

"I will discover poor Michand's murderer in the end if I should have to spend twenty thousand francs over it!" General Montcornet never wearied of repeating those words.

He went to Paris with this idea in his head, and returned in the month of January with one of the cleverest detectives in the force, who came ostensibly as foreman of the work at the château, and took to poaching. Formal complaints were made by the keepers, and the General turned him away. In February the Comte de Montcornet returned to Paris.

## X

### THE VICTORY OF THE VANQUISHED

ONE evening in May, when summer weather had come, and the Parisians had returned to the Aigues, M. de Troisièmeville, whom his daughter had brought with her, Blondet, the Abbé Brossette, the General, and the sub-prefect from Ville-anx-Fayes, who had come on a visit, were playing at whist and chess. It was half-past eleven o'clock when Joseph came in to tell his master that the bad workman who had been dismissed wished to speak with him; the man said that the General still owed him money. He was very drunk, the valet reported.

"All right, I will go out to him," said the General, and he went out on the lawn at some distance from the house.

"M. le Comte, there is nothing to be made of these people," said the detective. "All that I can find out is simply this—that if you stay here and persist in trying to break the people of the bad habits which they were allowed to contract in Mille-Laguerre's time, the next shot will be fired at *you*. I can do nothing more here after this; they suspect me even more than your keepers."

The Count paid the detective, and the man took his leave; his departure only confirmed previous suspicions of the perpetrators of the crime. When the General went back to join the party in the drawing-room, his face bore traces of such