

Delighted to have rid himself of this man, Dominique sprang up the stairs leading to the apartment of the marquis. It consisted of two rooms, in the first of which Comtois slept, the marquis occupying the other. The latter was locked.

Besides the valet, the marquis had a tutor, a venerable man, the Abbé Verbois, whom the Duke of Jumiège had placed over his son. Dominique, fearful he might then be in the apartment, first assured himself, ere he ventured to open the door.

On entering the room, Dominique cast a look around, and he was not long in discovering the desired box. He took a table, and placing a chair upon it, mounted, when suddenly he heard footsteps and voices in the adjoining room.

There was only one thing to be done, and that was to climb to the top of the wardrobe, which he did, and concealed himself close to the wall.

At this moment the door opened, and the Abbé Verbois and the marquis entered.

"How is this, my pupil, that notwithstanding the reports current in the college relative to thieving, you leave your key in the door?" said the abbé.

"I know not how it is," replied the marquis; "but who is there who would rob me? With the exception of Comtois and my friend Dominique, nobody is aware of my having money."

"How comes it this chair is placed on the table?" asked the abbé looking at the scaffolding erected by Cartouche.

"I have no doubt it is Comtois's doing, when he dusted the top of the wardrobe," replied the marquis, placing the chair on the ground, and pushing aside the table.

It happened to be that time of the day when the son of the Duke of Jumiège received an hour's religious instruction from the abbé. The lesson finished, the abbé and his pupil prepared to leave the room, and Cartouche was already rejoicing at the idea of regaining his liberty, when Comtois returned.

"Is little Cartouche here?" he asked, on entering.

"No," replied the marquis. "Why do you ask?"

"He cannot be found anywhere, and nobody knows what has become of him," rejoined Comtois.

"Good heavens!" cried the marquis, rushing out of the room.

"Are you going out?" asked the abbé of Comtois.

"No," replied the servant; "I have a headache, and will sit in this chair;" and he seated himself opposite the wardrobe.

"If you go out, lock the door," said the abbé, leaving the room.

A more disagreeable position than that of Dominique cannot be imagined. Every moment he felt ready to throw himself at the feet of Comtois, confess everything, and beg him not to betray him.

Night came, and the marquis returned to his room, and retired to rest. Cartouche did not deem it safe to venture from his hiding-place, fearing to awaken his friend. He therefore preferred waiting until the hour of study arrived, when that part of the college would be deserted.

On the morning following, Comtois continued too ill to leave his room. Cartouche thus saw all his hopes of liberty vanish. Towards the close of the day the cooper arrived, and in the presence of the little marquis, his tutor, and several of the professors of the college assembled at the foot of the wardrobe, the anxious father expressed all his fears touching the conduct of his son.

"God punishes me for my ambition," said the miserable father, "and for my weakness for this vagabond! Seeing him so pretty, so delicate, so witty, so ingenious, and so clever for his age, I said to my poor wife—'Truly he has more the look of a great lord than of a beggar. We must make a gentleman of him, and then he will do us honour.' Alas! in my paternal pride I forgot all the little peccadilloes of his childhood, or at least I excused them. Everybody in the neighbourhood cried out against him; my wife was inconsolable. Alas! as he grew older, he no longer stole trifles, but money and jewels! I whipped him each time, but he promised to reform, and I believed him!"

Notwithstanding this burst of grief from his father, Dominique, far from feeling any desire of repentance, cursed his parent, and