

THE WANDERING JEW.

BY EUGENE SUE.

CHAPTER LXI. (CONTINUED.)

LOVE.

"About twenty feet higher, upon a ledge of rock, the prince lay flat on the ground, looking down upon this frightful spectacle. The tigress, rendered furious by the cries of her little ones, gnawed the hands of the black, who, from the interior of the den, strove to support the trunk of the tree, his only rampart, whilst he uttered the most lamentable outcries."

"It is horrible!" said the count.

"Oh! go on! pray go on!" exclaimed Adrienne, with excitement; "you will see what can be achieved by the heroism of goodness."

The count pursued: "Suddenly the prince seized his dagger between his teeth, fastened his sash to a block of stone, took his axe in one hand and with the other slid down this substitute for a rope; falling a few steps from the wild beast, he sprang upon her, and, swift as lightning, dealt her two mortal strokes, just as the black, losing his strength, was about to drop the trunk of the tree, sure to have been torn to pieces."

"And you are astonished at his resemblance with the demi-god, to whom fable itself ascribes no more generous devotion!" cried the young lady, with still increasing excitement.

"I am astonished no longer, I only admire," said the count, in a voice of emotion; "and, at these two noble instances of heroism, my heart beats with enthusiasm, as if I were still twenty."

"And the noble heart of this traveller beat like yours at the recital," said Adrienne; "you will see."

"What renders so admirable the intrepidity of the prince, is, that, according to the principle of Indian castes, the life of a slave is of no importance; thus a king's son, risking his life for the safety of a poor creature, so generally despised, obeyed an heroic and truly Christian instinct of charity, until then unheard of in this country."

"Two such actions," said Colonel Drake, with good reason, "are sufficient to paint the man; it is with a feeling of profound respect and admiration, therefore, that I, an obscure traveller, have written the name of Prince Djalma in my book; and at the same time, I have experienced a kind of sorrow, when I have asked myself what would be the future fate of this prince, buried in the depths of a savage country, always devastated by war. However humble may be the homage that I pay to this character, worthy of the heroic age, his name will at least be repeated with generous enthusiasm by all those who have hearts that beat in sympathy with what is great and noble."

"And just now, when I read those simple and touching lines," resumed Adrienne, "I could not forbear pressing my lips to the name of the traveller."

"Yes; he is such as I thought him," cried the count, with still more emotion, as he returned the book to Adrienne, who rose, with a grave and touching air, and said to him: "It was thus I wished you to know him, that you might understand my adoration; for this courage, this heroic goodness, I had guessed beforehand, when I was an involuntary listener to his conversation. From that moment, I knew him to be generous as intrepid, tender and sensitive as energetic and resolute; and when I saw him so marvellously beautiful—so different, in the noble character of his countenance, and even in the style of his garments, from all I had hitherto met with—when I saw the impression that I had made upon him, and which I perhaps felt still more violently—I knew that my whole life was bound up with his love."

"And now, what are your plans?"

"Divine, radiant as my heart. When he learns his happiness, I wish that Djalma should feel dazzled as I do, so as to prevent my gazing on my sun; for I repeat, that until tomorrow will be a century to me. Yes, it is strange! I should have thought that after such a discovery, I should feel the want of being left alone, plunged in an ocean of delicious dreams. But no! from this time till to-morrow—I dread solitude—I feel a kind of feverish impatience—uneasy—ardent—Oh! where is the beneficent fairy, that, touching me with her wand, will lull me into slumber till to-morrow!"

"I will be that beneficent fairy," said the count, smiling.

"You?"

"Yes, I."

"And how so?"

"The power of my wand is this; I will relieve you from a portion of your thoughts by making them materially visible."

"Pray explain yourself."

"And my plan will have another advantage for

you. Listen to me; you are so happy now that you can hear anything. Your odious aunt, and her equally odious friends, are spreading the report that your residence with Dr. Balcaster—"

"Was rendered necessary by the derangement of my mind," said Adrienne, with a smile; "I expected that."

"It is stupid enough; but, as your resolution to live alone makes many envious of you, and many hostile, you must feel that there will be no want of persons ready to believe the most absurd calumny possible."

"I hope as much. To pass for mad in the eyes of fools is very flattering."

"Yes; but to prove to fools that they fools, and that in the face of all Paris, is much more amusing. Now, people begin to talk of your absence; you have given up your daily rides; for some time my niece has appeared alone in our box at the Opera; you wish to kill the time till tomorrow—well! here is an excellent opportunity. It is two o'clock; at half-past three, my niece will come in the carriage; the weather is splendid; there is sure to be a crowd in the Bois de Boulogne. You can take a delightful ride, and be seen by everybody. Then, as the air and movement will have calmed your fever of happiness, I will commence my magic this evening, and take you to India."

"To India?"

"Into the midst of one of those wild forests, in which roar the lion, the panther, and the tiger. We will have this heroic combat, which so moved you just now, under our own eyes, in all its terrible reality."

Really, my dear count, you must be joking."

"Not at all; I promise to show you real wild beasts, formidable tenants of the country, of our demi-god—growing tigers—roaring lions—do you not think that will be better than books?"

"But how?"

"Come! I must give you the secret of my supernatural power. On returning from your ride, you shall dine with my niece, and we will go together to a very curious spectacle, now exhibiting at the Porte-Sainte-Martin Theatre. A most extraordinary lion-tamer there shows you a number of wild beasts, in a state of nature, in the midst of a forest (here only commences the illusion), and has fierce combats with them—all tigers, lions and panthers. All Paris is crowding to these representations, and all Paris will see you there, more charming than ever."

"I accept your offer," said Adrienne, with childish delight. "Yes, you are right. I shall feel a strange pleasure in beholding these ferocious monsters, who will remind me of those that my demi-god so heroically overcame. I accept also, because, for the first time in my life, I am anxious to be admired—even by everybody. I accept finally because—"

Here Mdle. de Cardoville was interrupted by a low knock at the door, and by the entrance of Florine, who announced M. Rodin.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE EXECUTION.

Rodin entered.

A rapid glance at Mdle. de Cardoville and M. de Montbron told him at once that he was in a dilemma. In fact, nothing could be less encouraging than the faces of Adrienne and the count. The latter, when he disliked people, exhibited his antipathy, as we have already said, by an impertinently aggressive manner, which had before now occasioned a good number of duels. At sight of Rodin, his countenance at once assumed a harsh and insolent expression; resting his elbow on the chimney-piece, and conversing with Adrienne, he looked disdainfully over his shoulder, without taking the least notice of the Jesuit's low bow. On the other hand, at sight of this man, Mdle. de Cardoville almost felt surprise, that she should experience no movement of anger or hatred. The brilliant flame which burned in her heart, purified it from every vindictive sentiment. She smiled, on the contrary; for, glancing with gentle pride at the Indian Bacchus, and then at herself, she asked herself what two beings, so young, and fair, and free, and loving, could have to fear from this old, sordid man, with his ignoble and base countenance, now advancing toward her with the writhing of a reptile. In a word, far from feeling anger or aversion with regard to Rodin, the young lady seemed full of the spirit of mocking gaiety, and her large eyes, already lighted up with happiness, now sparkled with irony and mischief. Rodin felt himself ill at ease. People of his stamp greatly prefer violent to mocking enemies. They can encounter bursts of rage—sometimes by falling on their knees, weeping, groaning and beating their breasts—sometimes by turning on their adversary, armed and implacable. But they are easily disconcerted by biting railery; and thus it was with Rodin. He saw that, between Adrienne de Cardoville and M. de Montbron, he was

about to be placed in what is vulgarly termed a "regular fix."

The count opened the fire, still glancing over his shoulder, he said to Rodin: "Ah! you are here, my benevolent gentleman!"

"Pray, sir, draw a little nearer," said Adrienne with a mocking smile. "Best of friends and model of philosophers—as well as declared enemy of all fraud and falsehood—I have to pay you a thousand compliments."

"I accept anything from you, my dear young lady, even though undeserved," said the Jesuit, trying to smile, and thus exposing his vile yellow teeth; "but may I be informed how I have earned these compliments?"

"Your penetration, sir, which is rare," replied Adrienne.

"And your veracity, sir," said the count, "which is perhaps no less rare—"

"In what have I exhibited my penetration, my dear young lady?" said Rodin, coldly. "In what my veracity?" added he turning towards M. de Montbron.

"In what, sir?" said Adrienne. "Why, you have guessed a secret surrounded by difficulties and mystery. In a word, you have known how to read the depths of a woman's heart."

"I, my dear young lady?"

"You, sir! rejoice at it, for your penetration has had the most fortunate results."

"And your veracity has worked wonders," added the count.

"It is pleasant to do good, even without knowing it," said Rodin, still acting on the defensive, and throwing side glances by turns on the count and Adrienne; "but will you inform me what it is that deserves this praise—"

"Gratitude obliges me to inform you of it," said Adrienne, maliciously; "you have discovered and told Prince Djalma, that I was passionately in love. Well! I admire your penetration; it was true."

"You have also discovered, and told this lady, that Prince Djalma was passionately in love," resumed the count. "Well! I admire your penetration, my dear sir; it was true." Rodin looked confused, and at a loss for a reply.

"The person that I loved so passionately," said Adrienne, "was the prince."

"The person that the prince loved so passionately," resumed the count, "was this lady."

These revelations, so sudden and alarming, almost stunned Rodin; he remained mute and terrified, thinking of the future.

"Do you understand now, sir, the extent of our gratitude towards you?" resumed Adrienne, in a still more mocking tone. "Thanks to your sagacity, thanks to the touching interest you take in us, the prince and I are indebted to you for the knowledge of our mutual sentiments."

The Jesuit had now gradually recovered his presence of mind, and his apparent calmness greatly irritated M. de Montbron, who, but for Adrienne's presence, would have assumed another tone than jests.

"There is some mistake," said Rodin, "in what you have done me the honor to tell me, my dear young lady. I have never in my life spoken of the sentiments, however worthy and respectable, that you may entertain for Prince Djalma—"

"That is true," replied Adrienne; "with scrupulous and exquisite discretion, whenever you spoke to me of the deep love felt by Prince Djalma, you carried your reserve and delicacy so far as to inform me that it was not I whom he loved."

"And the same scruple induced you to tell the prince that Mdle. de Cardoville loved some one passionately—but that he was not the person," added the count.

"Sir," answered Rodin, dryly, "I need hardly tell you that I have no desire to mix myself up with amorous intrigues."

"Come! this is either pride or modesty," said the count, insolently. "For your own interest, pray do not advance such things; for, if we took you at your word, and it became known, it might injure some of the nice little trades that you carry on."

"There is one at least," said Rodin, drawing himself up as proudly as M. de Montbron, "whose rude apprenticeship I shall owe to you. It is the wearisome one of listening to your discourse."

"I tell you what, my good sir!" replied the count, disdainfully; "you force me to remind you that there are more ways than one of chastising impudent rogues."

"My dear count!" said Adrienne to M. de Montbron, with an air of reproach.

With perfect coolness, Rodin replied: "I do not exactly see, sir, first, what courage is shown by threatening a poor old man like myself; and secondly—"

"M. Rodin," said the count, interrupting the Jesuit, "first, a poor old man like you, who does evil under the shelter of the age he dishonors, is both cowardly and wicked, and deserves a double

chastisement; secondly, with regard to this question of age, I am not aware that gamekeepers and policemen bow down respectfully to the grey coats of old wolves, and the grey hairs of old thieves. What do you think, my good sir?"

Still impassible, Rodin raised his flabby eyelid, fixed for hardly a second his little reptile eye upon the count, and darted at him one of his rapid, cold, piercing glances—and then the livid eyelid again covered the dull eye of that corpse-like face.

"Not having the disadvantage of being an old wolf, and still less an old thief," said Rodin, quietly, "you will permit me, sir, to take no account of the pursuit of hunters and police. As for the reproaches made me, I have a very simple method of answering—I do not say of justifying myself—I never justify myself—"

"You don't say!" said the count.

"Never," resumed Rodin coolly; "my acts are sufficient for that. I will then simply answer, that seeing the deep, violent, almost fearful impression made by this lady on the prince—"

"Let this assurance which you give me of the prince's love," said Adrienne interrupting Rodin with an enchanting smile, "absolve you of all the evil you wished to do me. The sight of our happiness be your own punishment!"

"It may be that I need neither absolution nor punishment, for, as I have already had the honor to observe to the count, my dear young lady, the future will justify my acts. Yes; it was my duty to tell the prince that you loved another than himself, and to tell you that he loved another than yourself—all in your mutual interest. That my attachment for you may have misled me, is possible—I am not infallible; but, after my past conduct toward you, I have, perhaps, some right to be astonished at seeing myself thus treated. This is not a complaint. If I never justify myself, I never complain either."

"Now really, there is something heroic in all this my good sir," said the count. "You do not condescend to complain or justify yourself, with regard to the evil you have done."

"The evil I have done?" said Rodin, looking fixedly at the count. "Are we playing at enigmas?"

"What, sir!" cried the count, with indignation; "is it nothing; by your falsehoods, to have plunged the prince into so frightful a state of despair, that he has twice attempted his life? Is it nothing, by similar falsehoods, to have induced this lady to believe so cruel and complete an error; that but for the resolution I have today taken, it might have led to the most fatal consequences?"

"And will you do me the honor to tell me, sir, what interest I could have in all this despair and error, admitting even that that I had wished to produce them?"

"Some great interest, no doubt," said the count bluntly; "the more dangerous that it is concealed. You are one of those, I see, to whom the woes of others are pleasure and profit."

"That is really too much, sir," said Rodin, bowing; "I should be quite contented with the profit."

"Your impudent coolness will not deceive me; this is a serious matter," said the count. "It is impossible that so perfidious a piece of roguery can be an isolated act. Who knows but this may still be one of the fruits of Madame de Sainte-Dizier's hatred for Mdle. de Cardoville?"

Adrienne had listened to the preceding discussion with deep attention. Suddenly she started, as if struck by a sudden revelation.

After a moment's silence, she said to Rodin, without anger, without bitterness, but with an expression of gentle and serene calmness: "We are told, sir, that happy love works miracles. I should be tempted to believe it; for, after some minutes' reflection, and when I recall certain circumstances, your conduct appears to me in quite a new light."

"And what may this new perspective be, my dear young lady?"

"That you may see it from my point of view, sir, allow me to remind you of a few facts. That sewing girl was generously devoted to me; she had given me unquestionable proofs of her attachment. Her mind was equal to her noble heart; but she had an invincible dislike to you. All on a sudden she disappears mysteriously from my house, and you do your best to cast upon her odious suspicions. M. de Montbron has a paternal affection for me; but, as I must confess, little sympathy for you; and you have always tried to produce a coldness between us. Finally, Prince Djalma has a deep affection for me, and you employ the most perfidious treachery to kill that sentiment within him. For what end do you act thus? I do not know; but certainly with some hostile design."

"It appears to me, madame," said Rodin, severely, "that you have forgotten services performed."

To be Continued.