

The Abbé Menage is the only one in the world in whom the condemned shows a little interest. He says not a word to him, but he looks at him, listens to him, for the Chaplain speaks to him of his son. Yesterday, he told him that the child was getting a little strength, and that the doctors were beginning to give hope, and then the gentle apostle endeavored, as he had done on every previous occasion, to insinuate a good sentiment into that fierce heart. Does Romain Gailloux understand him? Is he touched? How can that be known? His face is a sealed book.

To-day, the Abbé, very grave, his features agitated, appears before the murderer without opening his lips, his eyes fixed on him long and steadily. Astonished, then disquieted, Romain Gailloux trembles. Uttering no word, the Abbé Menage shakes his head sadly, his eyes swimming in tears. The condemned man rises and tries to speak, but his contracted throat refuses to produce the voice. His eyes alone, opened to their greatest extent, affrighted, agonized, interrogates the priest with mute and painful eloquence.

"Yes, my poor friend," said the priest at last in a very low voice, "He is dead!"

"How?... Why?"

"Why?... Alas!" replied the priest raising his eyes to heaven. And then in few rapid words, interrupted by sighs, he related to the unhappy father the unexpected and crushing blow that had carried off little Pierre at the very hour when the wound had healed and the child's cure was thought certain. Yes, the sickness had been vanquished, but the patient exhausted, was unable to rally from the shock. A sudden chill, the cause of which no one could say, and in a few hours he was dead.

"I knew it this morning while still in church," continued the Abbé. "They came to carry the good God to a sick person. The sacristan told me that it was to your child. Although he was so young, he was sufficiently prepared,—the poor innocent martyr!—to make his First Communion on his death-bed. I followed the priest, and entered the room with him. I shall never forget that First Communion! Little Pierre panting, livid, drooping, his breathing short and loud, was lying on his snow-