

aid. But his blue lips and drawn and pallid features betrayed him exhausted. The Minister, noting this, pointed to a chair.

"Sit down," he said, "and rest before you speak! There is brandy in that flask that stands upon the bureau. . . . But something hot would be better for you—that is what you most need."

There was a sound upon the landing . . . a faint tap upon the door-panel.

"See who it is!" said the Chancellor.

As Breagh rose the door opened, wide enough to admit a little tray bearing two steaming coffee-cups.

"Capital!" said His Excellency, addressing the unseen cup-bearer. "Now, that I call an excellent thought!"

He took a cup from the tray Breagh offered, bidding him:

"Sit down and drink the other. I should have got none except for you!" When the steaming cup was empty: "Proceed," he said, ignoring the gray daylight outlining the curtain-poles and filtering between the drawn curtains:

"At what hour did you get to Maisons Laffitte? For I presume you did get there?"

P. C. Breagh said:

"I got there at about two o'clock. . . . I had an appointment at the Cathedral, otherwise I should have started before."

"I hope she was pretty!" said the Minister, smiling.

P. C. Breagh went on as though he had not heard:

"The snow was beginning to freeze. It was not such bad walking, but that hill of St. Germain was a winder, and in the Forest I lost my way. . . . If a party of men—peasants in sheepskin caps and jackets—forest-keepers possibly—had not turned out of an avenue and kept marching ahead I might never have got as far as the Seine road. . . ."