

Do you care to see the newspapers from Athens? Here they are, the monk brought them; for me they possess little or no interest."

The papers contained glowing descriptions of various victories gained over the brigands and of their dispersion. I laid them aside, and while waiting the reappearance of the king, meditated on the position in which Madame Simons had left me, and formed a plan for my escape. Decidedly it was glorious to owe my liberation to myself alone, and better far to quit my prison by means of a stroke of courage than by a scholarly trick. I might in the course of twenty-four hours become a hero of romance, an object of admiration to all the young ladies of Europe. There could be no manner of doubt but that Mary Anne would be seized with passionate love for me on beholding me safe after so perilous an escape as mine must of necessity be. Yet my foot might slip in the formidable slide I contemplated! Were I to break an arm or leg would my idol still smile on a lame or one-armed hero? Besides, I must rely on being watched night and day, and my plan, however ingenious, could only be executed upon the death of my guardian. Killing a man is no small matter—even for a Doctor. It would be difficult to procure a weapon, and still more difficult to make use of it. After due reflection I began to think my future mother-in-law had acted rather coolly towards her prospective son-in-law. It would cost her but little to send me fifteen thousand francs for my ransom—she might deduct them from her daughter's dowry! I presently began to abuse Madame Simons as cordially as the greater number of sons-in-law abuse their mothers-in-law all over the civilised globe.

Hadgi-Stavros changed my ideas on the subject of escape, by putting within my reach far more simple and less dangerous means. The king arrived just as I was yawning wearily.

"You feel dull," said he, "you have been

reading too long. I myself can never open a book without endangering my jaws, and I see with pleasure that Doctors can no more withstand it than I. But why do you not employ your time better? You came here to pick flowers on the mountain; would you not like to go on excursions, under supervision of course? Should you happen to meet with a strange and beautiful flower, unknown in your country, you must give it my name, and call it the 'Queen of the Mountains.'"

Truly, thought I, were I but a league from here between two brigands, it would not be so very difficult to outstrip them; danger would double my strength and speed. He runs best who has the greatest interest in running!

I gladly accepted the king's offer, and ere the meeting separated he placed me in charge of two life-guardsmen, with this simple recommendation:

"This milord is worth fifteen thousand francs! If you lose him you will either forfeit that sum or replace him."

My acolytes were in no manner disabled; they had neither wounds nor bruises—it was extremely improbable that they would be easily fatigued; and it was with some regret I perceived two long pistols in their girdles. Spite of all, however, my courage did not fail, and strapping my box on my shoulders I started.

"I wish you a pleasant excursion!" shouted the king after me.

"Adieu, Sire!"

"Not adieu, if you please! *Au revoir!*"

I led my companions in the direction of Athens, as they did not hesitate to let me select my own paths. These brigands were better mannered than the gendarmes of Péricle's, and gave me all reasonable latitude; they herborized for the evening meal, while I, on my part, pretended great eagerness at my work; rooting up to right and left, and feigning to select a blade of grass and place it very carefully in my box, but taking good care not to overload myself.