

Joseph Leroux, hearing that, had directed him, and then had hurried to the château himself. So now, when pantingly he came into the room, and stooped to the corpse, and Dick Stewart saw and knew him for the detective who had fooled him by masquerading as Pied-de-nez, the last of the hope and gladness which Stewart had brought from Paris went out like the last feeble gleam of a candle, leaving everything dark and blank.

M. de Grandemaison did not seem to notice the stranger enter; M. de Grandemaison was muttering again.

"It was our—ah—justice," he was muttering. "We had the right to punish him."

And then Dick Stewart stamped his foot and cursed, for now M. Joseph Leroux could not but intervene.

"Silence, Uncle—you are talking nonsense!" the Abbé was sternly saying, but he did not persuade M. Joseph Leroux that nonsense it was.

He had turned round, and was regarding M. de Grandemaison eagerly; not at all to the taste of M. Joseph Leroux had been the hushing-up telegram from the Ministry of the Interior that morning. M. Joseph Leroux had been anxious to obtain for himself the fame of detecting a plot and arresting the chief plotter against the Republic; M. Joseph Leroux had arranged the entrance of Dick Stewart to the château with that aim. It now appeared that this Englishman had befooled him—*him*, M. Joseph Leroux; he had been so influential at the Ministry of the Interior that M. Joseph Leroux had been warned by telegram not to press matters, to be quiescent, and to be remotely watchful, only. But now. . . .

Hope beamed on M. Joseph Leroux again. "What did you say, sir?" he asked, stepping forward. "You had the right to punish the Comte, did you say? Seems to me somebody's throttled him. Who was it, sir? Look at me, sir, if you please. Look at me, I pretended to be Pied-de-nez, but I'm a high police-agent, and—look at me!"

M. de Grandemaison obeyed. Looking up, M. de Grandemaison saw the transformed Pied-de-nez stand before him, and put out a shaking hand, as if to wave that impertinent presenee away. Then he began his muttering