



THE VIATICUM.

(Continued.)

The priest and his guide walked quickly, scattering the snow to the right and left with their staffs. Anthony's lantern cast a ray of light before them and elongated their shadows in the rear into fantastic proportions. The priest prayed as he walked, but Anthony's thoughts were busy with the cattle in his stable, the wheat stored so abundantly in his barn, and a little also, it must be confessed, with his housekeeper.

At first, neither felt the fatigue but walked briskly along, their eyes fixed on the luminous orb traced by the lantern on the snow. Soon, however, little by little, the perspiration broke out on their brow. They slackened their pace, their breathing grew less regular. Anthony no longer held the lantern with a steady hand while the Curé occasionally interrupted his prayer.

Though it was nearly two hours since they had started they were still at some distance from the forest. They continued their route with difficulty; now and then exchanging a few brief words to encourage each other.

"Ah Father!" said Anthony in a tone of regret—"if I had not forgotten my flask!"

"My poor friend, you make me remember, I did not bring mine either! What carelessness!"

"Oh, never mind," replied Anthony resignedly, "we will drink with more zest when we reach Aygues. It must be nearly three o'clock now and see the wind is rising. Let us hurry, Father. I am afraid we are going to have a storm."

As if to verify his words, a strong wind rose, a typical western wind which soon developed into a perfect hurri-