

with me to-night; I am afraid I must really give it up—

'O pray don't,' said I; 'I am very anxious to know what caused the pastor's emotion. Pray, go on.'

'Well, if monsieur will excuse me—'

'Proceed, Jean, and take more care,' said madame.

'I will. The pastor went straight from the church to the house of the mayor. Now this man kept an inn, and, as he was very busy from its being a fête day, he was much annoyed at the pastor's asking for a private interview with him; but, from his own position and the character of the clergyman, who told him he had something of great importance to communicate to him, he was obliged to grant it. He was, moreover, struck with the firmness and warmth of M. Martin on this occasion, as the pastor was in general the mildest of men. I may say also that he was one of the simplest; he was in fact not too well fitted to deal with the world—he was too unsuspecting.'

Here madame nodded her head approvingly, and said, 'That's true' Jean.' For my part, I could scarcely suppress a smile at the worthy man's innocence—he had been, from the little I had seen of him, exactly describing himself. He resumed as follows:—

'When they were alone, the pastor said, 'M. Mayor, here is my business with you in a single word. On opening my Bible to-day to give out my text, I found this in it,' and he handed the mayor a slip of paper. The mayor took it and read it. He was a long time about it, but at last he finished, and when he did so he burst into a loud laugh. At this moment his son came into the room to ask him for the key of the cellar, on which his father, still laughing, cried out, 'What do you think, Pierre? here is Pastor Martin who has found a slip of paper in his Bible, stating that a murder has been committed somewhere—'

'I wished to have spoken to you alone,' said the pastor, with emphasis; 'but, since young M. Masson has heard so much, let him hear all. It is not because I found this slip in the way I told you that it has so much struck me; it is because it was not there when I looked at the very passage a few moments' before in the vestry, and that during that time the book never left my hands.'

'You must have put it in yourself then, that's clear,' said the innkeeper, laughing louder than ever.—'I am speaking very seriously, M. Masson, and—'—'Perhaps it will disappear as oddly as it came,' interrupted the mayor. 'There, put it off, and let me go; I am very busy to-day, and must attend to my customers.' The pastor insisted for some time longer, but the mayor said the thing was too absurd, and that he would do nothing. M. Martin had wished him to make some search at a place indicated in the mysterious slip, but finding remonstrance useless, or worse, for the mayor was becoming very rude, the pastor took his leave, escorted to the door by the young man, who was civil enough, and apologised for his father's conduct. M. Martin then bent his way to the residence of the nearest commissary of police. This gentleman listened to him attentively, and, when he had heard the story, asked of course to see the slip. M. Martin pulled out

his Bible, found the place of his text, and turned very pale. The slip was gone—

'Ah!' said I, 'that was strange enough.'

'Gone!' repeated madame, who had evidently been watching the effect the announcement would have on me, and was delighted at my surprise. 'Gone! And the commissary was my master, so I know all about it.'

'This is very strange,' said the commissary, rather coldly.—'I had it when I left the mayor's,' replied M. Martin. 'My Bible has never left my pocket, and now the slip is gone. There is something supernatural in this.'—'It will be difficult to get a commissary to believe in supernatural appearances of the sort,' said the other, pointedly.—'M. Commissary,' said the pastor, solemnly, 'so deeply were the words impressed on me, that, having read them twice, I can now repeat them. They were these:—'On the night of the 10th, a man was murdered by two others, on the highway, going from Vallerançon towards Bellevue, and his body was thrown into the old well, under the willow-tree, a little beyond the Croix-Rousse.'

'Hum!' said the magistrate.—'I assure you, M. Commissary, that I cannot be mistaken. At all events a search in the well could do no harm.' The commissary, though he did not say much, had been not a little impressed by the earnestness and evident sincerity of the pastor, so, after considering some time, he said, 'Continue your walk a little farther, as far as Lourdigneux, then go back by another road than that you came, and don't speak of the matter till I see you again.' When the pastor was gone, the commissary considered a little, and then a sudden thought seized him. 'Saddle me a horse,' he said, 'and send Besnard here.' When Besnard—

'Who was Besnard, may I ask?' said I.

'Why, the gendarme, of course. When Besnard came, he told him, after a short consideration, to go to the Croix-Rousse, and, concealing himself a little beyond it, to remark any one who should happen particularly to observe the old well under the willow-tree. Then he got on horseback, and went straight to the Mayor's inn, at Vallerançon, after, however, having made the pastor recount more particularly, and indeed very particularly, all that had passed between him and the two Massons. When the commissary reached the inn, he was received with great deference by its proprietor, and they talked on other matters for some time, the magistrate gradually insisting on the increasing influence of the Protestants in that quarter, and on the possibility of their uniting with the more strict Catholics to make him shut up his house at certain times, especially on Sundays. On this the mayor got excited, the more so that he had already been drinking; in short, and at last, he told the story of the pastor's application to him, calling him a fool and a madman. 'But the slip of paper,' said the commissary, 'what did it contain?'—'Oh, I don't remember,' said the mayor, 'neither I nor my son.'—'Then you both saw it?' asked the magistrate.—'Yes—that is to say—yes, we both saw it.' The commissary talked for some time on other subjects, and then left the inn, riding slowly and by a circuitous path towards the Croix-Rousse, saying to himself, 'This slip has been lost, for it existed; and so must be found, for it was found; and was