

"Dear daughter," he said, "and dear son, more touched than I can express, I yield to your youthful wisdom. You are now voluntarily poor. But you will permit me once and a while to give you a little surprise."

"We will permit whatever will be a pleasure to you," said Benedict.

"Very well," said Pomereul gayly, recovering from his emotion, "we shall serve up surprises, like truffles, under a napkin."

At that moment Lipp-Lapp threw open the doors, and drew aside the curtains, while the voice of Baptiste announced,

"Dinner."

The great clock struck six.

The same thought occurred to Sabine and Sulpice. Xavier was not there.

Benedict, who read what was passing in Sabine's mind, said to M. Pomereul, in a half entreating way,

"Shall we not wait for Xavier?"

"No, my boy," said M. Pomereul firmly, "it is his duty to be punctual, he has not done his duty."

"He forgot that this night was not like every other."

"He knows that he owes me respect and deference," said Pomereul, "that should suffice. Give Sabine your arm, Benedict; we must not let the dinner cool."

They went into the dining-room. It was a large square room, made octagon in shape by great sideboards, laden with massive silver. The bright light of the lamps shone on choice pictures; the table linen was snowy white; vases of flowers ornamented the table; comfort and taste reigned supreme at this board, where the finest crystal rivalled the choicest of porcelain.

Taking up her napkin, Sabine uttered a cry of delight; a magnificent bracelet of diamonds lay beneath it.