

nounced Gaubertin to all who heard him: "for my own part, I would not buy the place, I know. The peasants are too troublesome. Even in Mlle. Laguerre's time I used to have trouble with them, though the Lord knows that she allowed them latitude enough."

The month of May was drawing to a close, and there was nothing indicated that the General meant to sell the Aigues. He was hesitating. One night about ten o'clock he was returning from the forest by one of the six avenues which led to the hunting-lodge; he was so near home that he had dismissed the keeper who went with him. At a turn in the avenue a man armed with a rifle came out from a bush.

"General," he said, "this is the third time that I have had you close to the muzzle of my gun, and this makes the third time that I have given you your life."

"And why should you want to kill me, Bonnébault?" said the Count, without a sign of flinching.

"Faith! if I did not, it would be somebody else; and, you see, I myself have a liking for those who served under the Emperor, and I cannot make up my mind to shoot you like a partridge. Don't ask me about it; I don't mean to say anything.—But you have enemies who are more cunning and stronger than you are, and they will crush you at last. I am to have three thousand francs if I kill you, and I shall marry Marie Tonsard. Well, give me a few acres of waste and a cabin; I will go on saying, as I have said before, that I have not found an opportunity. You shall have time to sell your place and go away, but be quick. I am a good fellow still, scapegrace though I am; somebody else might do you a mischief."

"And if I give you your demands," said the General, "will you tell me who it was that promised you the three thousand crowns?"

"I do not know; some one is pushing me on to do this, but I am too fond of that person to mention names. . . . And if I did, and if you knew that it was Marie Tonsard, you