

POETRY.

A PRAYER.

I ask not for wealth, but power to take
And use the things I have aright;
Not years, but wisdom that shall make
My life a profit and delight.

SELECT STORY.

COUNT OF MONTE-CRISTO;

REVENGE OF EDMOND DANTES.

CHAPTER I.

THE DIVISION.

Oh! as for that, I have made inquiries.
I reserve eighty francs for myself;
A young man, I know not requiring
Luxuries; besides, I know what travelling

With a post-chaise and valet de-chambre?
"Any way, mother."

"Well, be it so. But these 200 francs?"
"Here they are, and 200 more besides."

"See, I have sold my watch for 100 francs,
And the guard and seals for 500.
How fortunate the ornaments were worth
More than the watch. Now I think we are rich,
Since, instead of the 114 francs we require
For the journey, we find ourselves in possession of 250."

"But we owe something in this house?"
"Thirty francs; but I pay that out of my 150 francs;
And as I require only eighty francs
For my journey, you see I am overwhelmed with luxury.
But that is not all. What do you say to this, mother?"

And Albert took out of a little pocket-book
With golden clasps, a note of 1000 francs.

"What is this?" asked Mercedes.
"A thousand francs."

"Where have you obtained them?"
"Listen to me, mother, and do not yield
Too much to agitation." And Albert,
Rising, kissed his mother on both cheeks,
Then stood looking at her. "You cannot imagine,
mother, how beautiful I think you are!"
said the young man. "You are, indeed,
the most beautiful and noble woman I ever saw."

"Dear child!" said Mercedes, endeavoring
In vain to restrain a tear which appeared
In the corner of her eye. "Indeed,
you only wanted misfortune to change my love
for you to admiration. I am not unhappy
while I possess my son!"

"Al! just so," said Albert, "here he begins
the trial. Do you know the division
we have come to, mother?"

"Have we come to any?"
"Yes; it is decided that you are to live
at Marseilles, and that I am to leave for Africa,
where I will earn for myself the right
to use the title of bar, instead of the one
I have thrown aside." Mercedes sighed.

"Well, mother! I yesterday enlisted
myself in the Spahis," added the young man,
lowering his eyes with a certain feeling
of shame, for even he was unconscious
of the sublimity of his self-abasement.
"I thought my body was my own
and I might sell it. I yesterday took
the place of another. I sold myself
for more than I thought I was worth;
I added, attempting to smile; "I fetched
2000 francs."

"Then these 1000 francs—" said Mercedes,
shuddering—
"Are the half of the sum, mother; the other
will be paid in the year."

"The price of his blood," she murmured.
"Yes, if I am killed," said Albert, laughing.
"But I assure you, mother, I have a strong
intention of defending my person; and I never
felt so strong an inclination to live as at present."

"It is well," replied Mercedes, with her
eloquent glance; "you are right, my love;
let us prove to those who are watching
our actions that we are worthy of compassion."

"And so our division is made, mother,"
said the young man. "We can part now;
come, I shall take your place."

"I shall stay here for a few days longer;
I must accustom ourselves to parting.
I want recommendations and some information
relative to Africa. I will join you again
at Marseilles."

"Well, be it so! let us part," said Mercedes,
folding round her shoulder the only shawl
she had taken away.

Albert gathered up his papers hastily,
rang the bell to pay the thirty francs he owed
the landlord, and offering his arm to his mother,
they descended the stairs. Some one was waiting
down below before them, and this person,
hearing the rustling of a silk dress, turned round.
"Debray!" muttered Albert.

"You, Morcerf?" replied the secretary,
resting on the stairs. It was, indeed,
strange in this unknown spot to find the young man
whose misfortunes had made so much noise in Paris.

"Morcerf!" repeated Debray. Then noticing
in the dim light, the still youthful and veiled figure
of Madame de Morcerf— "Pardon me!" he added, with a smile.
"I leave you, Albert. I have understood his thoughts.
"Mother," he said, turning towards Mercedes,
"this is M. Debray, secretary of the minister of the interior,
once a friend of mine."

"How one!" stammered Debray;
"let me do you some good in his pocket-book;
and, unimagined as he was he could not help reflecting
that the same house had contained two women, one of whom,
justly dishonored, had left it poor with 1500,000 francs
under her cloak, while the other, unjustly dishonored,
but sublime in her misfortune, was yet rich with a few deniers.
This parallel disturbed his usual politeness;
the philosophy he witnessed appalled him; he muttered
a few words of general civility, and ran downstairs."

"That day the minister's clerks and the subordinates
had a great deal to put up with from his ill-humor.
But the same night he found himself the possessor of a fine house,
situated on the Boulevard de la Madeleine,
and an income of 50,000 livres. The next day, just as Debray was signing
the deed, that is, about five o'clock in the afternoon,
Madame de Morcerf, after having affectionately embraced her son,
entered the coupe of the diligence,

which closed upon her. A man was hidden
in Lafitte's banking-house, behind one of the little
arched windows which are placed above each desk;
he saw Mercedes enter the diligence, and he also saw
Albert withdraw. Then he passed his hand across his forehead,
which was clouded with doubt. "Alas!" he exclaimed,
"how can I restore the happiness I have taken away from these poor innocent creatures? God help me!"

CHAPTER II.

THE LIONS' DEN.

One division of La Force, in which the most
dangerous and desperate prisoners are confined,
is called the Court of Saint-Bernard. The prisoners,
in their expressive language, have named it the
Lions' Den, probably because the captives possess
teeth which frequently gnaw the bars.

The Court of Saint-Bernard has its own particular
parlor; it is a long square, divided by two upright gratings,
placed at a distance of three feet from one another,
to prevent a visitor from shaking Albert with or passing
anything to the prisoners. It is a wretched damp, nay,
even horrible spot, more especially when we consider
the fearful confessions which have taken place between
these iron bars. And yet, frightful though this spot may be,
it is considered as a kind of paradise to the men whose
days are numbered; it is so rare for them to leave the
Lions' Den for any other place than the barrier
Saint-Jacques or the galleys!

In the court which we have attempted to describe,
and from which a damp vapor was rising, a young man
might be seen walking, with his hands in his pockets,
who had excited much curiosity among the inhabitants
of the "Den." The cut of his clothes would have made
him pass for an elegant man, if those clothes had not
been torn to ribbons; still they were not worn, and the
fine cloth soon recovered its gloss in the parts which
were still perfect, beneath the careful hands of the prisoner,
who tried to make it assume the appearance of a new coat.

He bestowed the same attention upon the
sleeves of a shirt, which had considerably changed in color
since his entrance into the prison. Some of the inmates
of the "Den" were watching the operation of the prisoner's
toilet with considerable interest. "See, the prince is
scrupulously neat!" said one of the thieves. "He is naturally
very handsome," said another; "and if he had only a comb
and pomatum, he would look like all the gentlemen in white
sides!"

Meanwhile the object of this hideous attention
approached the wicket, against which one of the keepers
was leaning. "Come, sir," he said, "lend me twenty francs;
you will soon be paid; you run no risk with me. Remember,
I have relations which possess more millions than you have
deniers. Come, I beseech you, lend me the sum, so that I may
buy a dressing gown; it is intolerable always to be in a coat
and boots! And what a coat, sir, for a prince of the Cavalanti!"

The keeper turned his back and shrugged his
shoulders; he had heard so many other things of the kind—indeed,
he heard nothing else.

"Come," said Andrea, "you are a man
void of compassion; I will cause you to lose your place;
this made the keeper turn round, and he burst into a loud laugh.

"I tell you with that wretched sun," continued Andrea,
"you could obtain a coat and a room in which to receive
the illustrious visitor I am daily expecting."

"He is right! he is right!" said the prisoners; "any one can see he is a swell!"

"Well, then, lend him the twenty francs," said the keeper; "surely you will not refuse?"

"I am no partner of these people," said the young man, proudly, "you have no right to insult me thus."

"Did you hear him?" said the keeper,
"he rates you handsomely. Come, lend him the sum, so that I may buy a coat and a room in which to receive the illustrious visitor I am daily expecting."

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whole of its sumptuous furniture. Bertuccio sat
down upon the chair; Andrea threw himself on the bed; the keeper retired.

"Now," said the steward, "what have you to tell me?"

"And you?" said Andrea.

"You speak first."

"Oh, no! You must have much to tell me, since you have come to seek me."

"Well, be it so! You have continued your course of villainy; you have robbed—"

"Good! If you had me taken to a private room
only to tell me this, you might have saved yourself the trouble.
I know all these things. Who sent you here?"

"No one."

"How did you know I was in prison?"

"I recognized you some time since as the insolent dandy who so gracefully mounted his horse in the Champs Elysees."

"Oh, the Champs Elysees! Come, let us talk a little about my father!"

"Who, then, an?"

"You, sir!—you are my adopted father. But it was not you, I presume, who placed at my disposal 100,000 francs, which I spent in four or five months; who manufactured an Italian gentleman for my father; who introduced me into the world, and had me invited to a certain dinner at Anteuil, which I fancy I am eating at this moment, in company with the most distinguished people in Paris—amongst the rest was a certain proctor, whose acquaintance I did very wrong not to cultivate; for he would have been very useful to me just now—was it not you who bailed me for one or two millions, when the fatal discovery of the robbery took place. Come, speak, my worthy Corsican!"

"What do you wish me to say?"

"I will help you. You were speaking of the Champs Elysees just now!"

"Well?"

"Well, in the Champs Elysees there resides a very rich gentleman."

"A house whose name I do not know, but which would have been very useful to me just now—was it not you who bailed me for one or two millions, when the fatal discovery of the robbery took place. Come, speak, my worthy Corsican!"

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foliage, Mme. de Villefort sitting with a book in her hand. Villefort became pale; he understood the old man's meaning. Noirtier continued to look at the same object, but suddenly his glance was carried from the wife to the husband, and Villefort himself had to submit to the searching investigation of those eyes, which, while changing their object and even their language, had lost none of their menacing expression.

Villefort, drawn by an irresistible attraction, walked towards the house. As he approached it, Noirtier's gaze followed him, and his eyes appeared of such a fiery brightness that Villefort felt them pierce to the depths of his heart. Then Noirtier raised his eyes to heaven to remind his son of a forgotten oath. "It is well, sir," replied Villefort from below, "it is well; I have patience but one day longer; what I said I will do." Noirtier appeared calmed by these words, and turned his eyes with indifference to the other side.

The next day, Monday, was the first sitting of the assizes. The morning rose black and gloomy, and Villefort saw the dim gray light shine upon the lines he had traced in red ink. He opened the window; a bright yellow streak crossed the sky, and seemed to divide in half the population, which stood out in black relief on the horizon. The damps of the dew bathed the head of Villefort and refreshed his memory. "To-day," he said with an effort, "to-day the man who holds the knife of justice must strike wherever there is a criminal."

His head dropped upon his chest, and in this position he paced his study. By degrees every one woke; Villefort heard the successive noises which constitute the life of a house; he rang the bell; his new valet-de-chambre brought him the vial and with them a cup of chocolate. "What are you bringing me?" he said.

"A cup of chocolate."

"I did not ask for it. Who has paid me this attention?"

"My mistress, sir. She said you would have to speak great words on the case of murder, and that you would take something to keep up your strength."

The valet then left the room