

companions, entered with the intention of remaining till morning. On seeing us he started, and grasping the hand of one of the Frenchmen exclaimed, "Ha! Lafont, what brings you here?" The other instantly replied "what mischief are you up to now, Darnell?" "Oh! nothing," said Darnell, speaking hastily, "travelling, merely travelling for my health," and he drew the other aside.

For some minutes they appeared to be speaking in a very confidential and friendly manner together, if I should judge from the occasional nods and laughs that passed between them.

We supped in company, and after supper, cards were produced to while away the hour. I objected to play any other game than whist, much to the dissatisfaction of Darnell and Lafont, who proposed a more gambling game; at last Darnell said to me, "well then, Lafont and I, will stand you and M. Martin," so the matter was settled. I never played with worse luck in my life, and although the stakes were small, I lost a considerable sum. They now proposed to change the game, and I foolishly, though as it turned out fortunately, consented. Luck, indeed appeared to have changed, I not only recovered what I lost, but nearly a hundred gold pieces at my elbow, testified that I had won. But cards at the best produce a fluctuating game and fortune is fickle. The stakes were now doubled, and several losses in succession warned me that a reverse was about to take place; but this only made me the more eager, feverishly I watched the dealing of the cards, which the slow, cautious movements of Darnell and Lafont, rendered tedious to me; more than once I felt inclined to snatch them from their hands and distribute them myself. I was furiously excited. About a hundred pounds still lay before me, and I suddenly, without reason, offered them against thirty, that either hearts, spades, or clubs, would turn up. Lafont was dealing.

"Say twenty," cried Darnell, "and I'll take it."

"No, thirty." And Lafont, holding the card in his hand, paused, awaiting our bet.

"Twenty" said Darnell again. And I thought, slightly tilted the card. "Well," he continued, "I will say—"

"You need not" I interrupted, "that card was shown, and it is a diamond." Placing my money in my pocket I rose from the table.

"Indeed, you are hasty," said M. Martin, "the card certainly was slightly turned, accidentally, I think. Let the bet be drawn, what is the card?"

"I object," cried Darnell passionately, "Lafont did not in the slightest degree turn the card."

"The card did slip," said Lafont, "but not sufficiently to allow any one at the table to see what it was."

"Well then, if it is not a diamond I'll forfeit the money."

"Excuse me," said M. Martin, "I must object to that, let the card be placed in the middle of the pack and deal anew."

At this moment a noise was heard overhead, as if several persons were running from room to room, intermingled with cries and slamming of doors; presently the startling cry of fire was heard clear and oft repeated.

"Mind not the fire," said Darnell, "go on with the game, I for one have—" I did not hear the end of the sentence, but running into the passage, met a host of terrified lodgers—I suppose—endeavoring to save what little property they had. The fire which had broken out in one of the upper rooms, might have been easily arrested had the people been at the first cool or collected, but each only thought of self, and so the house was lost. It was morning before the fire was over, and collecting my luggage together, I found all right; not so with M. Martin, a small carpet bag, which he said he carried out with his own hands was missing. On enquiry he was told that M. Lafont had taken it with him as his own, "M. Lafont," said the man, "drove off in Mr. Darnell's carriage half an hour ago."

"*Mon dieu!* I'm robbed. Aid me my friend to overtake the miscreants," cried M. Martin wringing his hands.

"I will," I replied, "you obtain horses; in the mean time I must see our unfortunate landlord." I left him and found the poor German, who was now, the excitement being over, crying and constantly repeating, that he was ruined. I offered no word of consolation, but taking the sum I had won the previous evening, placed it in his hands and left him, without awaiting his reply.

M. Martin without difficulty obtained horses, and in a few minutes we were dashing along the road pointed out to us by the post boy, as the one taken by Darnell. Nor did he deceive us: a carriage, such as he described, preceded us a couple of miles, as a peasant lad we met informed us. The bag stolen contained, M. Martin said, papers of the utmost importance, and he would follow the thieves to the end of the world, if necessary, before he would lose his documents. On mounting a rising ground, we saw in the distance a carriage, no doubt the one we were in pursuit of, overturned. M. Martin spurred on his horse, and with vehement gestures, bade me follow him, though urging the animal I rode with voice and