

POETRY.

THE MOTHER'S PRAYER. A mother's holy arm caressed A babe that laughed upon her breast. Then thus to heaven she cried in prayer: "Now, even as his face is fair, Oh, Lord! keep Thou his soul within As free from any spot of sin."

SELECT STORY.

COUNT OF MONTE-CRISTO.

REVENGE OF EDMOND DANTES.

CHAPTER XLVII.

MAXIMILIAN.

"Do not alarm yourself, sir, justice will be done," said Villefort. "My father has revealed the culprit's name; my father thirsts for revenge as much as you do, yet he conjures you as I do to keep this secret. Do you not, father?"

"Yes," resolutely replied Noirtier.

"Oh, sir," said Villefort, arresting Maximilian by the arm, "if my father, the inflexible man, makes this request, it is because he knows, he is assured, that Valentine will be terribly avenged. Is it not so, father?"

"The old man made a sign in the affirmative. Villefort continued: "He knows me, and I have pledged my word to him. Rest assured, gentlemen, that within three days, in a less than time than justice would demand, the revenge I shall have taken for the murder of my child will be such as to make the boldest heart tremble; and as he spoke these words he ground his teeth and grasped the old man's senseless hand."

"Will this promise be fulfilled, M. Noirtier?" asked Morrel.

"Yes," replied Noirtier, with an expression of sinister joy.

"Swear, then," said Villefort, joining the hands of Morrel and d'Arigny "swear that you will spare the honor of my house, and leave me to avenge my child."

d'Arigny turned round and uttered a very feeble "Yes," but Morrel, denegating his hand, rolled down his cheeks. Villefort went to his study, and d'Arigny left with his own, hurriedly left, uttering a long deep groan of despair and anguish. He was before stated that all the servants had fled. M. de Villefort was, therefore, obliged to request M. d'Arigny to supplant all these arrangements consequent upon a death in a large city, more especially a death under such suspicious circumstances. It was something terrible to witness the silent agony, the mute despair of M. Noirtier, whose tears silently rolled down his cheeks. Villefort went to his study, and d'Arigny left to summon the doctor of the mayoralty, whose office it is to examine the bodies after death. At the end of a quarter of an hour M. d'Arigny returned in his associate; they found the outer gate closed, and not a servant remaining in the house; Villefort himself was obliged to open it. But he stopped on the landing; he had not the courage to revisit the room of death. The two doctors, therefore, entered the room alone. The district doctor approached with the indifference of a man accustomed to spend half his time amongst the dead; he then lifted the sheet which was placed over the face, and just unrolled the lips.

"Alas!" said d'Arigny, "she is indeed dead, poor child! You can leave."

"Yes," answered the doctor laconically, dropping the sheet he had raised. Noirtier uttered a kind of howl, rattling sound; the old man's eyes sparkled, and the good doctor understood that he wished to behold his child. He therefore approached the bed, and while his companion was dipping the fingers with which he had touched the lips of the corpse in chloride of lime, he uncovered that calm and pale face, which looked like that of a sleeping angel. A tear, which appeared in the old man's eye, expressed his thanks to the doctor. The doctor of the dead then laid his report on the corner of the table, and, having executed his office, was conducted out by d'Arigny. Villefort met them at the door of his study; having in a few words thanked the district doctor, he returned to d'Arigny and said:

"And now the priest?"

"Is there any particular priest you wish to pray with Valentine?" asked d'Arigny.

"No," said Villefort; "fetch the nearest."

"The nearest," said the district doctor, "is a good Italian abbe, who lives next door to you. Shall I call on him as I pass?"

"d'Arigny," said Villefort, "be so kind as to accompany this gentleman. Here is the key of the door, so that you can go in and out as you please; you will bring the priest with you, and will oblige me by introducing him into my child's room."

"I only wish to be alone. You will excuse me, will you not? A priest can not understand a father's grief."

"As the doctors entered the street, they saw a man in a cassock standing on the threshold of the next door. "This is the abbe of whom I spoke," said the doctor to d'Arigny. d'Arigny accented the priest. "Sir," said he, "are you disposed to confer a great obligation on an unhappy father who has just lost his daughter? I mean M. de Villefort, the proctor."

"Ah!" said the priest, in a marked Italian accent, "yes, I have heard that death is in that house."

"Then I need not tell you what kind of service he requires of you."

"I was about to offer myself, sir," said the priest; it is our mission to forestall our duties."

"I know it, sir; the servants who fled from the house informed me. I also know that her name is Valentine, and I have already prayed for her."

"Thank you, sir," said d'Arigny; "since you have commenced your sacred office, deign to continue it. Come and

watch by the dead, and all the wretched family will be grateful to you." "I am going, sir; and I do not hesitate to say that no prayers will be more fervent than mine." d'Arigny took the priest's hand, and without meeting Villefort, who was engaged in his study, they reached Valentine's room, which on the following night was to be occupied by the undertakers. On entering the room, Noirtier's eyes met those of the abbe, and no doubt he read some peculiar expression in them. In order, doubtless, that he might not be disturbed while fulfilling his sacred mission, the priest, as soon as d'Arigny departed, rose, and not only bolted the door through which the doctor had just left, but also that leading to Mme. de Villefort's room.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

DANGLERS' SIGNATURE.

The next morning rose sad and cloudy. During the night the undertakers had executed their melancholy office, and folded the corpse in the winding-sheet, which, whatever may be said about the equality of death, is at least a last proof of the luxury so pleasing in life. This winding sheet was nothing more than a beautiful piece of cambric, which the young girl had bought a fortnight before. During the evening two men, engaged for the purpose, had carried Noirtier from his room into his own, and contrary to all expectation there was no difficulty in withdrawing him from his child. The abbe Bussi had watched till daylight, and then left without calling any one. d'Arigny returned about eight o'clock in the morning; he met Villefort on his way to Noirtier's room, and accompanied him to see how the old man had slept. They found him in the large armchair, which served him for a bed, enjoying a calm, nay, almost a smiling sleep. They both stood in amazement at the door.

"See," said d'Arigny to Villefort, "nature knows how to alleviate the deepest sorrow. No one can say M. Noirtier did not love his child, and yet he sleeps."

"Yes, you are right," replied Villefort, "but he sleeps in peace. And this is the more strange, since the least contradiction keeps him awake all night."

"Grief has stunned him," replied d'Arigny; and they both returned thoughtfully to the study.

"See, I have filled three papers and have made out the accusation against the assassin Benedetto. Oh, work! work! my passion, my joy, my delight! it is for thee to alleviate my sorrows!" and he convulsively grasped the hand of d'Arigny.

"Do you require my services now?" asked d'Arigny.

"No," said Villefort; only return again at eleven o'clock; at twelve—the oh, heavens! my poor, poor child!" and the proctor did not again become a man, lifted up his eyes and groaned.

"Shall you be present in the reception room?"

"No; I have a cousin who has undertaken this sad office. I shall work, doctor—when I work I forget everything."

And, indeed, no sooner had the doctor left the room, than he was again absorbed in study. On the doorstep d'Arigny met the cousin whom Villefort had mentioned, a personage as insignificant in our story as in the world he occupied—one of those beings removed from their birth to make themselves useful to others. At twelve o'clock the mourning coaches rolled into the paved court, and the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré was filled with a crowd of idlers, of the mourning of the festivities of the mourning of the funeral procession as to the marriage of a duchess. Gradually the reception room filled, and some of our old friends appeared—our dear Debray, Chateau-Renaud, and Beauchamp, accompanied by all the leading men of the day at the bar, in literature, or the army, for M. de Villefort moved in the first Parisian circles, less owing to his social position than to his personal merit. The cousin standing at the door ushered in the guests. Those who were acquainted soon formed into little groups. One of these was composed of Debray, Chateau-Renaud, and Beauchamp.

"Poor girl!" said Debray, like the rest, paying an involuntary tribute to the sad event, "poor girl! so young! so rich! so beautiful! Could you have imagined this scene, Chateau-Renaud, when we saw her, at the most three weeks ago, about to sign the contract?"

"Indeed, no!" said Chateau-Renaud. "Did you know her?"

"I spoke to her once or twice at Mme. de Moreau's, amongst the rest; she appeared to me charming. Do you know where her step-mother is?"

"She is spending the day with the wife of the gentleman who is receiving us."

"Who is he? Is he a deputy?"

"Oh, no. I am condemned to witness those gentlemen every day," said Beauchamp; "but he is perfectly unknown to me."

"Have you mentioned this death in your paper?"

"It has been mentioned, but the article is not used; indeed, I don't if it will please M. de Villefort, for it says, that if four successive deaths had happened any where else than in the house of the proctorur dei roi, he would have interested himself somewhat more about it."

"Still," said Chateau-Renaud, "de d'Arigny, who attends my mother, declares he is in despair about it. But whom are you seeking, Debray?"

"I am seeking the Count of Monte-Cristo," said the young man.

"I met him on the Boulevard, on my road here," said Beauchamp. "I think he is about to leave Paris; he was going to his banker."

"His banker? Danglers is his banker, is he not?" asked Chateau-Renaud of Debray.

"I believe so," replied the secretary.

"But Monte-Cristo is not the only one I miss here; I do not see Morrel."

"Morrel! Do you know him?" asked Chateau-Renaud. "He think he had only been introduced to Madame de Villefort."

"Still, he ought to have been here," said Debray; "I wonder what will be talked about to-night; this funeral is the news of the day."

Beauchamp told the truth when he said, that on his road to the funeral he met Monte-Cristo, who was directing his steps towards the Rue de Chausse d'Antin, to Madame Danglers. The banker saw the carriage of the count enter the courtyard, and advanced to meet him with a sad, though affable smile. "Well!" said he, extending his hand to Monte-Cristo, "I suppose you have come to sympathize with me, for indeed misfortune has taken possession of my house. When I perceived you, I was just asking myself whether I had not wished harm towards those poor Morrels, which would have justified the proverb of 'He who wishes misfortune to happen to others experiences that himself.' Do you know, count, that persons of our time live—not that you belong to the class, you are still a young man, but as I was saying, persons of our

time live—have been very unfortunate this year. For example, look at the proctorur dei roi, who has just lost his daughter, and in fact nearly all his family in so singular a manner; Morcerf dishonored and dead; and then myself covered with ridicule through the vilany of Benedetto; besides—"

"Besides what?" asked the count.

"Alas! do you not know?"

"What new calamity?"

"My daughter, who is dead; I have a Mademoiselle Danglers?"

"Eugenie has left us!"

"Good heavens! what are you telling me?"

"The truth, my dear count."

"And so Mademoiselle Danglers—"

"She could not endure the insult offered to us by that wretch, so she asked permission to travel."

"And is she gone?"

"The other night she left."

"With Madame Danglers?"

"No, with a relation. But still, we have quite lost our dear Eugenie; for I doubt whether her bride will ever allow her to return to France."

"Still, baron," said Monte-Cristo, "any affliction which would crush a man whose child was his only treasure, are endurable to a millionaire. Philosophers may well say that money mitigates many trials; and if you admit the efficacy of this sovereign balm, you ought to be very easily consoled; you, the king of finance, who form the intersecting point of all the powers in Europe, nay, the world!"

Danglers looked at him obliquely, as if to ascertain whether he spoke seriously. "Yes," he answered, "if a fortune brings consolation, I ought to be consoled; I am rich."

"So rich, that you still owe me five millions and the banker's pen alone is worth the price of the pyramid; if you wished to demolish them you could not; if it were possible, you would not dare!"

"That reminds me," said Danglers, "that when you entered I was on the point of signing five little bonds; I have already signed two, will you allow me to do the same to the others?"

"Pray do so."

There was a moment's silence, during which the noise of the banker's pen alone was heard, while Monte-Cristo examined the mouldings on the ceiling. "Are they Spanish, Haytian or Neapolitan bonds?" said Monte-Cristo.

"Neither," said Danglers, smiling, "they are bonds on the bank of France, payable to the bearer. Count, you may be called the emperor, if I claim the title of king of finance, have you many pieces of paper this size, each worth a million?"

"One, two, three, four, five," said Monte-Cristo; "five millions! why, what a Crossus you are!"

"This is how I transact business!" said Danglers.

"It is really wonderful," said the count.

"It is indeed," said Danglers.

"It is a fine thing to have such credit; really, it is only in France these things are done. Five millions on five little scraps of paper!—it must be seen to be believed."

"You do not doubt it?"

"No!"

"You say so with an accent—stay, you shall be convinced; take my clerk to the bank, and you will see him leave it with an order on the Treasury for the same sum."

"No!" said Monte-Cristo, folding the five notes, "the thing is so curious I will make the experiment myself. I am credited on you for six millions. I have drawn nine hundred thousand francs, you therefore still owe me five millions and a hundred thousand francs. I will take the five scraps of paper that I now hold as bonds, with your signature alone, and here is a receipt in full for the six millions between us. I had prepared it beforehand, for I am much in want of money to-day."

If a thunderbolt had fallen at Danglers' feet, he could not have expressed greater terror.

"What! he stammered, "do you mean to take that money? Excuse me, excuse me, but I owe this money to the hospital, but continued to gaze around him. At length they arrived at the cemetery. The count, on seeing Monte-Cristo placed through clusters of bushes and trees, and was soon relieved from all anxiety, for he saw a shadow glide between the trees, and Monte-Cristo recognized him whom he sought. Twice the count left the ranks to see whether the object of his interest had any concealed weapon beneath his clothes. When the procession stopped, this shadow was recognized as Morrel; who, with his coat buttoned up to his throat, his face livid, and convulsively crushing his hat between his hands, passed him, and immediately alighting from his coupe, joined him. The count looked attentively through every opening in the crowd; he was evidently watching for someone, but his search ended in disappointment. "Where is Morrel?" he asked. "Do either of these gentlemen know where he is?"

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