

THE DOWRY'S SECRET.

CHAPTER IX.—Continued.

Benard possessed in a rare degree the quality of a reception. Inferior to many as a consulting lawyer, little versed in the intricacies of law, he had a perfect passion for difficult, intricate or dramatic cases, upon which he often threw a sudden light, and solving the more human side of the case, dwelt upon it with the skill of some of a novelist and a lawyer.

His whole appearance had contributed to the success to which he had already attained. He had a finely formed head, regular features, pale complexion, and large, brilliant eyes. His finely modulated voice had chords in it that went to the heart. He had a knack of using unexpected expressions and producing spontaneous effects. If he did not carry the judge with him, at least he made a deep impression upon the jury, and the opposing lawyer dreaded so formidable an opponent. He feared him all the more that the young lawyer always adhered strictly to oratorical and parliamentary forms. None knew better than he how to pay a tribute to the talent or experience of his adversary, and to wind up by showing in the most conclusive manner that he was wrong both in fact and in point of law. When Benedict Pomeroy went to ask Benard to undertake Xavier's defence the young lawyer held out both hands to him.

"Have no fear," said he; "skill will be of little avail in such a case as this; heart must win the victory, and, thank God! I have one in my breast. Certainly the case seems almost hopeless, and the unfortunate boy has got himself into the meshes of a net, which snatches him on every side, but we will find means to break the net and let the poor fellow out. How often I have seen him, gay, careless, light-hearted! How he did throw his life to the four winds of pleasure! What a prodigal youth has he been! What mad fascination! The handsome gambler, the agreeable loon companion has come to this! An accusation which incurs capital punishment! I will see him this very day, and I swear, Benedict, that as surely as God has given me some talent I will use it to defend him."

"Thanks," cried Benedict, "thank! I not only regard Xavier as the friend and companion of my youthful days, the son of my benefactor, but almost as my brother."

"You are to marry Sabine Pomeroy?" said the lawyer.

"Her father gave his consent to our engagement the night before his death. Since then, though, I do not know what Sabine has in her head, but she avoids me. Yesterday she refused to receive me, sending word that her meaning did not permit her to see any one. Her mourning! If I had no part in it, she has no right to deprive me of being with her, and trying to console her, once she has placed her hand in mine and said, 'I will be your wife! You must save Xavier Pomeroy. Then I shall have my hopes for the future.'"

"Yes," said the lawyer, "I understand what Mlle. Pomeroy has not yet told you. Young, wealthy, of high social position, she was willing to become my wife; but if Xavier Pomeroy be condemned, the poor girl will wear all her life two-fold mourning for the honor of her family and her love for you."

"Yes, yes, you are right, Leon," said Benedict; "procure the brother's acquittal and the sister will be restored to me. Sabine must be the guardian angel of my life. Ever since I remember, whilst the father gradually developed my intellect and my artistic sentiment, whilst Sulpice placed my inspiration under the guidance of faith, Sabine has seemed to me the very personification of domestic virtues."

"Well," said Leon Benard, "this is another powerful incentive for me to espouse her brother's cause with all possible zeal."

The young man parted at the prison gate. Benedict went home, and the lawyer was admitted to the cell of his client. He found him utterly prostrate. The occurrence of the past two days had broken him down both in body and mind. His paroxysm of rage once passed, he began to remember Sulpice's words, and to repeat to himself that the murderer of his father was in Paris, and that one word would be sufficient to bring him to justice and restore himself to liberty, but he remained as if stricken by a sudden blow. Hitherto he had struggled against the accusation and protested his innocence; but now his courage seemed utterly to fail him. Where was the use of his case already lost? The sight of his lawyer seemed to arouse him from his stupor. This handsome, brave young man, so full of life and vigor, who declared himself his champion, won his heart, and finding the lawyer convinced of his innocence he blushed at his own weakness.

For the first time he opened his heart, displayed his wounds, and related even the smallest details of the drama which seemed so incomprehensible, look at it as he would. Whilst Leon Benard took notes and classified the facts, he became more and more convinced that his client had never even handled those bank notes, which in a moment of frenzy he had dreamed of appropriating. But still the difficulties were many and serious. Would his own conviction influence the jury? In presence of facts, would presumption in favor of Xavier have any weight? Certainly he had never undertaken so difficult a case, and the battle would be greater than any as yet lost or won by the young lawyer. Public opinion ran strongly against Xavier. At the time instances of wild and dissipated sons were becoming every day more frequent. Some robbed their father, others ended their career of folly by a cowardly suicide. Xavier capped the climax in the long list of those who ended a precocious youth spent in extravagant folly by a terrible crime. Of him an example must be made for other young men. Society had long been crying out that the new generation was rotten; therefore a gangrene member must be cut off. Arranged against Xavier were the envious whom he had outshone in extravagance and luxury, the rivals in his successes, the fathers of the theatre, the fathers of families, and magistrates. They raged the changes in every key on the fact that an example was needed. Benard knew all this, and knew that it was harder to struggle against public opinion than to carry the jury. He did not conceal this from Xavier, but he used the very difficulties which lay before them to stimulate his courage.

"Alone I can do nothing," he said, "but with you I am strong. Your attitude in the court, your replies, will assist me greatly. Between this and the great day of our struggle collect your thoughts and take note of everything that may be useful to me. Meanwhile, I will see the Abbe Sulpice."

"You will get nothing from him," said Xavier.

"You are mistaken," said Benard; "I will obtain from the man, and the brother that is due to justice. He can speak as follows without betraying his sacred office: Two men were on the stairs when I went in; they came for

me; while I was with them they played a sacrilegious farce, made use of a base subterfuge to force me to silence."

"But who will believe so dark and mysterious an act in this drama which seems devised on purpose for my ruin?"

"It will be believed, because your brother will declare it," said the lawyer; "his reputation for honesty will leave no room for doubt. However brief his testimony it will suffice. The presiding judge, jury, etc., will divine the truth; when it is forbidden the ministry of God to reveal. They will understand that the real culprit exists, and that nothing remains for them but to release you."

"You are right," cried Xavier, "and I will cling to this hope. If you believe in me, I must not lose faith in myself. I owe it to Sabine Benard, and the few friends who refuse to believe me a ruffian."

"Well, keep up your courage," said Benard; "the battle has commenced. I will come every day."

Whilst Sabine went daily to console and encourage the prisoner, whilst Leon Benard endeavored to keep up his strength, and whilst Xavier alternated between hope and despair, Sulpice was scouring Paris for the escaped convict who held in his hands the destiny of his family. It seemed to him that God must put the murderer in his way, and that he must conquer him by gentle persuasion. It seemed that his sufferings were great enough to merit such a reward. Every day he set out and wandered hap-hazard through the streets, having but one object in view. He visited the prisons, the lowest parts of the city, scanned every group, peered at dark figures by night, and followed man whose gait or appearance reminded him of Jean Machu. He was forever consumed by this burning thirst. His nerves seemed strained to the utmost, like the cords of an instrument where the tension is so great that but little more will suffice to snap them. He returned home late at night utterly exhausted, his head burning, his feet swollen and painful. Prayer seemed to refresh him unexpectably. He found in it, not indeed, fortitude, but strength; and the next day, sustained by his brotherly affection, he set out again on his wearisome quest, ever hoping and expecting to find himself, some midnight, perchance face to face with his father's murderer.

One day he went to the quay. It was full of gaudily dressed, showy looking people. The day was one of bright sunlight. Every one seemed happy in the very fact of existence, though the political news was anything but hopeful. A declaration of war, however, seemed to every one the sure precursor of victory. No one feared for the future of that great army. The past was the best guarantee for the approaching struggle. When the sound of trumpets or the measured tread of a battalion struck upon the ears of the crowd, dispersing their right and left, a murmur of delight greeted the soldiers. Their imposing appearance and martial men were freely admired; already the people saw them returning as conquerors, and bouquets were often showered upon them as they passed.

Sulpice loitered about that portion which lies near the prison. All along the quay dealers in second-hand books displayed their wares to the passers-by. At some little distance from the last book-stall a crowd were surrounding a man who stood behind a wooden table, so formed that he could close it up and move it at will. This table served as a balustrade, keeping the juggler apart from the crowd. Dressed in a sort of dark velvet blouse, holding in his hand a black felt hat, the actor, who seemed to be remarkably dextrous, changed the expression of his face with wonderful art, and with astonishing rapidity. The hat was twisted into every variety of form, and each one being accompanied by appropriate movements of the muscles of the face, the man was rendered almost unrecognizable. If you have read Ponsard's *Etudes sur les Passions de l'Amour*, you can form some idea of this man, reproducing by turns the most opposite expressions with a skill which was really artistic. Children laughed till they cried; nurses forgot their errands, and the crowd grew greater till it became impossible to pass. The policeman, attracted by the spectacle, forgot to cry "Move on," and Sulpice, about to cross the street, found it impossible. Seeing that he could not get on, he remained unwillingly enough, waiting till some movement of the crowd might permit him to pass. By the merest chance he glanced at the performer. Life a flash came a memory to him. Yet at first sight there was nothing about this man to disturb Sulpice; he was a mountebank exercising his profession with the ease of long habit. He laughed, he made jokes and grimaces, his countenance seemed open and simple as a child's, and yet Sulpice was involuntarily convinced that this face with its multifarious expressions belonged to Jean Machu, the convict. The intensity with which the Abbe Pomeroy regarded him seemed to have a certain fascination for the performer, and the priest noticed a slight twitching of the eyes, and saw that he seemed to lose something of his animation. In fact there was a sinister gleam of feared defiance in the mountebank's eyes which would have dispelled all doubt as to his identity, if doubt had remained in the abbe's mind. A sort of struggle began at once between Jean Machu and the priest. The former sought to escape the latter. Sulpice, thinking God for having at last brought him face to face with the murderer, was resolved to follow him wheresoever he went, and to wait as long as he might be inclined to exhibit himself to the public.

Jean Machu felt his vivacity dimmed as his irritation increased. Whatever the Abbe Pomeroy might have to say, he dreaded an interview with him. Finding no further inspiration for the performance with which he had hitherto regaled the crowd gratis, Jean Machu brought his hand down from the shoulder of a boy of fourteen or thereabouts, in whom it was easy to recognize Pomme d'Api.

"Play an air," he said, roughly. "I want to bring out my soap."

While the boy struck up an air upon the organ as a sort of overture, Jean Machu, still keeping his eyes fixed upon the Abbe Sulpice, drew from the table some green phials wrapped in gilt paper. He seemed to find less difficulty in pronouncing his customary panegyric on the articles in question than in improvising the jokes which preceded each of his facial changes. The overture ended, the farce had to be played, the receipts taken in, and then to get away from the place, or discover, if he could, what M. Pomeroy's son might want with him.

The Abbe Sulpice, approaching one of the book-stalls, seemed to be intent on an old Latin volume, but his eyes never strayed from Jean Machu, and the wretch became convinced that there was no hope of escaping that watchfulness. He tapped Pomme d'Api playfully on the head.

"Enough music," he said. "You must not disgust the Conservatory people."

Then tearing the gilt paper from one of the cakes of soap, he began to sing. "Ladies and gentlemen, this soap for removing stains, which I have the honor of

offering to your enlightened appreciation, has been patronized by all the crowned heads of Europe. Her Britannic Majesty uses it for shaving. It is infinitely superior to ordinary soap; which, housekeeper, employ in washing, to carbonate of soda, Panama soap, and all such. Come here, my beautiful lad," continued the charlatan, seizing upon a raw lad who was listening, through your mouth. "You have received through your mother's goodness, a new vest from the shop. The price is still on it—thirty francs sixty-five. Why, you got it for nothing! Now, ladies and gentlemen, you see the freshness of this stuff. I will just spill this little phial of it upon it; like that—"

And the rogue actually did spill the oil upon the poor boy's vest, while the latter made desperate efforts to escape from the charlatan's grasp, and only succeeded in splitting his coat.

"Have patience, good youth," said Jean Machu, with a sardonic laugh. "I would surely not destroy such a costly vest, had I not the means of restoring it to its pristine splendor. You see the stain, ladies and gentlemen; it has visibly increased; it has now spread over the entire back of the garment. Well, I will now rub it with my soap, my incomparable cleansing soap, and immediately it grows paler, becomes effaced, disappears entirely, without leaving a trace. I thank you, worthy youth, for having lent yourself with such good grace to scientific experiments. If your mother should not be pleased, go fearlessly to the shop at the *Poign Neuf*. Your money will be returned. And now for some music!"

Pomme d'Api played a waltz, and meanwhile twenty hands were outstretched for cakes of soap.

"Order, order! have some order!" cried Jean Machu. "Two cakes of soap for you, madame? One for that pretty little cock? And you, brunette? Come, come! only twenty-four cakes remain at sixteen cents a cake."

Machu displayed his merchandise under the very eyes of the police, to whom he showed a license from the prefect of police which seemed perfectly regular. Meanwhile, the Abbe Sulpice continued looking over the books. At last Jean Machu thought he could escape those watchful eyes. Hastily he refolded his table, gave it to Pomme d'Api, whispering, "Go to the right; I will go to the left. Get back as quick as you can to Methusalem's."

But this movement had not been lost upon the abbe. He had made up his mind to speak to Jean Machu, but he had also to consider his promise. His conscience would not permit him to compromise the ruffian in any way, nor say or do anything which might betray the secret. He feigned, therefore, to have lost sight of him; but scarce had Machu gone round the nearest corner than the abbe followed him. Jean Machu turned once, but the crowd of vehicles prevented him from seeing the priest, and supposing that he had eluded him, he rushed down the Rue Gît-le-Coeur. When he reached Methusalem's house he turned again, but saw no one. The Abbe Pomeroy had hidden himself in an alley way. He determined to wait till nightfall, and then have a decisive interview with the murderer. He leaned against the wall, perfectly motionless. He could easily see from his post of observation what manner of customers entered Methusalem's shop. They were not mere chasers of his wares, for some came once that he was in the vicinity of a most dangerous den, where a visit from the police would result in the arrest of many others as well as his father's murderer.

The day slowly waned, and night came—a dark night, moonless and starless. One by one Methusalem's customers quitted the place, cigar in mouth, and went on his way to Chatelot to exercise his calling of opening carriage doors, in front of the theatre. Fleur d'Echauffé next appeared arm in arm with a showily-dressed young man. Soon afterwards a heterogeneous party issued, in every variety of costume.

Jean Machu came out last. The searching glances which he cast round did not penetrate the abbe's hiding place, and just as he passed the dark alley way he made a gesture which seemed to say,

"All's well; why should I be uneasy?"

Jean Machu went through St. Michel's square, and proceeding along the quay, passed the Hotel Dieu and Notre Dame. He seemed lost in the deep shadows of the night, when a footstep close behind him caused him to turn his head. He waited a moment to see whether it was simply a passer-by, or whether some one was following him of a set purpose. As he did so, a hand was suddenly laid upon his shoulder, and he barely suppressed a cry.

"You are not mistaken, Jean Machu," said a voice, which trembled with excessive emotion; "it is I."

"You promised to forget," cried he.

"I swore that I would not betray you."

"But don't you understand that your being seen with me is dangerous?"

"Yes; otherwise I would have addressed you to-day, in front of the prison, upon which your gaze was fixed, as if you feared lest its walls should claim their prey. You know, then, Jean Machu, the result of your crime, and of your diabolical ingenuity."

"Yes," answered the felon.

"You know that my unfortunate brother is accused in your place, and that in your place he will, perhaps, be condemned to death?"

"What can I do?" cried the ruffian, in a hoarse, unnatural voice. "All I want is impunity. The law has made a mistake; that is not my business. Your brother has his innocences to plead for him, and besides a famous lawyer."

"Do you not tremble lest I, seeing my brother in such peril, should save him at any price?"

"No," said Jean Machu, composedly.

"Beware, Jean Machu! I am but a man, a weak, frail man, whose reason seems at times to totter under the weight of a duty so cruel. Sometimes I can scarcely distinguish right from wrong. My brother cursed me. He will die in despair if sentenced by the law. Machu, remember that I saved you once. Remember that I promised to keep your secret, unconscious of the fatal consequences to my nearest of kin. I gave you the stolen gold; I freely pardoned you the blood which you had spilled; but can I bear to think that, in screening you, I am sending my own brother to the scaffold?"

"All this has nothing to do with me, Jean Machu, the thief and convict; what matters it to me I am I remember who you are. My identity was lost in confession; you have promised, you must keep your promise."

"I will be outside the prison every day, and you will not follow me any more. I will be present in the court on the day of the trial, and you will be silent."

"But if I were to give you the means of flight, of going to America? If I were to double the amount of money which you stole, would you confess your crime?"

"I could not," said Machu, "on account of the extortionist."

"Then my brother is irretrievably lost?"

"Why, I thought," said Bat de-Cave mockingly; "that you depended on the justice of God."

"To it I submit," said the priest; "nor do I question it."

Jean Machu stopped.

"See here," said he, "there is no use prolonging this interview. You are sworn to silence. Keep your promise."

"I swore to be silent before the people, before the magistrates, the judge and jury, and that oath I have kept in spite of all my sufferings. But I did not promise that I would not make a last appeal to him who alone has power to release me from this oath. Listen, Jean Machu, the religion which I teach and profess must indeed be great and sublime to bind me to such obedience. Then, in the name of that faith, in the name of the God whom I serve, I promise you complete forgiveness, the pardon of my Divine Master, and even the indulgence of man. My brother is only twenty-three. He bears a name hitherto honorable. My sister is an angel upon earth, and we are all disgraced for you."

"Oh, yes, I understand perfectly," said Jean Machu; "it matters little for me, the escaped convict, the hardened criminal, who will fall into the clutches of the law sooner or later, for some other crime; who has passed through the galleys, and belongs in advance to the gallows. Ah, well, perhaps that is just why I cling so fiercely to the few years or months or days of life which yet remain to me. I have more money than I ever had in my life. I want to enjoy it, to wallow in luxury like a hog, to revel in pleasure. After that, Charlot can do what he likes with me, and then it will be time for my sermons. Till then, to be plain with you, Mr. Priest, you must not know me."

Sulpice clung to the wretch's clothes.

"Ah," said he, "it must be my fault. I have not explained things clearly. You do not understand my terrible anguish, the struggle which is consuming my very soul. Have pity, have pity on me! I do not think I ever injured any one in my life. I have lived for the poor and for God. Ah, see I am at your feet, praying, weeping; give me my brother's life, my brother's life!"

Jean Machu tried to extricate himself from the priest's grasp, but the latter, knowing well that no second opportunity would ever occur, held on with the energy of despair.

The wretch's anger, hitherto counterbalanced by a feeling of mingled pity and admiration, at last got the better of the other sentiments so foreign to his nature. He no longer beheld in Sulpice the man who was saving him by his silence, but one who was troubling him and annoying him.

"Let me go," cried he, savagely, "some one is coming."

Jean Machu drew himself to his full height, put his feet firmly together, and with a sudden jerk backwards, shook off the priest with his whole strength, and the latter fell heavily on the pavement. His head struck against the parapet of the quay, and the blood gushed out. Jean Machu took to his heels, and ran from the spot with all possible speed.

CHAPTER X. THE TRIAL.

A dense crowd had gathered around the court house. The streets in its vicinity were packed with a curious throng; all the efforts of the police only succeeded in keeping a narrow passage for carriages and other vehicles. The court, the grand staircase, the halls and lobbies presented an unusually lively appearance on this day, when the court was expected to sit, and to surpass in interest a drama of the Boulevard.

The presiding judge had been fairly persecuted with applications for tickets of admission. Within the hall were to be seen numerous representatives of the very best Parisian society. One foreign ambassador had begged them to keep him an armchair. The Minister of Justice had announced his intention of being present; the ushers had to double the row of chairs usually reserved for distinguished guests. Never had so many professors and students assembled to hear so thrilling a case. Many were the strategies employed, and several young men borrowed a friend's cap and gown to secure themselves a place on the benches of the court-room. The holders of red tickets ostentatiously displayed them, while others held on to their buttonhole or even on their hat, with an alacrity rarely seen anywhere outside of a steeple-chase.

Chase had in truth been made after tickets for the past eight days. Besides the privileged ones who had tickets, an eager multitude filled the staircases, halls, lobbies, even the court yard outside; workmen and women, tradespeople, pale, sickly children, all crowded about the place, discussing the Pomeroy family, the nature of the crime, and the probability of the prisoner's acquittal.

Many of the workmen from the factory at Ghent had come thither to give another proof of their interest and attachment to the family of their old master. None of them felt any great sympathy for Xavier. They remembered him as cold and haughty towards themselves; an idler and a spendthrift; in fact they hardly knew him. But Antonio Pomeroy, whose name was on every lip, together with Sulpice and Sabine, still claimed their warmest affection and gratitude. As soon as it became known in the crowd that this little group of men had known the murdered man and his children they were immediately surrounded, and pelted with questions as to the crime and its melancholy probabilities.

"Do you think," asked a woman, "Mlle. Pomeroy will be at the trial?"

"Ah, she is an angel," said Blanc-Oudet; "and she shall be there if she dies of shame."

"And the priest?"

"Ah, that is another thing. He will not appear."

"Then you don't know all that has happened," said Blanc-Oudet.

"Has anything else happened in that house?"

"A terrible thing," said Blanc-Oudet, impressively; "and it is connected with the other affair, too. Some one tried to kill the Abbe Sulpice."

"To kill him?" cried several voices.

"Oh, yes, it was hushed up in the papers, out of pity for the wretch who did it; the Abbe Sulpice refused to denounce him. But one night, about twelve o'clock, the poor priest was brought home in a carriage, unconscious, and with his head split open. A passer-by found him lying on the pavement. Of course the parapet had blood on it, and the abbe may have struck his head in falling.

But every one knows very well that it was not an accident. As soon as he came to, they questioned him, but he only said, 'I fell.' Since then his brain has been wandering, and he raves and raves, or keeps such a silence that it is sadder than any ravine."

"There seems to be some misfortune in that family," said an old man.

"Just think what a burden Mlle. Sabine has to bear. She watched beside her brother every night except two, when M. Pomeroy's former secretary took her place. I used to think that young chap selfish; but since his master's death he is all devotion. It is true, besides thanking him, they presented him with six months' salary; but even so, it is not every young man in M. Mandul's place that would take such trouble about the abbe's health."

"But won't his testimony be needed, and wouldn't it help his brother?" said a woman.

"Well, well, God wants to keep the secret, to Himself, I suppose," said Blanc-Oudet. "But if I was the judge, I'd do as I have read in books if they used to do in old times. I'd bring the man on the woods into court."

"Lipp-Lapp?" said a child, eagerly.

"Yes, Lipp-Lapp," said the old man. "You've got his name sure enough. A worthy beast, who was almost killed defending his master. The doctor who cured him is an excellent man, and if I belonged to the Society for Protection of Animals, I'd give him a medal, so I would. But, as I say, I'd bring Lipp-Lapp into court. He show him the knife which the murderer used, and I'd say to him, as they say to the hounder, 'Catch him.' And if, when he came face to face with the prisoner, the man of the woods didn't strangle him, I'd swear that M. Xavier was innocent!"

"Ha, ha!" laughed a bystander, "that would be too funny. It reminds one of Jacko, or the monkey of Brazil."

"It would be contrary somewhat to the dignity of the court," said another.

"Oh, well," said Blanc-Oudet, "the dog of Montargis disturbed the dignity of the judgment of God." And that was as good a case as this any day. I maintain that if Lipp-Lapp alone knows the truth, Lipp-Lapp alone should be asked for it."

"And why not the Abbe Pomeroy?" said a voice.

"But he wasn't there," replied Blanc-Oudet.

"He knows everything," said an old man.

"How could he?" asked the other.

"Well," said the old man, "I have followed all the trials at the court, and I am hardly ever mistaken, and mark my words, he knows all about it."

"Why doesn't he tell it then?" asked Blanc-Oudet.

"Perhaps he can't," said the other.

"What would prevent him from declaring it to the court, and saving his brother?"

"Oh, well, he's a priest, and some way or another they might have bound him to keep silent," said the old man.

"As for that," cried the other, "if it was himself, he'd have to keep silent just the same."

"Of course it would," said the man, "but heretofore and grand for all that. It would show what the secrecy promised by the priest is worth. Things like this happen from time to time, keep the people's faith alive. If it be so, though, I think the Abbe Sulpice as great a martyr as any that we read of in the *Lives of the Saints*."

This idea, started by the old man, spread like wild fire, through the eager, breathless multitude. It produced a feeling of profound commiseration for all concerned, and deepened the interest which already centred around this mysterious case; and the regret became greater and greater that the Abbe Sulpice was unable to give his testimony.

When the great clock struck eleven, the soldiers who kept guard below, and regulated the admission to the court room, stood back a moment as the ushers threw open the doors, and the crowd rushed in like a torrent which has burst all barriers. The reserved places, and the space without the barrier, kept for those who had no tickets, were simultaneously filled. The law students mounted to their places on the benches, and the reporters seated themselves at their desks, some describing the appearance of the audience, and others preparing to stenograph the trial in extenso.

Women took out their opera-glasses to see whom they knew in the stalls. They exchanged smiles, while the men saluted each other by a wave of the hand. The costumes were for the most part dark, but rich and elegant. It was a play to be sure, but of such a character that costumes of neutral tints were in the best taste. The lawyers discussed the case among themselves in an audible voice, some condemning Xavier in advance, others defending him energetically. Every one looked forward to hearing Leon Benard's defence, his fervid eloquence, and the replies of the much dreaded Solicitor-General. Near the benches for the lawyers sat some members of Xavier's club, smiling and careless, looking around them glass in eye. Foremost was the Count de Montjoux, indulging in reminiscences of the fine suppers he had had with young Pomeroy. Taken in general, this assemblage of curious people in the Court-room seemed rather as if awaiting the rising of the curtain than sitting in expectation of a death sentence against a fellow creature.

All at once a sound as of the turning of a door was heard in the adjoining room. The door was thrown open by two attendants, and the sonorous voice of the usher proclaimed, "Hats off, gentlemen! the Court."

A sudden death-like silence followed the solemn entrance of the magistrates. The judges took each his place behind the great table covered with green cloth, upon which were piled huge bundles of paper. On a separate table were the deeds of indictment, numbered and sealed. The jury next appeared, each answering to his name, and then the judge gave orders for the introduction of the prisoner. Men and women rose tumultuously, and every eye was fixed upon Xavier Pomeroy. He appeared between two *gendarmes*. He had summoned up all his fortitude for that moment of entering the court-room. He was deathly pale. His hands worked nervously, and as he took his seat in the dock he scarcely heard Leon Benard's whispered words of encouragement. The cruel, staring, eager crowd bewildered him, as the noisy pack bewilders the stag. He felt too well that to every tear which he might shed a cruel taunt would respond. He made a violent effort, and steeled his face to immobility, whilst the lawyer looked over his notes and deeds. Xavier, questioned by the judge as to his name, surname, and condition, replied in a voice scarcely audible. The clerk then began to read the accusation. Its logic was overwhelming. It was written in a sober, sedate fashion, by a man of tried integrity, with rare talent as a dictionist. Every point of the accusation was laid down with mathematical precision. Hearing it, there seemed no argument left for the defence, and not even a single objection to offer to that clear, concise statement, dictated neither by hatred nor prejudice.

Aware of his own innocence, Xavier was nevertheless completely overwhelmed by the force of the accusation. Thenceforth his mind entered upon a new phase. He seemed no longer the party concerned in all this; it was not his life, his future, which was being decided, but the existence of another. From being an actor in that terrible scene, the denouement of the bloody drama of the Chaussee d'Antin, he became merely a spectator. His forced composure gave place to a sort of morbid curiosity. He asked himself what must be the fate of a man accused in such fashion, and forgot that his own life hung in the balance.

For a moment he thought of giving up the defence. Where was the use? His brother, who alone possessed the knowledge which could save him, was hindered from disclosing it. God did not will that his innocence should be made known. At least he could show the vulgar courage of dying well.

Mentally a lady in deep mourning appeared. M. Benard recognized her and offering his arm led her to a seat near the prisoner. She raised her veil and showed the face of Sabine. It was deathly pale, and sorrow had written dark lines about the eyes. But it retained its purity and gentleness. She could not speak to Xavier, but she gave him a look which seemed to say,

"For our sake, if not for your own, defend your honor as if at stake."

The sight of Sabine revived Xavier's courage. He drew himself together, looked firmly and bravely, but without bravado, at the audience. The women seemed touched by his youth and his comely appearance, and Sabine attracted general compassion.

The witnesses were summoned. Each one related what little they knew of the matter. The doctor made his purely scientific deposition, and Sabine was called. The young girl advanced trembling to the bar, and spoke in a clear, musical voice of X. Xavier, at some length, before the presiding judge had the heart to interrupt her. She spoke of their happy youth, their friendship, of her father's great love for Xavier, which had made him weak. She touched briefly upon the dark morning when she had seen her father's corpse, and learned that X. Xavier had been taken away from home, and ended by saying:

"Would X. Xavier have dared to look me in the face if he had murdered our father? The affection he shows me, and his caresses, are the surest proof of his innocence."

The Abbe Sulpice was then called for form's sake; the doctor came forward declaring him quite incapable of appearing. The presiding judge then bade the other judges and jury remark that his written deposition contained all that he would have said, and it was read. The testimony being thus ended, it behooved the attorney-general to speak.

So true to the usual custom of solicitor-general, he did not commence by showing society shaken to its very base, and tottering if the head of the accused were not sacrificed to law and justice. He took Xavier from him, and totally ignoring his denial of the charge, overpowered him with proofs, showed him his punishment in all its horrors, and ended by saying:

"You despoiled honest work, which made you your father rich and respected; you despoiled the virtue which made your home a sanctuary. You allowed evil passions to take hold of you in the very flower of your youth, so that from an idler and spendthrift, you became vicious, and ended by descending to the level of burglars and midnight assassins. There is no pity for you who have despoiled the example of such a brother as yours. Ask mercy and pardon of that God, who would have pardoned even Judas had Judas repented, but from men expect only justice, implacable justice, which throws over you in anticipation the dark pall of a parolide."