

"You have come from him?" she asked, with a tender look that would have touched any other priest! "Oh, he thought I should do it!"

"No," replied the priest; "it is not your death, but your life that we are interested in. Come, explain your position toward each other."

"In one word," said she.

The poor child quaked at the priest's stern tone, but as a woman quakes who has long ceased to be surprised at brutality

"Lucien is Lucien," said she, "the handsomest young man, the kindest soul alive; if you know him, my love must seem to you quite natural. I met him by chance, three months ago, at the Porte Saint-Martin theatre, where I went one day when I had leave, for we had a day a week at Madame Meynardie's, where I then was. Next day, you understand, I went out without leave. Love had come into my heart, and had so completely changed me, that on my return from the theatre I did not know myself: I had a horror of myself. Lucien would never have known. Instead of telling him what I was, I gave him my address at these rooms, where a friend of mine was then living, who was so kind as to give them up to me. I swear on my sacred word——"

"You must not swear."

"Is it swearing to give your sacred word?—Well, from that day I have worked in this room like a lost creature at shirt-making at twenty-eight sons apiece, so as to live by honest labor. For a month I have had nothing to eat but potatoes, that I might keep myself a good girl and worthy of Lucien, who loves me and respects me as a pattern of virtue. I have made my declaration before the police to recover my rights, and submitted to two years' surveillance. They are ready enough to enter your name on the lists of disgrace, but make every difficulty about scratching it out again. All I asked of Heaven was to enable me to keep my resolution.

"I shall be nineteen in the month of April; at my age