

the Préfet of la Charente a nervous chill. "You may tell her," Lucien went on, "that I now bear *gules*, a bull raging *argent* on a meadow *vert*."

"Raging argent," echoed Châtelet.

"Madame la Marquise will explain to you, if you do not know, why that old coat is a little better than the chamberlain's key and Imperial gold bees which you bear on yours, to the great despair of Madame Châtelet, *née* Nègrepelisse d'Espard," said Lucien quickly.

"Since you recognize me, I cannot puzzle you; and I could never tell you how much you puzzle me," said the Marquise d'Espard, amazed at the coolness and impertinence to which the man had risen whom she had formerly despised.

"Then allow me, madame, to preserve my only chance of occupying your thoughts by remaining in that mysterious twilight," said he, with the smile of a man who does not wish to risk assured happiness.

"I congratulate you on your changed fortune," said the Comte du Châtelet to Lucien.

"I take it as you offer it," replied Lucien, bowing with much grace to the Marquise.

"What a coxcomb!" said the Count in an undertone to Madame d'Espard. "He has succeeded in winning an ancestry."

"With these young men such coxcombry, when it is addressed to us, almost always implies some success in high places," said the lady; "for with you older men it means ill-fortune. And I should very much like to know which of my grand lady friends has taken this fine bird under her patronage; then I might find the means of amusing myself this evening. My ticket, anonymously sent, is no doubt a bit of mischief planned by a rival and having something to do with this young man. His impertinence is to order; keep an eye on him. I will take the Due de Navarre's arm. You will be able to find me again."

Just as Madame d'Espard was about to address her cousin, the mysterious mask came between her and the Duke to whisper in her ear: