

your questions so rapidly that I am overwhelmed. Pray be seated.

I took a seat reluctantly, with my gaze riveted upon his face, which wore the most disagreeable smile I ever beheld, since it was at once cunning and devilish. I recalled what he had said about my uncle being dead, and began to surmise that there was indeed some truth in the matter.

"What is the meaning of this?" I demanded, "and where is Mademoiselle de Catinac?"

Instead of answering, he rose to his feet, picked up a pistol from the desk, walked to the door through which I had entered, locked it, then resumed his seat and laid down the pistol within easy reach.

He had changed his clothes, and instead of the mud-bespattered riding suit, he wore a fashionable coat of brown material, a pale blue embroidered waistcoat, with breeches to match, white silk stockings, and black slippers with silver buckles. He wore a black stock *à la mode*, and a delicate lace cravat in which sparkled a diamond of considerable value. I had never seen him with his hat off, and now I observed a shrewd, calculating brow, and a closely cropped head of hair. The shape of his head did not please me; it was too broad at the ears, too low at the forehead, too high at the back, and too full at the base, where it joined a thick neck. His eyes were small, black, cruel and close together. His nose was aquiline, his mouth petulant, and lascivious, his chin broad and prominent, and his jaw heavy near the throat. He had a fashion of biting his teeth so that the masseter muscles contracted rapidly. Taken altogether he was fairly good looking, and yet a dangerous rogue.

While he was locking the door, I glanced hurriedly about the room, and was pleased to find many things which were familiar to me. Upon the wall to my right hung the portrait of myself which Monsieur Gérard had painted shortly before that wretched quarrel with my uncle. I gazed upon it with considerable interest, and could not help remarking that seven years ago I was rather a pleasant-looking youngster. Time, however, had wrought its change; nevertheless,

there were the same brown eyes, the same dark hair, the same prominent nose and chin, and the same full, though rather compressed lips, which were reflected whenever I peered into a mirror. I was glad to find the portrait there, since it evidenced my uncle's affection. Near it was one of my aunt Héléne, painted since I last saw her, and as I beheld the gentle countenance, and recalled her many kindnesses, in spite of my predicament, a lump rose up in my throat and my eyes filled with tears.

A further survey of the room disclosed an easel, supporting a shield upon which several swords and daggers had been arranged as souvenirs of my uncle's campaigns. One, a jewel-hilted cimeter, had been presented by Napoleon while in Egypt. Another, a heavy cavalry sabre, served as a relic of Marengo. Another, a beautifully shaped sword, such as is carried by a General of Division, recalled the battles of Austerlitz, Wagram and Salamanca. And still another of a more ancient pattern, commemorated a sub-lieutenant's service at the battle of Arcole. There was yet another sword, but I could not recollect having seen it before, and as it was a long, straight, heavy cavalry sabre, such as is used by the Cuirassiers, I judged from what I had learned of Montluc, that it belonged to him. The furnishings and decorations of the apartment had not been altered in the least. The panelled walls and ceiling, the heavy oak wainscoting and the several candelabras were quite unchanged; the well-filled bookcases, the pictures, the writing desk, and the easy chair, for which my uncle had a great fondness, were just as I had seen them last, and I was glad to find in its old place over the mantelpiece, the family coat of arms with the motto, *Nil Desperandum*.

I have always taken pride in the armorial bearings of our house, since they date from the time of Henry of Navarre, and hint of the stock whence we sprung; but never did our motto seem so much to me as at that moment. It was like a voice from the dead, and I am sure the noble Chevalier du Morney, who adopted it, must have been in many a trying predicament himself, to have learned the inspiring magic of this *cri de*