

The bed was undisturbed. The unhappy creature, stricken to the heart by a mortal thrust, had, no doubt, made all her arrangements on her return from the opera. A candle-wick, collapsed in the pool of grease that filled the candle-sconce, showed how completely her last meditations had absorbed her. A handkerchief soaked with tears proved the sincerity of the Magdalen's despair, while her classic attitude was that of the irreligious courtesan. This abject repentance made the priest smile.

Esther, unskilled in dying, had left the door open, not thinking that the air of two rooms would need a larger amount of charcoal to make it suffocating; she was only stunned by the fumes; the fresh air from the staircase gradually restored her to a consciousness of her woes.

The priest remained standing, lost in gloomy meditation, without being touched by the girl's divine beauty, watching her first movements as if she had been some animal. His eyes went from the crouching figure to the surrounding objects with evident indifference. He looked at the furniture in the room: the paved floor, red, polished, and cold, was poorly covered with a shabby carpet worn to the string. A little bedstead, of painted wood and old-fashioned shape, was hung with yellow cotton printed with red stars, one armchair and two small chairs, also of painted wood, and covered with the same cotton print of which the window-curtains were also made; a gray wall-paper sprigged with flowers blackened and greasy with age; a fireplace full of kitchen utensils of the vilest kind, two bundles of fire-logs; a stone shelf, on which lay some jewelry false and real, a pair of scissors, a dirty pincushion, and some white scented gloves; an exquisite hat perched on the water-jug, a Ternaux shawl stopping a hole in the window, a handsome gown hanging from a nail; a little hard sofa, with no cushions; broken elogs and dainty slippers, boots that a queen might have coveted; cheap china plates, cracked or chipped, with fragments of a past meal, and nickel forks—the plate of the Paris poor; a basket full of potatoes and dirty linen, with a smart gauze cap on the top; a rickety