

THE WANDERING JEW.

BY EUGENE SUE.

CHAPTER XXXVII.—CONTINUED.

"Where you accepted the challenge of Morok," continued the Jesuit, without answering Dagobert's question, "and so fell into a trap, or else refused it, and were then arrested, for want of papers, and thrown into prison as a vagabond, with these poor children. Now, do you know the object of this violence? It was to prevent your being here on the 13th of February."

"But the more I hear, sir," said Adrienne, "the more I am alarmed at the audacity of the Abbe d'Aigrigny, and the extent of means he has at his command. Really," she resumed, with increasing surprise, "if your words were not entitled to absolute belief—"

"You would doubt there truth, madame?" said Dagobert. "It is like me. Bad as he is, I cannot think that this renegade had relations with a wildbeast showman as far off as Saxony; and then, how could he know that I and the children were to pass through Leipsic? It is impossible, my good man."

"In fact, sir," resumed Adrienne, "I fear that you are deceived by your dislike (a very legitimate one) of Abbe d'Aigrigny, and that you ascribe to him an almost fabulous degree of power and extent of influence."

After a moment's silence, during which Rodin looked first at Adrienne and then at Dagobert, with a kind of pity, he resumed. "How could the Abbe d'Aigrigny have your cross in his possession, if he had no connection with Morok?"

"That is true, sir," said Dagobert; "joy prevented me from reflecting. But how, indeed, did my cross come into your hands?"

"By means of the Abbe d'Aigrigny's having precisely those relations with Leipsic, of which you and the young lady seem to doubt."

"But how did my cross get to Paris?"—"Tell me; you were arrested at Leipsic for want of papers—is it not so?"

"Yes; but I could never understand how my passports and money disappeared from my knapsack. I thought I must have had the misfortune to lose them."

Rodin shrugged his shoulders, and replied: "You were robbed of them at the White Falcon Inn, by Goliath, one of Morok's servants; and the latter sent the papers and the cross to the Abbe d'Aigrigny, to prove that he had succeeded in executing his orders with respect to the orphans and yourself. It was the day before yesterday, that I obtained the key of that dark machination. Cross and papers were amongst the stores of Abbe d'Aigrigny; the papers formed a considerable bundle, and he might have missed them; but, hoping to see you this morning, and knowing how a good soldier of the Empire values his cross, his sacred relic, as you call it, my good friend—I did not hesitate. I put the relic into my pocket. 'After all,' said I, 'it is only restitution, and my delicacy perhaps exaggerates this breach of trust.'"

"You could not have done a better action," said Adrienne; "and, for my part, because of the interest I feel for M. Dagobert, I take it as a personal favor. But, sir, after a moment's silence, she resumed with anxiety: "What terrible power must be at the command of M. d'Aigrigny, for him to have such extensive and formidable relations in a foreign country!"

"Silence!" said Rodin, in a voice, and looking round him with an air of alarm. "Silence! In heaven's name do not ask me about it!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

REVELATIONS.

Mdlle. de Cardoville, much astonished at the alarm displayed by Rodin, when she had asked him for some explanation of the formidable and far-reaching power of the Abbe d'Aigrigny, said to him: "Why, sir, what is there so strange in the question that I have just asked you?"

After a moment's silence, Rodin cast his looks all around, with well-feigned uneasiness, and replied in a whisper: "Once more, madame, do not question me on so fearful a subject. The walls of this house may have ears."

Adrienne and Dagobert looked at each other with growing surprise. Mother Bunch, by an instinct of incredible force, continued to regard Rodin with invincible suspicion. Sometimes she stole a glance at him, as if trying to penetrate the mask of this man, who filled her with fear. At one moment, the Jesuit encountered her anxious gaze, obstinately fixed upon him; immediately he nodded to her with the greatest amenity. The young girl, alarmed at finding herself observed, turned away with a shudder.

"No, no, my dear young lady," resumed Rodin, with a sigh, as he saw Mdlle. de Cardoville astonished at his silence; "do not question me on the subject of Abbe d'Aigrigny's power!"

"But, to persist, sir," said Adrienne, "why this hesitation to answer? What do you fear?"

"Ah, my dear young lady," said Rodin, shuddering, "those people are so powerful! their animosity is so terrible!"

"Be satisfied, sir; I owe you too much, for my support ever to fail you."

"Ah, my dear young lady," cried Rodin, as if hurt by the supposition; "think better of me, I entreat you. Is it for myself that I fear?—No, no; I am too obscure, too inoffensive; but it is for you, for Marshal Simon, for the other members of your family, that all is to be feared. Oh, my dear young lady! let me beg you to ask no questions. There are secrets which are fatal to those who possess them."

"But, sir, is it not better to know the perils with which one is threatened?"

"When you know the manoeuvres of your enemy, you may at least defend yourself," said Dagobert. "I prefer an attack in broad daylight to an ambush."

"And I assure you," resumed Adrienne, "the few words you have spoken cause me a vague uneasiness."

"Well, if I must, my dear young lady," replied the Jesuit, appearing to make a great effort, "since you do not understand my hints, I will be more explicit; but remember," added he, in a deeply serious tone, "that you have known."—"Speak, sir, I pray you speak," said Adrienne.

Drawing about him Adrienne, Dagobert, and Mother Bunch, Rodin said to them in a low voice, and with a mysterious air: "Have you never heard of a powerful association which extends its net over all the earth, and counts its disciples, agents, and fanatics in every class of society—which has had, and often has still, the ear of kings and nobles—which, in a word, can raise its creatures to the highest positions, and with a word can reduce them again to the nothingness from which it alone could uplift them?"

"Good heaven, sir!" said Adrienne, "what formidable association? Until now I never heard of it."

"I believe you; and yet your ignorance on this subject greatly astonishes me, my dear young lady."

"And why should it astonish you?"—"Because you lived sometime with your aunt, and must have often seen the Abbe d'Aigrigny."

"I lived at the princess's, but not with her; for a thousand reasons she had inspired me with warrantable aversion."

"In truth, my dear young lady, my remark was ill-judged. It was there, above all, and particularly in your presence, that they would keep silence, with regard to this association—and yet to it alone did the Princess de Saint-Dizier owe her formidable influence in the world, during the last reign. Well, then; know this—it is the aid of that association which renders the Abbe d'Aigrigny so dangerous a man. By it he was enabled to follow and to reach divers members of your family, some in Siberia, some in India, others on the heights of the American mountains; but, as I have told you, it was only the day before yesterday, and by chance, that, examining the papers of Abbe d'Aigrigny, I found the trace of his connection with this company, of which he is the most active and able chief."

"But the name, sir, the name of this company?" said Adrienne.

"Well! it is—," but Rodin stopped short.

"It is," repeated Adrienne, who was now as much interested as Dagobert and the sempstress; "it is—"

Rodin looked round him, beckoned all the actors in this scene to draw nearer, and said in a whisper, laying great stress upon the words. "It is—the Society of Jesus!" and he again shuddered.

"The Jesuits!" cried Mdlle. de Cardoville, unable to restrain a burst of laughter, which was the buoyant, as, from the mysterious precautions of Rodin, she had expected some very different revelation. "The Jesuits!" she resumed, still laughing. "They have no existence, except in books; they are frightful historical personages, certainly; but why should you put forward Madame de Saint-Dizier and M. d'Aigrigny in that character? Such as they are, they have done quite enough to justify my aversion and disdain."

After listening in silence to Mdlle. de Cardoville, Rodin continued, with a grave and agitated air: "Your blindness frightens me, my dear young lady; the past should have given you some anxiety for the future, since, more than any one, you have already suffered from the fatal influence of this company, whose existence you regard as a dream!"

"I, sir?" said Adrienne, with a smile, although a little surprised.—"You."

"Under what circumstances?"

"You ask me this question, my dear young lady! you ask me this question!—and yet you have been confined here as a mad person! It is not enough to tell you that the master of this

house is one of the most devoted lay members of the company, and therefore the blind instrument of the Abbe d'Aigrigny."

"So," said Adrienne, this time smiling. "Dr. Baleinier—"

"Obeyed the Abbe d'Aigrigny, the most formidable chief of that formidable society. He employs his genius for evil; but I must confess he is a man of genius. Therefore, it is upon him that you and yours must fix all your doubts and suspicions; it is against him that you must be upon your guard. For, believe me, I know him, and he does not look upon the game as lost. You must be prepared for new attacks, doubtless of another kind, but only the more dangerous on that account—"

"Luckily, you give us notice," said Dagobert, "and you will be on our side."

"I can do very little, my good friends; but that little is at the service of honest people," said Rodin.

"Now," said Adrienne, with a thoughtful air, completely persuaded by Rodin's air of conviction, "I can explain the inconceivable influence that my aunt exercised in the world. I ascribed it chiefly to her relations with persons in power; I thought that she, like the Abbe d'Aigrigny, was concerned in dark intrigues, for which religion served as a veil—but I was far from believing what you tell me."

"How many things you have got to learn!" resumed Rodin. "If you knew, my dear young lady, with what art these people surround you, without your being aware of it, by agents devoted to themselves! Every one of your steps is known to them, when they have any interest in such knowledge. Thus, little by little, they act upon you—slowly, cautiously, darkly. They circumvent you by every possible means, from flattery to terror—seduce or frighten, in order at last to rule you, without your being conscious of their authority. Such is their object, and I must confess they pursue it with detestable ability."

Rodin had spoken with so much sincerity, that Adrienne trembled; then, reproaching herself with these fears, she resumed: "And yet, no—I can never believe in so infernal a power; the might of priestly ambition belongs to another age. Heaven be praised, it has disappeared forever!"

"Yes, certainly, it is out of sight; for they now know how to disperse and disappear, when circumstances require it. But then are they the most dangerous; for suspicion is laid asleep, and they keep watch in the dark. Oh! my dear young lady, if you knew their frightful ability! In my hatred of all that is oppressive, cowardly, and hypocritical, I had studied the history of that terrible society, before I knew that the Abbe d'Aigrigny belonged to it. Oh! it is dreadful. If you knew what means they employ! When I tell you that, thanks to their diabolical devices, the most pure and devoted appearances often conceal the most horrible snares." Rodin's eye rested, as if by chance, on the hunchback; but, seeing that Adrienne did not take the hint, the Jesuit continued: "In a word—are you not exposed to their pursuits?—have they any interest in gaining you over?—oh! from that moment, suspect the most noble attachments, the most tender affections, for these monsters sometimes succeed in corrupting your best friends, and making a terrible use of them, in proportion to the blindness of your confidence."

"Oh! it is impossible," cried Adrienne, in horror. "You must exaggerate. No! hell itself never dreamed of more frightful treachery!"

"Alas, my dear young lady! one of your relations, M. Hardy—the most loyal and generous-hearted man that could be—has been the victim of some such infamous treachery. Do you know what we learned from the reading of your ancestor's will? Why, that he died the victim of the malevolence of these people; and now, at the lapse of a hundred and fifty years, his descendants are still exposed to the hate of that indestructible society."

"Oh, sir! it terrifies me," said Adrienne, feeling her heart sink within her. "But are there no weapons against such attacks?"

"Prudence, my dear young lady—the most watchful caution—the most incessant study and suspicion of all that approach you."

"But such a life would be frightful! It is a torture to be the victim of continual suspicions, doubts and fears."

"Without doubt! They know it well, the wretches! That constitutes their strength. They often triumph by the very excess of the precautions taken against them. Thus, my dear young lady, and you, brave and worthy soldier, in the name of all that is dear to you, be on your guard, and do not lightly impart your confidence. Be on your guard, for you have nearly fallen the victims of those people. They will always be your implacable enemies. And you, also, poor, interesting girl!" added the Jesuit, speaking to Mother Bunch, "follow my advice—fear these

people. Sleep, as the proverb says, with one eye open."

"I, sir!" said the work girl "What have I done? what have I to fear?"

"What have you done? Dear me! Do not you tenderly love this young lady, your protectress? Have you not attempted to assist her? Are you not the adopted sister of the son of this intrepid soldier, the brave Agricola? Alas, poor girl! are not these sufficient claims to their hatred, in spite of your obscurity? Nay, my dear young lady! do not think that I exaggerate. Reflect! only reflect! Think what I have just said to the faithful companion-in-arms of Marshal Simon, with regard to his imprisonment at Leipsic. Think what happened to yourself, when, against all law and reason, you were brought hither. Then you will see, that there is nothing exaggerated in the picture I have drawn of the secret power of this company. Be always on your guard, and, in doubtful cases, do not fear to apply to me. In three days, I have learned enough by my own experience, with regard to their manner of acting, to be able to point out to you many a snare, device, and danger, and to protect you from them."

"In any such case, sir," replied Mdlle. de Cardoville, "my interest, as well as gratitude, would point to you as my best counsellor."

According to the skilful tactics of the sons of Loyola, who sometimes deny their own existence, in order to escape from an adversary—and sometimes proclaim with audacity the living power of their organization, in order to intimidate the feeble—Rodin had laughed in the face of the baillif of Cardoville, when the latter had spoken of the existence of the Jesuits; while now, at this moment, picturing their means of action, he endeavored, and he succeeded in the endeavor, to impregnate the mind of Mdlle. de Cardoville with some germs of doubt, which were gradually to develop themselves by reflection, and serve hereafter the dark projects that he meditated. Mother Bunch still felt considerable alarm with regard to Rodin. Yet, since she had heard the fatal powers of the formidable order revealed to Adrienne, the young sempstress, far from suspecting the Jesuit of having the audacity to speak thus of a society of which he was himself a member, felt grateful to him, in spite of herself, for the important advice that he had just given her patroness. The side glance which she now cast upon him (which Rodin also detected, for he watched the young girl with sustained attention), was full of gratitude, mingled with surprise. Guessing the nature of this impression, and wishing entirely to remove her unfavorable opinion, and also to anticipate a revelation which would be made sooner or later, the Jesuit appeared to have forgotten something of great importance, and exclaimed, striking his forehead: "What was I thinking of?" Then, speaking to Mother Bunch, he added: "Do you know where your sister is, my dear girl?" Disconcerted and saddened by this unexpected question, the workwoman answered with a blush, for she remembered her last interview with the brilliant Bacchanal Queen: "I have not seen my sister for so many days, sir."

"Well, my dear girl, she is not very comfortable," said Rodin; "I promised one of my friends to send her some little assistance. I have applied to a charitable person, and that is what I received for her." So saying, he drew from his pocket a sealed roll of coin; which he delivered to Mother Bunch, who was now both surprised and affected.

"You have a sister in trouble, and I know nothing of it?" said Adrienne, hastily. "This is not right of you, my child!"

"Do not blame her," said Rodin. "First of all, she did not know that her sister was in distress, and, secondly, she could not ask you, my dear young lady, to interest yourself about her."

As Mdlle. de Cardoville looked at Rodin with astonishment, he added, again speaking to the hunchback: "Is not that true, my dear girl?"

"Yes, sir," said the sempstress, casting down her eyes and blushing. Then she added, hastily and anxiously: "But when did you see my sister, sir? where is she? how did she fall into distress?"

"All that would take too long to tell you, my dear girl; but go as soon as possible to the greengrocer's in the Rue Clovis, and ask to speak to your sister as from M. Charlemagne or M. Rodin, which you please, for I am equally well known in that house by my Christian name as by my surname, and then you will learn all about it. Only tell your sister, that, if she behaves well, and keeps to her good resolutions, there are some who will continue to look after her."

More and more surprised, Mother Bunch was about to answer Rodin, when the door opened, and M. de Germande entered. The countenance of the magistrate was grave and sad.

"Marshal Simon's daughters!" cried Mdlle. de Cardoville.

"Unfortunately, they are not with me," answered the judge.