

The news seemed to be well received by the company.

"I must also ask your pardon, ladies, for my rather peculiar behavior in this very place, a few weeks ago. My excuses are my late infirmity, the annoyances of a law-suit, and an old housekeeper who robbed and plagued me in a thousand ways and of whom I have the happiness of being now delivered. To-day you see me rejuvenated, married to an amiable spouse, and with only one cloud to obscure my happiness—that of my young friend who has been crowned by the Academy; all here are more or less guilty toward him; I, for my ingratitude, when he turned over to me the benefits of his discovery and the reward of his immortal labors; which was to become later, in drawing me to England, the cause of the happiness which has come to me in my old age; that young lady I see there with tears in her eyes, for having foolishly accused him of atheism; that other stern-looking one, for replying with harshness to his proposals made by his worthy father, whose white hairs she should rather have honored; Monsieur Thuillier, for having sacrificed him to his ambition; Monsieur Colleville, for not having done his part as a father, and choosing the most worthy man; Monsieur Minard, for giving in to his jealousy and trying to foist his son in his place. There are but two present who have done him common justice—Madame Thuillier and Monsieur the Abbé Gondrin. I shall now ask that man of God whether we may not almost doubt Divine justice, when we see this generous young man, the victim of all of us, tossed at the mercy of the waves and tempest, to which for three long years he is consigned before he returns?"

"Providence is all powerful, monsieur," said the abbé; "God will protect Monsieur Félix Phellion in the midst of peril; in three years let us have the firm hope that he will be safely restored to us."

"But three years," said Monsieur Picot. "Will it still be time? Will Mademoiselle Colleville wait for him?"

"Yes, I swear it," cried the young girl, carried away by an uncontrollable impulse.

And then, blushing with shame, she sat down, melting into tears.

"And you, Mademoiselle Thuillier," continued Picot, "and you, Madame Colleville, will you allow this child to reserve herself for one worthy of her?"

"Yes, yes," cried everybody; for Monsieur Picot's voice, full and sonorous, had tears in it, which filled all present with emotion.

"It is time, then," said Monsieur Picot, "to grant an amnesty