some good in him," said D'Artagnan, who had fathomed the character of Louis, and who played with his self-love, within certain limits; always observing, be it understood, the proprieties and flattering, even when he appeared to be bantering.

"Sire," said Bragelonne, with voice soft and musical, and with the natural and easy elocution he inherited from his father; "Sire, it is not from to-day that I belong to your majesty."

"Oh! no, I know," said the king, "you mean your enterprise of the Greve. That day, you were truly mine, monsieur."

"Sire, it is not of that day I would speak; it would not become me to refer to so paltry a service in the presence of such a man as M. d'Artagnan. I would speak of a circumstance which created an epoch in my life, and which consecrated me, from the age of sixteen, to the devoted service of your majesty."

"Ah! ah!" said the king, "what was that circumstance? Tell me, monsieur."

"This is it, sire.—When I was setting out on my first campaign, that is to say, to join the army of monsieur le prince, M. le Comte de la Fere came to conduct me as far as Saint-Denis, where the remains of King Louis XIII. wait, upon the lowest steps of the funeral *basilique*, a successor, whom God will not send him, I hope, for many years. Then he made me swear upon the ashes of our masters, to serve royalty, represented by you—incarnate in you, sire—to serve it in word, in thought, and in action. I swore, and God and the dead were witnesses to my oath. During ten years, sire, I have not so often as I desired had occasion to keep it. I am a soldier of your majesty, and nothing else; and, on calling me nearer to you, I do not change my master, I only change my garrison."

Raoul was silent and bowed. Louis still listened after he had done speaking.

"*Mordieux!*" cried D'Artagnan, "that was well spoken! was it not, your majesty? A good race! a noble race!"

"Yes," murmured the king, without, however daring to manifest his emotion, for it had no other cause than contact with a nature intrinsically noble. "Yes, monsieur, you say truly:—wherever you were, you were the king's. But in changing your garrison, believe me you will find an advancement of which you are worthy."

Raoul saw that this ended what the king had to say to him. And with the perfect tact which characterized his refined nature, he bowed and



retired.

"Is there anything else, monsieur, of which you have to inform me?" said the king, when he found himself again alone with D'Artagnan.

"Yes, sire, and I kept that news for the last, for it is sad, and will clothe European royalty in mourning."

"What do you tell me?"

"Sire, in passing through Blois, a word, a sad word, echoed from the palace, struck my ear."

"In truth, you terrify me, M. d'Artagnan."

"Sire, this word was pronounced to me by a *piqueur*, who wore crape on his arm."

"My uncle, Gaston of Orleans, perhaps."

"Sire, he has rendered his last sigh."

"And I was not warned of it!" cried the king, whose royal susceptibility saw an insult in the absence of this intelligence.

"Oh! do not be angry, sire," said D'Artagnan; "neither the couriers of Paris, nor the couriers of the whole world, can travel with your servant; the courier from Blois will not be here these two hours, and he rides well, I assure you, seeing that I only passed him on the thither side of Orleans."

"My uncle Gaston," murmured Louis, pressing his hand to his brow, and comprising in those three words all that his memory recalled of that symbol of opposing sentiments.

"Eh! yes, sire, it is thus," said D'Artagnan, philosophically replying to the royal thought, "it is thus the past flies away."

"That is true, monsieur, that is true; but there remains for us, thank God! the future; and we will try to make it not too dark."

"I feel confidence in your majesty on that head," said D'Artagnan, bowing, "and now—"

"You are right, monsieur; I had forgotten the hundred leagues you have just ridden. Go, monsieur, take care of one of the best of soldiers, and when you have reposed a little, come and place yourself at my disposal."

"Sire, absent or present, I am always yours."

D'Artagnan bowed and retired. Then, as if he had only come from Fontainebleau, he quickly traversed the Louvre to rejoin Bragelonne.

## Chapter

### 2 A Lover and His Mistress.

Whilst the wax-lights were burning in the castle of Blois, around the inanimate body of Gaston of Orleans, that last representative of the past; whilst the *bourgeois* of the city were thinking out his epitaph, which was far from being a panegyric; whilst madame the dowager, no longer remembering that in her young days she had loved that senseless corpse to such a degree as to fly the paternal palace for his sake, was making, within twenty paces of the funeral apartment, her little calculations of interest and her little sacrifices of pride; other interests and other prides were in agitation in all the parts of the castle into which a living soul could penetrate. Neither the lugubrious sounds of the bells, nor the voices of the chanters, nor the splendor of the wax-lights through the windows, nor the preparations for the funeral, had power to divert the attention of two persons, placed at a window of the interior court—a window that we are acquainted with, and which lighted a chamber forming part of what were called the little apartments. For the rest, a joyous beam of the sun, for the sun appeared to care little for the loss France had just suffered; a sunbeam, we say, descended upon them, drawing perfumes from the neighboring flowers, and animating the walls themselves. These two persons, so occupied, not by the death of the duke, but by the conversation which was the consequence of that death, were a young woman and a young man. The latter personage, a man of from twenty-five to twenty-six years of age, with a mien sometimes lively and sometimes dull, making good use of two large eyes, shaded with long eye-lashes, was short of stature and swart of skin; he smiled with an enormous, but well-furnished mouth, and his pointed chin, which appeared to enjoy a mobility nature does not ordinarily grant to that portion of the countenance, leant from time to time very lovingly towards his interlocutrix, who, we must say, did not always draw back so rapidly as strict propriety had a right to require. The young girl—we know her, for we have already seen her, at that very same window, by the light of that same sun—the young girl presented a singular mixture of shyness and reflection; she was charming when she laughed, beautiful when she became serious; but, let us hasten to say, she was more frequently charming than beautiful. These two appeared to have attained the culminating point of a discussion—half-bantering, half-serious.

"Now, Monsieur Malicorne," said the young girl, "does it, at length, please you that we should talk reasonably?"

"You believe that that is very easy, Mademoiselle Aure," replied the young man. "To do what we like, when we can only do what we are able —"

"Good! there he is bewildered in his phrases."

"Who, I?"

"Yes, you; quit that lawyer's logic, my dear."

"Another impossibility. Clerk I am, Mademoiselle de Montalais."

"Demoiselle I am, Monsieur Malicorne."

"Alas, I know it well, and you overwhelm me by your rank; so I will say no more to you."

"Well, no, I don't overwhelm you; say what you have to tell me—say it, I insist upon it."

"Well, I obey you."

"That is truly fortunate."

"Monsieur is dead."

"Ah, *peste!* that's news! And where do you come from, to be able to tell us that?"

"I come from Orleans, mademoiselle."

"And is that all the news you bring?"

"Ah, no; I am come to tell you that Madame Henrietta of England is coming to marry the king's brother."

"Indeed, Malicorne, you are insupportable with your news of the last century. Now, mind, if you persist in this bad habit of laughing at people, I will have you turned out."

"Oh!"

"Yes, for really you exasperate me."

"There, there. Patience, mademoiselle."

"You want to make yourself of consequence; I know well enough why. Go!"

"Tell me, and I will answer you frankly, yes, if the thing be true."

"You know that I am anxious to have that commission of lady of honor, which I have been foolish enough to ask of you, and you do not use your credit."

"Who, I?" Malicorne cast down his eyes, joined his hands, and assumed his sullen air. "And what credit can the poor clerk of a procurer have, pray?"

"Your father has not twenty thousand livres a year for nothing, M. Malicorne."

"A provincial fortune, Mademoiselle de Montalais."

"Your father is not in the secrets of monsieur le prince for nothing."

"An advantage which is confined to lending monseigneur money."

"In a word, you are not the most cunning young fellow in the province for nothing."

"You flatter me!"

"Who, I?"

"Yes, you."

"How so?"

"Since I maintain that I have no credit, and you maintain I have."

"Well, then,—my commission?"

"Well,—your commission?"

"Shall I have it, or shall I not?"

"You shall have it."

"Ay, but when?"

"When you like."

"Where is it, then?"

"In my pocket."

"How—in your pocket?"

"Yes."

And, with a smile, Malicorne drew from his pocket a letter, upon which mademoiselle seized as a prey, and which she read eagerly. As she read, her face brightened.

"Malicorne," cried she after having read it, "In truth, you are a good lad."

"What for, mademoiselle?"

"Because you might have been paid for this commission, and you have not." And she burst into a loud laugh, thinking to put the clerk out of countenance; but Malicorne sustained the attack bravely.

"I do not understand you," said he. It was now Montalais who was disconcerted in her turn. "I have declared my sentiments to you," continued Malicorne. "You have told me three times, laughing all the while, that you did not love me; you have embraced me once without laughing, and that is all I want."

"All?" said the proud and coquettish Montalais, in a tone through which the wounded pride was visible.

"Absolutely all, mademoiselle," replied Malicorne.

"Ah!"—And this monosyllable indicated as much anger as the young man might have expected gratitude. He shook his head quietly.

"Listen, Montalais," said he, without heeding whether that familiarity pleased his mistress or not; "let us not dispute about it."

"And why not?"

"Because during the year which I have known you, you might have had me turned out of doors twenty times if I did not please you."

"Indeed; and on what account should I have had you turned out?"

"Because I have been sufficiently impertinent for that."

"Oh, that,—yes, that's true."

"You see plainly that you are forced to avow it," said Malicorne.

"Monsieur Malicorne!"

"Don't let us be angry; if you have retained me, then it has not been without cause."

"It is not, at least, because I love you," cried Montalais.

"Granted. I will even say, at this moment, I am certain that you hate me."

"Oh, you have never spoken so truly."

"Well, on my part, I detest you."

"Ah! I take the act."

"Take it. You find me brutal and foolish; on my part I find you have a harsh voice, and your face is too often distorted with anger. At this moment you would allow yourself to be thrown out of that window rather than allow me to kiss the tip of your finger; I would precipitate myself from the top of the balcony rather than touch the hem of your robe. But, in five minutes, you will love me, and I shall adore you. Oh, it is just so."

"I doubt it."

"And I swear it."

"Coxcomb!"

"And then, that is not the true reason. You stand in need of me, Aure, and I of you. When it pleases you to be gay, I make you laugh; when it suits me to be loving, I look at you. I have given you a commission of lady of honor which you wished for; you will give me, presently, something I wish for."

"I will?"

"Yes, you will; but, at this moment, my dear Aure, I declare to you that I wish for absolutely nothing, so be at ease."

"You are a frightful man, Malicorne; I was going to rejoice at getting this commission, and thus you quench my joy."

"Good; there is no time lost,—you will rejoice when I am gone."

"Go, then; and after—"

"So be it; but in the first place, a piece of advice."

"What is it?"

"Resume your good-humor,—you are ugly when you pout."

"Coarse!"

"Come, let us tell the truth to each other, while we are about it."

"Oh, Malicorne! Bad-hearted man!"

"Oh, Montalais! Ungrateful girl!"

The young man leant with his elbow upon the window-frame; Montalais took a book and opened it. Malicorne stood up, brushed his hat with his sleeve, smoothed down his black doublet;—Montalais, though pretending to read, looked at him out of the corner of her eye.

"Good!" cried she, furious; "he has assumed his respectful air—and he will pout for a week."

"A fortnight, mademoiselle," said Malicorne, bowing.

Montalais lifted up her little doubled fist. "Monster!" said she; "oh! that I were a man!"

"What would you do to me?"

"I would strangle you."



"Ah! very well, then," said Malicorne; "I believe I begin to desire something."

"And what do you desire, Monsieur Demon? That I should lose my soul from anger?"

Malicorne was rolling his hat respectfully between his fingers; but, all at once, he let fall his hat, seized the young girl by the shoulders, pulled her towards him, and sealed her mouth with two lips that were very warm, for a man pretending to so much indifference. Aure would have cried out, but the cry was stifled in his kiss. Nervous and, apparently, angry, the young girl pushed Malicorne against the wall.

"Good!" said Malicorne, philosophically, "that's enough for six weeks. Adieu, mademoiselle, accept my very humble salutation." And he made three steps towards the door.

"Well! no,—you shall not go!" cried Montalais, stamping with her little foot. "Stay where you are! I order you!"

"You order me?"

"Yes; am I not mistress?"

"Of my heart and soul, without doubt."

"A pretty property! *ma foi!* The soul is silly and the heart dry."

"Beware, Montalais, I know you," said Malicorne; "you are going to fall in love with your humble servant."

"Well, yes!" said she, hanging round his neck with childish indolence, rather than with loving abandonment. "Well, yes! for I must thank you at least."

"And for what?"

"For the commission; is it not my whole future?"

"And mine."

Montalais looked at him.

"It is frightful," said she, "that one can never guess whether you are speaking seriously or not."

"I cannot speak more seriously. I was going to Paris,—you are going there,—we are going there."

"And so it was for that motive only you have served me; selfish fellow!"

"What would you have me say, Aure? I cannot live without you."

"Well! in truth, it is just so with me; you are, nevertheless, it must be confessed, a very bad-hearted young man."

"Aure, my dear Aure, take care! if you take to calling me names again, you know the effect they produce upon me, and I shall adore you." And so saying, Malicorne drew the young girl a second time towards him. But at that instant a step resounded on the staircase. The young people were so close, that they would have been surprised in the arms of each other, if Montalais had not violently pushed Malicorne, with his back against the door, just then opening. A loud cry, followed by angry reproaches, immediately resounded. It was Madame de Saint-Remy who uttered the

cry and the angry words. The unlucky Malicorne almost crushed her between the wall and the door she was coming in at.

"It is again that good-for-nothing!" cried the old lady. "Always here!"

"Ah, madame!" replied Malicorne, in a respectful tone; "it is eight long days since I was here."

## Chapter

# 3 In Which We at Length See the True Heroine of this History

Appear.

Behind Madame de Saint-Remy stood Mademoiselle de la Valliere. She heard the explosion of maternal anger, and as she divined the cause of it, she entered the chamber trembling, and perceived the unlucky Malicorne, whose woeful countenance might have softened or set laughing whoever observed it coolly. He had promptly intrenched himself behind a large chair, as if to avoid the first attacks of Madame de Saint-Remy; he had no hopes of prevailing with words, for she spoke louder than he, and without stopping; but he reckoned upon the eloquence of his gestures. The old lady would neither listen to nor see anything; Malicorne had long been one of her antipathies. But her anger was too great not to overflow from Malicorne on his accomplice. Montalais had her turn.

"And you, mademoiselle; you may be certain I shall inform madame of what is going on in the apartment of one of her ladies of honor?"

"Oh, dear mother!" cried Mademoiselle de la Valliere, "for mercy's sake, spare—"

"Hold your tongue, mademoiselle, and do not uselessly trouble yourself to intercede for unworthy people; that a young maid of honor like you should be subjected to a bad example is, certes, a misfortune great enough; but that you should sanction it by your indulgence is what I will not allow."

"But in truth," said Montalais, rebelling again, "I do not know under what pretense you treat me thus. I am doing no harm, I suppose?"

"And that great good-for-nothing, mademoiselle," resumed Madame de Saint-Remy, pointing to Malicorne, "is he here to do any good, I ask you?"

"He is neither here for good nor harm, madame; he comes to see me, that is all."

"It is all very well! all very well!" said the old lady. "Her royal highness shall be informed of it, and she will judge."

"At all events, I do not see why," replied Montalais, "it should be forbidden M. Malicorne to have intentions towards me, if his intentions are honorable."

"Honorable intentions with such a face!" cried Madame de Saint-Remy.

"I thank you in the name of my face, madame," said Malicorne.

"Come, my daughter, come," continued Madame de Saint-Remy; "we will go and inform madame that at the very moment she is weeping for her husband, at the moment when we are all weeping for a master in this old castle of Blois, the abode of grief, there are people who amuse themselves with flirtations!"

"Oh!" cried both the accused, with one voice.

"A maid of honor! a maid of honor!" cried the old lady, lifting her hands towards heaven.

"Well! it is there you are mistaken, madame," said Montalais, highly exasperated; "I am no longer a maid of honor, of madame's at least."

"Have you given in your resignation, mademoiselle? That is well! I cannot but applaud such a determination, and I do applaud it."

"I do not give in my resignation, madame; I take another service,—that is all."

"In the *bourgeoisie* or in the *robe*?" asked Madame de Saint-Remy, disdainfully.

"Please to learn, madame, that I am not a girl to serve either *bourgeoises* or *robines*; and that instead of the miserable court at which you vegetate, I am going to reside in a court almost royal."

"Ha, ha! a royal court," said Madame de Saint-Remy, forcing a laugh; "a royal court! What do you think of that, my daughter?"

And she turned towards Mademoiselle de la Valliere, whom she would by main force have dragged away from Montalais, and who instead of obeying the impulse of Madame de Saint-Remy, looked first at her mother and then at Montalais with her beautiful conciliatory eyes.

"I did not say a royal court, madame," replied Montalais; "because Madame Henrietta of England, who is about to become the wife of S. A. R. Monsieur, is not a queen. I said almost royal, and I spoke correctly, since she will be sister-in-law to the king."

A thunderbolt falling upon the castle of Blois would not have astonished Madame de Saint-Remy more than the last sentence of Montalais.

"What do you say? of Son Altesse Royale Madame Henrietta?" stammered out the old lady.

"I say I am going to belong to her household, as maid of honor; that is what I say."

"As maid of honor!" cried, at the same time, Madame de Saint-Remy with despair, and Mademoiselle de la Valliere with delight.

"Yes, madame, as maid of honor."

The old lady's head sank down as if the blow had been too severe for her. But, almost immediately recovering herself, she launched a last projectile at her adversary.

"Oh! oh!" said she; "I have heard of many of these sorts of promises beforehand, which often lead people to flatter themselves with wild hopes, and at the last moment, when the time comes to keep the

promises, and have the hopes realized, they are surprised to see the great credit upon which they reckoned vanish like smoke."

"Oh! madame, the credit of my protector is incontestable and his promises are as good as deeds."

"And would it be indiscreet to ask you the name of this powerful protector?"

"Oh! *mon Dieu!* no! it is that gentleman there," said Montalais, pointing to Malicorne, who, during this scene, had preserved the most imperturbable coolness, and the most comic dignity.

"Monsieur!" cried Madame de Saint-Remy, with an explosion of hilarity, "monsieur is your protector! Is the man whose credit is so powerful, and whose promises are as good as deeds, Monsieur Malicorne!"

Malicorne bowed.

As to Montalais, as her sole reply, she drew the brevet from her pocket, and showed it to the old lady.

"Here is the *brevet*," said she.

At once all was over. As soon as she had cast a rapid glance over this fortunate *brevet*, the good lady clasped her hands, an unspeakable expression of envy and despair contracted her countenance, and she was obliged to sit down to avoid fainting. Montalais was not malicious enough to rejoice extravagantly at her victory, or to overwhelm the conquered enemy, particularly when that enemy was the mother of her friend; she used then, but did not abuse her triumph. Malicorne was less generous; he assumed noble *poses* in his *fauteuil* and stretched himself out with a familiarity which, two hours earlier, would have drawn upon him threats of a caning.

"Maid of honor to the young madame!" repeated Madame de Saint-Remy, still but half convinced.

"Yes, madame, and through the protection of M. Malicorne, moreover."

"It is incredible!" repeated the old lady: "is it not incredible, Louise?" But Louise did not reply; she was sitting, thoughtfully, almost sad; passing one hand over her beautiful brow, she sighed heavily.

"Well, but, monsieur," said Madame de Saint-Remy, all at once, "how did you manage to obtain this post?"

"I asked for it, madame."

"Of whom?"

"One of my friends."

"And you have friends sufficiently powerful at court to give you such proofs of their credit?"

"It appears so."

"And may one ask the name of these friends?"

"I did not say I had many friends, madame, I said I had one friend."

"And that friend is called?"



"*Peste!* madame, you go too far! When one has a friend as powerful as mine, we do not publish his name in that fashion, in open day, in order that he may be stolen from us."

"You are right, monsieur, to be silent as to that name; for I think it would be pretty difficult for you to tell it."

"At all events," said Montalais, "if the friend does not exist, the *brevet* does, and that cuts short the question."

"Then, I conceive," said Madame de Saint-Remy, with the gracious smile of the cat who is going to scratch, "when I found monsieur here just now—"

"Well?"

"He brought you the *brevet*."

"Exactly, madame; you have guessed rightly."

"Well, then, nothing can be more moral or proper."

"I think so, madame."

"And I have been wrong, as it appears, in reproaching you, mademoiselle."

"Very wrong, madame; but I am so accustomed to your reproaches, that I pardon you these."

"In that case, let us begone, Louise; we have nothing to do but retire. Well!"

"Madame!" said La Valliere starting, "did you speak?"

"You do not appear to be listening, my child."

"No, madame, I was thinking."

"About what?"

"A thousand things."

"You bear me no ill-will, at least, Louise?" cried Montalais, pressing her hand.

"And why should I, my dear Aure?" replied the girl in a voice soft as a flute.

"*Dame!*" resumed Madame de Saint-Remy; "if she did bear you a little ill-will, poor girl, she could not be much blamed."

"And why should she bear me ill-will, good gracious?"

"It appears to me that she is of as good a family, and as pretty as you."

"Mother! mother!" cried Louise.

"Prettier a hundred times, madame—not of a better family; but that does not tell me why Louise should bear me ill-will."

"Do you think it will be very amusing for her to be buried alive at Blois, when you are going to shine at Paris?"

"But, madame, it is not I who prevent Louise following me thither; on the contrary, I should certainly be most happy if she came there."

"But it appears that M. Malicorne, who is all-powerful at court—"

"Ah! so much the worse, madame," said Malicorne, "every one for himself in this poor world."

"Malicorne! Malicorne!" said Montalais. Then stooping towards the young man:—

"Occupy Madame de Saint-Remy, either in disputing with her, or making it up with her; I must speak to Louise." And, at the same time, a soft pressure of the hand recompensed Malicorne for his future obedience. Malicorne went grumbling towards Madame de Saint-Remy, whilst Montalais said to her friend, throwing one arm around her neck:—

"What is the matter? Tell *me*. Is it true that you would not love me if I were to shine, as your mother says?"

"Oh, no!" said the young girl, with difficulty restraining her tears; "on the contrary, I rejoice at your good fortune."

"Rejoice! why, one would say you are ready to cry!"

"Do people never weep except from envy?"

"Oh! yes, I understand; I am going to Paris and that word Paris recalls to your mind a certain cavalier—"

"Aure!"

"A certain cavalier who formerly lived near Blois, and who now resides at Paris."

"In truth, I know not what ails me, but I feel stifled."

"Weep, then, weep, as you cannot give me a smile!"

Louise raised her sweet face, which the tears, rolling down one after the other, illumined like diamonds.

"Come, confess," said Montalais.

"What shall I confess?"

"What makes you weep; people don't weep without cause. I am your friend; whatever you would wish me to do, I will do. Malicorne is more powerful than you would think. Do you wish to go to Paris?"

"Alas!" sighed Louise.

"Do you wish to come to Paris?"

"To remain here alone, in this old castle, I who have enjoyed the delightful habit of listening to your songs, of pressing your hand, of running about the park with you. Oh! how I shall be *ennuyee*! how quickly I shall die!"

"Do you wish to come to Paris?"

Louise breathed another sigh.

"You do not answer me."

"What would you that I should reply?"

"Yes or no; that is not very difficult, I think."

"Oh! you are very fortunate, Montalais!"

"That is to say you would like to be in my place."

Louise was silent.

"Little obstinate thing!" said Montalais; "did ever any one keep her secrets from her friend thus? But, confess that you would like to come to Paris; confess that you are dying with the wish to see Raoul again."

"I cannot confess that."

"Then you are wrong."

"In what way?"

"Because—do you not see this *brevet*?"

"To be sure I do."

"Well, I would have got you a similar one."

"By whose means?"

"Malicorne's."

"Aure, are you telling the truth? Is that possible?"

"Malicorne is there; and what he has done for me, he surely can do for you."

Malicorne had heard his name pronounced twice; he was delighted at having an opportunity of coming to a conclusion with Madame de Saint-Remy, and he turned round:—

"What is the question, mademoiselle?"

"Come hither, Malicorne," said Montalais, with an imperious gesture. Malicorne obeyed.

"A *brevet* like this," said Montalais.

"How so?"

"A *brevet* like this; that is plain enough."

"But—"

"I want one—I must have one!"

"Oh! oh! you must have one!"

"Yes."

"It is impossible, is it not, M. Malicorne?" said Louise, with her sweet, soft voice.

"If it is for you, mademoiselle—"

"For me. Yes, Monsieur Malicorne, it *would* be for me."

"And if Mademoiselle de Montalais asks it at the same time—"

"Mademoiselle de Montalais does not ask it, she requires it."

"Well! we will endeavor to obey you, mademoiselle."

"And you will have her named?"

"We will try."

"No evasive answers, Louise de la Valliere shall be maid of honor to Madame Henrietta within a week."

"How you talk!"

"Within a week, or else—"

"Well! or else?"

"You may take back your *brevet*, Monsieur Malicorne; I will not leave my friend."

"Dear Montalais!"

"That is right. Keep your *brevet*; Mademoiselle de la Valliere shall be a maid of honor."

"Is that true?"

"Quite true."

"I may then hope to go to Paris?"

"Depend on it."

"Oh! Monsieur Malicorne, what joy!" cried Louise, clapping her hands, and bounding with pleasure.

"Little dissembler!" said Montalais, "try again to make me believe you are not in love with Raoul."

Louise blushed like a rose in June, but instead of replying, she ran and embraced her mother. "Madame," said she, "do you know that M. Malicorne is going to have me appointed maid of honor?"

"M. Malicorne is a prince in disguise," replied the old lady, "he is all-powerful, seemingly."

"Should you also like to be a maid of honor?" asked Malicorne of Madame de Saint-Remy. "Whilst I am about it, I might as well get everybody appointed."

And upon that he went away, leaving the poor lady quite disconcerted.

"Humph!" murmured Malicorne as he descended the stairs,— "Humph! there goes another note of a thousand livres! but I must get through as well as I can; my friend Manicamp does nothing for nothing."

## Chapter

### 4 Malicorne and Manicamp.

The introduction of these two new personages into this history and that mysterious affinity of names and sentiments, merit some attention on the part of both historian and reader. We will then enter into some details concerning Messieurs Malicorne and Manicamp. Malicorne, we know, had made the journey to Orleans in search of the *brevet* destined for Mademoiselle de Montalais, the arrival of which had produced such a strong feeling at the castle of Blois. At that moment, M. de Manicamp was at Orleans. A singular person was this M. de Manicamp; a very intelligent young fellow, always poor, always needy, although he dipped his hand freely into the purse of M. le Comte de Guiche, one of the best furnished purses of the period. M. le Comte de Guiche had had, as the companion of his boyhood, this De Manicamp, a poor gentleman, vassal-born, of the house of Gramont. M. de Manicamp, with his tact and talent had created himself a revenue in the opulent family of the celebrated marechal. From his infancy he had, with calculation beyond his age, lent his mane and complaisance to the follies of the Comte de Guiche. If his noble companion had stolen some fruit destined for Madame la Marechale, if he had broken a mirror, or put out a dog's eye, Manicamp declared himself guilty of the crime committed, and received the punishment, which was not made the milder for falling on the innocent. But this was the way this system of abnegation was paid for: instead of wearing such mean habiliments as his paternal fortunes entitled him to, he was able to appear brilliant, superb, like a young noble of fifty thousand livres a year. It was not that he was mean in character or humble in spirit; no, he was a philosopher, or rather he had the indifference, the apathy, the obstinacy which banish from man every sentiment of the supernatural. His sole ambition was to spend money. But, in this respect, the worthy M. de Manicamp was a gulf. Three or four times every year he drained the Comte de Guiche, and when the Comte de Guiche was thoroughly drained, when he had turned out his pockets and his purse before him, when he declared that it would be at least a fortnight before paternal munificence would refill those pockets and that purse, Manicamp lost all his energy, he went to bed, remained there, ate nothing and sold his handsome clothes, under the pretense that, remaining in bed, he did not want them. During this prostration of mind and strength, the purse of the Comte de Guiche was getting full again, and when once filled, overflowed into that of De Manicamp, who bought new clothes, dressed himself again, and recommenced the same life he had followed before. The mania of selling



his new clothes for a quarter of what they were worth, had rendered our hero sufficiently celebrated in Orleans, a city where, in general, we should be puzzled to say why he came to pass his days of penitence. Provincial *debauches*, *petits-maitres* of six hundred livres a year, shared the fragments of his opulence.

Among the admirers of these splendid toilettes, our friend Malicorne was conspicuous; he was the son of a syndic of the city, of whom M. de Conde, always needy as a De Conde, often borrowed money at enormous interest. M. Malicorne kept the paternal money-chest; that is to say, that in those times of easy morals, he had made for himself, by following the example of his father, and lending at high interest for short terms, a revenue of eighteen hundred livres, without reckoning six hundred livres furnished by the generosity of the syndic; so that Malicorne was the king of the gay youth of Orleans, having two thousand four hundred livres to scatter, squander, and waste on follies of every kind. But, quite contrary to Manicamp, Malicorne was terribly ambitious. He loved from ambition; he spent money out of ambition; and he would have ruined himself for ambition. Malicorne had determined to rise, at whatever price it might cost, and for this, whatever price it did cost, he had given himself a mistress and a friend. The mistress, Mademoiselle de Montalais, was cruel, as regarded love; but she was of a noble family, and that was sufficient for Malicorne. The friend had little or no friendship, but he was the favorite of the Comte de Guiche, himself the friend of Monsieur, the king's brother; and that was sufficient for Malicorne. Only, in the chapter of charges, Mademoiselle de Montalais cost *per annum*:—ribbons, gloves, and sweets, a thousand livres. De Manicamp cost—money lent, never returned—from twelve to fifteen hundred livres *per annum*. So that there was nothing left for Malicorne. Ah! yes, we are mistaken; there was left the paternal strong box. He employed a mode of proceeding, upon which he preserved the most profound secrecy, and which consisted in advancing to himself, from the coffers of the syndic, half a dozen year's profits, that is to say, fifteen thousand livres, swearing to himself—observe, quite to himself—to repay this deficiency as soon as an opportunity should present itself. The opportunity was expected to be the concession of a good post in the household of Monsieur, when that household would be established at the period of his marriage. This juncture had arrived, and the household was about to be established. A good post in the family of a prince of the blood, when it is given by the credit, and on the recommendation of a friend, like the Comte de Guiche, is worth at least twelve thousand livres *per annum*; and by the means which M. Malicorne had taken to make his revenues fructify, twelve thousand livres might rise to twenty thousand. Then, when once an incumbent of this post, he would marry Mademoiselle de Montalais. Mademoiselle de Montalais, of a half noble family, not only would be dowered, but would ennoble Malicorne. But,

in order that Mademoiselle de Montalais, who had not a large patrimonial fortune, although an only daughter, should be suitably dowered, it was necessary that she should belong to some great princess, as prodigal as the dowager Madame was covetous. And in order that the wife should not be of one party whilst the husband belonged to the other, a situation which presents serious inconveniences, particularly with characters like those of the future consorts—Malicorne had imagined the idea of making the central point of union the household of Monsieur, the king's brother. Mademoiselle de Montalais would be maid of honor to Madame. M. Malicorne would be officer to Monsieur.

It is plain the plan was formed by a clear head; it is plain, also, that it had been bravely executed. Malicorne had asked Manicamp to ask a *brevet* of maid of honor of the Comte de Guiche; and the Comte de Guiche had asked this *brevet* of Monsieur, who had signed it without hesitation. The constructive plan of Malicorne—for we may well suppose that the combinations of a mind as active as his were not confined to the present, but extended to the future—the constructive plan of Malicorne, we say, was this:—To obtain entrance into the household of Madame Henrietta for a woman devoted to himself, who was intelligent, young, handsome, and intriguing; to learn, by means of this woman, all the feminine secrets of the young household; whilst he, Malicorne, and his friend Manicamp, should, between them, know all the male secrets of the young community. It was by these means that a rapid and splendid fortune might be acquired at one and the same time. Malicorne was a vile name; he who bore it had too much wit to conceal this truth from himself; but an estate might be purchased; and Malicorne of some place, or even De Malicorne itself, for short, would ring more nobly on the ear.

It was not improbable that a most aristocratic origin might be hunted up by the heralds for this name of Malicorne; might it not come from some estate where a bull with mortal horns had caused some great misfortune, and baptized the soil with the blood it had spilt? Certes, this plan presented itself bristling with difficulties: but the greatest of all was Mademoiselle de Montalais herself. Capricious, variable, close, giddy, free, prudish, a virgin armed with claws, Erigone stained with grapes, she sometimes overturned, with a single dash of her white fingers, or with a single puff from her laughing lips, the edifice which had exhausted Malicorne's patience for a month.

Love apart, Malicorne was happy; but this love, which he could not help feeling, he had the strength to conceal with care; persuaded that at the least relaxing of the ties by which he had bound his Protean female, the demon would overthrow and laugh at him. He humbled his mistress by disdaining her. Burning with desire, when she advanced to tempt him, he had the art to appear ice, persuaded that if he opened his arms, she would run away laughing at him. On her side, Montalais believed she

did not love Malicorne; whilst, on the contrary, in reality she did. Malicorne repeated to her so often his protestation of indifference, that she finished, sometimes, by believing him; and then she believed she detested Malicorne. If she tried to bring him back by coquetry, Malicorne played the coquette better than she could. But what made Montalais hold to Malicorne in an indissoluble fashion, was that Malicorne always came cram full of fresh news from the court and the city; Malicorne always brought to Blois a fashion, a secret, or a perfume; that Malicorne never asked for a meeting, but, on the contrary, required to be supplicated to receive the favors he burned to obtain. On her side, Montalais was no miser with stories. By her means, Malicorne learnt all that passed at Blois, in the family of the dowager Madame; and he related to Manicamp tales that made him ready to die with laughing, which the latter, out of idleness, took ready-made to M. de Guiche, who carried them to Monsieur.

Such, in two words, was the woof of petty interests and petty conspiracies which united Blois with Orleans, and Orleans with Paris; and which was about to bring into the last named city where she was to produce so great a revolution, the poor little La Valliere, who was far from suspecting, as she returned joyfully, leaning on the arm of her mother, for what a strange future she was reserved. As to the good man, Malicorne—we speak of the syndic of Orleans—he did not see more clearly into the present than others did into the future; and had no suspicion as he walked, every day, between three and five o'clock, after his dinner, upon the Place Sainte-Catherine, in his gray coat, cut after the fashion of Louis XIII. and his cloth shoes with great knots of ribbon, that it was he who was paying for all those bursts of laughter, all those stolen kisses, all those whisperings, all those little keepsakes, and all those bubble projects which formed a chain of forty-five leagues in length, from the palais of Blois to the Palais Royal.

## Chapter

### 5 Manicamp and Malicorne.

Malicorne, then, left Blois, as we have said, and went to find his friend, Manicamp, then in temporary retreat in the city of Orleans. It was just at the moment when that young nobleman was employed in selling the last decent clothing he had left. He had, a fortnight before, extorted from the Comte de Guiche a hundred pistoles, all he had, to assist in equipping him properly to go and meet Madame, on her arrival at Le Havre. He had drawn from Malicorne, three days before, fifty pistoles, the price of the *brevet* obtained for Montalais. He had then no expectation of anything else, having exhausted all his resources, with the exception of selling a handsome suit of cloth and satin, embroidered and laced with gold, which had been the admiration of the court. But to be able to sell this suit, the last he had left,—as we have been forced to confess to the reader—Manicamp had been obliged to take to his bed. No more fire, no more pocket-money, no more walking-money, nothing but sleep to take the place of repasts, companies and balls. It has been said—"He who sleeps, dines;" but it has never been affirmed—He who sleeps, plays—or, He who sleeps, dances. Manicamp, reduced to this extremity of neither playing nor dancing, for a week at least, was, consequently, very sad; he was expecting a usurer, and saw Malicorne enter. A cry of distress escaped him.

"Eh! what!" said he, in a tone which nothing can describe, "is that you again, dear friend?"

"Humph! you are very polite!" said Malicorne.

"Ay, but look you, I was expecting money, and, instead of money, I see you."

"And suppose I brought you some money?"

"Oh! that would be quite another thing. You are very welcome, my dear friend!"

And he held out his hand, not for the hand of Malicorne, but for the purse. Malicorne pretended to be mistaken, and gave him his hand.

"And the money?" said Manicamp.

"My dear friend, if you wish to have it, earn it."

"What must be done for it?"

"Earn it, *parbleu!*"

"And after what fashion?"

"Oh! that is rather trying, I warn you."

"The devil!"

"You must get out of bed, and go immediately to M. le Comte de Guiche."

"I get up!" said Manicamp, stretching himself in his bed, complacently,  
"oh, no, thank you!"

"You have sold all your clothes?"

"No, I have one suit left, the handsomest even, but I expect a purchaser."

"And the *chausses*?"

"Well, if you look, you will see them on that chair."

"Very well! since you have some *chausses* and a *pourpoint* left, put your legs into the first and your back into the other; have a horse saddled, and set off."

"Not I."

"And why not?"

"*Morbleu!* don't you know, then, that M. de Guiche is at Etampes?"

"No, I thought he was at Paris. You will then only have fifteen leagues to go, instead of thirty."

"You are a wonderfully clever fellow! If I were to ride fifteen leagues in these clothes, they would never be fit to put on again; and, instead of selling them for thirty pistoles, I should be obliged to take fifteen."

"Sell them for whatever you like, but I must have a second commission of maid of honor."

"Good! for whom? Is Montalais doubled, then?"

"Vile fellow!—It is you who are doubled. You swallow up two fortunes—mine, and that of M. le Comte de Guiche."

"You should say, that of M. le Comte de Guiche and yours."

"That is true; honor where it is due; but I return to my *brevet*."

"And you are wrong."

"Prove me that."

"My friend, there will only be twelve maids of honor for madame; I have already obtained for you what twelve hundred women are trying for, and for that I was forced to employ all my diplomacy."

"Oh! yes, I know you have been quite heroic, my dear friend."

"We know what we are about," said Manicamp.

"To whom do you tell that? When I am king, I promise you one thing."

"What? To call yourself Malicorne the First?"

"No; to make you superintendent of my finances; but that is not the question now."

"Unfortunately."

"The present affair is to procure for me a second place of maid of honor."

"My friend, if you were to promise me the price of heaven, I would decline to disturb myself at this moment."

Malicorne chinked the money in his pocket.

"There are twenty pistoles here," said Malicorne.

"And what would you do with twenty pistoles, *mon Dieu!*"

"Well!" said Malicorne, a little angry, "suppose I were to add them to the five hundred you already owe me?"

"You are right," replied Manicamp, stretching out his hand again, "and from that point of view I can accept them. Give them to me."

"An instant, what the devil! it is not only holding out your hand that will do; if I give you the twenty pistoles, shall I have my *brevet*?"

"To be sure you shall."

"Soon?"

"To-day."

"Oh! take care! Monsieur de Manicamp; you undertake much, and I do not ask that. Thirty leagues in a day is too much, you would kill yourself."

"I think nothing impossible when obliging a friend."

"You are quite heroic."

"Where are the twenty pistoles?"

"Here they are," said Malicorne, showing them.

"That's well."

"Yes, but my dear M. Manicamp, you would consume them in post-horses alone!"

"No, no, make yourself easy on that score."

"Pardon me. Why, it is fifteen leagues from this place to Etampes?"

"Fourteen."

"Well! fourteen be it; fourteen leagues makes seven posts; at twenty *sous* the post, seven *livres*; seven *livres* the courier, fourteen; as many for coming back, twenty-eight! as much for bed and supper, that makes sixty *livres* this complaisance would cost."

Manicamp stretched himself like a serpent in his bed, and fixing his two great eyes upon Malicorne, "You are right," said he; "I could not return before to-morrow;" and he took the twenty pistoles.

"Now, then, be off!"

"Well, as I cannot be back before to-morrow, we have time."

"Time for what?"

"Time to play."

"What do you wish to play with?"

"Your twenty pistoles, *pardieu*!"

"No; you always win."

"I will wager them, then."

"Against what?"

"Against twenty others."

"And what shall be the object of the wager?"

"This. We have said it was fourteen leagues to Etampes."

"Yes."

"And fourteen leagues back?"

"Doubtless."

"Well; for these twenty-eight leagues you cannot allow less than fourteen hours?"

"That is agreed."

"One hour to find the Comte de Guiche."

"Go on."

"And an hour to persuade him to write a letter to Monsieur."

"Just so."

"Sixteen hours in all?"

"You reckon as well as M. Colbert."

"It is now twelve o'clock."

"Half-past."

"*Hein!*—you have a handsome watch!"

"What were you saying?" said Malicorne, putting his watch quickly back into his fob.

"Ah! true; I was offering to lay you twenty pistoles against these you have lent me, that you will have the Comte de Guiche's letter in—"

"How soon?"

"In eight hours."

"Have you a winged horse, then?"

"That is no matter. Will you bet?"

"I shall have the comte's letter in eight hours?"

"Yes."

"In hand?"

"In hand."

"Well, be it so; I lay," said Malicorne, curious enough to know how this seller of clothes would get through.

"Is it agreed?"

"It is."

"Pass me the pen, ink, and paper."

"Here they are."

"Thank you."

Manicamp raised himself with a sigh, and leaning on his left elbow, in his best hand, traced the following lines:—

"Good for an order for a place of maid of honor to Madame, which M. le Comte de Guiche will take upon him to obtain at sight. DE MANICAMP."

This painful task accomplished, he laid himself down in bed again.

"Well!" asked Malicorne, "what does this mean?"

"That means that if you are in a hurry to have the letter from the Comte de Guiche for Monsieur, I have won my wager."

"How the devil is that?"

"That is transparent enough, I think; you take that paper."

"Well?"

"And you set out instead of me."

"Ah!"