

"Excellent! If it should turn out as you predict, we will then be delivered from the heir and his troublesome friends at one *coup*. Long enough at least for the pear to ripen. Then we have only to pluck it, and dispose of *le vieillard*, and it will be an affair finished! But what is the old *groggnard* muttering about?"

The two drew near the couch once more, and bent over the sleeper whose lips still worked and syllabled whisperingly forth his dreamy meaning.

"Hist! what says he?" whispered Deleval.

Marie looked up with that dangerous gleam in her eyes.

"Listen: he says 'Oh Angélique, Angélique! Poor defenceless one! Wallowing in thy gore! Murdered! Murdered! Jacques Barillot; murderer of women and children!'"

"What means the dotard?" said Delaval with white and ghastly face. "Can he know, can he suspect anything of the past? But it is impossible: so long ago."

The sound of approaching footsteps here startled the pair.

"Stay; I must not be found here," muttered the Frenchman.

Without noise he slipped through the open window on to the balcony beyond: whilst his sister adjusting the curtain, so as to conceal him effectually, returned silently to her post by the bedside. To the tap at the door which followed, it was in a quiet and collected tone she answered, "come in!"

The handle was turned, and Calvert strode across the threshold. With but scant acknowledgment of his cousin's presence, he moved to the side of the bed.

A gentle pressure on the arm, and the girl's finger on her lip, warned the youth not to disturb the sufferer.

With a cold and contemptuous glance he turned from her, and bent over the agitated form before him, and laying one hand on the arm tossed out over the coverlet, said in a soft clear voice

"Father!"

The head moved uneasily over, and an effort seemed to be made to throw off the stupor that weighed down the half-closed eyelids. But a weary sigh, and an unintelligible muttering, dying off upon the lips shewed his powerlessness to contend with the coma that seemed to benumb his faculties.

"What is this?" said Calvert, with a sharp glance of suspicion around him; and his eyes resting on the array of glasses and vials on the small *commode*, within hand-reach of the nurse. "What have you been drugging him with?"