



Vautrin's Last Avatar

Honoré de Balzac

DODO



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VAUTRIN A DRAMA IN FIVE

ACTS

BY

HONORE DE BALZAC

Presented for the first time at the
Porte-Saint-Martin Theatre, Paris
March 14, 1840

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

It is difficult for the playwright to put himself, five days after the first presentation of his piece, in the situation in which he felt himself on the morning after the event; but it is still more difficult to write a preface to *Vautrin*, to which every one has written his own. The single utterance of the author will infallibly prove inferior to so vast a number of divergent expressions. The report of a cannon is never so effective as a display of fireworks.

Must the author explain his work? Its only possible commentator is M. Frederick Lemaître.

Must he complain of the injunction which delayed the presentation of his play? That would be to betray ignorance of his time and country. Petty tyranny is the besetting sin of constitutional governments; it is thus they are disloyal to themselves, and on the other hand, who are so cruel as the weak? The present government is a spoilt child, and does what it likes, excepting that it fails to

secure the public weal or the public vote.

Must he proceed to prove that *Vautrin* is as innocent a work as a drama of Berquin's? To inquire into the morality or immorality of the stage would imply servile submission to the stupid Prudhommes who bring the matter in question.

Shall he attack the newspapers? He could do no more than declare that they have verified by their conduct all he ever said about them.

Yet in the midst of the disaster which the energy of government has caused, but which the slightest sagacity in the world might have prevented, the author has found some compensation in the testimony of public sympathy which has been given him. M. Victor Hugo, among others, has shown himself as steadfast in friendship as he is pre-eminent in poetry; and the present writer has the greater happiness in publishing the good will of M. Hugo, inasmuch as the enemies of that distinguished man have no hesitation in blackening his character.

Let me conclude by saying that *Vautrin* is two months old, and in the rush of Parisian life a novelty of two months has survived a couple of centuries. The real preface to *Vautrin* will be found in the play, *Richard-Coeur-d'Eponge*, [*] which the administration permits to be acted in order to save the prolific stage of Porte-Saint-Martin from being overrun by children.

[*] A play never enacted or printed.

PARIS, May 1, 1840.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

Jacques Collin, known as Vautrin
The Duc de Montsorel
The Marquis Albert de Montsorel, son to Montsorel
Raoul de Frascas
Charles Blondet, known as the Chevalier de Saint-Charles
Francois Cadet, known as the Philosopher
Fil-de-Soie
Buteux
Philippe Boulard, known as Lafouraille
A Police Officer
Joseph Bonnet, footman to the Duchesse de Montsorel
The Duchesse de Montsorel (Louise de Vaudrey)
Mademoiselle de Vaudrey, aunt to the Duchesse de Montsorel
The Duchesse de Christoval
Inez de Christoval, Princesse D'Arjos
Felicite, maid to the Duchesse de Montsorel
Servants, Gendarmes, Detectives, and others

SCENE: Paris

TIME: 1816, after the second return of the Bourbons.

VAUTRIN

ACT I.

SCENE FIRST. (A room in the house of the Duc de Montsorel.) The Duchesse de Montsorel and Mademoiselle de Vaudrey.

The Duchess

Ah! So you have been waiting for me! How very good of you!

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey

What is the matter, Louise? This is the first time in the twelve years of our mutual mourning, that I have seen you cheerful. Knowing you as I do, it makes me alarmed.

The Duchess I cannot help showing my unhappiness, and you, who have shared all my sorrows, alone can understand my rapture at the faintest gleam of hope.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey

Have you come upon any traces of your lost son?

The Duchess

He is found!

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey

Impossible! When you find out your error it will add to your anguish.

The Duchess A child who is dead has but a tomb in the heart of his mother; but the child who has been stolen, is still living in that heart, dear aunt.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey

Suppose you were overheard!

The Duchess I should not care. I am setting out on a new life, and I feel strong enough to resist even the tyranny of De Montsorel.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey After twenty-two years of mourning, what possible occurrence can give you ground for hope?

The Duchess I have much more than hope! After the king's reception, I went to the Spanish ambassador's, where I was introduced to Madame de Christoval. There I saw a young man who resembled me, and had my voice. Do you see what I mean? If I came home late it was because I remained spellbound in the room, and could not leave until he had gone.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey

Yet what slight warrant you had for your elation!

The Duchess Is not a revelation such as that more than sufficient warrant for the rapture of a mother's heart? At the sight of that young stranger a flame seemed to dart before my yes; his glance gave me new life; I felt happy once more. If he were not my son, my feelings would be quite unaccountable.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey

You must have betrayed yourself!

The Duchess Yes, perhaps I did! People doubtless noticed us; but I was carried away by an uncontrollable impulse; I saw no one but him, I wished to hear him talk, and he talked with me, and told me his age. He is twenty-three, the same age as Fernand!

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey

And was the duke present?

The Duchess Could I give a thought to my husband? I listened only to this young man, who was talking with Inez. I believe they are in love with each other.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey Inez, who is engaged to your son, the marquis? And do you think the warm reception given by her to his son's rival could escape the duke's notice?

The Duchess Of course not, and I quite see the dangers to which Fernand is exposed. But I must not detain you longer; I could talk to you about him till morning. You shall see him. I have told him to come at the hour the duke goes to the king's, and then we will question him about his childhood.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey For goodness' sake, calm yourself; you will never be able to sleep this night. And send Felicite to bed, she is not accustomed to these late hours. (She rings the bell.)

Felicite (entering the room)

His grace the duke has come in with his lordship the marquis.

The Duchess I have already told you, Felicite, never to inform me of his grace's movements. (Exit Felicite.)

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey I should hate to rob you of an illusion which causes you such happiness; but when I see the height of expectation to which you have soared, I fear a terrible fall for you. The soul, like the body, is bruised by a fall from an excessive height, and you must excuse my saying that I tremble for you.

The Duchess While you fear the effect of despair for me, I fear that of overwhelming joy.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey (watching the duchess go out)
If she should be deceived, she might lose her senses.

The Duchess (re-entering the room)
Fernand, dear aunt, calls himself Raoul de Frescas. (Exit.)

SCENE SECOND.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey (alone) She does not see that the recovery of her son would be a miracle. All mothers believe in miracles. We must keep watch over her. A look, a word might ruin her, for if she is right, if God restores her son to her, she is on the brink of a catastrophe more frightful even than the deception she had been practicing. Does she think she can dissemble under the eyes of women?

SCENE THIRD. Mademoiselle de Vaudrey and Felicite.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey
Already here?

Felicite
Her grace the duchess dismissed me early.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey
Has my niece given you no orders for the morning?

Felicite
None, madame.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey A young man, named Monsieur Raoul de Frescas, is coming to call upon me towards noon; he may possibly ask for the duchess,

but you must instruct Joseph to bring him to my apartment. (Exit.)

SCENE FOURTH.

Felicite (alone) A young man for her? Not a bit of it. I always said that there was some motive in my lady's retired way of living; she is rich, she is handsome, yet the duke does not love her; and now the first time she goes out, a young man comes next day to see her, and her aunt wishes to receive him. They keep me in the dark; I am neither trusted nor tipped. If this is the way chambermaids are to be treated under the new government, I don't know what will become of us. (A side door opens, two men are seen, and the door is immediately closed again.) At any rate we shall have a look at the young man. (Exit.)

SCENE FIFTH. Joseph and Vautrin. (Vautrin wears a tan-colored overcoat, trimmed with fur, over the black evening dress of a foreign diplomatic minister.)

Joseph That blasted girl! We would have been down in our luck if she had seen us.

Vautrin You mean *you* would have been down in your luck; you take pretty good care not to be caught again, don't you? I suppose then that you enjoy peace of mind in this house?

Joseph
That I do, for honesty I find to be the best policy.

Vautrin
And do you quite approve of honesty?

Joseph

Oh, yes, so long as the place and the wages suit me.

Vautrin I see you are doing well, my boy. You take little and often, you save, you even have the honesty to lend a trifle at interest. That's all right, but you cannot imagine what pleasure it gives me to see one of my old acquaintances filling an honorable position. You have succeeded in doing so; your faults are but negative and therefore half virtues. I myself once had vices; I regret them as things of the past; I have nothing but dangers and struggles to interest me. Mine is the life of an Indian hemmed in by my enemies, and I am fighting in defence of my own scalp.

Joseph

And what of mine?

Vautrin

Yours? Ah! you are right to ask that. Well, whatever happens to me, you have the word of Jacques Collin that he will never compromise you. But you must obey me in everything!

Joseph

In everything? But—

Vautrin There are no buts with me. If there is any dark business to be done I have my "trusties" and old allies. Have you been long in this place?

Joseph

The duchess took me for her footman when she went with the court to Ghent, last year and I am trusted by both the ladies of the house.

Vautrin

That's the ticket! I need a few points with regard to these Montegrals. What do you know about them?

monitors. What do you know about them?

Joseph
Nothing.

Vautrin (aside) He is getting a little too honest. Does he think he knows nothing about them? Well, you cannot talk for five minutes with a man without drawing something out of him. (Aloud) Whose room is this?

Joseph The salon of her grace the duchess, and these are her apartments; those of the duke are on the floor above. The suite of the marquis, their only son, is below, and looks on the court.

Vautrin I asked you for impressions of all the keys of the duke's study. Where are they?

Joseph (hesitatingly)
Here they are.

Vautrin Every time I purpose coming here you will find a cross in chalk on the garden gate; every night you must examine the place. Virtue reigns here, and the hinges of that gate are very rusty; but a Louis XVIII can never be a Louis XV! Good-bye—I'll come back to-morrow night. (Aside) I must rejoin my people at the Christoval house.

Joseph (aside) Since this devil of a fellow has found me out, I have been on tenter-hooks—

Vautrin (coming back from the door)
The duke then does not live with his wife?

Joseph
They quarreled twenty years ago.

Vautrin

What about?

Joseph

Not even their own son can say.

Vautrin

And why was your predecessor dismissed?

Joseph I cannot say. I was not acquainted with him. They did not set up an establishment here until after the king's second return.

Vautrin (aside) Such are the advantages of the new social order; masters and servants are bound together by no ties; they feel no mutual attachment, exchange no secrets, and so give no ground for betrayal. (To Joseph) Any spicy stories at meal-times?

Joseph

Never before the servants.

Vautrin

What is thought of them in the servants' hall?

Joseph

The duchess is considered a saint.

Vautrin

Poor woman! And the duke?

Joseph

He is an egotist.

Vautrin Yes, a statesman. (Aside) The duke must have secrets, and we must

look into that. Every great aristocrat has some paltry passion by which he can be led; and if I once get control of him, his son, necessarily— (To Joseph)
What is said about the marriage of the Marquis de Montsorel and Inez de Christoval?

Joseph I haven't heard a word. The duchess seems to take very little interest in it.

Vautrin

And she has only one son! That seems hardly natural.

Joseph

Between ourselves, I believe she doesn't love her son.

Vautrin I am obliged to draw this word from your throat, as if it were the cork in a bottle of Bordeaux. There is, I perceive, some mystery in this house. Here is a mother, a Duchesse de Montsorel, who does not love her son, her only son! Who is her confessor?

Joseph

She keeps her religious observances a profound secret.

Vautrin Good—I shall soon know everything. Secrets are like young girls, the more you conceal them, the sooner they are discovered. I will send two of my rascals to the Church of St. Thomas Aquinas. They won't work out their salvation in that way, but they'll work out something else.— Good-bye.

SCENE SIXTH.

Joseph (alone) He is an old friend—and that is the worst nuisance in the world. He will make me lose my place. Ah, if I were not afraid of being poisoned like a dog by Jacques Collin, who is quite capable of the act, I

would tell all to the duke; but in this vile world, every man for himself, and I am not going to pay another man's debt. Let the duke settle with Jacques; I am going to bed. What noise is that? The duchess is getting up. What does she want? I must listen. (He goes out, leaving the door slightly ajar.)

SCENE SEVENTH.

The Duchesse de Montsorel (alone) Where can I hide the certificate of my son's birth? (She reads) "Valencia. . . . July, 1793." An unlucky town for me! Fernand was actually born seven months after my marriage, by one of those fatalities that give ground for shameful accusations! I shall ask my aunt to carry the certificate in her pocket, until I can deposit it in some place of safety. The duke would ransack my rooms for it, and the whole police are at his service. Government refuses nothing to a man high in favor. If Joseph saw me going to Mademoiselle de Vaudrey's apartments at this hour, the whole house would hear of it. Ah—I am alone in the world, alone with all against me, a prisoner in my own house!

SCENE EIGHTH. The Duchesse de Montsorel and Mademoiselle de Vaudrey.

The Duchess

I see that you find it is impossible to sleep as I do.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey Louise, my child, I only rose to rid you of a dream, the awakening from which will be deplorable. I consider it my duty to distract you from your insane fancies. The more I think of what you told me the more is my sympathy aroused. But I am compelled to tell you the truth, cruel as it is; beyond doubt the duke has placed Fernand in some compromising situation, so as to make it impossible for him to retrieve his position in the world to

which you belong. The young man you saw cannot be your son.

The Duchess Ah, you never knew Fernand! But I knew him, and in whatever place he is, his life has an influence on mine. I have seen him a thousand times

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey

In your dreams!

The Duchess Fernand has the blood of the Montsorels and the Vaudreys in his veins. The place to which he was born he is able to take; everything gives way before him wherever he appears. If he became a soldier, he is to-day a colonel. My son is proud, he is handsome, people like him! I am sure he is beloved. Do not contradict me, dear aunt; Fernand still lives; if not, then the duke has broken faith, and I know he values too highly the virtues of his race to disgrace them.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey But are not honor and a husband's vengeance dearer to him than his faith as a gentleman?

The Duchess

Ah! You make me shudder.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey

You know very well, Louise, that pride of race is hereditary with the Montsorels, as it is with the Montemarts.

The Duchess I know it too well! The doubt cast upon his child's legitimacy has almost crazed him.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey You are wrong there. The duke has a warm heart, and a cool head; in all matters that concern the sentiments on which they live, men of that temper act promptly in carrying out their ideas.

The Duchess But, dear aunt, do you know at what price he has granted me the life of Fernand? Haven't I paid dearly for the assurance that his days were not to be shortened? If I had persisted in maintaining my innocence I should have brought certain death upon him; I have sacrificed my good name to save my son. Any mother would have done as much. You were taking care of my property here; I was alone in a foreign land, and was the prey of ill-health, fever, and with none to counsel me, and I lost my head; for since that time it has constantly occurred to me that the duke would never have carried out his threats. In making the sacrifice I did, I knew that Fernand would be poor and destitute, without a name, and dwelling in an unknown land; but I knew also that his life would be safe, and that some day I should recover him, even if I had to search the whole world over! I felt so cheerful as I came in that I forgot to give you the certificate of Fernand's birth, which the Spanish ambassador's wife has at last obtained for me; carry it about with you until you can place it in the hands of your confessor.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey The duke must certainly have learnt the measures you have taken in this matter, and woe be to your son! Since his return he has been very busy, and is still busy about something.

The Duchess If I shake off the disgrace with which he has tried to cover me, if I give up shedding tears in silence, be assured that nothing can bend me from my purpose. I am no longer in Spain or England, at the mercy of a diplomat crafty as a tiger, who during the whole time of our emigration was reading the thoughts of my heart's inmost recesses, and with invisible spies surrounding my life as by a network of steel; turning my secrets into jailers, and keeping me prisoner in the most horrible of prisons, an open house! I am in France, I have found you once more, I hold my place at court, I can speak my mind there; I shall learn what has become of the Vicomte de Langeac, I should prove that since the Tenth of August[*] we have never met, I shall inform the king of the crime committed by a father against a son who is the heir of two noble houses

THE DUKE continued eye and hand against a son who is the heir of the noble houses.
I am a woman, I am Duchesse de Montsorel, I am a mother! We are rich, we have a virtuous priest for an adviser; right is on our side, and if I have demanded the certificate of my son's birth—

[*] A noteworthy date in French history, August 10, 1792; the day of the storming of the Tuileries.—J. W. M.

SCENE NINTH. The same persons, and the Duc de Montsorel (who enters as the duchess pronounces the last sentence).

The Duke

It is only for the purpose of handing it to me.

The Duchess Since when have you ventured to enter my apartment without previously sending me word and asking my leave?

The Duke Since you broke the agreement we made. You swore to take no steps to find this—your son. This was the sole condition on which I promised to let him live.

The Duchess And is it not much more honorable to violate such an oath, than to remain faithful to all others?

The Duke

We are henceforth both of us released from our engagements.

The Duchess

Have you, up to the present day, respected yours?

The Duke

I have, madame.

The Duchess

Listen to him, aunt, and bear witness to this declaration.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey But has it never occurred to you, my dear sir, that Louise is innocent?

The Duke Of course you think so, Mademoiselle de Vaudrey. And what would not I give to share your opinion! The duchess has had twenty years in which to prove to me her innocence.

The Duchess For twenty years you have wrung my heart without pity and without intermission.

The Duke Madame, unless you hand me this certificate, your Fernand will have serious cause for alarm. As soon as you returned to France you secured the document, and are trying to employ it as a weapon against me. You desire to obtain for your son a fortune and a name which do not belong to him; to secure his admission into a family, whose race has up to my time been kept pure by wives of stainless reputation, a family which has never formed a single mesalliance—

The Duchess

And which will be worthily represented by your son Albert.

The Duke Be careful what you say, for you waken in me terrible memories. And your last word shows me that you will not shrink from causing a scandal that will overwhelm all of us with shame. Shall we air in public courts past occurrences which will show that I am not free from reproach, while you are infamous? (He turns to Mademoiselle de Vaudrey) She cannot have told you everything, dear aunt? She was in love with Viscount Langeac; I knew it, and respected her love; I was so young! The viscount came to me; being without hope of inheriting a fortune, and the last representative of his house, he

unselfishly offered to give up Louise de Vaudrey. I trusted in their mutual generosity, and accepted her as a pure woman from his hands. Ah! I would have given my life for her, and I have proved it! The wretched man performed prodigies of valor on the Tenth of August, and called down upon himself the rage of the mob; I put him under the protection of some of my people; he was, however, discovered and taken to the Abbaye. As soon as I learned his predicament, I gave into the hands of a certain Boulard all the money I had collected for our flight! I induced Boulard to join the Septembrists in order to save the viscount from death; I procured his escape! (To the duchess) He paid me back well, did he not? I was young, madly in love, impetuous, yet I never crushed the boy! You have to-day made me the same requital for my pity, as your lover made for my trust in him. Well—things remain just as they were twenty years ago excepting that the time for pity is past. And I will repeat what I said to you then: Forget your son, and he shall live.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey

And shall her sufferings during those twenty years count for nothing?

The Duke

A great crime calls for a great atonement.

The Duchess Ah—if you take my grief for a sign of remorse, I will again protest to you, I am innocent! No! Langeac never betrayed your confidence; it was not for his king alone he went to his death, and from the fatal day on which he bade me farewell and surrendered me to you, I have never seen him again.

The Duke You purchased the life of your son by making an exactly contrary declaration.

The Duchess

Can a compact dictated by terror be looked upon as an avowal of guilt?

The Duke

Do you intend to give that certificate of birth?

The Duchess

It is no longer in my possession.

The Duke

I will no longer answer then for your son's safety.

The Duchess

Have you weighed well the consequences of this threat?

The Duke

You ought to know me by this time.

The Duchess The trouble is that you do not know me. You will no longer answer for my son's safety? Indeed—but you had better look after your own son. Albert is a guarantee for the life of Fernand. If you keep watch on my proceedings, I shall set a watch on yours; if you rely upon the police of the realm, I have resources of my own, and the assistance of God. If you deal a blow at Fernand, beware of what may happen to Albert. A blow for a blow!—That is final.

The Duke You are in our own house, madame. I forgot myself. Pray pardon me. I was wrong.

The Duchess You are more a gentleman than your son; when he flies into a rage he begs no one's pardon, not he!

The Duke (aside) Has her resignation up to this time been nothing but a pretence? Has she been waiting for the present opportunity to speak? Women who are guided by the advice of bigots travel underground, like volcanic fires, and only reveal themselves when they break out. She knows my secret. I have

and only reveal themselves when they break out. She knows my secret, I have lost sight of her son, and my defeat is imminent. (Exit.)

SCENE TENTH. Mademoiselle de Vaudrey and the Duchess.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey

Louise, you love the child you have never seen, and hate him who is before your eyes. Ah! you must tell the reason of your hatred for Albert, if you would retain my esteem and my affection.

The Duchess

Not a word on that subject.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey The calm way in which your husband remarks your aversion for your son is astonishing.

The Duchess

He is accustomed to it.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey

Yet you could never show yourself a bad mother, could you?

The Duchess A bad mother? No. (She reflects.) I cannot make up my mind to forfeit your affection. (She draws her aunt to her side.) Albert is not my son.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey Can a stranger have usurped the place, the name, the title, the property of the real child?

The Duchess No, not a stranger, but his son. After the fatal night on which Fernand was carried off from me, an eternal separation between the duke and myself took place. The wife in me was as cruelly outraged as the mother. But still I purchased from him peace of mind.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey
I do not understand your meaning.

The Duchess I allowed the duke to present this Albert, child of a Spanish courtesan, as if he were mine. The duke desired an heir. Amid the confusion wrought in Spain by the French Revolution the trick escaped notice. Are you surprised that my blood boils at the sight of this strange woman's child occupying the place of the lawful heir?

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey Now I can deeply sympathize with your hopes; ah! how glad I should be if you were right in your suspicions and this young man were indeed your son. But what is the matter with you?

The Duchess He is, I fear, ruined; for I have brought him under the notice of his father, who will— But stay, something must be done! I must find out where he lives, and warn him not to come here to-morrow morning.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey
Leave the house at this hour! Louise, you are mad!

The Duchess
Come, we must save him at any price.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey
What do you propose doing?

The Duchess Neither of us can leave the house to-morrow without being noticed. We must forestall the duke by bribing my chambermaid.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey
Louise, would you resort to such means as this?

The Duchess If Raoul is the son disclaimed by his father, the child over whom

I have mourned for the last twenty years, I must show them what a wife, a mother, who has been wrongly accused, can do!

Curtain to the First Act.

ACT II.

SCENE FIRST. (Scene the same as in preceding act.) **The Duc de Montsorel and Joseph.**

The Duke Joseph, I am not at home excepting to one person. If he comes, you will show him up. I refer to Monsieur de Saint-Charles. Find out whether your mistress will see me. (Exit Joseph.) The awakening of a maternal instinct, which I thought had been utterly extinguished in her heart, amazes me beyond measure. The secret struggle in which she is engaged must at once be put a stop to. So long as Louise was resigned our life was not intolerable; but disputes like this would render it extremely disagreeable. I was able to control my wife so long as we were abroad, but in this country my only power over her lies in skillful handling, and a display of authority. I shall tell everything to the king. I shall submit myself to his dictation, and Madame de Montsorel must be compelled to submit. I must however bide my time. The detective, whom I am to employ, if he is clever, will soon find out the cause of this revolt; I shall see whether the duchess is merely deceived by a resemblance, or whether she has seen her son. For myself I must confess to having lost sight of him since my agents reported his disappearance twelve years ago. I was very much excited last night. I must be more discreet. If I keep quiet she will be put off her guard and reveal her secrets.

Joseph (re-entering the room)

Her grace the duchess has not yet rung for her maid.

The Duke

Very well.

SCENE SECOND. The preceding and Felicite. (To explain his presence in his wife's room, the duke looks over articles lying on the table, and discovers a letter in a book.)

The Duke (reading) "To Mademoiselle Inez de Christoval." (aside) Why should my wife have concealed a letter of such slight importance? She no doubt wrote it after our quarrel. Is it concerning Raoul? This letter must not go to the Christoval house.

Felicite (looking for the letter in the book)

Now, where is that letter of madame's? Can she have forgotten it?

The Duke

Aren't you looking for a letter?

Felicite

Yes, your grace.

The Duke

Isn't this it?

Felicite

The very one, your grace.

The Duke It is astonishing that you should leave the very hour your mistress must need your services: she is getting up.

...and your services, she is getting up.

Felicite Her grace the duchess has Therese; and besides I am going out by her orders.

The Duke

Very good. I did not wish to interfere with you.

SCENE THIRD. The preceding, and Blondet, alias the Chevalier de Saint-Charles. (Joseph and Saint-Charles walk together from the centre door, and eye each other attentively.)

Joseph (aside)

The look of that man is very distasteful to me. (To the duke) The Chevalier de Saint-Charles.

(The duke signs to Saint-Charles to approach, and examines his appearance.)

Saint-Charles (giving him a letter, aside)

Does he know my antecedents, or will he simply recognize me as Saint-Charles?

The Duke

My dear sir—

Saint-Charles

I am to be merely Saint-Charles.

The Duke You are recommended to me as a man whose ability, if it had fair scope, would be called genius.

Saint-Charles If his grace the duke will give me an opportunity, I will prove myself worthy of that flattering opinion.

The Duke
You shall have one at once.

Saint-Charles
What are your commands?

The Duke You see that maid. She is going to leave the house. I do not wish to hinder her doing so; yet she must not cross the threshold, until she receives a fresh order. (Calls her) Felicite!

Felicite
What is it, your grace?

(The Duke gives her the letter. Exit Felicite.)

Saint-Charles (to Joseph) I recognize you, I know all about you: See that this maid remains in the house with the letter, and I will not recognize you, and will know nothing of you, and will let you stay here so long as you behave yourself.

Joseph (aside) This fellow on one side, and Jacques Collin on the other! Well; I must try to serve them both honestly.

(Exit Joseph in pursuit of Felicite.)

SCENE FOURTH. The Duke and Saint-Charles.

Saint-Charles Your grace's commands are obeyed. Do you wish to know the contents of the letter?

The Duke Why, my dear sir, the power you seem to exercise is something

terrible and wonderful.

Saint-Charles

You gave me absolute authority in the matter, and I used it well.

The Duke

And what if you had abused it?

Saint-Charles

That would have been impossible, for such a course would ruin me.

The Duke How is it that men endowed with such faculties are found employing them in so lowly a sphere?

Saint-Charles Everything is against our rising above it; we protect our protectors, we learn too many honorable secrets, and are kept in ignorance of too many shameful ones to be liked by people, and render such important services to others that they can only shake off the obligation by speaking ill of us. People think that things are only words with us; refinement is thus mere silliness, honor a sham, and acts of treachery mere diplomacy. We are the confidants of many who yet leave us much to guess at. Our programme consists in thinking and acting, finding out the past from the present, ordering and arranging the future in the pettiest details, as I am about to—and, in short, in doing a hundred things that might strike dismay to a man of no mean ability. When once our end is gained, words become things once more, and people begin to suspect that possibly we are infamous scoundrels.

The Duke There may be some justice in all this, but I do not suppose you expect to change the opinion of the world, or even mine?

Saint-Charles I should be a great fool if I did. I don't care about changing another man's opinion; what I do want to change is my own position.

The Duke

According to you that would be very easy, wouldn't it?

Saint-Charles Why not, your grace? Let some one set me to play the spy over cabinets, instead of raking up the secrets of private families. Instead of dogging the footsteps of shady characters, let them put me in charge of the craftiest diplomats. Instead of pandering to the vilest passions, let me serve the government. I should be delighted to play a modest part in a great movement. And what a devoted servant your grace would have in me!

The Duke I am really sorry to employ such talents as yours in so petty an affair, my friend, but it will give me an opportunity of testing, and then we'll see.

Saint-Charles (aside)

Ah—We shall see? That means, all has already been seen.

The Duke

I wish to see my son married—

Saint-Charles

To Mademoiselle Inez de Christoval, Princesse d'Arjos—a good match! Her father made the mistake of entering Joseph Bonaparte's service, and was banished by King Ferdinand. He probably took part in the Mexican revolution.

The Duke Madame de Christoval and her daughter have made the acquaintance of a certain adventurer, named—

Saint-Charles

Raoul de Frescas.

The Duke

Is there nothing I can tell you that you do not know?

Saint-Charles

If your grace desires it, I will know nothing.

The Duke On the contrary, I should like you to speak out, so that I may know what secrets you will permit us to keep.

Saint-Charles Let us make one stipulation; whenever my frankness displeases your grace, call me chevalier, and I will sink once more into my humble role of paid detective.

The Duke

Go on, my friend. (Aside) These people are very amusing.

Saint-Charles M. de Frescas will not be an adventurer so long as he lives in the style of a man who has an income of a hundred thousand francs.

The Duke

Whoever he is you must pierce through the mystery which surrounds him.

Saint-Charles Your grace requires a very difficult thing. We are obliged to use circumspection in dealing with foreigners. They are our masters; they have turned Paris upside down.

The Duke

That's the trouble!

Saint-Charles

Does your grace belong to the opposition?

The Duke I should like to have brought back the king without his following—that is my position.

Saint-Charles The departure of the king resulted from the disorganization of the magnificent Asiatic police created by Bonaparte. An effort is being made nowadays to form a police of respectable people, a procedure which disbands the old police. Hemmed in by the military police of the invasion, we dare not arrest any one, for fear we might lay hands on some prince on his way to keep an assignation, or some margrave who had dined too well. But for your grace a man will attempt the impossible. Has this young man any vices? Does he play?

The Duke

Yes, in a social way.

Saint-Charles

Does he cheat?

The Duke

Chevalier!

Saint-Charles

This young man must be very rich.

The Duke

Inquire for yourself.

Saint-Charles I ask pardon of your grace; but people without passions cannot know much. Would you have the goodness to tell me whether this young man is sincerely attached to Mademoiselle de Christoval?

The Duke

What! That princess! That heiress! You alarm me, my friend.

Saint-Charles Has not your grace told me that he is a young man? Now,

pretended love is more perfect than genuine love; that is the reason why so many women are deceived! Undoubtedly he has thrown over many mistresses, and heart-free, tongue-free, you know—

The Duke Take care! Your mission is peculiar, and you had best not meddle with the women; an indiscretion on your part may forfeit my good will, for all that relates to Monsieur Frescas must go no further than you and myself. I demand absolute secrecy, both from those you employ, and those who employ you. In fact, you will be a ruined man, if Madame de Montsorel has any suspicion of your designs.

Saint-Charles Is Madame de Montsorel then interested in this young man? I must keep an eye on her, for this girl is her chambermaid.

The Duke Chevalier de Saint-Charles, to order you to do this would be unworthy of me, and to ask for such an order is quite unworthy of you.

Saint-Charles Your grace and I perfectly understand each other. But what is to be the main object of my investigations?

The Duke You must find out whether Raoul de Frescas is the real name of this young man; find out where he was born, ransack his whole life, and consider all you learn about him a secret of state.

Saint-Charles

You must wait until to-morrow for this information, my lord.

The Duke

That is a short time.

Saint-Charles

But it involves a good deal of money.

The Duke Do not forget that I have a great deal of business to attend to.

The Duke Do not suppose that I wish to hear of evil things; it is the method of you people to pander to depraved passions. Instead of showing them up, you prefer to invent rather than to reveal occurrences. I should be delighted to learn that this young man has a family—

(The marquis enters, sees his father engaged, and turns to go out; the duke asks him to remain.)

SCENE FIFTH. The preceding and the Marquis de Montsorel.

The Duke (continuing) If Monsieur de Frescas is a gentleman, and the Princesse d'Arjos decidedly prefers him to my son, the marquis must withdraw his suit.

The Marquis

But, father, I am in love with Inez.

The Duke (to Saint-Charles)

You may go, sir.

Saint-Charles (aside) He takes no interest in the proposed marriage of his son. He is incapable of feeling jealous of his wife. There is something very serious in these circumstances; I am either a ruined man or my fortune is made. (Exit.)

SCENE SIXTH. The Duke and the Marquis.

The Duke To marry a woman who does not love you is a mistake which I shall never allow you to commit, Albert.

The Marquis But there is nothing that indicates that Inez will reject me; and, in any case once she is my wife, it will be my object to win her love, and I

believe, without vanity, that I shall succeed.

The Duke Allow me to tell you, my son, that your barrack-room ideas are quite out of place here.

The Marquis On any other subject your words would be law to me; but every era has a different art of love—I beg of you to hasten my marriage. Inez has all the pliability of an only daughter, and the readiness with which she accepts the advances of a mere adventurer ought to rouse your anxiety. Really, the coldness with which you receive me this morning amazes me. Putting aside my love for Inez, could I do better? I shall be, like you, a Spanish grandee, and, more than that, a prince. Would that annoy you, father?

The Duke (aside) The blood of his mother shows itself all the time! Oh! Louise has known well my tender spot! (Aloud) Recollect, sir, that there is no rank higher than the glorious title, Duc de Montsorel.

The Marquis
How have I offended you?

The Duke Enough! You forget that I arranged this marriage after my residence in Spain. You are moreover aware that Inez cannot be married without her father's consent. Mexico has recently declared its independence, and the occurrence of this revolution explains the delay of his answer.

The Marquis But, my dear father, your plans are in danger of being defeated. You surely did not see what happened yesterday at the Spanish ambassador's? My mother took particular notice there of this Raoul de Frescas, and Inez was immensely pleased with him. Do you know that I have long felt, and now at last admit to myself, that my mother hates me? And that I myself feel, what I would only say to you father, whom I love, that I have little love for her?

The Duke (aside) I am reaping all that I have sown; hate as well as love is instinctively divined. (To the marquis) My son, you should not judge, for you can never understand your mother. She has seen my blind affection for you, and she wishes to correct it by severity. Do not let me hear any more such remarks from you, and let us drop the subject! You are on duty at the palace to-day; repair thither at once: I will obtain leave for you this evening, when you can go to the ball and rejoin the Princesse d'Arjos.

The Marquis Before leaving, I should like to see my mother, and beg for her kind offices in my favor, with Inez, who calls upon her this morning.

The Duke Ask whether she is to be seen, for I am waiting for her myself. (Exit the marquis.) Everything overwhelms me at the same time; yesterday the ambassador inquired of me the place of my son's death; last night, my son's mother thought she had found him again; this morning the son of Juana Mendes harrows my feelings! The princess recognizes him instinctively. No law can be broken without a nemesis; nature is as pitiless as the world of men. Shall I be strong enough, even with the backing of the king, to overcome this complication of circumstances?

SCENE SEVENTH. The Duke, the Duchess and the Marquis.

The Duchess Excuses? Nonsense! Albert, I am only too happy to see you here; it is a pleasant surprise; you are come to kiss your mother before going to the palace—that is all. Ah! if ever a mother found it in her heart to doubt her son, this eager affection, which I have not been accustomed to, would dispel all such fear, and I thank you for it, Albert. At last we understand each other.

The Marquis I am glad to hear you say that, mother; if I have seemed lacking in my duty to you, it is not that I forget, but that I feared to annoy you.

The Duchess (seeing the duke) What! Your grace here also!—you really seem to share your son's cordiality,—my rising this morning is actually a fête.

The Duke

And you will find it so every day.

The Duchess (to the duke) Ah! I understand— (To the marquis) Good-bye! The king is strict about the punctuality of his red-coated guards, and I should be sorry to cause you to be reprimanded.

The Duke

Why do you send him off? Inez will soon be here.

The Duchess

I do not think so, I have just written to her.

SCENE EIGHTH. The same persons and Joseph.

Joseph (announcing a visitor)

Their graces the Duchesse de Christoval and the Princess d'Arjos.

The Duchess (aside)

How excessively awkward!

The Duke (to his son)

Do not go; leave all to me. They are trifling with us.

SCENE NINTH. The same persons, the Duchesse de Christoval and the Princesse d'Arjos.

The Duchesse de Montsoral Ah! madame, it is extremely kind of you thus to

The Duchesse de Montsorel All! madame, it is extremely kind of you thus to anticipate my visit to you.

The Duchesse de Christoval

I come in this way that there may be no formality between us.

The Duchesse de Montsorel (to Inez)

Have you read my letter?

Inez

One of your maids has just handed it to me.

The Duchesse de Montsorel (aside)

It is evident that Raoul is also coming.

The Duke (to the Duchesse de Christoval, whom he leads to a seat) I hope we see in this informal visit the beginning of a family intimacy?

The Duchesse de Christoval Pray do not exaggerate the importance of a civility, which I look upon as a pleasure.

The Marquis

You are seriously afraid, madame, I perceive, of encouraging my hopes? Did I not suffer sufficiently yesterday? The princess did not notice me, even by a look.

Inez I didn't expect the pleasure of meeting you again so soon, sir. I thought you were on duty; I am glad to have an opportunity of explaining that I never saw you till the moment I left the ball-room, and this lady (pointing to the Duchesse de Montsorel) must be the excuse of my inattention.

The Marquis You have two excuses, mademoiselle, and I thank you for mentioning only one—my mother.

The Duke His reproaches spring only from his modesty, mademoiselle. Albert is under the impression that Monsieur de Frescas can give him ground for anxiety! At his age passion is a fairy that makes trifles appear vast. But neither yourself nor your mother, mademoiselle, can attach any serious importance to the claims of a young man, whose title is problematical and who is so studiously silent about his family.

The Duchesse de Montsorel (to the Duchesse de Christoval)
And are you also ignorant of the place where he was born?

The Duchesse de Christoval
I am not intimate enough with him to ask for such information.

The Duke There are three of us here who would be well pleased to have it. You alone, ladies, would be discreet, for discretion is a virtue the possession of which profits only those who require it in others.

The Duchesse de Montsorel
As for me, I do not believe that curiosity is always blameless.

The Marquis
Is mine then ill-timed? And may I not inquire of madame whether the Frescas of Aragon are extinct or not?

The Duchesse de Christoval (to the duke) Both of us have known at Madrid the old commander, who was last of his line.

The Duke
He died, of course, without issue.

Inez
But there exists a branch of the family at Naples.

The Marquis

Surely you are aware, mademoiselle, that your cousins, the house of Medina-Coeli, have succeeded to it?

The Duchesse de Christoval

You are right; there are no De Frescas in existence.

The Duchesse de Montsorel Well! Well! If this young man has neither title nor family, he can be no dangerous rival to Albert. I do not know why you should be interested in him.

The Duke

But there are a great many ladies interested in him.

Inez

I begin to see your meaning—

The Marquis

Indeed!

Inez Yes, this young man is not, perhaps, all he wishes to appear; but he is intelligent, well educated, his sentiments are noble, he shows us the most chivalric respect, he speaks ill of no one; evidently, he is acting the gentleman, and exaggerates his role.

The Duke I believe he also exaggerates the amount of his fortune; but it is difficult at Paris to maintain that pretension for any length of time.

The Duchesse de Montsorel (to the Duchesse de Christoval)

I am told that you mean to give a series of brilliant entertainments?

The Marquis

Does Monsieur de Frescas speak Spanish?

Inez

Just as well as we do.

The Duke Say no more, Albert; did you not hear that Monsieur de Frescas is a highly accomplished young man?

The Duchesse de Christoval He is really a very agreeable man, but if your doubts were well founded, I confess, my dear duke, I should be very sorry to receive any further visits from him.

The Duchesse de Montsorel (to the Duchesse de Christoval) You look as fresh to-day as you did yesterday; I really admire the way you stand the dissipations of society.

The Duchesse de Christoval (aside to Inez)

My child, do not mention Monsieur de Frescas again. The subject annoys Madame de Montsorel.

Inez (also aside)

It did not annoy her yesterday.

SCENE TENTH. The same persons, Joseph and Raoul de Frescas.

Joseph (to the Duchesse de Montsorel) As Mademoiselle de Vaudrey is not in, and Monsieur de Frescas is here, will your grace see him?

The Duchesse de Christoval
Is Raoul here?

The Duke
So he has already found her out!

The Marquis (to his father)
My mother is deceiving us.

The Duchesse de Montsorel (to Joseph)
I am not at home.

The Duke If you have asked Monsieur de Frescas to come why do you begin by treating so great a personage with discourtesy? (To Joseph, despite a gesture of protest from the Duchesse de Montsorel) Show him in! (To the marquis) Try to be calm and sensible.

The Duchesse de Montsorel (aside)
In trying to help, I have hurt him, I fear.

Joseph
M. Raoul de Frescas.

Raoul (entering)
My eagerness to obey your commands will prove to you, Madame la Duchesse, how proud I am of your notice, and how anxious to deserve it.

The Duchesse de Montsorel I thank you, sir, for your promptitude. (Aside)
But it may prove fatal to you.

Raoul (bowing to the Duchesse de Christoval and her daughter, aside)
How is this? Inez here?

(Raoul exchanges bows with the duke; but the marquis takes up a newspaper from the table, and pretends not to see Raoul.)

The Duke I must confess, Monsieur de Frescas, I did not expect to meet you

in the apartment of Madame de Montsorel; but I am pleased at the interest she takes in you, for it has procured me the pleasure of meeting a young man whose entrance into Parisian society has been attended with such success and brilliancy. You are one of the rivals whom one is proud to conquer, but to whom one submits without displeasure.

Raoul This exaggerated eulogy, with which I cannot agree, would be ironical unless it had been pronounced by you; but I am compelled to acknowledge the courtesy with which you desire to set me at my ease, (looking at the marquis, who turns his back on him), in a house where I might well think myself unwelcome.

The Duke On the contrary, you have come just at the right moment, we were just speaking of your family and of the aged Commander de Frescas whom madame and myself were once well acquainted with.

Raoul I am highly honored by the interest you take in me; but such an honor is generally enjoyed at the cost of some slight gossip.

The Duke

People can only gossip about those whom they know well.

The Duchesse de Christoval

And we would like to have the right of gossiping about you.

Raoul

It is my interest to keep myself in your good graces.

The Duchesse de Montsorel

I know one way of doing so.

Raoul

What is that?

The Duchesse de Montsorel

Remain the same mysterious personage you are at present.

The Marquis (rejoining them, newspaper in hand) Here is a strange thing, ladies; one of those foreigners who claim to be noblemen has been caught cheating at play at the field marshal's house.

Inez

Is that the great piece of news in which you have been absorbed?

Raoul

In these times, everyone seems to be a foreigner.

The Marquis It is not altogether the piece of news that set me thinking, but I was struck by the incredible readiness with which people receive at their houses those about whose antecedents they know positively nothing.

The Duchesse de Montsorel (aside)

Is he to be insulted in my house?

Raoul If people distrust those whom they do not know, aren't they sometimes likely, at very short notice, to know rather too much about them?

The Duke Albert, how can this news of yours interest us? Do we ever receive any one without first learning what his family is?

Raoul

His grace the duke knows my family.

The Duke It is sufficient for me that you are found at Madame de Montsorel's house. We know what we owe to you too well to forget what you owe to us. The name De Frescas commands respect, and you represent it worthily.

The Duchesse de Christoval (to Raoul) Will you immediately announce who you are, if not for your own sake, at least out of consideration for your friends?

Raoul I shall be extremely distressed if my presence here should occasion the slightest discussion; but as certain hints are as galling as the most direct charges, I suggest that we end this conversation, which is as unworthy of you, as it is of me. Her grace the duchess did not, I am sure, invite me here to be cross-examined. I recognize in no one the right to ask a reason for the silence which I have decided to maintain.

The Marquis
And you leave us the right to interpret it?

Raoul If I claim liberty of action, it is not for the purpose of refusing the same to you.

The Duke (to Raoul) You are a noble young man, you show the natural distinction which marks the gentleman; do not be offended at the curiosity of the world; it is our only safeguard. Your sword cannot impose silence upon all idle talkers, and the world, while it treats becoming modesty with generosity, has no pity for ungrounded pretensions—

Raoul
Sir!

The Duchesse de Montsorel (whispering anxiously to Raoul) Not a word about your childhood; leave Paris, and let me alone know where you are—hidden! Your whole future depends on this.

The Duke I really wish to be your friend, in spite of the fact that you are the rival of my son. Give your confidence to a man who has that of his king. How

can you be descended from the house of De Frescas, which is extinct?

Raoul (to the duke) Your grace is too powerful to fail of proteges, and I am not so weak as to need a protector.

The Duchesse de Christoval Sir, I am sure you will understand a mother's feeling that it would be unwise for her to receive many visits from you at the Christoval house.

Inez (to Raoul) A word would save us, and you keep silence; I perceive that there is something dearer to you than I am.

Raoul Inez, I could hear anything excepting these reproaches. (Aside) O Vautrin! Why did you impose absolute silence upon me. (He bows farewell to the ladies. To the Duchesse de Montsorel) I leave my happiness in your charge.

The Duchesse de Montsorel
Do what I order; I will answer for the rest.

Raoul (to the marquis)
I am at your service, sir.

The Marquis
Good-bye Monsieur Raoul.

Raoul
De Frescas, if you please.

The Marquis
De Frescas, then!

(Exit Raoul.)

SCENE ELEVENTH. The same persons, except Raoul.

The Duchesse de Montsorel (to the Duchesse de Christoval)
You were very severe.

The Duchesse de Christoval You may not be aware, madame, that for the last three months this young man has danced attendance on my daughter wherever she went, and that his admission into society was brought about a little incautiously.

The Duke (to the Duchesse de Christoval)
He might easily be taken for a prince in disguise.

The Marquis
Is he not rather a nobody disguised as a prince?

The Duchesse de Montsorel
Your father will tell you that such disguises are difficult to assume.

Inez (to the marquis) A nobody sir? We women can be attracted by one who is above us, never by him who is our inferior.

The Duchesse de Christoval
What are you talking about, Inez?

Inez It is of no consequence, mother! Either this young man is crazed or these people are ungenerous.

The Duchesse de Christoval (to the Duchesse de Montsorel)
I can plainly see, madame, that any explanation is impossible, especially in the presence of the duke; but my honor is at stake, and I shall expect you to explain.

The Duchesse de Montsorel
To-morrow, then.

(Exit the duke with the Duchesse de Christoval and her daughter, followed by the Duchesse de Montsorel.)

SCENE TWELFTH. The Marquis and the Duke.

The Marquis The appearance of this adventurer, father, seems to throw both you and my mother into a state of the most violent excitement; it would almost seem as if not only was the marriage of your son jeopardized, but your very existence menaced. The duchess and her daughter went off in high dudgeon—

The Duke
What could have brought them here in the very midst of our discussion?

The Marquis
And you also are interested in this fellow Raoul?

The Duke Are not you? Your fortune, your name, your future and your marriage, all that is more to you than life, is now at stake!

The Marquis If all these things are dependent upon this young man, I will immediately demand satisfaction from him.

The Duke What! A duel? If you had the wretched luck to kill him, the success of your suite would be hopeless.

The Marquis
What then is to be done?

The Duke

Do like the politicians; wait!

The Marquis

If you are in danger, father, do you think I can remain quiet?

The Duke

Leave the burden to me; it would crush you.

The Marquis

Ah! but you will speak, father, you will tell me—

The Duke

Nothing! For we should both of us have too much to blush for.

SCENE THIRTEENTH. The same persons and Vautrin. (Vautrin is dressed all in black; at the beginning of the scene he puts on an air of compunction and humility.)

Vautrin Excuse me, your grace, for having forced my way in, but (whispering so as not to be overheard) we have both of us been victimized by an abuse of confidence—allow me to say a word or two to you alone.

The Duke (with a sign to his son to leave them)

Say on, sir.

Vautrin In these days success is in the power of those alone who exert themselves to obtain office, and this form of ambition pervades all classes. Every man in France desires to be a colonel, and it is difficult to see where the privates are to come from. As a matter of fact society is threatened by disintegration, which will simply result from this universal desire for high positions, accompanied with a general disgust for the low places. Such is the

fruit of revolutionary equality. Religion is the sole remedy for this corruption.

The Duke

What are you driving at?

Vautrin I beg pardon, but it is impossible to refrain from explaining to a statesman, with whom I am going to work, the cause of a mistake which annoys me. Has your grace confided any secrets to one of my people who came to you this morning, with the foolish idea of supplanting me, and in the hope of making himself known to you as one who could serve your interests?

The Duke

What do you mean? That you are the Chevalier de Saint-Charles?

Vautrin Let me tell your grace, that we are just what we desire to be. Neither he nor I is simple enough to be his real self—it would cost us too much.

The Duke

Remember, that you must furnish proofs.

Vautrin If your grace has confided any important secret to him, I shall have immediately to put him under surveillance.

The Duke (aside)

This man seems more honest and reliable than the other.

Vautrin

We put the secret police on such cases.

The Duke You ought not to have come here, sir, unless you were able to justify your assertions.

Vautrin I have done my duty. I hope that the ambition of this man, who is

capable of selling himself to the highest bidder, may be of service to you.

The Duke (aside) How can he have learned so promptly the secret of my morning interview?

Vautrin (aside)

He hesitates; Joseph is right, some important secret is at stake.

The Duke

Sir!

Vautrin

Your grace!

The Duke

It is the interest of both of us to defeat this man.

Vautrin

That would be dangerous, if he has your secret; for he is tricky.

The Duke

Yes, the fellow has wit.

Vautrin

Did you give him a commission?

The Duke Nothing of importance; I wish to find out all about a certain Monsieur de Frescas.

Vautrin (aside)

Merely that! (Aloud) I can tell your grace all about him. Raoul de Frescas is a young nobleman whose family is mixed up in an affair of high treason, and he does not like to assume his father's name.

The Duke

He has a father, then?

Vautrin

He has a father.

The Duke

And where does he come from? What is his fortune?

Vautrin

We are changing our roles, and your grace must excuse my not answering until you tell me what special interest your grace has in Monsieur de Frescas.

The Duke

You are forgetting yourself, sir!

Vautrin (with assumed humility) Yes, I am forgetting the fact that there is an enormous difference between spies and those who set them.

The Duke

Joseph!

Vautrin (aside)

The duke has set his spies upon us; I must hurry.

(Vautrin disappears through the side door, by which he entered in the first act.)

The Duke (turning back) You shall not leave the house. Heavens! Where is he? (He rings and Joseph answers.) Let all the doors of the house be locked, a man has got into the house. Quick! Let all look for him, and let him be apprehended. (He goes to the room of the duchess.)

apprehended. (He goes to the room of the duchess.)

Joseph (looking through the postern)

He is far away by this time.

Curtain to the Second Act.

ACT III.

SCENE FIRST. (A room in the house of Raoul de Frescas.)

Lafouraille (alone) Would my late excellent father, who advised me to frequent none but the best society, have been satisfied with me yesterday? I spent all night with ministers' valets, attendants of the embassy, princes', dukes', peers' coachmen—none but these, all reliable men, in good luck; they steal only from their masters. My master danced with a fine chit of a girl whose hair was powdered with a million's worth of diamonds, and he had no eyes for anything but the bouquet she carried in her hand; simple young man, we sympathize with you. Old Jacques Collin—Botheration! There I trip again, I cannot reconcile myself to this common name—I mean Monsieur Vautrin, will arrange all that. In a little time diamonds and dowry will take an airing, and they have need of it; to think of them as always in the same strong boxes! 'Tis against the laws of circulation. What a joker he is!—He sets you up as a young man of means. He is so kind, he talks so finely, the heiress comes in, the trick is done, and we all cry shares! The money will have been well earned. You see we have been here six months. Haven't we put on the look of idiots! Everybody in the neighborhood takes us for good simple folk. And who would refuse to do anything for Vautrin? He said to us: "Be virtuous," and virtuous we became. I fear him as I fear the police, and yet I love him even

virtuous we became. I fear him as I fear the police, and yet I love him even more than money.

Vautrin (calling from outside)

Lafouraille!

Lafouraille

There he is! I haven't seen his face this morning—that means a storm; I prefer it should fall upon some one else, and will get out. (He starts to the door but encounters Vautrin.)

SCENE SECOND. Vautrin and Lafouraille. (Vautrin is dressed in long white duck trousers and a waistcoat of the same material, slippers of red morocco,—the morning dress of a business man.)

Vautrin

Lafouraille.

Lafouraille

Sir?

Vautrin

Where are you going?

Lafouraille

To get your letters.

Vautrin

I have them. Have you anything else to do?

Lafouraille

Yes, your chamber—

Vautrin

In so many words you want to avoid me. I have always found that restless legs never go with a quiet conscience. Stay where you are. I want to talk with you.

Lafouraille

I am at your service.

Vautrin

I hope you are. Come here. You told us, under the fair sky of Provence, a certain story which was little to your credit. A steward beat you at play; do you recollect?

Lafouraille A steward? Yes, that fellow Charles Blondet, the only man who ever robbed me! Can a fellow forget that?

Vautrin Had you not on one occasion sold your master to him? That's common enough.

Lafouraille

On one occasion? I sold him three times over.

Vautrin

That was better. And what business was the steward then engaged in?

Lafouraille

I was going to tell you. I was footman at eighteen with the De Langeacs—

Vautrin

I thought it was in the Duc de Montsorel's house.

Lafouraille No: the duke, fortunately, has only twice set eyes on me, and has.

I hope, forgotten me.

Vautrin

Did you rob him?

Lafouraille

Well, to some small extent.

Vautrin

Why do you want him to forget you?

Lafouraille Because, after seeing him again, yesterday, at the embassy, I should then feel safe.

Vautrin

And it is the same man?

Lafouraille We are both older by twenty-five years, and that is the only difference.

Vautrin

Tell me all about him. I knew I had heard you mention his name. Go on.

Lafouraille The Vicomte de Langeac, one of my masters, and this Duc de Montsorel were like peas in the same pod. When I was forced to choose between the nobles and the people, I did not hesitate; from a mere footman, I became a citizen, and citizen Philip Boulard was an earnest worker. I had enthusiasm, and acquired influence in the faubourg.

Vautrin

And so you have been a politician, have you?

Lafouraille

Not for long. I did a pretty thing, and that ruined me.

Vautrin Aha! My boy, pretty things are like pretty women—better light shy of them; they often bring trouble. What was this pretty thing?

Lafouraille I'll tell you. In the scrimmage of the Tenth of August, the duke confided to my care the Vicomte de Langeac; I disguised and hid him, I gave him food at the risk of my popularity and my life. The duke had greatly encouraged me by such trifles as a thousand gold pieces, and that Blondet had the infamy to offer me a bigger pile to give up our young master.

Vautrin
Did you give him up?

Lafouraille Immediately. He was jugged in the Abbaye, and I became the happy possessor of sixty good thousands of francs in gold, in real gold.

Vautrin
And what has this to do with the Duc de Montsorel?

Lafouraille Wait a little. When the days of September came, my conduct seemed to me slightly reprehensible; and to quiet my conscience, I determined to propose to the duke, who was leaving the country that I should rescue his friend.

Vautrin
Did your remorse prove a good investment?

Lafouraille That it did; for it was rare in those days! The duke promised me twenty thousand francs if I delivered the viscount from the hands of my comrades, and I succeeded in doing so.

Vautrin

Twenty thousand francs for a viscount!

Lafouraille And he was all the more worth it, because he was the last. I found that out too late. The steward had disposed of all the other Langeacs, even to the poor grandmother whom he had sent to the Carmelites.

Vautrin

That was good!

Lafouraille But then something else happened. That Blondet heard of my devotion, he traced me out and found me in the neighborhood of Mortagne, where my master was at the house of one of my uncles waiting for a chance to reach the sea. The noodle offered me as much money as he had already given me. I saw before me an honest life for the rest of my days; and I was weak. My friend Blondet caused the viscount to be shot as a spy; and my uncle and myself were imprisoned as his accomplices. We were not released until I had disgorged all my gold.

Vautrin That is the way a knowledge of the human heart is acquired. You were dealing with a stronger man than yourself.

Lafouraille

That remains to be seen; for I am still alive.

Vautrin

Enough of that! There is nothing of use to me in your tale.

Lafouraille

Can I go now?

Vautrin Come, come. You seem to experience a keen longing to be where I am not. But you went into society yesterday; did you do anything?

Lafouraille The servants said such funny things about their masters, that I could not leave the antechamber.

Vautrin

Yet I saw you nibbling at the sideboard; what did you take?

Lafouraille

Nothing—but stay—I took a wineglass of Madeira.

Vautrin What did you do with the dozen of gold spoons that went with the glass of Madeira?

Lafouraille Gold spoons! I've searched diligently, but find nothing of that kind in my memory.

Vautrin Possibly; but you will find them in your mattress. And was Philosopher also absent-minded?

Lafouraille Poor Philosopher! Since morning he has been a laughing-stock below stairs. He induced a coachman who was very young to strip off his gold lace for him. It was all false on the underside. In these days masters are thieves. You cannot be sure of anything, more's the pity.

Vautrin (whistles) This is no joking matter. You will make me lose the house: this must be put a stop to—Here, father Buteux, ahoy! Philosopher! Come here. Fil-de-Soie! My dear friends, let us have a clearing up. You are a pack of scoundrels.

SCENE THIRD. The same persons, Buteux, Philosopher and Fil-de-Soie.

Buteux

Present! Is the house on fire?

Fil-de-Soie

Is it some one burning with curiosity?

Buteux

A fire would be better, for it can be put out.

Philosopher

But the other can be choked.

Lafouraille

Bah! He has had enough of this trifling.

Buteux

So we are to have more moralizing—thank you for that.

Fil-de-Soie

He cannot want me for I have not been out.

Vautrin (to Fil-de-Soie) You? The evening when I bade you exchange your scullion's cap for a footman's hat—poisoner—

Fil-de-Soie

We will drop the extra names.

Vautrin And you accompanied me as my footman to the field marshal's; while helping me on with my cloak, you stole the watch of the Cossack prince.

Fil-de-Soie

One of the enemies of France.

Vautrin

You, Buteux, you old malefactor, carried off the opera-glass of the

You, Buteux, you old marabout, carried on the opera-glass of the Princesse d'Arjos the evening she set down your young master at our gate.

Buteux

It dropped on the carriage step.

Vautrin You should have respectfully handed it back to her; but the gold and the pearls appealed to your tigerish talons.

Lafouraille Now, now, surely people can have a little fun? Devil take it! Did not you, Jacques—

Vautrin

What do you mean?

Lafouraille Did not you, Monsieur Vautrin, require thirty thousand francs that this young man might live in princely style? We succeeded in satisfying you in the fashion of foreign governments, by borrowing, and getting credit. All those who come to ask for me leave some with us. And you are not satisfied.

Fil-de-Soie And if, when I am sent to buy provisions without a sou, I may not be allowed to bring back some cash with me,—I might as well send in my resignation.

Philosopher And didn't I sell our custom to four different coach-builders—5,000 francs each clip—and the man who got the order lost all? One evening Monsieur de Frescas starts off from home with wretched screws, and we bring him back, Lafouraille and I, with a span worth ten thousand francs, which have cost him only twenty glasses of brandy.

Lafouraille

No, it was Kirchenwasser.

Philosopher

Yes, and yet you fly into a rage—

Fil-de-Soie

How are you going to keep house now?

Vautrin Do you expect to do things of this kind for long? What I have permitted in order to set up our establishment, from this day forth I forbid. You wish, I suppose, to descend from robbery to swindling? If you do not understand what I say I will look out for better servants.

Buteux

And where will you find them?

Lafouraille

Let him hunt for them!

Vautrin You forget, I see, that I have pledged myself to save your necks! Dear, dear, do you think I have sifted you, like seeds in a colander, through three different places of residence, to let you hover round a gibbet, like flies round a candle? I wish you to know that any imprudence that brings you to such a position, is, to men of my stamp, a crime. You ought to appear as supremely innocent as you, Philosopher, appeared to him who let you rip off his lace. Never forget the part you are playing; you are honest fellows, faithful domestics, and adore Raoul de Frescas, your master.

Buteux Do you take this young man for a god? You have harnessed us to his car; but we know him no better than he knows us.

Philosopher

Tell me, is he one of our kind?

Fil-de-Soie

Fil-de-Soie

What is he going to bring us to?

Lafouraille We obey on condition that the Society of the Ten Thousand be reconstituted, so that never less than ten thousand francs at a time be assigned to us; at present we have not any funds in common.

Fil-de-Soie

When are we all to be capitalists?

Buteux If the gang knew that for the last six months I have been disguising myself as an old porter, without any object, I should be disgraced. If I am willing to risk my neck, it is that I may give bread to my Adele, whom you have forbidden me to see, and who for six months must have been as dry as a match.

Lafouraille (to the other two)

She is in prison. Poor man! Let us spare his feelings.

Vautrin Have you finished? Come now, you have made merry here for six months, eaten like diplomats, drunk like Poles, and have wanted nothing.

Buteux

Yes, we are rusting out!

Vautrin Thanks to me, the police have forgotten you! You owe your good luck to me alone! I have erased the brand from your foreheads. I am the head, whose ideas you, the arms, carry out.

Philosopher

We are satisfied.

Vautrin

You must all obey me blindly

You must all obey me blindly.

Lafouraille
Blindly.

Vautrin
Without a murmur.

Fil-de-Soie
Without a murmur.

Vautrin Or else let us break our compact, and be off with you! If I meet with ingratitude from you, to whom can I venture hereafter to do a service?

Philosopher
To no one, my emperor.

Lafouraille
I should rather say, our great teacher!

Buteux
I love you more than I love Adele.

Fil-de-Soie
We worship you.

Vautrin
If necessary, I shall even have to beat you.

Philosopher
We'll take it without a murmur.

Vautrin
To spit in your face; to bowl over your lives like a row of skittles.

Buteux

But I bowl over with a knife.

Vautrin

Very well—Kill me this instant.

Buteux It is no use being vexed with this man. Do you wish me to restore the opera-glass? I intended it for Adele!

All (surrounding Vautrin)

Would you abandon us, Vautrin?

Lafouraille

Vautrin! Our friend.

Philosopher

Mighty Vautrin!

Fil-de-Soie

Our old companion, deal with us as you will.

Vautrin Yes, and I can deal with you as I will. When I think what trouble you make, in your trinket-stealing, I feel inclined to send you back to the place I took you from. You are either above or below the level of society, dregs or foam; but I desire to make you enter into society. People used to hoot you as you went by. I wish them to bow to you; you were once the basest of mankind, I wish you to be more than honest men.

Philosopher

Is there such a class?

Buteux

There are those who are nothing at all.

Vautrin There are those who decide upon the honesty of others. You will never be honest burgesses, you must belong either to the wretched or the rich; you must therefore master one-half of the world! Take a bath of gold, and you will come forth from it virtuous!

Fil-de-Soie

To think, that, when I have need of nothing, I shall be a good prince!

Vautrin Of course. And you, Lafouraille, you can become Count of Saint Helena; and what would you like to be, Buteux?

Buteux I should like to be a philanthropist, for the philanthropist always becomes a millionaire.

Philosopher

And I, a banker.

Fil-de-Soie

He wishes to be a licensed professional.

Vautrin Show yourselves then, according as occasion demands it, blind and clear-sighted, adroit and clumsy, stupid and clever, like all those who make their fortune. Never judge me, and try to understand my meaning. You ask who Raoul de Frescas is? I will explain to you; he will soon have an income of twelve hundred thousand francs. He will be a prince. And I picked him up when he was begging on the high road, and ready to become a drummer-boy; in his twelfth year he had neither name nor family; he came from Sardinia, where he must have got into some trouble, for he was a fugitive from justice.

Buteux

Oh, now that we know his antecedents and his social position—

Vautrin

Be off to your lodge!

Buteux

Little Nini, daughter of Giroflee is there—

Vautrin

She may let a spy pass in.

Buteux She! She is a little cat to whom it is not necessary to point out the stool-pigeons.

Vautrin You may judge my power from what I am in process of doing for Raoul. Ought he not to be preferred before all? Raoul de Frescas is a young man who has remained pure as an angel in the midst of our mire-pit; he is our conscience; moreover, he is my creation; I am at once his father, his mother, and I desire to be his guiding providence. I, who can never know happiness, still delight in making other people happy. I breathe through his lips, I live in his life, his passions are my own; and it is impossible for me to know noble and pure emotions excepting in the heart of this being unsoiled by crime. You have your fancies, here I show you mine. In exchange for the blight which society has brought upon me, I give it a man of honor, and enter upon a struggle with destiny; do you wish to be of my party? Obey me.

All

In life, and death—

Vautrin (aside) So my savage beasts are once more brought to submission. (Aloud) Philosopher, try to put on the air, the face, the costume of an *employe* of the lost goods bureau, and take back to the embassy the plate borrowed by Lafouraille. (To Fil-de-Soie) You, Fil-de-Soie, must prepare a sumptuous dinner. as Monsieur de Frescas is to entertain a few friends. You

will afterwards dress yourself as a respectable man, and assume the air of a lawyer. You will go to number six, Rue Oblin, ring seven times at the fourth-story door, and ask for Pere Giroflee. When they ask where you come from, you will answer from a seaport in Bohemia. They will let you in. I want certain letters and papers of the Duc de Christoval; here are the text and patterns. I want an absolute fac-simile, with the briefest possible delay. Lafouraille, you must go and insert a few lines in the newspapers, notifying the arrival of . . . (He whispers into his ear.) This forms part of my plan. Now leave me.

Lafouraille

Well, are you satisfied?

Vautrin

Yes.

Philosopher

You want nothing more of us?

Vautrin

Nothing.

Fil-de-Soie

There will be no more rebellion; every one will be good.

Buteux Let your mind rest easy; we are going to be not only polite, but honest.

Vautrin That is right, boys; a little integrity, a great deal of address, and you will be respected.

(Exeunt all except Vautrin.)

SCENE FOURTH.

Vautrin (alone) In order to lead them it is only necessary to let them think they have an honorable future. They have no future, no prospects! Pshaw! If generals took their soldiers seriously, not a cannon would be fired! In a few days, following upon years of subterranean labors, I shall have won for Raoul a commanding position; it must be made sure to him. Lafouraille and Philosopher will be necessary to me in the country where I am to give him a family. Ah, this love! It has put out of the question the life I had destined him to. I wished to win for him a solitary glory, to see him conquering for me and under my direction, the world which I am forbidden to enter. Raoul is not only the child of my intellect and of my malice, he is also my instrument of revenge. These fellows of mine cannot understand these sentiments; they are happy; they have never fallen, not they! They were born criminals. But I have attempted to raise myself. Yet though a man can raise himself in the eyes of God, he can never do so in the eyes of the world. People tell you to repent, and then refuse to pardon. Men possess in their dealings with each other the instincts of savage animals. Once wounded, one is down-trodden by his fellows. Moreover, to ask the protection of a world whose laws you have trampled under foot is like returning to a house which you have burnt and whose roof would fall and crush you. I have well polished and perfected the magnetic instrument of my domination. Raoul was brave, he would have sacrificed his life, like a fool; I had to make him cold and domineering, and to dispel from his mind, one by one, his exalted ideas of life; to render him suspicious and tricky as—an old bill-broker, while all the while he knew not who I was. And at this moment love has broken down the whole scaffolding. He should have been great; now, he can only be happy. I shall therefore retire to live in a corner at the height of his prosperity; his happiness will have been my work. For two days I have been asking myself whether it would not be better that the Princesse d'Arjos should die of some ailment—say brain fever. It's singular how many plans a woman can upset!

SCENE FIFTH. Vautrin and Lafouraille.

Vautrin

What is the matter? Cannot I be alone one moment? Did I call?

Lafouraille

We are likely to feel the claws of justice scratch our shoulders.

Vautrin

What new blunder have you committed?

Lafouraille The fact is little Nini has admitted a well-dressed gentleman who asks to see you. Buteux is whistling the air, *There's No Place Like Home*, so it must be a sleuth.

Vautrin Nothing of the kind, I know who it is; tell him to wait. Everybody in arms! Vautrin must then vanish; I will be the Baron de Vieux-Chene. Speak in a German account, fool him well, until I can play the master stroke. (Exit.)

SCENE SIXTH. Lafouraille and Saint-Charles.

Lafouraille (speaking with a German accent)

M. de Frescas is not at home, sir, and his steward, the Baron de Vieux-Chene, is engaged with an architect, who is to build a grand house for my master.

Saint-Charles

I beg your pardon, my dear sir, you said—

Lafouraille

I said Baron de Vieux-Chene.

Saint-Charles
Baron!

Lafouraille
Yes! Yes!

Saint-Charles
He is a baron?

Lafouraille
Baron de Vieux-Chene.

Saint-Charles
You are a German.

Lafouraille
Not I! Not I! I am an Alsatian, a very different thing.

Saint-Charles (aside)
This man has certainly an accent too decidedly German to be a Parisian.

Lafouraille (aside)
I know this man well. Here's a go!

Saint-Charles
If the baron is busy, I will wait.

Lafouraille (aside) Ah! Blondet, my beauty, you can disguise your face, but not your voice; if you get out of our clutches now, you will be a wonder.
(Aloud) What shall I tell the baron brings you here? (He makes as if to go out.)

Saint-Charles Stay a moment, my friend; you speak German, I speak French, we may misunderstand one another. (Puts a purse into his hand.) There can be no mistake with this for an interpreter.

Lafouraille

No, sir.

Saint-Charles

That is merely on account.

Lafouraille (aside) Yes, on account of my eighty thousand francs. (Aloud) And do you wish me to shadow my master?

Saint-Charles No, my friend, I merely ask for some information, which cannot compromise you.

Lafouraille

In good German we call that spying.

Saint-Charles

But no—that is not it—it is—

Lafouraille

To shadow him. And what shall I say to his lordship the baron?

Saint-Charles

Announce the Chevalier de Saint-Charles.

Lafouraille We understand each other. I will induce him to see you. But do not offer money to the steward; he is more honest than the rest of us. (He gives a sly wink.)

Saint-Charles

That means he will cost more.

Lafouraille

Yes, sir. (Exit.)

SCENE SEVENTH.

Saint-Charles (alone) A bad beginning! Ten louis thrown away. To shadow him indeed! It is too stupid not to have a spice of wit in it, this habit of calling things by their right name, at the outset. If the pretended steward, for there is no steward here, if the baron is as clever as his footman, I shall have nothing to base my information on, excepting what they conceal from me. This room is very fine. There is neither portrait of the king, nor emblem of royalty here. Well, it is plain they do not frame their opinions. Is the furniture suggestive of anything? No. It is too new to have been even paid for. But for the air which the porter whistled, doubtless a signal, I should be inclined to believe in the De Frescas people.

SCENE EIGHTH. Saint-Charles, Vautrin and Lafouraille. (Vautrin wears a bright maroon coat, of old-fashioned cut, with large heavy buttons; his breeches are black silk, as are his stockings. His shoes have gold buckles, his waistcoat is flowered, he wears two watch-chains, his cravat belongs to the time of the Revolution; his wig is white, his face old, keen, withered, dissipated looking. He speaks low, and his voice is cracked.)

Vautrin (to Lafouraille) Very good; you may go. (Exit Lafouraille. Aside) Now for the tug of war, Monsieur Blondet. (Aloud) I am at your service, sir.

Saint-Charles (aside) A worn out fox is still dangerous. (Aloud) Excuse me,

baron, for disturbing you, while yet unknown to you.

Vautrin

I can guess what your business is.

Saint-Charles (aside)

Indeed?

Vautrin You are an architect, and have a proposal to make to me; but I have already received most excellent offers.

Saint-Charles

Excuse me, your Dutchman must have mispronounced my name. I am the Chevalier de Saint-Charles.

Vautrin (raising his spectacles)

Let me see—we are old acquaintances. You were at the Congress of Vienna, and then bore the name of Count of Gorcum—a fine name!

Saint-Charles (aside)

Go choke yourself, old man! (Aloud) So you were there also?

Vautrin I should think so! And I am glad to have come upon you again. You were a deuced clever fellow, you know. How you fooled them all!

Saint-Charles (aside) We'll stick to Vienna, then. (Aloud) Ah, baron! I recall you perfectly now; you also steered your bark pretty cleverly there.

Vautrin Of course I did, and what women we had there! Yes, indeed! And have you still your fair Italian?

Saint-Charles

Did you know her? She was a woman of such tact.

Vautrin My dear fellow, wasn't she, though? She actually wanted to find out who I was.

Saint-Charles

And did she find out?

Vautrin Well, my dear friend, I know you will be glad to hear it, she discovered nothing.

Saint-Charles Come, baron, since we are speaking freely to each other to-day, I for my part must confess that your admirable Pole—

Vautrin

You also had the pleasure?

Saint-Charles

On my honor, yes!

Vautrin (laughing)

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Saint Charles (laughing)

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Vautrin

We can safely laugh now, for I suppose you left her there?

Saint-Charles Immediately, as you did. I see that we are both come to throw away our money in Paris, and we have done well; but it seems to me, baron, that you have accepted a very secondary position, though one which attracts notice.

Vautrin Ah! thank you, chevalier. I hope, however, we may still be friends for

many a day.

Saint-Charles
Forever, I hope.

Vautrin You can be extremely useful to me, I can be of immense service to you, we understand each other! Let me know what your present business is, and I will tell you mine.

Saint-Charles (aside)
I should like to know whether he is being set on me, or I on him.

Vautrin (aside)
It is going to be a somewhat slow business.

Saint-Charles
I will tell you.

Vautrin
I am attention!

Saint-Charles
Baron, between ourselves, I admire you immensely.

Vautrin
What a compliment from a man like you!

Saint-Charles Not at all! To create a De Frescas in the face of all Paris shows an inventive genius which transcends by a thousand points that of our countesses at the Congress. You are angling for the dowry with rare nerve.

Vautrin
I angling for a dowry?

Saint-Charles But, my dear friend, you would be found out, unless I your friend had been the man chosen to watch you, for I am appointed your shadower by a very high authority. Permit me also to ask how can you dare to interfere with the family of Montsorel in their pursuit of an heiress?

Vautrin To think that I innocently believed you came to propose we should work in company, and speculate, both of us, with the money of Monsieur de Frescas, of which I have entire control—and here you talk to me of something entirely different! Frescas, my good friend, is one of the legal titles of this young man, who has seven in all. Stringent reasons prevent him from revealing the name of his family, which I know, for the next twenty-four hours. Their property is vast, I have seen their estate, from which I am just returned. I do not mind being taken by you for a rogue, for there is no disgrace in the vast sums at stake; but to be taken for an imbecile, capable of dancing attendance on a sham nobleman, and so silly as to defy the Montsorels on behalf of a counterfeit—Really, my friend, it would seem that you have never been to Vienna! We are not in the same class!

Saint-Charles Do not grow angry, worthy steward! Let us leave off entangling ourselves in a web of lies more or less agreeable; you cannot expect to make me swallow any more of them. Our cash box is better furnished than yours, therefore come over to us. Your young man is as much Frescas as I am chevalier and you baron. You picked him up on the frontier of Italy; he was then a vagabond, to-day he is an adventurer, and that's the whole truth of it.

Vautrin You are right. We must leave off entangling ourselves in the web of falsehoods more or less agreeable; we must speak the truth.

Saint-Charles
I will pay you for it.

Vautrin I will give it you for nothing. You are an infamous cur, my friend. Your

name is Charles Blondet; you were steward in the household of De Langeac; twice have you bought the betrayal of the viscount, and never have you paid the money—it is shameful! You owe eighty thousand francs to one of my footmen. You caused the viscount to be shot at Mortagne in order that you might appropriate the property entrusted to you by the family. If the Duc de Montsorel, who sent you here, knew who you are, ha! ha! He would make you settle some old accounts! Take off your moustache, your whiskers, your wig, your sham decorations and your badges of foreign orders. (He tears off from him his wig, his whiskers and decorations.) Good day, you rascal! How did you manage to eat up a fortune so cleverly won? It was colossal; how did you lose it?

Saint-Charles
Through ill-luck.

Vautrin
I understand. . . . What are you going to do now?

Saint-Charles Whoever you are, stop there; I surrender, I haven't a chance left! You are either the devil or Jacques Collin!

Vautrin
I am and wish to be nothing but the Baron de Vieux-Chene to you. Listen to my ultimatum. I can cause you to be buried this instant in one of my cellars, and no one will inquire for you.

Saint-Charles
I know it.

Vautrin
It would be prudent to do so. But are you willing to do for me in Montsorel's house, what Montsorel sent you to do here?

Saint-Charles

I accept the offer; but what are the profits?

Vautrin

All you can take.

Saint-Charles

From either party?

Vautrin Certainly! You will send me by the person who accompanies you back all the deeds that relate to the De Langeac family; they must still be in your possession. In case Monsieur de Frescas marries Mademoiselle de Christoval, you cannot be their steward, but you shall receive a hundred thousand francs. You are dealing with exacting masters. Walk straight, and they will not betray you.

Saint-Charles

It is a bargain!

Vautrin I will not ratify it until I have the documents in hand. Until then, be careful! (He rings; all the household come in.) Attend Monsieur le Chevalier home, with all the respect due his high rank. (To Saint-Charles, pointing out to him Philosopher) This man will accompany you. (To Philosopher) Do not leave him.

Saint-Charles (aside) Once I get safe and sound out of their clutches, I will come down heavy on this nest of thieves.

Vautrin

Monsieur le Chevalier, I am yours to command!

SCENE NINTH Vautrin and Lefauveille

SCENE NINTH. Vautrin and Lafouraille.

Lafouraille
M. Vautrin!

Vautrin
Well?

Lafouraille
Are you letting him go?

Vautrin Unless he considers himself at liberty, what can we hope to learn from him? I have given my instructions; he will be taught not to put ropes in the way of hangmen. When Philosopher brings for me the documents which this fellow is to hand him, they will be given to me, wherever I happen to be.

Lafouraille
But afterwards, will you spare his life?

Vautrin You are always a little premature, my dear. Have you forgotten how seriously the dead interfere with the peace of the living? Hush! I hear Raoul—leave us to ourselves.

SCENE TENTH. Vautrin and Raoul de Frescas.

Raoul (soliloquizing) After a glimpse of heaven, still to remain on earth—such is my fate! I am a lost man; Vautrin, an infernal yet a kindly genius, a man who knows everything, and seems able to do everything, a man as harsh to others as he is good to me, a man who is inexplicable except by a supposition of witchcraft, a maternal providence if I may so call him, is not after all the providence divine. (Vautrin enters wearing a plain black peruke, a blue coat, gray pantaloons, a black waistcoat, the costume of a stock-broker.) Oh! I

know what love is; but I did not know what revenge was, until I felt I could not die before I had wreaked my vengeance on these two Montsorels.

Vautrin (aside)

He is in trouble. (Aloud) Raoul, my son, what ails you?

Raoul

Nothing ails me. Pray leave me.

Vautrin Do you again repulse me? You abuse the right you have to ill-treat a friend—What are you thinking about?

Raoul

Nothing.

Vautrin Nothing? Come, sir, do you think that he who has taught you that English coldness, under the veil of which men of worth would conceal their feelings, was not aware of the transparency which belongs to this cuirass of pride? Try concealment with others, but not with me. Dissimulation is more than a blunder, for in friendship a blunder is a crime.

Raoul To game no more, to come home tipsy no more, to shun the menagerie of the opera, to become serious, to study, to desire a position in life, this you call dissimulation.

Vautrin You are as yet but a poor diplomatist. You will be a great one, when you can deceive me. Raoul, you have made the mistake which I have taken most pains to save you from. My son, why did you not take women for what they are, creatures of inconsequence, made to enslave without being their slave, like a sentimental shepherd? But instead, my Lovelace has been conquered by a Clarissa. Ah, young people will strike against these idols a great many times, before they discover them to be hollow!

Raoul

Is this a sermon?

Vautrin What? Do you take me, who have trained your hand to the pistol, who have shown you how to draw the sword, have taught you not to dread the strongest laborer of the faubourg, who have done for your brains what I have done for your body, have set you above all men, and anointed you my king, do you take me for a dolt? Come, now, let us have a little more frankness.

Raoul Do you wish me to tell you what I was thinking?—But no, that would be to accuse my benefactor.

Vautrin Your benefactor! You insult me. Do you think I have devoted to you my life, my blood, shown myself ready to kill, to assassinate your enemy, in order that I may receive that exorbitant interest called gratitude? Have I become an usurer of this kind? There are some men who would hang the weight of a benefit around your heart like a cannon-ball attached to the feet of —, but let that pass! Such men I would crush as I would a worm, without thinking that I had committed homicide! No! I have asked you to adopt me as your father, that my heart may be to you what heaven is to the angels, a space where all is happiness and confidence; that you may tell me all your thoughts, even those which are evil. Speak, I shall understand everything, even an act of cowardice.

Raoul

God and Satan must have conspired to cast this man of bronze.

Vautrin

It is quite possible.

Raoul

" " " "

I will tell you all.

Vautrin

Very good, my son; let us sit down.

Raoul

You have been the cause to me of opprobrium and despair.

Vautrin Where? When? Blood of a man! Who has wounded you? Who has proved false to you? Tell me the place, name the people—the wrath of Vautrin shall descend upon them!

Raoul

You can do nothing.

Vautrin

Child, there are two kinds of men who can do anything.

Raoul

And who are they?

Vautrin Kings, who are, or who ought to be, above the law; and—this will give you pain—criminals, who are below it.

Raoul

But since you are not king—

Vautrin

Well! I reign in the region below.

Raoul

What horrible mockery is this, Vautrin?

Vautrin

Did you not say that God and the devil hobnobbed to cast me?

Raoul

Heavens, sir, you make me shudder!

Vautrin Return to your seat! Calm yourself, my son. You must not be astonished at anything, if you wish to escape being an ordinary man.

Raoul Am I in the hands of a demon, or of an angel? You have brought me up without debauching the generous instincts I feel within me; you have enlightened without dazzling me; you have given me the experience of the old, without depriving me of the graces of youth; but it is not with impunity that you have whetted the edge of my intellect, expanded my view, roused my perspicacity. Tell me, what is the source of your wealth, is it an honorable one? Why do you forbid me to confess to you the sufferings of my childhood? Why have you given me the name of the village where you found me? Why do you prevent me from searching out my father and mother? Why do you bow me down under a load of falsehoods? An orphan may rouse the interest of people; an imposter, never. I live in a style which makes me a equal to the son of a duke or a peer; you have educated me well, without expense to the state; you have launched me into the empyrean of the world, and now they fling into my face the declaration, that there are no longer such people as De Frescas in existence. I have been asked who my family are, and you have forbidden me to answer. I am at once a great nobleman and a pariah. I must swallow insults which would drive me to rend alive marquises and dukes; rage fills my heart; I should like to fight twenty duels, and to die. Do you wish me to suffer any further insults? No more secrets for me! Prometheus of hell, either finish your work, or shatter it to pieces!

Vautrin Who could fail to respond with a glow of sympathy to this burst of youthful generosity? What flashes of courage blaze forth! It is inspiring to see sentiment at its full tide! You must be the son of a noble race. But, Raoul, let

us come down to what I call plain reason.

Raoul

Ah! At last!

Vautrin

You ask me for an account of my guardianship. Here it is.

Raoul

But have I any right to ask this? Could I live without you?

Vautrin Silence, you had nothing, I made you rich. You knew nothing, I have given you a good education. Oh! I have not yet done all for you. A father—all fathers give their life to their children, and as for me, happiness is a debt which I owe you. But is this really the cause of your gloom? There are here—in this casket (he points to a casket) a portrait, and certain letters. Often while reading the letters you sign as if—

Raoul

Then you know all—?

Vautrin

I know all.—Are you not touched to the heart?

Raoul

To the heart.

Vautrin O fool! Love lives by treachery, friendship by confidence.—And you—you must seek happiness in your own way.

Raoul But have I the power? I will become a soldier, and—wherever the cannot oars, I will win a glorious name, or die.

Vautrin

Indeed! Why should you? You talk nonsense.

Raoul You are too old to possess the power of understanding me, and it is no use trying to explain.

Vautrin Well, I will explain to you. You are in love with Inez de Christoval, Princesse d'Arjos in her own right, daughter of a duke banished by King Ferdinand—an Andalusian who loves you and pleases me, not as a woman, but as a ravishing money-box, whose eyes are the finest in the world, whose dowry is captivating, and who is the most delightful piece of cash, graceful and elegant as some black corvette with white sails which convoys the long-expected galleons of America, and yields all the joys of life, exactly like the Fortune which is painted over the entrance of the lottery agencies. I approve of you here. You did wrong to fall in love, love will involve you in a thousand follies—but I understand.

Raoul

Do not score me with such frightful sarcasms.

Vautrin See how quickly he feels his ardor damped, and his hat wreathed in crepe!

Raoul Yes. For it is impossible for the child flung by accident into the bosom of a fisher family at Alghero to become Prince of Arjos, while to lose Inez is for me to die of grief.

Vautrin An income of twelve thousand francs, the title of prince, grandeur, and amassed wealth are not things to be contemplated with melancholy.

Raoul

If you love me, why do you mock me thus in the hour of my despair?

Vautrin

And what is the cause of your despair?

Raoul The duke and the marquis have insulted me, in their own house, in her presence, and I have seen then all my hopes extinguished. The door of the Christoval mansion is closed upon me. I do not know why the Duchesse de Montsorel made me come and see her. For the last few days she has manifested an interest in me which I do not understand.

Vautrin

And what brought you to the house of your rival?

Raoul

It seems you know all about it.

Vautrin

Yes, and many other things besides. Is it true you desire Inez de Christoval? Then you can get over this present despondency.

Raoul

You are trifling with me.

Vautrin

Look here, Raoul! The Christovals have shut their doors upon you. Well—to-morrow you shall be the accepted lover of the princess, and the Montsorels shall be turned away, Montsorels though they be.

Raoul

The sight of my distress has crazed you.

Vautrin What reason have you ever had for doubting my word? Did I not give you an Arabian horse, to drive mad with envy the foreign and native dandies of the Bois de Boulogne? Who paid your gambling debts? Who made

provision for your excesses? Who gave you boots, you who once went barefoot?

Raoul

You, my friend, my father, my family!

Vautrin Many, many thanks. In those words is a recompense for all my sacrifices. But, alas! when once you become rich, a grandee of Spain, a part of the great world, you will forget me; a change of atmosphere brings a change of ideas; you will despise me, and—you will be right in doing so.

Raoul

Do I see before me a genie, a spirit materialized from the Arabian Nights? I question my own existence. But, my friend, my protector, I have no family.

Vautrin

Well, we are making up a family for you at this very moment. The Louvre could not contain the portraits of your ancestors, they would overcrowd the quays.

Raoul

You rekindle all my hopes.

Vautrin

Do you wish to obtain Inez?

Raoul

By any means possible.

Vautrin

You will shrink from nothing? Magic and hell will not intimidate you?

Raoul

Hell is nothing, if it yields me paradise.

Vautrin What is hell but the hulks and the convicts decorated by justice and the police with brandings and manacles, and driven on their course by that wretchedness from which they have no escape? Paradise is a fine house, sumptuous carriages, delightful women, and the prestige of rank. In this world there exist two worlds. I put you in the fairest of them, I remain myself in the foulest, and if you remember me, it is all I ask of you.

Raoul While you make me shudder with horror, you fill me with the frenzy of delight.

Vautrin (slapping him on the shoulder)

You are a child! (Aside) Have I not said too much to him? (He rings.)

Raoul (aside) There are moments when my inmost nature revolts from the acceptance of his benefits. When he put his hand on my shoulder it was like a red-hot iron; and yet he has never done anything but good to me! He conceals from me the means, but the ends are all for me.

Vautrin

What are you saying there?

Raoul

I am resolved to accept nothing, unless my honor—

Vautrin We will take care of your honor! Is it not I who have fostered your sense of honor? Have I ever compromised it?

Raoul

You must explain to me—

Vautrin
I will explain nothing.

Raoul
Nothing?

Vautrin Did you not say, "By any possible means"? When Inez is once yours, does it matter what I have done, or who I am? You will take Inez away; you will travel. The Christoval family will protect the Prince of Arjos. (To Lafouraille) Put some bottles of champagne on ice; your master is to be married, he bids farewell to bachelor life. His friends are invited. Go and seek his mistresses, if there are any left! All shall attend the wedding—a general turn-out in full dress.

Raoul (aside)
His confidence terrifies me, but he is always right.

Vautrin
Now for the dinner!

All
Now for the dinner!

Vautrin Do not take your pleasure gloomily; laugh for the last time, while liberty is still yours; I will order none but Spanish wines, for they are in fashion to-day.

Curtain to the Third Act.

ACT IV

SCENE FIRST. (Drawing-room of the Duchesse de Christoval.) The Duchesse de Christoval and Inez.

Inez If Monsieur de Frescas is of obscure birth, mother, I will at once give him up; but you, on your part, must be good enough not to insist upon my marriage with the Marquis de Montsorel.

The Duchess If I oppose this unreasonable match, it is certainly not for the purpose of making another with a designing family.

Inez Unreasonable? Who knows whether it be so or not? You believe him to be an adventurer, I believe he is a gentleman, and we have nothing to refute either view.

The Duchess We shall not have to wait long for proofs; the Montsorels are too eager to unmask him.

Inez And he, I believe, loves me too much to delay proving himself worthy of us. Was not his behavior yesterday noble in the extreme?

The Duchess Don't you see, silly child, that your happiness is identical with mine? Let Raoul satisfy the world, and I shall be ready to fight for you not only against the intrigues of the Montsorels, but in the court of Spain, itself.

Inez

Ah, mother, I perceive that you also love him.

The Duchess

Is he not the man of your choice?

SCENE SECOND. The same persons, a footman and Vautrin.

(The footman brings the duchess a card, wrapped up and sealed.)

The Duchess (to Inez)

General Crustamente, the secret envoy of his Majesty Don Augustine I, Emperor of Mexico. What can he have to say to me?

Inez

Of Mexico! He doubtless brings news of my father!

The Duchess (to the footman)

Let him come in.

(Vautrin enters dressed like a Mexican general, his height increased four inches. His hat has white plumes; his coat blue, with the rich lace of a Mexican general officer; his trousers white, his scarf crimson, his hair long and frizzed like that of Murat; he wears a long sabre, and his complexion is copper-hued. He stutters like the Spaniards of Mexico, and his accent resembles Provencal, plus the guttural intonation of the Moors.)

Vautrin Is it indeed her grace, the Duchesse de Christoval that I have the honor to address?

The Duchess

Yes, sir.

Vautrin

And mademoiselle?

The Duchess

My daughter, sir.

Vautrin Mademoiselle is then the Senorita Inez, in her own right Princesse d'Arjos. When I see you, I understand perfectly Monsieur de Christoval's idolatry of his daughter. But, ladies, before anything further, let me impose upon you the utmost secrecy. My mission is already a difficult one, but, if it is suspected that there is any communication between you and me, we should all be seriously compromised.

The Duchess

I promise to keep secret both your name and your visit.

Inez General, if the matter concerns my father, you will allow me to remain here?

Vautrin

You are nobles, and Spaniards, and I rely upon your word.

The Duchess

I shall instruct my servants to keep silence on the subject.

Vautrin Don't say a word to them; to demand silence is often to provoke indiscreet talk. I can answer for my own people. I pledged myself to bring you news of Monsieur de Christoval, as soon as I reached Paris, and this is my first visit.

The Duchess

Tell us at once about my husband, general; where is he now?

Vautrin

Mexico has become what was sooner or later inevitable, a state independent of Spain. At the moment I speak there are no more Spaniards, only Mexicans, in Mexico.

The Duchess

At this moment?

Vautrin Everything seems to happen in a moment where the causes are not discerned. How could it be otherwise? Mexico felt the need of her independence, she has chosen an emperor! Although nothing could be more natural, it may still surprise us: while principles can wait to be recognized men are always in a hurry.

The Duchess

What has happened to Monsieur de Christoval?

Vautrin Do not be alarmed, madame; he is not emperor. His grace the duke has been unsuccessful, in spite of a desperate struggle, in keeping the kingdom loyal to Ferdinand VII.

The Duchess

But, sir, my husband is not a soldier.

Vautrin Of course he is not; but he is a clever loyalist, and he acquitted himself well. If he does eventually succeed, he will be received back again into royal favor. Ferdinand cannot help appointing him viceroy.

The Duchess

In what a strange century do we live!

Vautrin Revolutions succeed without resembling each other. France sets the example to the world. But let me beg of you not to talk politics; it is dangerous ground.

Inez

Has my father received our letters, general?

Vautrin In the confusion of such a conflict letters may go astray when even

...again in the confusion of such a conflict others may go away, when even crowns are lost.

The Duchess

And what has become of Monsieur de Christoval?

Vautrin The aged Amoagos, who exercises enormous influence in those regions, saved your husband's life at the moment I was going to have him shot
—

The Duchess and Inez

Ah!

Vautrin

It was thus that he and I became acquainted.

The Duchess

You, general?

Inez

And my father?

Vautrin Well, ladies, I should have been either hanged by him, as a rebel, or hailed by others as the hero of an emancipated nation, and here I am. The sudden arrival of Amoagos, at the head of his miners, decided the question. The safety of his friend, the Duc de Christoval, was the reward of his interference. Between ourselves, the Emperor Iturbide, my master, is no more than a figurehead; the future of Mexico is entirely in the hands of the aged Amoagos.

The Duchess And who, pray, is this Amoagos, the arbiter, as you say, of Mexico's destiny?

Vautrin Is he not known here? Is it possible? I do not know what can possibly

be found to weld the old and new worlds together. I suppose it will be steam. What is the use of exploiting gold mines, of being such a man as Don Inigo Juan Varago Cardaval de los Amoagos, las Frescas y Peral—and not be heard over here? But of course he uses only one of his names, as we all do; thus, I call myself simply Crustamente. Although you may be the future president of the Mexican republic, France will ignore you. The aged Amoagos, ladies, received Monsieur de Christoval just as the ancient gentleman of Aragon that he was would receive a Spanish grandee who had been banished for yielding to the spell of Napoleon's name.

Inez
Did you not mention Frescas among other names?

Vautrin Yes, Frescas is the name of the second mine worked by Don Cardaval; but you will learn all that monsieur the duke owes to his host from the letters I have brought you. They are in my pocket-book. (Aside) They are much taken by my aged Amoagos. (Aloud) Allow me to send for one of my people. (He signs Inez to ring. To the duchess) Permit me to say a few words to him. (To the footman) Tell my negro—but no, you won't understand his frightful patois. Make signs to him to come here.

The Duchess
My child, leave the room for a moment.

(Enter Lafouraille, made up as a negro, and carrying a large portmanteau.)

Vautrin (to Lafouraille)
Jigi roro flouri.

Lafouraille
Joro.

Inez (to Vautrin) The confidence my father has reposed in you ensures you a warm welcome; but, general, you have won my gratitude by your promptness in allaying our anxieties.

Vautrin Your gratitude! Ah, senorita, if we are to reckon accounts I should consider myself in debt to your illustrious father, after having the happiness to see you.

Lafouraille

Jo.

Vautrin

Caracas, y mouli joro, fistas, ip souri.

Lafouraille

Souri, joro.

Vautrin (to the ladies) Ladies, here are your letters. (Aside to Lafouraille) Go round from the antechamber to the court, close your lips, open your ears; hands off, eye on the watch.

Lafouraille

Ja, mein herr.

Vautrin (angrily)

Souri joro, fistas.

Lafouraille

Joro. (whispering) There are the de Langeac papers.

Vautrin I am not for the emancipation of the negroes! When there are no more of them, we shall have to do with whites.

Inez (to her mother)

INEZ (TO HER MOTHER)

Mother, allow me to go and read my father's letter. (To Vautrin)
General— (She bows.)

Vautrin

She is charming, may she be happy!

(Exit Inez, accompanied to the door by her mother.)

SCENE THIRD. The Duchess and Vautrin.

Vautrin (aside) If Mexico saw herself represented in this way, the government would be capable of condemning me to embassades for life. (Aloud) Pray excuse me, madame. I have so many things to think about.

The Duchess

If absent-mindedness may be excused in any one, it is in a diplomat.

Vautrin Yes, to civil diplomats, but I mean to remain a frank soldier. The success which I derive must be the result of candor. But now that we are alone, let us talk, for I have more than one delicate mission to discharge.

The Duchess

Have you any news which my daughter should not hear?

Vautrin It may be so. Let me come to the point; the senorita is young and beautiful, she is rich and noble born; she probably has four times as many suitors as any other lady. Her hand is the object of rivalry. Well, her father has charged me to find whether she has singled out any one in particular.

The Duchess With a frank man, general, I will be frank. Your question is so strange that I cannot answer it.

Vautrin Take care, for we diplomats, in our fear of being deceived, always put the worst interpretation on silence.

The Duchess

Sir, you forget that we are talking of Inez de Christoval!

Vautrin She is in love with no one. That is good; she will be able then to carry out the wishes of her father.

The Duchess

How has Monsieur de Christoval disposed of his daughter's hand?

Vautrin You see my meaning, and your anxiety tells me that she has made her choice. I tremble to ask further, as much as you do to answer. Ah! if only the young man whom your daughter loves were a foreigner, rich, apparently without family, and bent on concealing the name of his native land!

The Duchess The name, Frescas, which you lately uttered, is that of a young man who seeks the hand of Inez.

Vautrin

Does he call himself also Raoul?

The Duchess

Yes, Raoul de Frescas.

Vautrin A young man of refinement, elegance and wit, and twenty-three years of age?

The Duchess

Gifted with manners which are never acquired, but innate.

Vautrin Romantic to the point of desiring to be loved for his own sake, in spite

of his immense fortune; he wishes that passion should prevail in marriage—an absurdity! The young Amoagos, for it is he, madame.

The Duchess

But the name of Raoul is not—

Vautrin

Mexican—you are right. It was given to him by his mother, a Frenchwoman, an *emigree*, a De Granville, who came from St. Domingo. Is the reckless fellow favored by her?

The Duchess

Preferred to all the rest.

Vautrin Well, open this letter, and read it, madame; and you will see that I have received full authority from Amoagos and Christoval to conclude this marriage.

The Duchess

Oh, let me call in Inez, sir. (Exit.)

SCENE FOURTH.

Vautrin (alone) The major-domo is on my side, the genuine deeds, if he comes upon them, will be handed to me. Raoul is too proud to return to this house; besides that, he has promised me to wait. I am thus master of the situation; Raoul, when once he is a prince, will not lack ancestors; Mexico and I will see to that.

SCENE FIFTH. Vautrin, the Duchesse de Christoval and Inez.

The Duchess (to her daughter)

My child, you have reason to thank the general very warmly.

Inez To thank you, sir? My father tells me, that among other missions you have received is that of marrying me to a certain Signor Amoagos, without any regard to my inclinations.

Vautrin

You need not be alarmed, for his name here is Raoul de Frescas.

Inez

What! He, Raoul de Frescas!—why then his persistent silence?

Vautrin Does it need an old soldier to interpret the heart of a young man? He wished for love, not obedience; he wished—

Inez

Ah, general, I will punish him well for his modesty and distrust. Yesterday, he showed himself readier to swallow an affront than to reveal the name of his father.

Vautrin But, mademoiselle, I am still uncertain as to whether the name of his father is that of a man convicted of high treason, or of a liberator of America.

Inez

Ah! mother, do you hear that?

Vautrin (aside)

How she loves him! Poor girl, she does not deserve to be imposed upon.

The Duchess My husband's letter does in truth give you the full authority, general.

Vautrin

I have the authentic documents, and family deeds.

A footman (as he enters)

Will her grace the duchess see Monsieur de Frescas?

Vautrin (aside)

What! Raoul here?

The Duchess (to the footman)

Let him come in.

Vautrin (aside)

What a mess! The patient is liable to dose his doctor.

The Duchess Inez, you can see Monsieur de Frescas alone hereafter, since he has been acknowledged by your father.

(Inez kisses her mother's hand formally.)

SCENE SIXTH. The same persons, and Raoul.

(Raoul salutes the two ladies. Vautrin approaches him.)

Vautrin (to Raoul)

Don Raoul de Cardaval.

Raoul

Vautrin!

Vautrin

No! General Crustamente.

Raoul
Crustamente!

Vautrin Certainly, Mexican Envoy. Bear well in mind the name of your father, —Amoagos, a gentleman of Aragon, friend of the Duc de Christoval. Your mother is dead; I bring the acknowledged titles, and authentic family papers. Inez is yours.

Raoul
And do you think that I will consent to such villainies? Never!

Vautrin (to the two ladies) He is overcome by what I have told him, not anticipating so prompt an explanation.

Raoul If the truth should kill, your falsehoods would dishonor me, and I prefer to die.

Vautrin You wished to obtain Inez by any means possible, yet you shrink from practicing a harmless stratagem.

Raoul (in exasperation)
Ladies!

Vautrin He is beside himself with joy. (To Raoul) To speak out would be to lose Inez and deliver me to justice: do as you choose, I am at your disposal.

Raoul
O Vautrin! In what an abyss you have plunged me!

Vautrin I have made you a prince; and don't forget that you are at the summit of happiness. (Aside) He will give in. (Exit.)

SCENE SEVENTH. — RAOUL, VOUTRIN, INEZ, THE TWO LADIES.

SCENE SEVENTH. Inez (standing at the door through which her mother has passed); Raoul (at the other side of the stage).

Raoul (aside) Honor bids me to speak out, gratitude to keep silence; well, I accept my role of happy man, until he is out of danger; but I will write this evening, and Inez shall learn who I am. Vautrin, after such a sacrifice, I may cry quits with you; all ties between us are severed. I will seek, I care not where, a soldier's death.

Inez (approaching, after gazing at him) My father and yours are friends; they consent to our marriage; we make love to each other as if they were opposed to it, and you seem lost in thought, and almost sad!

Raoul You are right, and I have lost my reason. At the very moment you see no obstacle in our way, it is possible that insurmountable difficulties may arise.

Inez

Raoul, what a damper you are throwing on our happiness!

Raoul Our happiness! (Aside) It is impossible to dissemble. (Aloud) In the name of our common love I implore you to believe in my loyalty.

Inez Has not my confidence in you been boundless? And the general has quite justified it, even during your silence before the Montsorels. I forgive you all the little annoyances you were forced to cause me.

Raoul (aside) Ah! Vautrin! I trust myself to you! (Aloud) Inez, you do not know how great is the impression your words make upon me; they give me power to bear the overwhelming rapture your presence causes—Come then, let us be happy!

SCENE EIGHTH The same persons and the Marquis de Montsorel.

The footman (announcing a visitor)
Monsieur le Marquis de Montsorel.

Raoul (aside) Ah! That name recalls me to myself. (To Inez) Whatever happens, Inez, do not judge my conduct until I have myself given an account of it, and believe at the present moment that I am carried along by an invincible fatality.

Inez
Raoul, I cannot understand you; but I shall trust you always.

The Marquis (aside) Again this little gentleman here! (He salutes Inez.) I thought you were with your mother, mademoiselle, and I never dreamed my visit would be so inopportune. Be good enough to excuse me—

Inez
I beg that you will not go; there is no one but ourselves here, for Monsieur Raoul has been accepted by my family.

The Marquis
Will Monsieur Raoul de Frescas, then, accept my congratulations?

Raoul Your congratulations? I accept them (they shake hands) in the same spirit as that in which they are offered.

Inez (to Raoul) Manage that he go away, and do you remain. (To the Marquis) My mother requires me for a few moments, and I will return with her.

SCENE NINTH. The Marquis and Raoul; later, Vautrin.

The Marquis

Will you agree to a meeting without seconds—a fight to the death?

Raoul

Without seconds?

The Marquis

Do you realize that both of us cannot exist in the same world?

Raoul Your family is a powerful one; your proposition exposes me, in case I am victorious, to their vengeance. Allow me to say that I do not want to exchange this house for a prison. (Vautrin appears.) I will fight to the death—but not without seconds.

The Marquis

Will those on your side stop the duel?

Raoul

Our mutual hatred is sufficient guarantee against that.

Vautrin (aside) Well, now—we always commit some blunder in the moment of success! To the death! This child would gamble away his life as if it belonged to him.

The Marquis Very well, monsieur; to-morrow at eight o'clock, we meet at the terrace of Saint-Germain, and drive from there to the forest.

Vautrin (coming forward)

You will not go. (To Raoul) A duel? Are the principals of equal rank?

Is this gentleman, like you, the only son of a noble house? Would your father Don Inigo Juan Varago de los Amoagos de Cardaval las Frescas y Peral, allow you to do it, Raoul?

The Marquis I have consented to fight with an unknown man, but the greatness of the house to which the gentleman belongs cannot nullify the agreement.

Raoul (to the marquis) Nevertheless, it seems to me, monsieur, that we can treat each other with courtesy, and act like people who esteem each other too much to take the trouble to hate and to kill.

The Marquis (looking at Vautrin)
May I know the name of your friend?

Vautrin
By whom have I to honor to be referred to?

The Marquis
By the Marquis de Montsorel, sir.

Vautrin (eyeing him from head to foot) I have the right to refuse you, but I will tell you my name, once for all, in a very short time, and you won't repeat it. I am to be one of the seconds of Monsieur de Frescas. (Aside) And Buteux shall be the other.

SCENE TENTH. Raoul, Vautrin, the Marquis and the Duchesse de Montsorel; Later, the Duchesse de Christoval and Inez.

Footman (announcing a visitor)
Her grace the Duchesse de Montsorel.

Vautrin (to Raoul) Let me have no nonsense; be calm and firm! I stand face to face with the enemy.

The Marquis

Ah, mother dear, and are you come to witness my defeat? All is ended. The De Christoval family has trifled with us. This gentleman (he points to Vautrin) represents both families.

The Duchesse de Montsorel Then Raoul has a family? (The Duchesse de Christoval and her daughter enter and salute the speaker. To the Duchesse de Christoval) Madame, my son has told me what has occurred to frustrate all our hopes.

The Duchesse de Christoval The interest which yesterday you manifested in Monsieur de Frescas has, I see, changed to indifference?

The Duchesse de Montsorel (scrutinizing Vautrin)
Is it through this gentleman that all your doubts have been satisfied?
Who is he?

The Duchesse de Christoval He represents the father of Monsieur de Frescas, don Amoagos, and the father of Inez, Monsieur de Christoval. He has brought us the news we expected, and brought letters from my husband.

Vautrin (aside)
Am I to act this part long?

The Duchesse de Montsorel (to Vautrin) Doubtless you have known the family of Monsieur de Frescas for some time?

Vautrin
My acquaintance is limited to a father and an uncle—(to Raoul) You have not even the mournful satisfaction of remembering your mother. (To the Duchess) She died in Mexico, shortly after her marriage.

The Duchesse de Montsorel
Monsieur de Frescas, then, was born in Mexico?

Vautrin
Of course he was.

The Duchesse de Montsorel (to the Duchesse de Christoval) My dear, we are being imposed upon. (To Raoul) Sir, you did not come from Mexico. Your mother is not dead, is she? And have you not been abandoned since your childhood?

Raoul
Would that my mother were alive!

Vautrin Pardon me, madame, but I am here to satisfy your curiosity, if you wish to learn the secret history which it is not necessary you should seek from this gentleman. (To Raoul) Not a word!

The Duchesse de Montsorel It is he! And this man is making him the tool in some sinister undertaking. (She approaches the marquis) My son—

The Marquis You have put them out, mother, and I share your impression of this man (he indicated Vautrin); but only a woman has the right to express her thoughts in a way to expose this frightful imposture.

The Duchesse de Montsorel
Frightful indeed! But pray leave us.

The Marquis Ladies, in spite of my ill-fortune, do not blame me if I still have hopes. (To Vautrin) Often between the cup and the lip there is—

Vautrin
Death!

(Exit the Marquis, after exchanging bows with Raoul.)

The Duchesse de Montsorel (to the Duchesse de Christoval) My dear duchess, I implore you to excuse Inez. We cannot make our explanations before her.

The Duchesse de Christoval (to her daughter, making signs to her to leave the room)

I will rejoin you in a moment.

Raoul (kissing his hand to Inez)

This is perhaps good-bye forever!

(Exit Inez.)

SCENE ELEVENTH. The Duchesse de Christoval, the Duchesse de Montsorel, Raoul and Vautrin.

Vautrin (to the Duchesse de Christoval)

Do you suspect the motive that brings madame here?

The Duchesse de Christoval

After what happened yesterday I prefer not to say.

Vautrin

I guessed her love for him immediately.

Raoul (to Vautrin)

This atmosphere of falsehood stifles me.

Vautrin (to Raoul)

One word more, and the affair will be ended.

The Duchesse de Montsorel Madame. I know well how strange my present

THE DUCHESS DE MONTSOREL (Madame, I know well how strange my present conduct must appear to you, and I won't attempt to justify it. There are solemn duties before which the conventions and even the laws of society must give way. What is the character and what the powers of this man?

The Duchesse de Christoval (to whom Vautrin makes a signal)
I am forbidden to answer this question.

The Duchesse de Montsorel Well, I will tell you; this man is either the accomplice or the dupe in an imposture of which we are the victims. In spite of the letters and documents which he brings to you, I am convinced that all evidence which gives name and family to Raoul is false.

Raoul To tell the truth, madame, I do not know what right you have to interfere in personal matters of mine.

The Duchesse de Christoval Madame, you were wise to send out of the room my daughter and the marquis.

Vautrin (to Raoul) What right? (To the Duchesse de Montsorel) You need not avow it, for we divine it. I can well understand, madame, the pain you feel at the prospect of this marriage, and am not therefore offended at your suspicions with regard to me, and the authentic documents which I have brought to the Duchesse de Christoval. (Aside) Now for the final stroke. (He takes her aside) Before becoming a Mexican I was a Spaniard, and I know the cause of your hatred for Albert. And as to the motive which brings you here, we will talk about that very soon at the house of your confessor.

The Duchesse de Montsorel
You know?

Vautrin All. (Aside) She has some motive. (Aloud) Will you examine the documents?

The Duchesse de Christoval
Well, my dear?

The Duchesse de Montsorel Be quick, and send for Inez. Examine the deeds carefully, I implore you. This is the request of a despairing mother.

The Duchesse de Christoval
A despairing mother!

The Duchesse de Montsorel (to herself, looking at Raoul and Vautrin) How is it possible that this man should know my secret and have this hold upon my son?

The Duchesse de Christoval
Will you come, madame?

(Exeunt the two duchesses.)

SCENE TWELFTH. Raoul, Vautrin and later Lafouraille.

Vautrin
I thought our star was setting; but it is still in the ascendant.

Raoul Have I not been humbled sufficiently? I had nothing in the world but my honor, and that I gave into your keeping. Your power is infernal, I see that plainly. But from this very moment I withdraw from its influence. You are no longer in danger. Farewell.

Lafouraille (coming in while Raoul speaks) No one caught,—'twas lucky,—we had time! Ah, sir, *Philosopher* is below, all is lost! The house has been entered by the police.

Vautrin

Disgusting! And no one has been taken?

Lafouraille

We were too cute for that.

Vautrin

Philosopher is below, as what?

Lafouraille

As a footman.

Vautrin Good; let him get up behind my carriage. I want to give you my orders about locking up the Prince d'Arjos, who thinks he is going to fight a duel to-morrow.

Raoul I see that you are in danger. I will not leave you, and I desire to know
—

Vautrin Nothing. Do not worry about your own security. I will look out for you, in spite of you.

Raoul

Oh! I know what my future will be.

Vautrin

I too know.

Lafouraille

Come, things are getting hot.

Vautrin

Nay, the fat is in the fire.

Lafouraille No time for sentiment, or dilly-dallying, they are on our track and are mounted.

Vautrin Let us be off then. (He takes Lafouraille aside) If the government should do us the honor to billet its gendarmes on us, our duty is to let them alone. All are at liberty to scatter; but let all be at Mother Giroflee's at midnight. Get off post haste, for I do not wish us to meet our Waterloo, and the Prussians are upon us. We must run for it.

Curtain to the Fourth Act.

ACT V.

SCENE FIRST. (The scene is laid at the Montsorel house, in a room on the ground floor.)

Joseph (alone) The cursed white mark appears this evening on the wicket side of the garden. Things cannot go on long in this way; the devil only knows how it will end. I prefer seeing him there, however, rather than in the apartments; the garden is at least away from the house, and when the warning comes, one can walk out to meet him.

SCENE SECOND. Joseph, Lafouraille and Buteux; later, Vautrin.

(The humming sound of a voice is heard for a moment.)

Joseph

Joseph
There it is, our national air, which I never hear without trembling.
(Enter Lafouraille) And who are you? (Lafouraille makes a sign) A new
one coming?

Lafouraille
No, an old one.

Joseph
Oh, he whose mark is in the garden.

Lafouraille
Can he be waiting here? He intended to be here. (Buteux appears.)

Joseph
Why, there will be three of you.

Lafouraille (pointing to Joseph)
There will be four of us.

Joseph And what do you come to do at this hour? Do you want to snatch up
everything here?

Lafouraille
He takes us for thieves!

Buteux We prove that we can be, when we are down in our luck; but we
never say so.

Lafouraille
That is, we make money, like other people.

Joseph
But his grace the duke is going—

Lafouraille Your duke cannot return home before two o'clock, and that gives us time enough: do not therefore interlard with anxious thought the professional dish which we have to serve—

Buteux
And serve hot.

(Vautrin wears a brown coat, blue trousers, and a black waistcoat. His hair is short and he is got up as an imitation of Napoleon in undress. As he enters he abruptly puts out the candle and draws the slide of his dark lantern.)

Vautrin What! You have lights here! You think yourselves still members of respectable society. I can understand that this fool should ignore the first elements of sane conduct—but you others! (To Buteux, as he points out Joseph to him) Put wool in this fellow's ears, and talk with him over there. (To Lafouraille) And what of the youngster?

Lafouraille
He is kept well out of sight.

Vautrin
In what place?

Lafouraille
In the other rookery of Giroflee's woman, near here, behind the Invalides.

Vautrin
And see that he does not escape like that slippery eel of a Saint-Charles, that madman, who came for the purpose of breaking up our establishment—for I—but I never threaten.

Lafouraille Upon the youngster's safety I will stake my head! Philosopher has put buskins on his hands and frills on his feet, he cannot stir hand or foot, and will be given up only to me. As for the other, who could help it? Poor Giroflee cannot resist strong liquors, and Blondet knew it.

Vautrin

What did Raoul say?

Lafouraille

He made a terrible uproar; and swore he was disgraced. Fortunately Philosopher is insensible to metaphors.

Vautrin Do you think the boy wishes for a fight to the death? A young man is fearful; he has the courage to conceal his terror and the folly to allow himself to be killed. I hope they prevent him from writing to any one.

Lafouraille (aside)

We are in for it! (Aloud) I can conceal nothing from you, before he was fastened up the prince sent little Nini with a letter to the Christoval house.

Vautrin

To Inez?

Lafouraille

To Inez.

Vautrin

He wrote a lot of rubbish, I'll warrant.

Lafouraille

A pack of lies and absurdities.

Vautrin (to Joseph)

Hello there! You—the honest man.

Buteux (leading Joseph to Vautrin)

You had better explain things to the master, as he desires.

Joseph It seems to me that I am not unreasonable to ask what risk I am to run, and what profit is to accrue to me.

Vautrin Time is short, speech long, let us employ the former and drop the latter. There are two lives in peril, that of a man I am interested in, and that of a musketeer which I consider useless: we are going to crush him.

Joseph What! Do you mean monsieur the marquis? I will have nothing to do with it.

Lafouraille

You have no say in the matter of your consent.

Buteux

We have captured him. Look you, my friend, when the wine is drawn—

Joseph

If it is bad, it must not be drunk.

Vautrin And you refuse to pledge me in a glass? He who thinks calculates, and he who calculates betrays.

Joseph

Your calculations lead to the scaffold.

Vautrin Enough! You tire me. Your master is to fight a duel to-morrow. In this duel one of the combatants will never leave the ground alive; imagine that the

duel has taken place, and that your master has had no fair chance.

Buteux
That is just it.

Lafouraille
The master is as deep as fate.

Joseph
A fine condition to be in.

Buteux
The devil to pay and no pitch hot!

Vautrin (to Joseph, pointing out Lafouraille and Buteux)
You will conceal these two.

Joseph
Where?

Vautrin I tell you, you must conceal them. When all are asleep in the house, excepting us, you must send them up to the musketeer's room. (To Buteux and Lafouraille) Try to go there without him; you must be cautious and adroit; the window of his room overlooks the court. (Whispers in their ears) Throw him down. It will be a case of despair (turning to Joseph), and suicide will be a ground for averting suspicion from all.

SCENE THIRD.

Vautrin (alone) All is saved! There is only one suspect among us, and I will change that state of affairs. Blondet is the traitor, and in this case bad debts will make good friends, for I will point him out to the duke in a friendly manner

as the murderer of Vicomte de Langeac. I must finally discover the motive of the duchess's singular behavior. If what I learn explains the suicide of the marquis, what a master stroke it will be!

SCENE FOURTH. Joseph and Vautrin.

Joseph Your men are well concealed, but you doubtless intend to leave the house?

Vautrin

No, I am going to do some reading in the study of the Duc de Montsorel.

Joseph

But if he comes home, won't you be afraid?

Vautrin

If I feared anything, would I be master of you all?

Joseph

But where are you going?

Vautrin

You are very curious.

SCENE FIFTH.

Joseph (alone) There, he is disposed of for the moment, his two fellows likewise; I hold them, and, as I don't want to have anything to do with the affair, I am going—

SCENE SIXTH Joseph, a footman; and afterwards Saint-Charles.

The footman

Monsieur Joseph, some one is asking for you.

Joseph

At this hour?

Saint-Charles

It is I.

Joseph (to the footman)

You may go.

Saint-Charles His grace the duke cannot come home until after the king's retirement for the night. The duchess is on her way home. I wish to speak to her privately and wait for her here.

Joseph

Here?

Saint-Charles

Here.

Joseph (aside)

O my God! And Jacques—

Saint-Charles

If it inconveniences you—

Joseph

Not in the least.

Saint-Charles

Tell me the truth, you are expecting some one?

Joseph

I am expecting the duchess.

Saint-Charles

And not Jacques Collin?

Joseph

Oh! don't talk to me about that man, you make me shudder.

Saint-Charles Collin is mixed up with some business that might bring him here. You must have seen him lately. I have no time to pump you, and I have no need to bribe, but you must choose between him and me, and pretty quickly, too.

Joseph

What do you require of me?

Saint-Charles

To tell me everything that takes place here.

Joseph Well, the latest thing is the duel of the marquis; he fights to-morrow with Monsieur de Frescas.

Saint-Charles

What next?

Joseph

I see her grace the duchess has just returned.

SCENE SEVENTH.

Saint-Charles (alone) What a timid beast he is! This duel is a capital excuse for speaking with the duchess. The duke did not understand me, he saw in me nothing but a tool, to be taken up and dropped at pleasure. Did he not, by imposing silence upon me towards his wife, betray his suspicion that I was dangerous to him? The patrimony of the strong is the faculty of utilizing the faults of a neighbor. I have already devoured several patrimonies, and my appetite is still good.

SCENE EIGHTH. Saint-Charles, the Duchesse de Montsorel and Mademoiselle de Vaudrey.

(Saint-Charles disappears till the two ladies have passed, and remains at the back, while they come to the front of the stage.)

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey
You are quite worn out.

The Duchesse de Montsorel (sinking into an armchair)
Yes; I am dead! In despair—

Saint-Charles (coming forward)
Madame the duchess.

The Duchess Ah! I had forgotten! Sir, it is impossible at this moment to grant you the interview you ask. To-morrow—or later in the day.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey (to Saint-Charles)
My niece, sir, is not in a condition to listen to you.

Saint-Charles

To-morrow, ladies, it will be too late! The life of your son, the Marquis de Montsorel, who fights a duel to-morrow with Monsieur de Frescas, is threatened.

The Duchess

The duel is indeed a frightful thing.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey (in a low tone to the duchess)

You have already forgotten that Raoul is a stranger to you.

The Duchess (to Saint-Charles)

Sir, my son will know how to acquit himself.

Saint-Charles May I venture to inform you of facts which ordinarily would be kept from a mother? Your son will be killed without any fighting. His adversary's servants are bravoës, wretches of whom he is the ringleader.

The Duchess

And what proof have you of this?

Saint-Charles A former steward of Monsieur de Frescas has offered me a vast sum if I would join in this foul conspiracy against the Christoval family. In order to make time, I pretended to assent; but just as I was on my way to warn the authorities, I was dashed to the ground by two men who came by at full speed, and I lost consciousness; they administered to me in this condition a powerful narcotic, thrust me into a cab, and when I came to myself, I was in a den of criminals. Recovering my self-possession, I escaped from my confinement, and set out to track these dare-devils.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey You sometimes come here to see Monsieur de Montsorel, according to what Joseph tells us?

Saint-Charles

Yes, madame.

The Duchess

And who, pray, may you be, sir?

Saint-Charles I am a private detective, whom his grace the duke distrusts, and I am hired for clearing up mysterious occurrences.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey (to the duchess)

O Louise!

The Duchess (fixing her eyes on Saint-Charles)

And who has had the impertinence to send you to address me?

Saint-Charles A sense of your danger brings me here. I am paid to be your enemy. You can keep silence as well as I; prove that your protection is more advantageous to me than the hollow promises of the duke, and I can assure you the victory. But time presses, the duke will soon be here, and if he finds us together, the success of our undertaking would be endangered.

The Duchess (to Mademoiselle de Vaudrey) Ah! we may still hope! (To Saint-Charles) And what were you going to do at the house of Monsieur de Frescas?

Saint-Charles

That which, at present, I am doing at yours.

The Duchess

Silence, sir.

Saint-Charles Your grace has given me no answer; the duke has my word, and he is very powerful.

The Duchess And I, sir, am immensely rich; but do not expect to take advantage of me. (She rises) I will never be the dupe of Monsieur de Montsorel, I recognize his trickery in this secret interview, which you had asked for. (With emphasis) Let me complete your information. Monsieur de Frescas is not a wretch; his servants are not assassins; he belongs to a family as rich as it is noble, and he is about to marry the Princesse d'Arjos.

Saint-Charles Yes, madame, a Mexican envoy has produced letters from Monsieur de Christoval, and documents remarkably authentic. You have sent for a secretary of the Spanish legation, who has endorsed them: seals, stamps, authentications—ah! all are flawless.

The Duchess

Yes, sir, the documents are unassailable.

Saint-Charles

You are very much interested, madame, in their being proved forgeries, I presume?

The Duchess (to Mademoiselle de Vaudrey)

Never has such torture as this wrung the heart of a mother!

Saint-Charles (aside)

Whose side shall I take, husband's or wife's?

The Duchess

Sir, any sum you may ask shall be yours, if you can prove to me that Monsieur Raoul de Frescas—

Saint-Charles

Is a criminal?

The Duchess

No, but a child—

Saint-Charles

You mean your child, don't you?

The Duchess (forgetting herself)

Yes, yes! Be my deliverer, and I will be your eternal protector. (To Mademoiselle de Vaudrey) Ah me! What have I said? (To Saint-Charles) Where is Raoul?

Saint-Charles He has disappeared, and this steward of his, who procured the forged deeds in Rue Oblin, and doubtless played the part of the Mexican envoy, is one of the most astute of criminals. (The duchess starts.) Oh, you need not be alarmed; he is too clever to shed blood; but he is more formidable than those who shed it recklessly; and such a man is the guardian of Raoul.

The Duchess

My whole fortune for his life!

Saint-Charles I am for you, madame. (Aside) I know all, and can choose which side I like.

SCENE NINTH. The same persons, the Duc de Montsorel and a footman.

The Duke Ah, well you are getting your own way; there is talk of nothing else but the fortune and coming marriage of Monsieur de Frescas; but of course he can claim a family. (Whispers to the Duchesse de Montsorel) He has a mother. (Perceiving Saint-Charles) What! You here, chevalier, and with the duchess?

Saint-Charles (taking the duke aside) Your grace will approve of what I have

Saint-Charles (taking the duke aside) Your grace will approve of what I have done. (Aloud) You have been at the palace and I thought it necessary to warn the duchess of the danger which threatens her only son, the marquis; he is likely to be murdered.

The Duke
Murdered!

Saint-Charles
But your grace will listen to my advice—

The Duke Come into my study, my friend, and let us at once take steps to avert this catastrophe.

Saint-Charles (exchanging a look of intelligence with the duchess) I have strange things to tell your grace. (Aside) I am certainly going to take the duke's part.

SCENE TENTH. The Duchess, Mademoiselle de Vaudrey and Vautrin.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey
If Raoul is your son, how vile is the company he keeps.

The Duchess
An angel would purify hell itself.

(Vautrin half opens with caution a French casement that leads to the garden, where he has been listening to the preceding conversation.)

Vautrin (aside)
I know all. Two brothers cannot fight a duel. Ah, here is my duchess!
(Aloud) Ladies!

(A loud) Ladies:

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey
A man! Help! Help!

The Duchess
It is he!

Vautrin (to the duchess)
Silence! Women can do nothing but cry out. (To Mademoiselle de Vaudrey) Mademoiselle de Vaudrey, run to the chamber of the marquis. Two infamous murderers are there; be quick, before they cut out his throat. But let the wretches be seized without making a disturbance. (To the duchess) Stay where you are, madame.

The Duchess
Go, dear aunt; have no fear for me.

Vautrin (aside) My rascals will be vastly surprised. What will they think? This is the way I bring down judgment upon them.

(A noise is heard.)

SCENE ELEVENTH. The Duchess and Vautrin.

The Duchess The whole house is in commotion! What will be said, when it is known that I am here?

Vautrin
Let us hope that the foundling will be saved.

The Duchess
But you are known here, and the duke is with—

Vautrin

The Chevalier de Saint-Charles. I am imperturbed; you will defend me.

The Duchess

I?

Vautrin

Yes, you. Or you will never again see your son, Fernand de Montsorel.

The Duchess

Raoul is undoubtedly my son then?

Vautrin He is—I hold in my possession complete proofs of your innocence, and —your son.

The Duchess

You! You shall not leave me until—

SCENE TWELFTH. The same persons and Mademoiselle de Vaudrey on one side of the stage, Saint-Charles on the other, and domestics.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey

Here he is! (To Vautrin) Begone! At once!

The Duchess (to Mademoiselle de Vaudrey)

You are ruining everything.

Saint-Charles (to the servants) Behold their ringleader and accomplice!

Whatever he may say, seize him!

The Duchess (to the company)

I command you to leave me alone with this man.

Vautrin

What is it, chevalier?

Saint-Charles

You are a puzzle to me, baron.

Vautrin (whispering to the duchess) You behold in this man the murderer of the viscount whom you loved so well.

The Duchess

He the murderer?

Vautrin (to the duchess) Let him be closely watched, or he will slip through your fingers like money.

The Duchess

Joseph!

Vautrin (to Joseph)

What happened upstairs?

Joseph His lordship the marquis drew his sword, and being attacked from the rear, defended himself, and was twice slightly wounded. His grace the duke is with him now.

The Duchess (to her aunt)

Return to Albert's room, I implore you. (To Joseph, pointing out Saint-Charles) I shall hold you responsible for this man's detention.

Vautrin (to Joseph)

So shall I.

Saint-Charles (to Vautrin)

I see the situation, you have got ahead of me.

Vautrin

I bear no malice towards you, my dear fellow.

Saint-Charles (to Joseph)

Take me before the duke.

(Exeunt.)

SCENE THIRTEENTH. Vautrin and the Duchess.

Vautrin (aside)

He has a father, an ancestral family, a mother. What a climax! In whom shall I henceforth find an interest? Whom shall I be able to love?

After ten years of paternity, the loss is irreparable.

The Duchess (approaching Vautrin)

What is it?

Vautrin What is it? It is, that I can never give back to you your son, madame; it is, that I do not feel brave enough to survive his separation from me, nor his contempt for me. The loss of such as Raoul is irretrievable! My life has been bound up in his.

The Duchess But could he feel affection for you, you a criminal whom one could at any moment give up—

Vautrin To justice do you mean? I thought you would have been more tender. But you do not, I perceive, see the abyss in which I am dragging you, your son and the duke— and which all descend in company

on that the duke, and which all descend in company.

The Duchess

Oh! What have you made of my poor child?

Vautrin

A man of honor.

The Duchess

And he loves you?

Vautrin

He loves me still.

The Duchess But has that wretch spoken the truth in revealing what you are and whence you come?

Vautrin

Yes, madame.

The Duchess

And have you taken care of my son?

Vautrin Your son, our son—yes—have you not perceived that he is as pure as an angel?

The Duchess Ah, may you receive a blessing for what you have done! May the world pardon you! Oh God! (she kneels) The voice of a mother must reach Thee, forgive, forgive this man. (She looks at Vautrin.) My tears shall bathe his hands! Oh! grant that he may repent! (Turning to Vautrin) You belong to me; I will change you! But people are deceived, you are no criminal, and, whatever you are, all mothers will give you their absolution!

Vautrin

Come, it is time to restore her son to her.

The Duchess Did you still harbor the horrible thought of refusing him to his mother? But I have waited for him for two and twenty years.

Vautrin And I, have I not been for ten years his father? Raoul is my very soul! Let me endure anguish, let men heap shame upon me; if he is happy and crowned with honor, I shall see it and my life will once more be bright.

The Duchess

I am overwhelmed. He loves like a mother.

Vautrin The only tie that binds me to the world, to life, is this bright link, purer than gold.

The Duchess

And—without stain?

Vautrin Ah! People know themselves only in their virtues, and are austere for others alone. But in myself I see but infamy—in him the heart of honor. And yet was he found by me on the highroad from Toulon to Marseilles, the route of the convict. He was twelve years old, without bread, and in rags.

The Duchess

Bare-foot, it may be?

Vautrin

Yes. But beautiful, with curly hair—

The Duchess

It was thus you saw him?

Vautrin

Poor angel, he was crying. I took him with me.

The Duchess

And you brought him up?

Vautrin

I stole the means to do so.

The Duchess

I should, perhaps, myself have done the like.

Vautrin

I did more!

The Duchess

He must have suffered much.

Vautrin Never! I concealed from him the means I took to make his life happy and easy. I would not let him even suspect them—it would have blighted him. You may ennoble him by parchments, I have made him noble in heart.

The Duchess

And he was my son!

Vautrin Yes, a son full of nobility, of winning grace, of high instincts; he needed but to have the way made clear to him.

The Duchess (wringing the hand of Vautrin) You must needs be great indeed, who have so well performed a mother's task!

Vautrin And better than you mothers do! Often you love your babes amiss—Ah, you will spoil him for me even now!—He was of reckless courage; he wished to be a soldier, and the Emperor would have accepted him. I showed him the world and made him understand its true light. Yet now he is about to

him the world and mankind under their true light—yet now he is about to renounce me—

The Duchess
My son ungrateful?

Vautrin
NO, 'tis mine I speak of.

The Duchess
Oh! give him back to me this very instant!

Vautrin
I and those two men upstairs—are we not all liable to prosecution?
And ought not the duke to give us assurance of silence and release?

The Duchess
Those two men then are your agents? And you came—

Vautrin But for me, of the two, natural and lawful son, there would not, in a few hours, have survived but one child. And they might perchance both have fallen—each by the other's hand.

The Duchess
Ah! you are a providence of horror!

Vautrin
What would you have had me do?

SCENE FOURTEENTH. The same persons, the Duke, Lafouraille, Buteux, Saint-Charles, and all the domestics.

The Duke (pointing to Vautrin) Seize him! (Pointing to Saint-Charles) And

The Duke (pointing to Vautrin) Seize him! (Pointing to Saint-Charles) And obey no one but this gentleman.

The Duchess But you owe to him the life of your Albert! It was he who gave the alarm.

The Duke
He!

Buteux (to Vautrin)

Ah! you have betrayed us! Why did you bring us here?

Saint-Charles (to the duke)
Does your grace hear them?

Lafouraille (to Buteux)

Cannot you keep silence? Have we any right to judge him?

Buteux
And yet he condemns us!

Vautrin (to the duke) I would inform your grace that these two men belong to me, and I claim possession of them.

Saint-Charles

Why, these are the domestics of Monsieur de Frescas!

Vautrin (to Saint-Charles)

Steward of the Langeacs, hold your tongue! (He points to Lafouraille)
This is Philip Boulard. (Lafouraille bows.) Will your grace kindly send every one out of the room?

The Duke

What! Do you dare give your orders in my house?

The Duchess

Ah! sir, he is master here.

The Duke

What! This wretch?

Vautrin If his grace the duke wishes to have an audience present we will proceed to talk of the son of Dona Mendes.

The Duke

Silence!

Vautrin

Whom you are passing off as the son of—

The Duke

Once more I say, silence!

Vautrin Your grace perceives, evidently, that there are too many people within hearing.

The Duke

All of you begone!

Vautrin (to the duke) Set a watch on every outlet from your house, and let no one leave it, excepting these two men. (To Saint-Charles) Do you remain here. (He draws a dagger and cuts the cords by which Lafouraille and Buteux are bound.) Take yourselves off by the postern; here is the key, and go to the house of mother Giroflee. (To Lafouraille) You must send Raoul to me.

Lafouraille (as he leaves the room)

Oh! our veritable emperor.

Vautrin

You shall receive money and passports.

Buteux (as he goes out)

After all, I shall have something for Adele!

The Duke

But how did you learn all these facts?

Vautrin (handing some documents to the duke)

These are what I took from your study.

The Duke These comprise my correspondence, and the letters of the duchess to the Viscount de Langeac.

Vautrin

Who was shot at Mortagne, October, 1792, through the kind efforts of Charles Blondet, otherwise known as the Chevalier de Saint-Charles.

Saint-Charles

But your grace very well knows—

Vautrin It was he himself who gave me these papers, among which you will notice the death certificate of the viscount, which proves that he and her grace the duchess never met after the Tenth of August, for he had then left the Abbaye for the Vendee, accompanied by Boulard, who seized the moment to betray and murder him.

The Duke

And so Fernand—

Vautrin

The Duke "The Chevalier de Saint-Charles."

The child sent to Sardinia is undoubtedly your son.

The Duke
And her grace the duchess—

Vautrin
Is innocent.

The Duke
My God! (He sinks back into an armchair.) What have I done?

The Duchess
What a horrible proof—his death! And the assassin stands before us.

Vautrin Monsieur le Duc de Montsorel, I have been a father to Fernand, and I have just saved your two sons, each from the sword of the other; you alone are the author of all this complication.

The Duchess Stop! I know him better than you do, and he suffers at this moment all that I have suffered during twenty years. In the name of mercy, where is my son?

The Duke
What, Raoul de Frescas?

Vautrin Fernand de Montsorel is on his way here. (To Saint-Charles) And what do you say about all this?

Saint-Charles
You are a hero; let me be your servant.

Vautrin
You are ambitious. Would you follow me?

Saint-Charles

Anywhere.

Vautrin

I can well believe it.

Saint-Charles Ah! what a master mind you obtain in me, and what a loss to the government!

Vautrin

Go; and wait for me at the bureau of passports.

(Exit Saint-Charles.)

SCENE FIFTEENTH. The same persons, the Duchesse de Christoval, Inez and Mademoiselle de Vaudrey.

Mademoiselle de Vaudrey

Here they are!

The Duchesse de Christoval My daughter, madame, has received a letter from Monsieur Raoul, in which this noble young man declares that he would rather give up Inez, than deceive us; he has related his whole life's history. He is to fight a duel with your son to-morrow, and as Inez is the involuntary cause of this duel we are come to prevent it; for it is now entirely without ground or reason.

The Duchesse de Montsorel

There will be no duel, madame.

Inez

He will live then!

The Duchesse de Montsorel
And you shall marry the Marquis de Montsorel, my child.

SCENE SIXTEENTH. The same persons, Raoul and Lafouraille. (The last named does not tarry.)

Raoul (to Vautrin)
What! Would you imprison me to prevent my fighting a duel?

The Duke
With your brother?

Raoul
My brother?

The Duke
Yes.

The Duchesse de Montsorel
You are, then, really my child! (She embrace Raoul.) Ladies, this is
Fernand de Montsorel, my son, the—

The Duke (taking Raoul by the hand, and interrupting his wife) The eldest son,
who was carried off from us in childhood. Albert is now no more than Comte
de Montsorel.

Raoul
For three days I have been in a dream! You, my mother! You, sir—

The Duke
Your father—yes!

Raoul

Among the very people who asked me to name my family—

Vautrin

Your family has been found.

Raoul

And—are you still to have a place in my life?

Vautrin (to the Duchesse de Montsorel) What shall I say to you? (to Raoul) Remember, my lord marquis, that I have, in advance, absolved you from all charge of ingratitude. (To the duchess) The child will forget me; will the mother also?

The Duchesse de Montsorel

Never.

The Duke

But what are the misfortunes that plunged you into so dark an abyss?

Vautrin

Can any one explain misfortune?

The Duchesse de Montsorel

Dear husband, is it not in your power to obtain his pardon?

The Duke

The sentences under which he has served are irreversible.

Vautrin That word reconciles me to you, it is a statesman's word. Your grace should explain that transportation is the last expedient to which you can resort in overcoming us.

Raoul
Monsieur—

Vautrin
You are wrong; I am not even monsieur at present.

Inez I think I understand that you are an outlaw, that my friend owes you a vast debt, and cannot discharge it. Beyond the sea, I have extensive lands, which require a man's energy for their right administration; you shall go and exercise there your talents, and become—

Vautrin Rich, under a new name? Child, can you not realize that in this world there are pitiless necessities? Yes, I could acquire a fortune, but who will give me the opportunity? (To the duke) The king could at your grace's intercession grant me a pardon, but who then would take my hand in his?

Raoul
I would!

Vautrin Ah! It was this I waited for before taking leave. You now have a mother. Farewell!

SCENE SEVENTEENTH. The same persons, a police officer, guards and servants.

(The window casements are flung open; and an officer enters; at the back of the stage are gendarmes.)

The officer (to the duke) In the name of the king, of the law, I arrest Jacques Collin, convicted of having broken—

(All persons present fling themselves between the armed force and

(All persons presenting themselves between the armed force and Jacques, in order to give him opportunity for escaping.)

The Duke

Gentlemen, I take upon myself—

Vautrin In your grace's house the justice of the king must have free course.

The matter lies between these gentlemen and me. (To the officer) I will follow you. (To the duchess) It was Joseph who brought the police; he is one of us; discharge him.

Raoul

Are we separated forever?

Vautrin You will marry very shortly. Within a year, on a day of christening, scan carefully the faces of the poor at the church door; one will be there who wishes to be certain of your happiness. Till then, adieu. (To the officer) It is time for us to be moving.

Final Curtain.

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