

Among them my guest's sonorous tones were to be heard in broken exclamations. I dressed hastily, and descended. The company of the last night was increased by three old men. One of these, by his long black coat and shovel hat, I knew to be a Priest; he was standing by the *poelle* as I entered. Another, in the dress of a respectable farmer, was talking in the door-way to the master of the auberge. From the respectful attitude of mien of mine host, I set this one down as a functionary. The third stood leaning on a table, at which the Captain was seated. He was very far advanced in years; grey straggling hairs escaped from beneath a black skull cap with which his head was covered. His whole appearance was legal.

"Clement," said he, humbly, "I do not want to make trouble—you are my sister's son. The money is yours, but give me a legal discharge."

"Very well," replied the soldier, "I knew we should understand each other."

"Yes, yes, but why did you come stalking into the house at such an hour? I scarce think old Thérèse will recover it."

"Nonsense."

"Why, it is so."

"Bah! I got off the Diligence on the Charleroi road. and walked across; that made me so late. As for Thérèse, when she opened the door I stepped in, and said, 'Thérèse, I must see your master.' The old woman screamed and fainted. Could I help her mistaking me for a ghost? Our father, there, will acquit me of that."

This brought the Priest into the circle. He said, addressing the soldier, "All this, my son, may be true; but after fifteen years of absence you ought to have written. Thérèse's fears were natural. But how came you to continue so cruel a farce? Your uncle deserved better of you."

"Well, father, that may be true, too; but the surprise and terror of my uncle were irresistible. There was something so comical in the whole affair, I had to go through with it. Thérèse's scream brought my uncle to the spot in great haste. In her fall, the old woman extinguished the light. No sooner, by the aid of that he brought, did he perceive me, than he commenced, '*Ave Maria, ora pro nobis,*' and ascending the stairs backwards. Thanks to you, good father, I believe he got through the whole Litany without missing a word."

"Clement! Clement!" said the uncle.

"Mien Gott!" said the miller, who had some time since joined the group, attracted, doubtless, by the stir from the duties of his mill.

"*Sanctissima!*" said an old woman in the corner.

"Well, I followed my uncle until he seated himself in his office, behind his baize covered table. He must forgive me;