

XXXI

MY GOD-DAUGHTER

*Algiers.*

I AM feverish with excitement. Médor came to my room an hour ago rubbing his hands with a sort of professional satisfaction.

"How do you feel, *mon petit* ?"

"Very empty-handed, Médor, but otherwise quite better."

"Good ! Strong enough to receive a little shock ? Don't be frightened. Do you remember you wanted me to bring you a baby from town the other day, do you still wish for one ? Yes ? Wait a minute, then."

Médor disappears with the promising, all-important air of a fairy godfather who is going to fetch his wand, and comes back with—a baby—a real one, with a little white button of a nose in a purple face, and lank hair quite wet and stuck on a throbbing cranium—something appallingly new, prodigious, hideous and adorable. It is wrapped up in a man's flannel vest, and a resplendent tablecloth with a red border.

Médor holds it tightly but reverently.

"In the manner of a shopkeeper, a baby, did you say, madame ? A baby for madame ! This is the very