

"We part here," said Valentine. "Your health, Michel!"

"Yours," said I sadly.

"Yes," said he, after drinking with a very serious face—"yes, I am satisfied; my conscience is easy; I have left the soil of scandal behind me; I have taken up my staff for a journey, and I am on the road to my salvation. I ought to have gone long since; I am wrong in having remained so long in the trammels of this Babylon. I am guilty, and I accuse myself of it; it is my own fault—my very great fault! The weakness of habit is to blame for it."

He went on for some time in this way, and I fancied I heard my mother when she came home after hearing mass among the refractory priests in the mountain. It was the capucin Eleonore himself speaking by the mouth of Valentine. At last, lifting up his eyes, he stretched up his long arms and said—

"The hour of pardon is come—to all sinners pardon. I came away the last—but it is never too late! Thy pity, O God, is boundless!"

"But, Valentine, where are you going?" cried I.

"You," he began again, looking at me as if he did not know whether he ought to answer—"your heart is with us, though you know it not—your errors come from others. You must tell me no one; and should you tell any one, what can it matter? What is written is written. The ruin of Babylon has sounded. Before this snow is melted every one will be recompensed according to his works! You shall be spared—yes, you shall be spared! But these trees, Michel—look at these trees; they will bend with the weight of patriots hanging from them, and their branches will break with their load."

All this nonsense made me very sad.

"No doubt, Valentine," said I, "it is quite possible; but in the meantime, where are you bound?"

"I am going to Mayence," said he, looking at the old woman, who was fast asleep. "I go to rejoin our good princes, and above all the man according to God, Mgr. the Count d'Artois. It is in him I put my trust. From Mayence we shall go to Lyons, which will become the capital of the kingdom; the other is polluted; there shall not remain of it one stone above another. General Bender has already disposed of the patriots in the Low Countries; now it is the French patriots' turn. You will see, Michel—you will see. Cavalry, infantry, artillery, lancers, and Croats—all will march together; they will enter by Savoy, by Liège, by Switzerland, and from Spain; and our seigneurs will march in front to deliver the poor martyr who is suffering for our sins—then peace be to the well-disposed! peace to the submissive! peace to the humble! peace to the faithful subjects! but war to the proud who lift up their heads! war to Antichrist, to the holders of stolen property! No pity for them—no pity for Jean Leroux, Letumier, Eloy Collin! Their hempen cravat is already prepared. You shall have nothing to fear—you are a good son, and support your father and mother. It is well—reason will return to you. But when our princes are in Alsace or near Metz you must not join the others in marching against them to support rebellion; not one shall escape, I tell you so. Mgr. the Count d'Artois has planned it all. Stir not! Let Cochart, Letumier, Maitre Jean go. The soldiers will turn against them; they are all for our princes; they will first go and exterminate the Babylon of iniquity, the scoundrels of Parisians."

While I looked at Valentine's sugarloaf-shaped head, I said to myself—

"What a pity! You are quite crazy, poor old fellow."

And I quietly said—

"So you are going to Mayence; but what will you do when you get there? You are no soldier, and then your age!"

"Ah!" cried he, "there will be no want of work. My place is marked out already. I shall go with a cavalry regiment as farrier, and I will work out my salvation."

So I said no more; and as we had finished the bottle I knocked for another; but he would not have it, but said—

"No, Michel, no, it is enough. One glass of wine does good, two would be too much."

He strapped on his bundle, paid for the wine, and we departed, the Spitz, which had recovered his courage, barking after us.

Once outside, Valentine stretched out his long arms, and we embraced. After that the poor devil went down the hill towards Saint-Jeandes-Choux, to go to Welsembourg. I watched him for a moment; he was deep in the snow, and then he recovered himself like a man of twenty.

I took my way back to Baraques. All that Valentine had said to me seemed madness; I did not know then that the kings and nobles of Europe formed a sort of freemasonry among themselves; that they were neither French, Germans, nor Russians, but before all they were nobles, and that they afforded each other mutual aid and assistance to keep the populations under the yoke.

This idea seemed to me too horrible to believe.

It was midday when I returned to the Three Pigeons.

"So there you are," said my godfather; "you are back in time for dinner. Is the other gone?"

"Yes, Maitre Jean."

"Which way?"

I did not know what to say, but he did not want an answer.

"He is gone to join the emigrants at Coblenz," said he, winking his eye; "I knew it." And as he sat down he called out—

"Let us have our dinner, and think no more of that idiot."

All dinner-time he was very gay.

"Now we are alone, Michel," said he, "we can sing as we like. But before that, the time

is come for certain changes. I am pleased with you; you have always given me satisfaction; you are not as good a workman yet as Valentine, for to be just, he was a very good one; but for good sense you are worth a thousand such as he. The rest will come. We shall always agree."

And after dinner, as I was going to rise, he put his arm on my arm, and said—

"Stay, I want to talk to you. Catherine, fetch us a bottle of wine. Everything had better be settled to day."

Dame Catherine went out. I was surprised at Maitre Jean's good-humor; I felt he was going to say something agreeable to me. His wife brought the wine, and then went into the kitchen to help Nicole—we remained alone.

"We shall not be disturbed this snowy weather," said my godfather, as he filled our glasses. "No one is likely to come to the inn."

Then, after having had some wine, he continued with a thoughtful air—

(To be continued.)

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