

‘The Appointment, or The Three Friends’

It was in the year 1785 – on a fine evening in the month of May – that three young students, in the uniform of the Military College of Paris, were occupied with the pleasant discussion of a repast in the restaurant, at Saint Cloud, which overlooks the park, and which every visitor of the present day to that sacred shrine of gastronomy knows by the name of Legriel’s.

The first of the three individuals, whom we have thus abruptly alluded to, was about sixteen years of age, with a peculiar expression of countenance which inspired respect rather than any other feeling, and a blue eye that seemed in itself to have a soul. His companions were his juniors – probably by about a few months, – and they were two fine, tall, handsome young men, with commanding though graceful figures, and eagle glances, which bespoke all the military enthusiasm that filled their bosoms.

‘Waiter, more wine !’ cried one of the youths last alluded to. ‘And you, Henri, pass the champagne to our host. This is the last time we may quaff a jovial glass together for many years.’

‘You are right, Alfred,’ said the young man with the expressive blue eyes. ‘But at our next meeting, pray to God that I shall be able to regale you as at present.’

‘To-morrow morning we depart to join our respective regiments,’ observed he whom one of his companions had addressed as Henri. ‘For five years we have now been school- or college-companions – at Brieme first – and then in Paris –’

‘A truce to sentimentality, Henri !’ exclaimed Alfred. ‘Here is more wine –let us drink and be gay !’

The young man who presided slowly poured out a bumper of champagne, nodded to his friends, and said ‘Success to our undertakings in the service of chivalry and France.’

‘Oh ! *your* career is certain, ’ cried Alfred enthusiastically. ‘When you first came to Brienne, at eleven years of age –’

‘Ten,’ interrupted the youth with the expressive blue eyes.

‘At ten, then,’ continued Alfred, ‘you already talked of muskets – and massacres – and of battles – as if you were a man. I wonder where we shall all be this day twenty years ?’

‘Colonels, I hope,’ said Henri, following up, in youthful mind, the playful language of his companion.

‘The day twenty years we will meet in Paris, provided we be all in this world,’ said the young student who presided, and whose expressive blue eyes now shone with unusual lustre; ‘and let emulation urge us on to see who will outstrip the others in the race after fortune.’

‘An appointment ! an appointment !’ exclaimed Alfred, clapping his hands together.

‘Perhaps this appointment, which we make in a moment of mirth, may be kept in earnest,’ observed Henri. ‘At all events, I will endeavour to preserve it, for me.’ And, by way of completing that which he of course regarded as little better than a joke, he entered the memorandum in his pocket-book.

‘Well, if you be thus serious, I must e’en imitate your example,’ cried Alfred; and he also made a note of the appointment in his tablets.

The young man with the expressive blue eyes, who presided at the feast, pointed to his forehead, and said, ‘I shall retain the recollection of that appointment *here* !’

‘Now that this child’s play – which, by the bye, is really unworthy of us – is over,’ said Alfred d’Estival, ‘let us pass our last evening together in the most pleasant manner possible.’

‘Another bottle of champagne !’ exclaimed Henri, who surname was Delaroche, ‘and then we will return to Paris, where I propose that we amuse ourselves a little at the Academy of Music.’

‘The Opera, by all means !’ ejaculated Alfred d’Estival; and the scheme was put into execution.

It is not necessary to enter into minute details relative to the proceedings of the three youths with whom we have thus more or less made our readers acquainted. It is sufficient to observe that on the following morning they laid aside their college uniforms, assumed plain clothes, and bade each other adieu beneath the portal of that seminary in which their friendship had matured. Three post-chaises were waiting in the court-yard to convey them to the stations of their respective regiments; and, as they separated from each other to ascend the steps of their vehicles, they with one accord exclaimed, smiling, ‘Forget not the appointment, twenty years hence, in Paris !’

Alfred d’Estival and Henri Delaroche forgot the injunction the moment it was uttered; but their less volatile friend with the expressive blue eyes did not so readily banish it from his memory. We must however leave this young man, as well as Henri Delaroche, at least for the present, in order to follow the fortunes of Alfred d’Estival.

The post-chaise which bore him away from that college where his military education had been perfect rolled rapidly along the road to Versailles; and when it arrived in that town, it stopped at the door of the principal hotel, where Alfred alighted. Having ordered a repast to be prepared for him in the course of a couple of hours, he proceeded to the gardens of the palace, with which the hotel communicated by a back gate, and hastily threaded his way through the long labyrinths of

verdure, to the most secluded spot in the enclosure. A young lady, attended by a female domestic, was seated upon a bench at the spot thus sought by the young officer; and no sooner did the sound of his footsteps fall upon her ears, than she glanced hastily around, and in another moment was folded in his arms. The servant withdrew to a little distance, to allow the lovers to converse at their ease; and so they seated themselves together on the bench, joy flashing from their eyes.

‘At length you are an officer, my dear Alfred !’ said the beautiful girl – for she was one of the most lovely of God’s creatures. Her eyes were dark blue, rolling in a milky way, and resembling that light in Orion which a celebrated modern astronomer has deemed the centre of our system of worlds, and round which the sun itself revolves. They were eyes that would have afforded ample scope for the effusions of a Catullus, or the encomiums of an Ovid. Her figure, though she herself could scarcely have numbered sixteen summers, was modelled in all the mature and voluptuous symmetry of womanhood. And upon the young military aspirant did this fair creature doat with all the fondness of a Leilah for her Meignoun.

‘So at length you are an officer, Alfred ?’ said the maiden, as she glanced tenderly towards her lover.

‘A lieutenant in the gallant fifty-seventh, my dearest Emilie !’ replied Alfred d’Estival. ‘And now let me return thee my best thanks for the punctuality. My note was hastily written; but it was explicit.’

‘And you have but an hour to pass with me ?’ observed Emilie, in a mournful tone of voice.

‘One or two hours, dearest girl,’ was the answer; ‘and then I must depart to join my regiment. But, alas ! perhaps when I am away Emilie Delaroche will forget her poor Alfred – and a happier rival will win the hand of the high-born daughter of one of France’s proudest peers.’

‘Alfred, you wrong me,’ said the young lady firmly. ‘I do not attempt to blind myself for one moment that my father will do everything to oppose our union, but you have a powerful advocate and friend in my brother Henri.’

‘Still I have no fortune save my sword; but I possess an enterprising spirit, Emilie; – and, since thou art to be won, I must dare everything in the shape of the ruder storms of his life to create for myself a name.’

‘Maintain your character as a true and loyal son of France, Alfred,’ said Emilie, her eyes lighting up with sudden fire, ‘and the prejudice of my father may be overcome. You know that he himself was a soldier of fortune; and that his devotion to his sovereign procured for him a title and a considerable pension.’

‘The former he has never disgraced; and with the latter he has done much good,’ said a loud voice, as Emilie terminated her sentence; and, in a moment, an elderly man, of aristocratic mien, stood before the astonished lovers.

‘My lord, forgive me !’ exclaimed Alfred d’Estival, sinking upon his knees.

‘Oh ! my dear father !’ cried Emilie, about to imitate her lover’s example. ‘Rise, M. d’Estival – rise,’ said the old General, for such was his military rank; ‘and you, daughter, attempt not to kneel. I have accidentally overheard a portion of your conversation; and the honourable sentiments uttered by both are creditable to you. I will not impede the happiness of my daughter – nor will I carelessly suffer her to espouse one who is unable to support her in the rank of life in which she has hitherto moved. These are stormy times, young man –and, if I mistake not, there will be more occupation yet for the armies of France. Go then, Alfred –go; and, when you shall have done aught to render you worthy of an alliance with the house of Delaroche, return – and Emilie shall be yours.’

The marquis took his daughter’s hand, bade the young soldier a hasty adieu, beckoned to the domestic (who had remained a silent spectator of all that had passed, at a little distance), and turned away into another avenue, which led towards his own dwelling. The lovers exchanged a significant glance of mingled joy and sorrow – joy at the hope held out by the marquis, and sorrow for this separation; -- and Alfred returned to the Hotel du Réservoir, a prey to a thousand conflicting emotions.

He scarcely touched the repast that was served up to him, and ordered the horses to be put to his vehicle. In half an hour he was once more on the road to join his regiment, which was stationed at a small fortified town about sixty or seventy miles distant from the French metropolis.

It does not seem necessary to detail all the adventures Alfred d’Estival passed through during the first seven or eight years of his noviciate in the army. Suffice it to say, that, having conducted himself in that period in a manner which gained for him the esteem of his brother officers, and the veneration of his subordinates, he found himself a captain at the age of three and twenty, when the fury of that terrible revolution broke out, which, like the fall of a colossal edifice, seemed to threaten with ruin and destruction everything within its reach. The regiment to which Alfred d’Estival belonged speedily declared itself in favour of the people; and Alfred, not only in obedience to the dictates of his own opinions, but also in accordance with the views and sentiments of the father of the betrothed, with whom he frequently corresponded, was obliged to escape from the wrath of those soldiers that once had revered him. He refused to serve the Convention – and retreated with precipitation to Versailles.

On his arrival at that town, he immediately repaired to the residence of the Marquis Delaroche, his heart beating high with the hope of once more embracing his much-loved Emilie, whom he had seen but once since the parting ere now described. But to his dismay and grief, he found that

the whole family (Henri excepted) had departed for England, to avoid the vengeance of republican fury. An old porter still remained in the house; and to him it was that Alfred addressed himself. After a brief conversation, which merely made Alfred aware of the fact and date of the departure of the marquis, the marchioness, and Emilie, the venerable *concierge* suddenly recollected that he had a letter for Captain d'Estival. Alfred hastily opened the precious document, the superscription of which he immediately recognised to be in the hand-writing of his Emilie, and read the following words: –

‘By the desire of my father, I write to you, my dear Alfred, to inform you that we are obliged to fly from our native land – exiled from our home – and that we shall seek refuge in London, whither you must follow us, if *you* value your safety as *I* value it. I have but time to mention the afflicting news that my brother Henri – your old school-fellow and friend – has joined the side of the Convention. My poor old father is nearly distracted; but he knows that *you* are loyal and true to your rightful monarch.

Adieu, dear Alfred, – and follow us immediately.

Emilie’

D'Estival did not hesitate for one moment over what course to pursue. To remain in France was not only useless – it was worse – it was madness. He accordingly hastened to Calais, whence he embarked for Dover, and arrived safely upon a hospitable shore. He immediately proceeded to London, and soon joined the family of the noble marquis.

For some time hopes were entertained that the tide of

French affairs might take a turn favourable to the royalist party. But those who were thus sanguine in their expectations were sadly mistaken. Toulon was wrested from the hands of the English by a warrior whose future greatness eclipsed all the glory of Caesar and of Pompey, or of any commander that ever existed before him. The Duke of York experienced a most disgraceful defeat at the hands of Houchard before Dunkerque – the siege of Maubeuge was raised by the intrepid Jourdain – and the Committee of Public Safety was enabled to pass a decree for arming and employing all the male population of France in defence of the country. The Marquis Delaroche saw that the royal cause was now lost, at least for a considerable length of time; and he himself was the first to propose that the hands of Alfred d'Estival and Emilie should be united in the bonds of holy matrimony. The ceremony was accordingly performed in the Roman Catholic faith, and the young royalist was rendered supremely happy by the possession of her he had so long and faithfully loved.

Six months passed away, and the felicity of the newly-married couple was uninterrupted, save by the consciousness that rank and fortune in their native land were most probably lost to them for ever. The Marchioness Delaroche endeavoured to soothe the grief of her noble husband; and

Emilie undertook the same task in reference to Alfred. But those two faithful adherents to the royal cause devoured in secret their despair and their sorrows.

One evening, Captain d'Estival was informed that a stranger was desirous of speaking to him at an adjacent hotel. Alfred proceeded to the place of *rendez-vous*, and was introduced into a room which an individual, in somewhat quaint attire, and with long hair flowing over his shoulders, was rapidly pacing. As Alfred entered the apartment, the stranger turned to meet him; and our hero immediately recognized the features of his brother-in-law, Henri Delaroche.

'Not a word – mention not my name !' said the republican, pointing to a seat; and, without expressing the slightest pleasure at thus meeting an old friend, Henri proceeded coolly and tranquilly to observe 'I am come to England at the greatest possible risk and personal danger to myself – I am come to claim the services of a misled father, and an infatuated brother-in-law, in favour of regenerated France !'

'You know, then, that I have espoused your sister ?' said Alfred, astonished at the extraordinary frigidity of his relative's disposition.

'I was made aware of the fact a few weeks ago, by one of our spies who returned from London to Paris,' was the reply; 'and I thought that this union argued favourably for my father's present views of society. He has suffered his aristocratic blood to commingle with that of a commoner; – this is the first step towards republicanism.'

'Insult not your father's grey hairs, Henry !' exclaimed Alfred, with unusual vehemence. 'He is as incapable of treachery to his sovereign –'

'That is the common cant of those whom the light of reason has not overtaken !' interrupted Henri fiercely; 'but, when a sovereign errs, he is responsible to his people; and in the punishment of a dishonest prince there is no treason.'

'We will not argue a point of opinion,' said Alfred. 'Let me only observe that these will never be your father's sentiments, nor mine. Your mission, then, is useless.'

'In that case, I must see my father myself,' coolly remarked the republican, rising from his chair. 'I thought to have first found an able and willing advocate in my old school-fellow and brother-in-law. It appears that I am mistaken; and, instead of the noble and generous Frenchman who knows how to value the blessing of liberty, I find a grovelling and obstinate slave, hugging the very chair from which he will not suffer his more enlightened friends to emancipate him.'

'Henri, you are my wife's brother,' said Alfred: 'or these words would not –'

'I came not to dispute with you,' interrupted Henri, very tranquilly waving his hand towards the door: 'my object was to place my father and yourself on the high road to fame and fortune.'

‘Things must change, Henri,’ observed Alfred, bitterly; then, as a sudden reminiscence flashed across his brain, he added, ‘And the twenty years have not *yet* passed away ! Does our appointment still hold good.’

‘A truce to irony,’ hastily ejaculated the republican. ‘My time is precious, I must see my father.’

‘I much fear,’ remarked Alfred, ‘that he will not listen to your opinions and arguments with even so much patience as myself.’

‘He is older, and more open to conviction,’ said Henri. ‘Lead on, and I will follow you.’

Captain d’Estival did not hesitate a moment: he fondly anticipated that the appeal of a father might shake the resolves of a son; and he perceived that an immense advantage would be gained to the royal cause if an influential officer like Henri Delaroche, who held the rank of colonel in the armies of the Convention, could be won over to the legitimate party.

But, oh ! the scene that ensued was too painful for description. In the middle of the drawing-room stood the stern republican, with folded arms, and eagle glances darted towards his father. And that venerable old man, with his long grey hair, was preparing to anathematize his son; and he was only prevented by the weeping marchioness and the agonized Emilie. And still the republican maintained all his calmness and equanimity of temper, and he dropped not a single tear at the sight of parental suffering.

‘Alas !’ cried the venerable marquis, almost mad with rage and grief, – ‘that I should have lived to see the ancient family of Delaroche disgraced by my own child ! Instead of being the prop of a noble house, there – there stands the man who would hurl it to the ground, and bury it, together with all other national distinctions, in one general tomb. Oh ! my God – what have I done thus to be afflicted ?’

‘Father, my dear father !’ cried Emilie, falling upon her knees, – ‘in the name of heaven, compose yourself !’

‘My son – my son !’ screamed the miserable mother, – ‘would’st thou kill the author of thy being ? Remember, Henri – Oh ! remember, that when you were a boy, no father could be more tender to his offspring than he was to you. Oh ! he watched over you, Henri, – he doated upon you – he spoke of you with the interest, the love, the pride, the affection of a fond—fond parent ! And this is the reward !’

And, as the marchioness sobbed bitterly, a smile of pity curled the lip of the stern and unrelenting republican.

‘Oh ! depart – fly – before he curses you !’ exclaimed Emilie to her brother; ‘for a father’s curse is terrible to think upon.’

The soldier of the Convention laughed outright; for he knew of no other ties save those which linked him with the welfare of his country.

‘He dares me – he dares me !’ cried the old man, wildly; ‘he dares me – but I will not curse him; – Oh ! no – he is my son – he is still my son – my son – and I will not, I may not curse him !’

The venerable marquis fell back in his daughter’s arms, as he uttered these words in a tone of voice which bespoke the deepest mental agony; Emilie gave vent to a piercing scream – the marquis rolled on the floor – Alfred rushed forward to raise him – but the old man’s spirit had fled for ever !

‘Wretch ! thou hast murdered thy father !’ ejaculated Alfred d’Estival, in a voice of the most galling reproach.

‘Oh ! horror – but he is my son !’ cried Madame Delaroche.

Alfred gazed upon the republican with a look of indescribable aversion; – that glance was returned by one of the most deadly hatred on the part of Henri: these two men understood each other but too well – they felt that they were thenceforth destined to be deadly foes – and they uttered not a word. Henri slowly drew towards the spot where the corpse of his father lay – the fine feelings of nature were not all stifled in his bosom – he stooped down and imprinted a kiss upon the cold forehead of his deceased sire – and then retreated slowly from the apartment.

Time passed away: the tomb had closed over both the parents of Emilie, and a lovely boy had blessed her union with Alfred d’Estival, when in the year 1800 a proclamation was issued by Napoleon Bonaparte, the first consul of France, inviting all emigrants to return to France. Alfred gladly availed himself of this amnesty; his heart was still true to the cause of his exiled sovereign; and he hoped to be enabled to benefit the cause of the Bourbons by his presence in the French capital. Nor was Emilie displeased at the prospect of again visiting her native land. Although the smallness of the competency which the late marquis had been able to save from the wreck of his fortunes would preclude the family of d’Estival from indulging in all the pleasures and expenses to which Emilie had in early youth been accustomed, she nevertheless looked forward with feelings of delight to the prospect of again dwelling in the splendid city of her birth. Her wishes, and those of her husband, were speedily satisfied; and in the commencement of the year 1802, they were once more domiciled in Paris.

In the meantime, the hero of a thousand battles – that meteor which blazed so brightly, and which so long terrified all the nations of the universe with its supernal lustre – had paved the way to his future aggrandizement, and laid the foundation of the throne which he was shortly to fill, as the conqueror of Marengo and of Austerlitz.

The banners of the German monarchs were soon to grace his triumphal car; and, as a military dictator, was he destined to give laws, not only to France, but to Europe. It is true that, at this period, the column in the Place Vendôme was not yet built; but its materials were in preparation; and the mighty victor had already commenced that career which was to furnish the metal for the eternal monument of his conquests.

Alfred d'Estival perceived the growing influence of Napoleon, and was aware that, if ever a blow were to be struck, the moment was fast approaching. He accordingly resolved to exert himself to the utmost of his endeavours, and without delay, in the cause of the exiled Bourbons.

It was about this time that circumstances began to occur which gradually increased in mystery and importance, and threatened to undermine the domestic happiness of Emilie. She was fondly attached to her husband, and was naturally jealous in her disposition. It was therefore with the most acute and poignant anguish that she became aware of frequent letters being secretly left for him at the porter's lodge, and the receipt of which he studiously concealed from her. They had been married upwards of eight years; and never, till this period, had the slightest sentiment of jealousy obtained ingress to the heart of Emilie. But now the conduct of her husband was inexplicable: she had once remonstrated with him for receiving letters unknown to her, and he had endeavoured to laugh away the suspicion; but, alas ! she could no longer doubt – she bribed the porter of the house in which they resided, and thus became aware of the terrible reality. She then vituperated herself for her own conduct, in having condescended to such measures to arrive at the truth; but the lively imagination of woman is ever fertile in the invention of argument to soothe the pangs of her own conscience in all matters connected with her love. Emilie was therefore speedily tranquilized upon this head; but relative to the supposed infidelity of her husband – oh ! no pen can describe the anguish which she nourished in secret, and which she endeavoured to conceal even from him who was the cause of her grief !

Alfred did not fail to observe that something was preying upon the mind of his beloved wife; and he did everything he could to console her. Then she would appear gay for a short interval – and her spirits would rally – and she would say to herself 'He still loves me !' And then Alfred would leave her, and absent himself from the house for the whole day, and very often for the greater part of the night; and, during that interval, perhaps, the porter would inform her that another letter, mysteriously delivered at the lodge, had arrived for her husband; and she would once more become a prey to the most poignant grief.

Great was the love of Emilie d'Estival for her husband; and commensurate with her affection was the amount of her jealousy. One evening she was sitting with her well-beloved boy in the dining-room, upon the table of which stood the untasted supper, and was anxiously awaiting the return of her husband, whose absence from home had lately been of more frequent occurrence than ever. Upwards of three years had now passed away since she was first a prey to that feeling of jealousy which was consuming her. It was, then, towards the middle of 1805, that she is again

introduced to notice. The clock had struck eleven – still Alfred returned not; the evening meal had long been served up – it was speedily cold – and she herself felt not the want of food. The little boy soon retired with the servant; and Emilie was then alone.

The night was stormy and tempestuous; and the rain beat in torrents against the window-panes. Suddenly a low knock at the door of the apartment in which Emilie was seated aroused her; and, when she desired the person, whoever it might be, to enter the room, an individual enveloped in a dark cloak answered the invitation. Emilie almost screamed with affright as she recognised the features of her brother.

‘I have long been absent from France,’ said the still stern and severe Henri Delaroche, ‘upon a mission of great import to America – a private mission for my imperial master; and on my return a few days ago, I learnt that you were again living in Paris. For three years and a half I have been absent; but for upwards of twelve years I have not seen my sister ! On what terms do we meet ?’

‘Wherefore that question ?’ demanded Emilie; ‘are you not my brother ?’

‘And Alfred ?’ said Henri interrogatively.

‘O ! Henri, Henri !’ ejaculated the unhappy woman, now overcome by her feelings, and clasping her hands together, for she recollected how happy was her love when she last saw her brother, and how miserable she was at the moment.

‘Ah ! what of Alfred ?’ demanded Henri, casting a searching glance at his sister. ‘Does he not still love you ?’

The question, which half originated in irony, was mistaken by the forlorn Emilie for one of kindness and condolence. She had no confidant – she felt that she was now with her brother, whom she had so tenderly loved in early youth; and, yielding to the impulse of the moment, and the violence of her own feelings, she threw herself into his arms, and sobbed out the secret of her jealousy, and the cause, on her brother’s bosom. He listened – he devoured every word she uttered with avidity – and then, when she had no more to say, he calmly led her to the sofa. Emilie felt relieved by the avowal she had made; – it is always sweet to be enabled to pour our griefs into the ears of relations, be they never so devoid of sympathy – and this was a terrible load taken from her mind.

At this moment the door of the apartment was gently opened, and the porter of the house crept slowly into the room. Emilie almost shrieked as her eye lighted upon his countenance. The old man was about to retire as soon as he perceived that Madame d’Estival was not alone.

‘You may speak,’ said Emilie, recovering her presence of mind; ‘that gentleman is my brother, and knows all.’

‘Another letter has just arrived for Monsieur d’Estival,’ murmured the porter, in a trembling tone of voice.

‘Emilie,’ said Henri, advancing hastily towards his sister, and speaking in a hurried tone, ‘yours is only suspicion, is it not ? You are not jealous upon conviction ?’

Emilie shook her head, to imply that she was not positively certain that she had cause to mistrust her husband; she then buried her face in her hands, and wept bitterly.

‘Old man,’ said Henri, ‘take this purse, and bring me that letter of which you have just spoken.’

‘But, sir –’

‘Obey – or I will disclose all your infamy in accepting bribes, and betraying the affairs of your lodgers,’ added Henri in an authoritative tone of voice.

The old man bowed, withdrew, and speedily returned, bearing a letter in his hands. Henri seized it, tore it hastily open, and ran his eyes over the contents.

‘Here – read,’ he said, approaching Emilie; ‘here is the letter which doubtless contains the fatal secret.’

At these words Madame d’Estival raised her head; and acting under a sudden impulse of curiosity, which none in her situation could have avoided, she snatched the letter from her brother’s hand, for the purpose of perusing the contents. But, to her astonishment, the document contained nothing but figures !

‘That is a fine specimen of arcanography !’ exclaimed Henri, with ill-concealed irony.

‘Extraordinary !’ cried Emilie, fancying that her worst fears were now confirmed: ‘this is the scheme adopted to defeat curiosity !’ and she again wept like a young girl who mourns the haplessness of a first love.

‘Adieu ! adieu ! dear sister,’ said Henri. ‘Alfred may return, and I would rather not meet him yet. I will shortly visit you again.’

‘But that letter –’

‘We must destroy it,’ interrupted Henri hastily: ‘I will take that task upon myself;’ and with these words he rushed hastily from the apartment.

Emilie felt she had done wrong in suffering him to depart with the letter. Her heart sank within her, she knew not why; and when her husband returned at midnight she was still bathed in tears.

On the following morning, when the breakfast was cleared away, Alfred, instead of rising from the table and leaving the house, as had been his habit for many months previously, retained his seat, and addressed Emilie as follows: –

‘My dear Emilie, for the last two or three years my conduct may have appeared more or less extraordinary; but I was unwilling to harass and perplex your gentle bosom with the exciting details of my proceedings from day to day. I have, however, now organised my scheme – a plan is arranged by which a desperate blow in favour of the royal cause will be shortly struck; and I hourly expect the last letter I shall receive upon the subject. These have been my aims, dearest Emilie –’

‘Oh ! my ever dear Alfred, how have I been mistaken !’ ejaculated Emilie; and she gave her husband a most feeling and touching description of the long torments she had experienced.

A cloud covered the brow of d’Estival: he had been unjustly suspected by her whom he adored, and he felt aggrieved. But she sank at his feet, and implored his pardon in tones so penetrating that he could be angry with her no longer. And at that moment she appeared so eminently beautiful amidst her tears that his ideas were instantly reflected back to the tranquil and happy period of their early love. He raised her from her suppliant posture, and clasped her fondly in her arms, just as a loud knocking at the front door of this suite of apartments compelled him and Emilie to assume a look of composure and ease which they did not feel.

Heavy steps were heard in the ante-chamber – the door of the parlour was thrown violently open—and three gendarmes entered the room.

‘Your name is Alfred d’Estival ?’ said the officer of this little detachment.

‘It is,’ was the reply.

‘In the name of his imperial Majesty, Napoleon, I arrest you on a charge of high treason !’ said the officer.

‘For what offence ?’ demanded Alfred. In a firm tone of voice.

‘Do you know anything of a letter containing a correspondence expressed by cyphers ?’ asked the officer. ‘All is discovered – and you are my prisoner. The Marquis Delaroche laid the accusation, and furnished the proof.’

There echoed through the room a shriek so wild – so loud – so long, that it might have been taken for the expression of the agony felt by some criminal undergoing the torture of the rack; and then something fell heavily upon the floor. The scream issued from the lips of Emilie – it was Emilie who fell. Alfred instantly conjectured the truth of all that had happened, and gave himself up for lost.

The officer allowed his prisoner to see that proper attention was administered to his unhappy and heart-broken wife; and, when this duty was fulfilled, d'Estival prepared to accompany the gendarmes whithersoever they were instructed to lead him.

They descended to a street, where a post-chaise was in attendance.

‘On your word as a gentleman, sir,’ said the officer, ‘you will not attempt to escape?’

‘I pledge my word,’ returned Alfred; ‘and my promise, in the hour of misfortune, is as sacred as if I had sworn to render a friend a service in the hour of prosperity.’

The officer bowed, and spoke in a whisper to the gendarmes who accompanied him. The communication was immediately followed by their departure; and d'Estival and the officer stepped unattended into the vehicle.

For some minutes Alfred was too much engaged in the contemplation of his own sorrows to notice the route which the carriage was pursuing. But, when he raised his head, and gazed from the window, as the vehicle turned under a high archway, he gave an involuntary start, exclaiming ‘This is not the entrance to the Conciergerie!’

‘It is the entrance to the Court of the Tuileries,’ calmly replied the officer. ‘I am obeying the directions of my superiors.’

And in five seconds, the vehicle stopped at the back entrance to the palace.

‘Have the kindness to take my arm, and accompany me whither I shall lead,’ said the officer, when he and his prisoner had alighted from the carriage.

D'Estival obeyed in mute astonishment. The officer led him up a splendid staircase, which alone proclaimed the entrance to a royal abode, and along which were ranged a few of those imperial guards whose banners had been led to conquest by the adored commander whose dwelling they now protected. Those grim-looking warriors were proud of the trust consigned to them by their master and by France; and any one who had gazed upon them would indeed have felt that with such followers even a coward might have dared to meet the assembled forces of the universe!

Having reached the spacious ante-chamber to which the stair-case led, the officer demanded of a gorgeously-attired domestic the name of the aide-de-camp in waiting.

‘General the Marquis Delaroche,’ was the reply, which went to the heart of Alfred with the sharpness of a dagger.

The officer led his prisoner into an adjoining apartment, where several military men, in various uniforms, were lounging before a stove in which a large fire was burning. The moment the

gendarme made his appearance with d'Estival, one of the group stepped hastily forward, and confronted the prisoner, who, as he had of course anticipated, recognised in the Marquis Delaroche his old school-fellow Henri – his wife's brother – and his own mortal enemy.

'His Majesty awaits your arrival,' said the marquis, with a malignant smile: 'follow me !'

With these words he led the gendarme and the prisoner through a suite of magnificently-furnished apartments., crowded with officers, pages, and nobles in waiting. At length they reached a very large apartment, hung around with pictures by the first masters; and Delaroche knocked gently at a door communicating with the reception-room. In another moment, the culprit was ushered into the presence of Napoleon !

Alfred had made up this mind not to quail before the emperor; -- but, when he was confronted by that great man, who, calm and unmoved, stood, with his arms folded across his breast, gazing upon the prisoner, he felt an indescribable sensation of awe creep over him. He trembled from head to foot, – he quailed beneath the glance of him who fame had eclipsed the renown acquired by Hannibal, Caesar, Timour, of Solyman the Great, – and, almost involuntarily, he sank upon his knees at the feet of the imperial hero.

'Rise – rise, d'Estival !' exclaimed Napoleon. 'We were once equals – we were school-fellows – we were friends ! Rise !'

'May it please your majesty,' said the Marquis Delaroche, 'this individual –'

'Silence', ejaculated Napoleon, in a tone, and with an air, beneath which Henri cowered almost to the floor: 'and you, Alfred d'Estival, stand forward ! When we last met, we gave each other a certain *rendez-vous*: on that occasion we were at Saint Cloud – twenty years ago ! Our appointment has been kept !'

Both the Marquis Delaroche and Alfred d'Estival uttered a cry of astonishment, as they called to mind the freak of their boyish days.

'Yes,' said the Emperor; 'we have been faithful to your appointment ! But how do we meet ? I as the ruler of the destinies of France – you, Alfred d'Estival, as a traitor, a conspirator, against your sovereign – and you, Henri Delaroche, as the betrayer and accuser of your friend.'

'I did my duty to my master,' observed the marquis, in a suppliant tone of voice.

'True, true,' returned the Emperor; 'but I must punish thee for thy hatred of thy former friend – thy brother-in-law. Be thou then, the bearer of this document to his afflicted wife. Haste—and acquit thyself well of the mission !'

The Emperor paused for a moment; and when Henri had departed with a sealed packet which Napoleon had placed in his hands, his Majesty again addressed the astonished d'Estival.

‘And you, headstrong fanatic in a bad and ruined cause, know that the emperor of the French forgets not ancient friendships in his hope to acquire new ones. Alfred d'Estival – you are pardoned; and when, in after years, you record the history of your own life, forget not to add that your appointment was duly kept, and that the recollection of a youthful frolic saved your life on this occasion. Officer, your prisoner is free.’

D'Estival again fell at the feet of the generous monarch, and endeavoured to pour forth his gratitude in all the eloquence which the nature of his situation in reference to Napoleon was calculated to originate; but his voice was rendered inaudible by deep emotions – the Emperor was himself affected – and the gendarme's countenance was moistened with tears. Napoleon waved his hand in token of adieu, and retired to another apartment, as d'Estival and the officer of gendarmes hurried out of the reception-room.

On his return to his own abode, Alfred found his wife and little boy weeping for joy in each other's arms. A document lay open upon the table – its contents confirmed d'Estival's pardon, and restored him, with the rank of major, to the regiment in which he had originally served. A considerable pension was moreover settled upon him; and thus had the happy couple good reason to bless the appointment which had been so faithfully kept.

Napoleon ordered the Marquis Delaroche to make the first advances towards a complete reconciliation with Alfred d'Estival; and, in obedience to the will of his sovereign, the hypocritical nobleman affected the deepest contrition for his dastard attempt to compass the ruin of his ancient school-fellow. He, however, nursed a secret, a deadly, and a durable hatred, against that companion of his youth – that generous man who had wedded his sister; and he resolved to seize a favourable opportunity to gratify his thirst for vengeance. He remembered the bitter reproach addressed to him by Alfred, when the venerable marquis, his father, had fallen dead at his feet – slain, as it were, by his own hand; and that reproach rankled like a venomous barb in his heart. But the frank and open disposition of d'Estival readily forgot the enmity of the past; and he soon began to consider Henri Delaroche in the light of one of his best and most sincere friends.

By means of the generosity of Napoleon, Alfred d'Estival speedily accumulated a large fortune. Gratitude towards his benefactor induced him to follow the destinies of that extraordinary man; and when Napoleon, after his temporary residence at Elba, returned to France to resume the imperial purple, d'Estival was one of those who flocked to his standard. With the rank of general, Alfred bore an active part in the great battle of Waterloo, and fell, covered with wounds, at the head of the regiment which he led to the fatal strife. More fortunate than his brother-in-law, the Marquis Delaroche, who was also present at Waterloo, escaped to bear the dread tidings to his sister.

Emilie did not long survive her husband. She had loved him so tenderly that his death annihilated all her hopes of happiness in this world, with a blow as terrible as it was sudden. Upon her death-bed, and with her last breath, she entrusted her son – her much-loved Alfred – to the care of her brother; and the immense fortune, which the demise of her husband had placed at her disposal, was all made over to the marquis, for the benefit of the youthful ward. Emilie died; and a monument in the cemetery of Père Lachaise marks her resting-place.

It is impossible to conceive the various idiosyncrasies of which the character of the Marquis Delaroche is compounded. Avaricious and griping in respect to money, he even triumphs over the natural affections of his disposition to save himself the pangs of parting with his wealth. It was in the year 1813 that he seduced Mademoiselle de Cerny, a beautiful young woman who was then the object of general attention as a *figurante* at one of the principal theatres of the French metropolis. As soon as he had gratified his illicit passion, he abandoned its partner, and left her to provide for the daughter that sprung from the connexion. He has, however, since that period anxiously watched from a distance the development of that daughter's destinies. He cares no longer for the mother, whom he never succoured with a *sou* in the depths of her pecuniary embarrassments; but he feels the deepest interest in the beautiful and virtuous Pauline. He, nevertheless, has made up his mind not to acknowledge the child to whom he is really attached, because all his republican ideas have long since exploded, and he fears to tarnish the great name of Delaroche by connecting himself in the slightest degree with the illegitimate offspring of an opera-dancer ! His chief delight is to be present where his unconscious daughter is the object of universal attraction, and to detail her history and chaunt her praises to all who will listen to him.

Of a far more heartless nature has been his conduct towards his nephew. He entertained the most violent antipathy towards that unfortunate relative; and, urged by sentiments of vengeance and avarice, he basely withheld from Alfred d'Estival the immense fortune with the stewardship of which he was entrusted. The hatred which he felt for the father, he visited, with fearful interest, upon the head of the son; and thus has this man, of a thousand eccentricities and evil passions, proved the bane of the happiness of all who were ever connected with him.