

Coming up to Labelle, who, as the evening was raw, had covered himself with a blanket, Brodeur pointed him out to his subordinate, as an object of special attention.

"Mark well what I say, you thick-skulled dunderpate," he exclaimed; "and see that you do not overlook this rascal, in the hurry of to-morrow morning. Such mistakes have happened more than once of late, but if a blunder is made in the present case, your own addled head shall pay the penalty! Do you understand me most stupid of citizens?"

The "citizen" seneschal, who most absurdly, was by no means a type or model of intelligence, emitted a stolid grunt of assent, and shortly afterwards left the hall, along with his reeling principal.

As the night wore on, the temperature of the room, from chilly, had become somewhat oppressively warm, owing to the breathing of so many occupants. Eugene, consequently, denuded himself of both coat and blanket, and by the light of a lamp which hung in the vicinity of his pallet, perused at intervals his prayer-book, which by some management he had contrived to retain.

Le Brun, the turnkey to whose special attention our hero had been commended, frequently visited the apartment during the nocturnal hours, evidently for the purpose of making himself sure of Eugene's identity.— Like his superior officer he had been palpably paying court to Bacchus, a process which by no means brightened his naturally sluggish wits. With all this, however, he had not forgotten Couchon's startling threat, and hence he was anxious to imprint the image of Labelle upon his mind.

The appointed time for execution was seven o'clock, and just as the deep-toned bell of Notre Dame had ceased tolling five, Brodeur staggered into the hall which contained Eugene and his brethren in tribulation. Having passed the entire night in carousing with some kindred souls, the wretch was in a state of the most insensate intoxication. His bloodshot eyes glared and rolled about with the restless energy of demontation, and ever and anon, he uttered shrill and meaningless laughs, suggestive of the yells of a hungry hyena robbed of her young.

In the course of a few minutes, the gaze of the frantic inebriate fell upon Labelle, and the sight appeared to add ten-fold to his mad furor. With one bound, he leaped upon the half-slumbering youth, and proceeded with spasmodic violence to tear the well-remembered and much-abhorred vest from his person.

"Sacre!" he hoarsely howled forth; "and so you have got that infernal love-token once more! Would you not like that the dainty fingers which sewed it, were pressing your hands, as in the olden time? By Saint Beelzebub, they will soon have an opportunity to wash the blood from your abominated head, if Citizen Sanson can be prevailed upon to preserve it as a keepsake for the jilt! But, I tell you what, mon garçon, you must not imagine that you are to be permitted to go to the axe in that piece of frippery! I have long had my eye upon it, and intend to appropriate it for my own special use and behoof. Come! strip, you dog, without grumbling, and let your heir take possession of his inheritance. So soon as your precious pumpkin has been fairly lopped off, and gathered into the basket, I purpose paying my devoirs to the coy Marie, and I have half a notion that when she beholds me figged out in her handywork, all her little scruples will at once evaporate! She will appreciate the delicacy of the compliment, ha, ha, ha! and when once you can tickle a woman's vanity, the battle is more than two-thirds gained!— Off at once, with the rag, or I will strangle you where you lie!"

Poor Eugene was in no frame of mind to resist any requisition, however unreasonable it might be, accordingly, with a gentle sigh, he denuded himself of the last frail, tangible link which connected him with earthly attachments.

Eager to assume the garment thus coveted after such a morbid fashion, Couchon threw off his hat, cloak, and doublet, and with wine-palsied hands adjusted the vest upon his person.

Hardly had the operation been performed when nature, so pestilently outraged by protracted excess, suddenly gave way. A deep and trance-like slumber settled, without even the prologue of a yawn, upon the vinous