

"Aha ! *Bon jour*, M. Duplessis," said a burly voice.

"*Bon jour*, M. Louvier," replied Duplessis.

"How long have you left Bretagne ?"

"On the day that the news of the armistice reached it, in order to be able to enter Paris the first day its gates were open. And you—where have you been ?"

"In London."

"Ah ! in London !" said Duplessis, paling. "I knew I had an enemy there."

"Enemy ! I ? Bah ! my dear Monsieur. What makes you think me your enemy ?"

"I remember your threats."

"*A propos* of Rochebriant. By the way, when would it be convenient to you and the dear Marquis to let me into prompt possession of that property ? You can no longer pretend to buy it as a *dot* for Mademoiselle Valérie."

"I know not that yet. It is true that all the financial operations attempted by my agent in London have failed. But I may recover myself yet, now that I re-enter Paris. In the meantime, we have still six months before us ; for, as you will find—if you know it not already—the interest due to you has been lodged with Messrs. —, of —, and you cannot foreclose, even if the law did not take into consideration the national calamities as between debtor and creditor."

"Quite true. But if you cannot buy the property it must pass into my hands in a very short time. And you and the Marquis had better come to an amicable arrangement with me. *A propos*, I read in the 'Times' newspaper that Alain was among the wounded in the sortie of December."

"Yes ; we learnt that through a pigeon-post. We were afraid . . . . .

#### L'ENVOI.

The intelligent reader will perceive that the story I relate is virtually closed with the preceding chapter ; though I rejoice to think that what may be called its plot does not find its *dénouement* amidst the crimes and the frenzy of the *Guerre des Communeaux*. Fit subjects these, indeed, for the social annalist in times to come. When crimes that outrage humanity have