

# POOR DOCUMENT

## THE FLOWER GIRLS —OF— Marseilles!

(Continued.)

Those men make a display at Marseilles of their vanity and their insolence; they have become devotees and hypocrites; they have deceived even the honest folks who salute and esteem them. In a word, they form an aristocracy of their own path; forgotten; one sees but the wealth of recent date. Well, I will tear off the mask. Listen: This one has made fortune by betraying a friend; another by selling human flesh; another by selling his wife or his daughter; another by speculating on the misfortunes of his creditors; another by reckoning at a low figure, after having himself adroitly discredited it, all the stock of a company which he was the superintendent; another by sinking a ship loaded with stones instead of merchandise, and making the insurance company pay him the price of this strange cargo; another, a partner by verbal agreement, by refusing to share the hazard of an operation as soon as that operation became bad; another by hiding his assets, making two or three failures and living afterwards like a man of means; another by selling for a few dollars the logwood or bear's blood; another by forestalling grain on the ocean during the days of scarcity; another by defouling the revenues on a large scale, by striving to corrupt the employees and by stealing his fill from the administration; another by placing on notes forced signatures of relatives or friends, who were afraid to deny them on the day of maturity, and paid rather than compromise the forger; another by selling for a few dollars the shares of a factory, insured beyond their value; another by tearing up and throwing into the fire the notes he snatched from his creditor's hands on the day of payment; another by gambling at the Bourse with the intention of not paying if he lost, and, in fact, by refusing to pay, which did not prevent him from enriching himself, a week afterwards, at the expense of some dupes.

M. de Giroussac's breath faltered. He maintained a long silence, allowing his anger to cool. Then his lips again opened and his smile was less bitter: "I am somewhat of a misanthrope," said he, mildly, to Marins, who had listened to him with pain and surprise; "I see everything in sombre colors. The reason is that the ill-fates to which my title condemns me has permitted me to study the pollutions of this district. But know that there are some honest signatures among us; if they would rise in a body, they could easily crush the scoundrels. I pray God every night that this civil war of virtue against vice may bring early day. As for you, content only upon the equity of the magistracy; you will find it a firm support, independent and loyal. Its members do not crawl like slaves at the bidding of the rich and powerful. I have always had for the magistracy a fanatical respect, for it is the representative of truth and justice on earth."

Marins took leave of M. de Giroussac, altogether overwhelmed by the fiery words he had heard. He foresaw that his brother would be pitilessly convicted. The commencement of the proceedings was set down for the following day.

### CHAPTER X. PHILIPPE'S TRIAL.

All Aix was excited. Gossip burns out with strange energy in those quiet little towns, where the curiosity of the idlers has not each day a new aliment. Nothing was talked of but Philippe and Blanche; the adventures of the young lovers were related in the open street; it was loudly asserted that the accused was convicted in advance, and that M. de Cazalis had, either personally through his friends, demanded his conviction of each juror.

The clergy of Aix lent its support to the deputy, feebly enough, it is true; that clergy then contained eminent and honorable men to whom promoting an injustice was repugnant. A few priests, nevertheless, yielded to the influence coming from the religious society of Marseilles, of which the Abbe Donadei was, so to speak, the master. These priests strove by visits and shrewd proceedings to bind the hands of the magistracy, the upright and firm spirit of which was feared. They succeeded only in persuading the jurors that the cause of M. de Cazalis was holy.

The nobility strongly aided them in this task. They believed themselves in honor bound to crush Philippe Cayol. They regarded him as a personal enemy, who had dared to make a criminal attempt against the dignity of one of their number, and who had thus insulted them in a body. To see the coming and marriage of their friends, get angry and unite together, one would have thought that the women were at the gates of the town. The matter in hand was simply to cause the conviction of a poor devil, guilty of love and ambition.

in the secret of the drama which was about to be played. Those who were interested in having the accused convicted did not even take the trouble to conceal their proceedings, being certain of their triumph; those who wished to save Marins' brother, feeling themselves weak and distressed, found solace in shouting, happy to irritate the powerful people whom they had no hope of conquering.

M. de Cazalis had, without shame, dragged his niece to Aix. During the first days he took a proud delight in exhibiting her upon the Cours. He protested thus against the idea of disgrace which the crowd attached to the young girl's flight; he seemed to say to all: "You see that a clown cannot harm a friend; another by selling human flesh; another by selling his wife or his daughter; another by speculating on the misfortunes of his creditors; another by reckoning at a low figure, after having himself adroitly discredited it, all the stock of a company which he was the superintendent; another by sinking a ship loaded with stones instead of merchandise, and making the insurance company pay him the price of this strange cargo; another, a partner by verbal agreement, by refusing to share the hazard of an operation as soon as that operation became bad; another by hiding his assets, making two or three failures and living afterwards like a man of means; another by selling for a few dollars the logwood or bear's blood; another by forestalling grain on the ocean during the days of scarcity; another by defouling the revenues on a large scale, by striving to corrupt the employees and by stealing his fill from the administration; another by placing on notes forced signatures of relatives or friends, who were afraid to deny them on the day of maturity, and paid rather than compromise the forger; another by selling for a few dollars the shares of a factory, insured beyond their value; another by tearing up and throwing into the fire the notes he snatched from his creditor's hands on the day of payment; another by gambling at the Bourse with the intention of not paying if he lost, and, in fact, by refusing to pay, which did not prevent him from enriching himself, a week afterwards, at the expense of some dupes."

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All the people declared frankly for him. The lower classes blamed his conduct, censured the means he had employed, and said that he would have done better to have loved and wedded the daughter of some plain citizen like himself; but, while condemning his actions, they noisily defended him against the pride and hatred of M. de Cazalis. It was known in the town that Blanche, before the Judge's instruction, had denied her love, and the girls of the people, true Provencals, that is to say devoted and courageous, treated her with insulting contempt. They called her "the renegade"; they assigned innumerable motives for her conduct, and did not hesitate to cry out their opinion in the public squares, in the energetic language of the streets.

phrase, altogether foolish and absurd as it seemed, contained nevertheless, the exact truth. The President remarked that the abduction of a man of thirty by a young girl was something unheard of. "Neither have you ever heard," replied Philippe, triumphantly, "of a young girl of sixteen passing along the public highway, traversing towns, meeting hundreds of persons and not thinking of summoning the first passer to deliver her from her jailer?"

And he proceeded to show the utter responsibility of the violence and intimidation of which he was accused. At each hour of the day, Blanche had been free to quit him, to demand aid and relief; she followed him, it was because she had consented to flight and marriage. Besides, Philippe displayed the greatest tenderness for the young girl and the greatest defence for M. de Cazalis. He admitted his error; he merely asked that they should not make him out a base abductor.

The court was adjourned until the following day, which was set apart for hearing the statements of the witnesses.

CHAPTER XI.  
BLANCHE AND FINE FACE TO FACE.

Blanche, hidden in the depths of the gallery, heard Philippe's defence. She was there by order of her uncle, who wished to crush out whatever tenderness might be lingering in her by showing her the man who had seduced her. She had been instructed to take her to this edifying spectacle.

As the two ladies were waiting for their carriage on the steps of the Palais, the crowd, precipitating itself from the building, suddenly separated them. Blanche, dragged into the middle of the Place des Freres, was recognized by the huckster women, who began to shout at her and insult her.

"It is she, it is she!" cried these women, "the renegade, the renegade!"

Blanche, she saw that she was about to become a mother. She grew white as a sheet and striving towards the women in the first row, said in a louder tone: "Let us pass, I say! Do you not see the poor girl's condition, wretches, and that you will kill her child?"

She repeated a gross huckster who was sneering. All the other women drew back. Blanche's words had suddenly rendered them silent and compassionate. The young girl retired between two hedges of women, among whom ran murmurs of regret. Blanche, red with shame, clung with fear to her companion and feverishly hastened her steps.

The flower-girl, to avoid the line of Pont-Moreau, then fell of people and noise, took the little Rue Saint-Jean. On reaching the Cours, she hid Mlle. de Cazalis to her hotel the floor of which was open. During the walk, she had not uttered a word.

Blanche forced her to enter the vestibule, and there, partially closing the door and almost going upon her knees, she said in a voice full of emotion: "Oh! Mademoiselle, I thank you with all my soul for having come to my rescue! Those wicked women would have murdered me!"

"Do not thank me," answered Fine roughly. "I came like the rest to insult you, to beat you!"

"Yes, I hate you; I wish you had died in your cradle!"

Blanche stared at the flower-girl with astonishment. She drew herself up, her aristocratic instincts rebelled and her lips grew slightly pale with disdain. The two young girls stood face to face, the one with her frail grace, the other in her fresh and energetic beauty. They contemplated each other silently, feeling surge in them the rivalry of their classes and hearts.

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