

"this will interest you; it shows that our profession, which at present seems to you unpleasantly tragic, does at times dabble in comedy, in addition. Read it aloud, it will amuse us."

Before la Peyrade had commenced to read:

"I ought to let you know," added Corentin, "that this report is from a man named Henri, whom Madame Komorn placed in service with the Thuilliers."

"So," said la Peyrade, "you have servants to your hand; is that one of your methods?"

"Sometimes," replied Corentin, "to know all, all means must be utilized; but, on this subject, many lies are spoken about us. It is not true that the police make a regular system of this, and at certain epochs, by means of a general enrollment of lackeys and chambermaids, have spread a vast network through the private life of families. Nothing is arbitrary in our method of operating; we adapt ourselves to time and circumstance. But I wanted an eye and ear in the Thuillier household, so I let the Godollo loose upon it; she in turn installed one of our men there, quite an intelligent fellow, as you will learn. But suppose another servant came and said he was willing to sell me the secrets of his master, I should have him arrested and let a warning be sent to the family to distrust the other servants."

Monsieur the Chief of the Secret Police (wrote to Corentin the man named Henri), I did not stay long with the little baron; he is a man wholly absorbed in frivolous pleasures; there was nothing to gather worthy of a report. I have another situation, though, where I have seen a number of things which have a bearing on the mission entrusted to me by Madame de Godollo; I take the liberty of acquainting you with them. The household in which I am now in service is that of an old professor, Monsieur Picot, who lives on a first floor, Place de la Madeleine, in the suite and house lately occupied by my former masters, the Thuilliers.

"What!" cried la Peyrade, interrupting himself, "Old Picot, that ruined old lunatic, occupying such splendid apartments?"