

"*Mon Dieu!*" sighed Bidelot heavily — and suddenly raised his head at a timid knocking upon the door. Here was another of them then, no doubt! He had been wrong to let his servant take the afternoon, and leave his apartment so unguarded that his door was at their mercy! "Well, come!" he called out, querulously — but the next instant he had risen, and was smiling, as he extended his hand. It was Father Anton. "Ah, Father Anton!" he cried. "This is a pleasure! This is a pleasure indeed! I do not often see you these days! As a matter of fact — let me see — not since Monsieur Bliss went away to America, and the evenings at his house were at an end."

"That is so," agreed Father Anton. "But then, I have been very busy; and besides, for a little while, I was in Bernay-sur-Mer."

"*Tiens!* So! But, tell me, what is the news from Monsieur Bliss? When will he return?"

"I do not know," Father Anton replied. "He has said nothing about it in his letters; but I have a letter to write him to-day, that may perhaps bring him back at once."

"Then write it, my dear Father Anton — write it, by all means!" Bidelot burst out with a vehemence that, if exaggerated, was at least sincere, as he waved his hand helplessly toward the desk. "I am in despair! I have been on the point of writing Monsieur Bliss myself."

Father Anton's eyes followed the direction of the gesture, and fixed interrogatively on the desk.

"The competitive designs," explained Bidelot. "None are worthy! It is tragic!"

But now Father Anton smiled, and shook his head, and laid his hand on Bidelot's arm.