

He turned, and he seemed to grope for the door, though daylight came strongly in through the terrace windows. "I assure you, I am very unwell . . . I must defer. . . ."

M. de Grandemaison clapped a heavy and angry hand on the Comte's shoulder. "Why do you—ah—grin so insultingly, varlet? What do you mean?"

M. le Comte was not intentionally grinning; he was grimacing, but he could not help that; it was as though he wished to smile, but grinned instead. Yet he wished neither to grin nor smile; ah, this was going to be one of his worst attacks, he knew—a very terrible and dangerous attack indeed. For a rapid and continuous shiver had begun, and he felt a freezing sweat upon his skin, all over. Grey with pallor, and shivering with cold, he stumbled towards the door. "You had better . . . let me get away, I . . . shall be very ill."

But M. de Grandemaison now stood between him and the door. "Not till you have told us why?"

Then M. le Comte in desperation spoke; he would have done anything at that moment to get free, to escape into hiding. "Because she—goes—to the Maison at night—I saw her—with—the Abbé!"

With nothing less than a roar, a roar of hurt pride and affection, the cry of that abrupt and terrible fury of his, M. de Grandemaison seized him. And then came the sudden and awful convulsion, then came the shrill involuntary scream. It was no scream for help; the Comte was past all calling for help; it was the symptomatic shriek of his access, the attack in its fellest form and strictest rigour was upon him. His eyes were now white globes, almost wholly visible, and purple lines were marking his chalky face like brandings. He had reeled against M. de Grandemaison unconsciously; he did not even know that M. de Grandemaison had taken him by the throat and was gripping, gripping. Furious with that abrupt and uncontrollable rage of his, that sudden and breathless anger which at times swept down upon him, M. de Grandemaison was gripping and dragging. "Our daughter! *Our* daughter?" . . . Liar! Devil!

But M. le Comte did not hear; M. le Comte did not