

THE WANDERING JEW.

BY EUGENE SUE.

CHAPTER LXVIII. [CONTINUED.]

The person before whom Ninny Moulin stopped in such extreme astonishment was the Bacchanal Queen.

Pale and wan, with hair in disorder, hollow cheeks, sunken eyes, and clothed almost in rags, this brilliant and joyous heroine of so many mad orgies was now only the shadow of her former self. Misery and grief were impressed on that countenance, once so charming. Hardly had she entered the room, when Cephyse paused; her mournful and unquiet gaze strove to penetrate the half obscurity of the apartment, in search of him she longed to see. Suddenly the girl started and uttered a loud scream. She had just perceived, at the otherside of a long table, by the blueish light of the punch, Jacques struggling with Morok and one of the guests, who were hardly able to restrain his convulsive movements.

At this sight Cephyse, with one spring, was by the side of the sufferer.

"Jacques!" she exclaimed, without yet remarking the lion-tamer, and throwing herself on the neck of her lover. "Jacques! it is I—Cephyse!"

He turned his head mechanically towards the Bacchanal Queen, without opening his eyes, and heaved a deep sigh; his stiffened limbs relaxed, a slight trembling succeeded to the convulsions, and in a few seconds his heavy eyelids were raised with an effort so as to uncover his dull and wandering gaze. Cephyse, kneeling beside her lover, bathed his hands in her tears, covered them with kisses, and exclaimed, in a voice broken by sobs, "It is I—Cephyse—I have found you again—it was not my fault that I abandoned you! Forgive me, forgive—"

"Wretched woman!" cried Morok, irritated at this meeting, which might, perhaps, be fatal to his projects; "do you wish to kill him? In his present state this agitation is death. Begone!" So saying, he seized Cephyse suddenly by the arm, just as Jacques, waking, as it were, from a painful dream, began to distinguish what was passing around him.

"You! it is you!" cried the Bacchanal Queen, in amazement, as she recognized Morok, "who separated me from Jacques!"

She paused; for the dim eye of the victim, as it rested upon her, grew suddenly bright.

"Cephyse!" murmured Jacques; "is it you?"

"Yes, it is I," answered she, in a voice of deep emotion; "who have come—I will tell you—"

"Poor girl! you also have had to bear much misery—I should hardly have known you."

"Yes," replied Cephyse, "much grief—much misery—and worse than misery," she added; trembling, whilst a deep blush overspread her pale features.

"Worse than misery?" said Jacques astonished.

"But it is you who have suffered," hastily resumed Cephyse, without answering her lover.

"Just now, I was going to make an end of it—your voice has recalled me for an instant—but I feel something here," and he laid his hand upon his breast, "which never gives quarter. It is all the same now—I have seen you—I shall die happy."

"You shall not die, Jacques; I am here—"

"Listen to me, my girl. If I had a bushel of live coal in my stomach, it could hardly burn me more. For more than a month, I have been consuming my body by a slow fire. This gentleman," he added, glancing at Morok, "this dear friend, always undertook to feed the flame. I do not regret life; I have lost the habit of work, and taken to drink and riot; I should have finished by becoming a thorough blackguard; I preferred that my friend here should amuse himself with lighting a furnace in my inside. Since what I drank just now, I am certain that it flames like yonder punch."

"You are both foolish and ungrateful," said Morok, shrugging his shoulders; "you held out your glass, and I filled it—and, faith, we shall drink long and often together yet."

For some moments Cephyse had not withdrawn her eyes from Morok. "I tell you, that you have long blown the fire in which I have burnt my skin," resumed Jacques, addressing Morok in a feeble voice, "so that they may not think I die of cholera. It would look as if I had been frightened by the part I played. I do not therefore reproach you, my affectionate friend," added he, with a sardonic smile; "you dug my grave gaily—and sometimes, when, seeing the great dark hole into which I was about to fall, I drew back a step—but you, my excellent friend, still pushed me forward, saying, 'Go on, my boy, go on!—and I went on—and here I am—'"

"My good fellow," said Morok coolly, "listen to me, and follow my advice—"

"Thank you! I know your advice—and instead of listening to you, I prefer speaking to my poor Cephyse. Before I go down to the moles, I should like to tell her what weighs on my heart."

"Jacques," replied Cephyse, do not talk so. I tell you, you shall not die."

"Why then, my brave Cephyse, I shall owe my life to you," returned Jacques, in a tone of serious feeling, which surprised the spectators. "Yes," resumed he, "when I came to myself and saw you so poorly clad, I felt something good about my heart—do you know why?—it was because I said to myself, 'Poor girl! she has kept her word bravely; she has shosen to toil, and want, and suffer—rather than take another love—who would have given her what I gave her as long as I could—and that thought, Cephyse, refreshed my soul. I needed it, for I was burning—and I burn still,' added he, clenching his fists with pain "but that made me happy—it did me good—thanks, my good, brave Cephyse—yes, you are good and brave—and you were right; for I never loved any one but you in the wide world; and if, in my degradation, I had one thought that raised me a little above the filth, and made me regret that I was not better—the thought was of you! Thanks, then, my poor dear love," said Jacques, whose hot and shining eyes were becoming moist "thanks once again," and he reached his cold hand to Cephyse; "if I die, I shall die happy—if I live, I shall live happy also. Give me your hand, my brave Cephyse!—you have acted like a good and honest creature."

Instead of taking the hand which Jacques offered her, Cephyse, still kneeling, bowed her head and dared not raise her eyes to her lover.

"You don't answer," said he leaning over towards the young girl; "you don't take my hand—why is this?"

The unfortunate creature only answered by stifled sobs.

Amazed at the silence and conduct, Jacques stammered, "Cephyse, I know you. If you do not take my hand, it is because—" Then, his voice failing, he added, in a dull tone, after a moment's silence; "When, six weeks ago, I was taken to prison, did you not say to me, 'Jacques, I swear that I will work—and if need be, live in horrible misery—but I will live true!' That was your promise. Now, I know you never speak false; tell me you have kept your word, and I shall believe you."

"Jacques, if you knew! if you only knew—listen—do not condemn me without hearing me—I will tell you all, I swear to you—without falsehood—this man," and she pointed to Morok, "will not dare deny what I say; he came, and told me to have the courage to—"

"I do not reproach you. I have no right to reproach you. Let me die in peace. I ask nothing but that now," said Jacques, in a still weaker voice, as he repulsed Cephyse. Then he added, with a grievous and bitter smile, "Luckily, I have my dose. I knew—what I was doing—when I accepted the duel of brandy."

"No, you shall not die, and you shall hear me, and everybody else shall hear me. They shall see that it is not my fault. Is it not so, gentlemen? Do I not deserve pity? You will entreat Jacques to forgive me; for if driven by misery—finding no work—I was forced to this—not for the sake of any luxury—you see the rags I wear—but to get bread and shelter for my poor, sick sister—dying, and even more miserable than myself—would you not have pity upon me? Do you think one finds pleasure in one's infamy?" cried the unfortunate, with a burst of frightful laughter; then she added, in a low voice, and with a shudder, "Oh, if you knew, Jacques! it is so infamous, so horrible, that I preferred death to fall so low a second time. I should have killed myself, had I not heard you were here." Then, seeing that Jacques did not answer her, but shook his head mournfully as he sank down, though still supported by Ninny Moulin, Cephyse exclaimed, as she lifted her clasped hands toward him, "Jacques! one word—for pity's sake—for-give me!"

"Gentlemen, pray remove this woman," cried Morok; "the sight of her causes my friend too painful emotions."

"Come, my dear child, by reasonable," said several of the guests, "leave him, and come with us; he is not in any danger."

"Gentlemen! oh, gentlemen!" she cried; "listen to me—I will do all that you wish me—I will go—but in heavens name send for help, and do not let him die thus. Look, what pain he suffers! what horrible convulsions!"

"She is right, we must send for a doctor."

"There is no doctor to be found, they are all too busy."

"We will do better than that, the hospital is just opposite, and we can carry the poor fellow thither. They will give him instant help. A leaf of the table will make a litter, and the table-cloth a covering."

Jacques, burnt up with brandy, and overcome

by his interview with Cephyse, had again fallen into violent convulsions. It was the dying paroxysm of the unfortunate man. They were obliged to tie him with the ends of the cloth, so as to secure him to the leaf which was to serve for a litter, which two of the guests hastened to carry away. Cephyse was allowed to accompany them. Jacques had been carried to the outer door of the tavern. There a dreadful shriek sounded above the roar of the crowd. It was Cephyse who uttered that cry. Jacques (one of the seven heirs of the Rennepont family) had just expired in her arms! Be a strange fatality,

at the very moment that the despairing exclamation of Cephyse announced that death, another cry arose from another part of the square. That distant, supplicating cry, tremulous with horrible alarm, like the last appeal of a man staggering beneath the blows of his murderers, chilled the soul of Morok in the midst of his execrable triumph. "Damnation!" cried the skilful assassin, who had selected drunkenness and debauchery for his murderous but legal weapons "it is the voice of the Abbe d'Aigrigny, whom they have in their clutches!"

To be Continued.

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