

know a red-coat when I see one," said he. "These were quite unlicensed hawks, with the hawk's call for signal too."

"Are you sure?" cried the Baron, standing up, and still with an unbelieving tone.

"My dear M. le Baron, I killed one of the birds to look at the feathers. That is the confounded thing too! So unceremonious a manner of introducing myself to a country where I desire me above all to be circumspect; is it not so?"

As he spoke he revealed the agitation that his flippant words had tried to cloak—by a scarcely perceptible tremor of the hand that drummed the table, a harder note in his voice, and the biting of his moustache. He saw that Doom guessed his perturbation, and he compelled himself to a careless laugh, got lazily to his feet, twisted his moustache points, drew forth his rapier with a flourish, and somewhat theatrically saluted and lunged in space as if the action gave his tension ease.

The Baron for a moment forgot the importance of what he had been told as he watched the graceful beauty of the movement, that revealed not only some eccentricity but personal vanity of a harmless kind and wholesome tastes and talents.

"Still I'm a little in the dark," he said when the point dropped and Count Victor recovered.

"Pardon," said his guest. "I am vexed at what you may perhaps look on as a trifle. The ruffians attacked me a mile or two farther up the coast, shot my horse below me, and chased me to the very edge of your moat. I made a feint to shoot one with my pistol, and came closer on the gold than I had intended."

"The Macfarlanes!" cried Doom, with every sign of uneasiness. "It's a pity, it's a pity; not that a man more or less of that crew makes any difference, but the affair might call for more attention to this place and your presence here than might be altogether wholesome for you or me."