

plenty of them,—muttering all the while, “Now what could I have done with them?”

At last he was successful. He fished out of his vest pocket a couple of little things which I carried to the light and discovered to be pistols. They were single-barreled and silver-mounted, and very dainty and pretty. I was not able to speak for emotion. I silently hung one of them on my watch-chain, and returned the other. My companion in crime now unrolled a postage-stamp containing several cartridges, and gave me one of them. I asked if he meant to signify by this that our men were to be allowed but one shot apiece. He replied that the French code permitted no more. I then begged him to go on and suggest a distance, for my mind was growing weak and confused under the strain which had been put upon it. He named sixty-five yards. I nearly lost my patience. I said,—

“Sixty-five yards, with these instruments? Pop-guns would be deadlier at fifty. Consider, my friend, you and I are banded together to destroy life, not to make it eternal.”

But with all my persuasions, all my arguments, I was only able to get him to reduce the distance to thirty-five yards; and even this concession he made with reluctance, and said with a sigh:—

“I wash my hands of this slaughter; on your head be it.”

There was nothing for me but to go home to my old lion-heart and tell my humiliating story. When I entered, M. Gambetta was laying his last lock of hair upon the altar. He sprang toward me exclaiming,

“You have made the fatal arrangements,—I see it in your eyes?”

“I have.”

His face paled a trifle, and he leaned upon the table for support. He breathed thick and heavily for a moment or two, so tumultuous were his feelings; then he hoarsely whispered,

“The weapon, the weapon! Quick! what is the weapon?”

“This!” and I displayed that silver-mounted thing. He caught but one glimpse of it, then swooned ponderously to the floor.

When he came to, he said mournfully,

“The unnatural calm to which I have subjected myself has told upon my nerves. But away with weakness! I will confront my fate like a man and a Frenchman.”

He rose to his feet and assumed an attitude which for sublimity has never been approached by man, and has seldom been surpassed by statues. Then he said, in his deep bass tones,

“Behold I am calm, I am ready; reveal to me the distance.”

“Thirty-five yards.”

I could not lift him up, of course; but I rolled him over, and poured water down his back. He presently came to, and said,

“Thirty-five yards,—without a rest? But why ask? Since murder was that man’s intention, why should he palter with small details? But mark you one thing: in my fall the world shall see how the chivalry of France meets death.”

After a long silence he asked,

“Was nothing said about that man’s family standing up with him as an offset to my bulk? But no matter; I would not stoop to make such a suggestion; if he is not noble enough to suggest it himself, he is welcome to this advantage, which no honorable man would take.”

He now sank into a sort of stupor of reflection, which lasted some minutes; after which he broke silence with,

“The hour,—what is the hour fixed for the collision?”

“Dawn, to-morrow.”

He seemed greatly surprised, and immediately said,

“Insanity! I never heard of such a thing. Nobody is abroad at such an hour.”

“That is the reason I named it. Do you mean to say you want an audience?”