

FILE NO. 113.

ONE OF THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS, AND HOW IT WAS SOLVED.

By EMILE GABORIAUX

CHAPTER XIV.

In 18—lived in his ancestral castle, on the banks of the Rhone, the old Marquis de Clameran, and his two sons, Gaston and Louis. They were objects of his love in the same measure as for his hate he viewed his neighbor, the Countess de la Verberie.

The estates were separated only by the river, here narrow, but swiftly flowing. It was no barrier for love. Valentine saw Gaston, and from that moment his image filled her heart. But so many obstacles separated them!

Yet they met happily, until one fatal evening, when she saw her lover swim the tide at the greatest risk, and fall at her feet, almost exhausted. "Is it you," she murmured, trying to lift him up. "Then Heaven has heard my prayers, and had pity."

"No," was his gloomy answer, "Heaven has not been pitiful for I am forced to flee. Our love is the sport of the rustics, and to punish the insolent I have killed two of the scoundrels. But what does this exile matter? You will accompany me, and share my home in the wilds."

"I can not leave my mother, Gaston." "But if my father consents to our union—" "She never will, for you are poor, and she is determined I shall marry a wealthy man that she may end her days in luxury."

"She shall have it," said Gaston, bitterly; "make her wait three years, when I shall return rich, or you will be free to wed for money. Meanwhile keep for me these jewels of my mother's, which I vowed should be worn by my beloved alone."

She accepted the pledge, and watched her lover depart in the gloom. Three days after he was on ship, bound for Valparaiso, happy that he had baffled justice, while she was in misery acute. Her mother had soon heard the story of her disgrace. It was tempered but by two causes for rejoicing in this wicked woman's heart; all believed that Gaston had been drowned in the Rhone, and the fear this was true had carried death to his father's heart.

Valentine could have wished death had included her in this swoop, but for one reason to preserve her, even in pain and travail. She was soon to be the mother of Gaston's child. She had not revealed this secret to him, but her mother divined it. Luckily she was a woman for emergencies. She escorted her daughter to England, where the child was born, and left with persons hired to adopt it, without, of course, knowing what an aristocratic scion they were fostering.

The young mother, bereft of her son, and of its father, returned home with her mother in passive resignation. She sorrowed for four years without receiving any intelligence of either. Her mother remained a marble image to her, but she was alive to her selfish interests. She was always looking about her for the means to rise from her genteel poverty, and at this period it presented itself. They made the acquaintance of the young banker, Andre Fauvel.

CHAPTER XV.

Time had dulled the remorse and anxiety of Valentine. In the genial atmosphere of a happy home she had found rest and almost forgetfulness. She had suffered so much at being compelled to deceive Andre that she hoped she was now even with fate.

She began to look forward to the future, and her youth seemed buried in an impenetrable mist, and was, as it were, the memory of a painful dream. One rainy November day her husband had gone to Provence on business. She was sitting, gazing into the bright fire, and thoughtfully meditating upon her present happiness, when the servant brought her a letter, which had been left by a stranger, who refused to give his name.

Without the faintest presentiment of evil she carelessly broke the seal, and in an instant was almost petrified by the words which met her terrified eye: "Madame—Would it be relying too much upon the memories of the past to hope for half an hour of your time?"

"To-morrow, between two and three, will do myself the honor of calling upon you." "THE MARQUIS OF CLAMERAN." Ah! she had hoped and believed that the fatal past was atoned for, and buried in oblivion; and now it stood before her, pitiless and threatening.

Poor woman! As if all human will could prevent what was fated to be! It was in this hour of security, when she imagined herself pardoned, that the storm burst upon the fragile edifice of her happiness and destroyed her every hope.

The dreaded day came, and with it the man. But to her amazement it was not Gaston whom she saw, but his brother, Louis! Her emotion was too deep not to serve his purpose, and though she preserved enough coolness not to place herself in his power, by accepting his fiction of Gaston dying in his brother's arms later in Paris, and consigning to him the care of his son, she could not altogether shake him off.

On the other hand, she dared not confess to her husband, who would never have confidence in her again, and she refused the sympathy of Madeleine. The girl had divined that she was in distress, and had pleaded to learn the cause. The plotter gave time for the poison to work; when he communicated with her again, it was to ask her to call on him at his hotel.

The poor woman, in the collar, dared not stay away. Here another surprise awaited her. The marquis was not in the rooms. He who received her was a cherubic youth, who announced himself in a sweet voice, which wrung her heart, as Raoul Valentine "Wilson." It was her castaway son!

This voice was so like Gaston's that she seemed once more to be listening to the lover of her almost forgotten youth. It seemed only yesterday that Gaston had pressed her to his faithful heart; she saw him still, saying, gently: "In three years, Valentine! Wait for me!"

CHAPTER XVI.

Andre, her two sons, Madeleine—all were forgotten in this new-found affection. In her maternal love—her folly—she did not so much as glance at the proofs which this young man was abundantly provided with. From that moment she was inextricably entangled in the toils by Clameran and Raoul de Lagors, for the plotter passed him off as her nephew that he might visit the banker's wife with impunity.

No remorse for the past, no apprehensions for the future, disturbed the satisfied present. To her the future was to-morrow; eternity was the sixteen hours which must elapse before another interview. She seemed to think that Gaston's death absolved the past and changed the present. Her sole regret was her marriage. Free, with no family ties, she could have consecrated herself exclusively to Raoul. How gladly would she have sacrificed her affluence to enjoy poverty with him!

She felt no fear that her husband and sons would suspect the thoughts which absorbed her mind; but she dreaded her niece. She imagined that Madeleine looked at her strangely on her return from the Hotel du Louvre. She must suspect something, but did she suspect the truth?

For several days she asked embarrassing questions as to where her aunt went, and with whom she had been during these long absences from home. This disquietude and seeming curiosity changed the affection which Mme. Fauvel had hitherto felt for her adopted daughter into positive dislike.

She regretted having placed over herself a vigilant spy from whom she could not escape. She pondered what means she could take to avoid the penetrating watchfulness of a girl who was accustomed to read in her face every thought that crossed her mind. With unspeakable satisfaction she solved the difficulty in a way which she thought would please all parties. She would have her married, and thus removed from her path and her son's.

Clameran espoused her idea, but wanted to modify it. It was himself that he proposed for the girl's hand, undertaking to avert Bertomy, to whom she had been tacitly engaged, and he promised, as a substantial inducement for the banker's wife to consent to this change, to transfer to Raoul all the dower that came with the bride.

This time the creature in his talons presumed to rebel. He left her with fear that his plans were not working smoothly as before. Clameran had cause for fear. Mme. Fauvel's determination was not feigned. She was firm in her resolve to confess. "Yes," she cried, with the enthusiasm of a noble resolution; "yes, I will tell Andre everything!"

She believed herself to be alone, but turned around suddenly at the sound of footsteps, and found herself face to face with Madeleine, who was pale and swelled-eyed from weeping. "You must obey this man," she quietly said. "I despise M. de Clameran, and shall always regard him as the basest of men; nevertheless, I will marry him. I will not suffer dishonor to fall upon this house, which is my home, while I have power to prevent it. Am I not indebted to you for more than life? What would I now be had you not taken pity on me? A factory girl in my native village. You warmly welcomed the poor orphan, and became a mother to her. It is not to your husband that I owe the fortune which excites the cupidities of this wicked Clameran? Are not Abel and Lucien brothers to me? And now, when the happiness of all who have been loving and generous to me is at stake, do you suppose I would hesitate? No, I will become the wife of Clameran."

Then began a struggle of self-sacrifice between Mme. Fauvel and her niece as to which should be the victim, only the more sublime, because each offered her life to the other, not from any sudden impulse, but deliberately and willingly. But Madeleine carried the day, fired as she was by that holy enthusiasm of sacrifice which is the sustaining element of martyrs. "Have courage; we two can fight the world and silence our enemies. You shall be saved, aunt; only trust in me." The Marquis of Clameran was agreeably surprised that evening by receiving a letter from Mme. Fauvel, saying that she consented to everything, but must have a little time to carry out a plan. A line from Madeleine, at the bottom of the letter, assured him that she fully concurred with her aunt. Poor girl, she did not spare herself. The next day she took Prosper aside, and forced from him the fatal promise to shun her in the future, and to take upon himself the responsibility of breaking their engagement. The marquis prudently absented himself, awaiting the propitious moment. At the end of three weeks he met the banker at a friend's, and was invited to dinner the next day. Twenty people were seated at the table, and as the desert was being served the banker suddenly turned to Clameran, and said: "I have a piece of news for you, monsieur. Have you any relatives of your name?" "None that I know of, Monsieur." "I am surprised. About a week ago I became acquainted with another

CHAPTER XVII.

Marquis of Clameran." Although so hardened by crime, impudent enough to deny anything, Clameran was so taken aback that he sat with pale face and a blank look, silently staring at M. Fauvel. But he soon recovered enough self-control to say, hurriedly: "Oh, indeed. That is strange. A Clameran may exist, but I can not understand the title of marquis."

M. Fauvel was not sorry to have the opportunity of annoying a guest whose aristocratic pretensions had often piqued him. "Marquis or not," he replied, "the Clameran in question seems to be able to do honor to the title." "Is he rich?" "I have reason to suppose that he is very wealthy. I have been notified to collect for this M. Gaston 400,000 francs."

But this time Louis betrayed no emotion or alarm; he had had sufficient time to recover his self-possession, and nothing could now throw him off his guard. "Gaston!" he queried, carelessly. "I know who he is now. He must be the son of my father's sister, whose husband lived at Havana. I suppose, upon his return to France, he must have taken his mother's name, which is more sonorous than his father's, that being, if I recollect aright, Moirot or Boiot."

The banker laid down his memorandum book, and, resuming his seat, went on: "Moirot or Clameran," said he, "I hope to have the pleasure of inviting you to dine with him before long. Of the 400,000 francs which I was ordered to collect for him he only wishes to draw 100, and tells me to keep the rest on running account. I judge from this that he intends coming to Paris."

"I shall be delighted to make his acquaintance," Clameran branched another topic, and seemed to have entirely forgotten the news told him by the banker. At last the dinner ended, and, as the guests passed into the drawing room, Clameran and Raoul managed to remain last in the dining room. When they were alone they no longer attempted to conceal their anxiety. "It is he!" said Raoul. "I have no doubt of it." "Then all is lost; we had better make our escape."

But a bold adventurer like Clameran had no idea of giving up the ship till forced to do so. "Who knows what may happen?" he asked, thoughtfully. "There is hope yet. Why did not that muddle-headed banker tell us where this Clameran is to be found?" Here he uttered a joyful exclamation. He saw M. Fauvel's memorandum book lying on the table. "Watch!" he said to Raoul. Seizing the note book, he hurriedly turned over the leaves, and, in an undertone, read: "Gaston, Marquis of Clameran, Oloron, Lower Pyrenees."

Two hours later Clameran was on the road to Vesinet with Raoul, explaining to him his plans. "It is my precious brother, and no mistake," he said. "But that need not alarm you so easily, my lovely nephew. Merciful powers! Don't the banker expect to see him any day? Is he not liable to pounce down on me to-morrow?" "Don't be an idiot!" interrupted Clameran. "Does he know that Fauvel is Valentine's husband? That is what we must find out. If he knows that little fact we must take to our heels; if he is ignorant of it our case is not desperate."

"How will you find out?" "By simply asking him." Raoul exclaimed at his ally's cunning. "That is a dangerous thing to do," he said. "It is not so dangerous as sitting down with our hands folded. And, as to running away at the first suspicion of alarm, it would be ineffectual." "Who is going to look for him?" "I am." "Oh," exclaimed Raoul. Clameran's audacity confounded him. "But what am I going to do?" he inquired, after a moment's silence. "You will oblige me by remaining here and keeping quiet. I will send you a dispatch if there is danger, and then you can decamp."

As they parted at Raoul's door Clameran said: "Now remember. Stay here, and during my absence be very intimate at your devoted mother's. Be the most dutiful of sons. Abuse me as much as you please to her, and, above all, don't indulge in any folly; make no demands for money; keep your eyes open. Good-by. To-morrow evening I will be at Oloron talking with this new Clameran."

CHAPTER XVIII.

After leaving Valentine de la Verberie, Gaston underwent great peril and difficulty in effecting his escape. But for the experienced and faithful Menou he never would have succeeded in embarking. Having left his mother's jewels with Valentine, his sole fortune consisted of not quite a thousand francs, and with this paltry sum in his pocket, the murderer of two men, a fugitive from justice, and with no prospect of earning a livelihood, he took passage for Valparaiso.

Before Gaston had been on board the Tom Jones forty-eight hours he saw that chance had cast him among a collection of the most depraved bandits and cut-throats. The vessel, which seemed to have recruited at all points of the compass, possessed a crew composed of every variety of thievish knaves; each country had contributed a specimen. But Gaston's mind was undisturbed as to the character of the people with whom his lot was cast for several months.

The Tom Jones set sail for Valparaiso, but certainly went in a roundabout way to reach her destination. The real fact was that Capt. Warth proposed visiting the gulf of Guinea. Gaston soon saw that he was serving his apprenticeship on a slaver, one of the many ships which made immense fortunes by carrying on the slave trade.

Although this discovery filled Gaston with indignation and shame he was prudent enough to conceal his impressions. When Gaston had been with Capt. Warth about three years the Tom Jones stopped at Rio Janeiro for a month, to lay in supplies. He now decided to leave the ship. He possessed 12,000 francs, as his share of the profits, when he landed at Brazil. As a proof that the slave trade was repugnant to his nature, he left the slaver the moment he possessed a little capital with which to enter some honest business.

But he was no longer the high-minded, pure-hearted Gaston, who had so devotedly loved and periled his life for the little fairy of La Verberie. Three years, after which he had pledged himself to return, had passed; perhaps Valentine was expecting him. Before deciding on any definite project he wrote to an intimate friend at Beaucaire to learn what had happened during his long absence. He also wrote to his father, asking why he had never answered the many letters which he had sent to him by returning sailors, who would have safely forwarded the replies.

At the end of a year he received an answer from his friend. This letter almost drove him mad. It told him that his father was dead; that his brother had left France, Valentine was lately married, and that he, Gaston, had been sentenced to ten years' imprisonment for murder. Henceforth he was alone in the world, with no country, no family, no home, and disgraced by a public sentence. But Gaston was not a man to be long cast down. "Money is the cause of it all!" he said, with rage. "If the lack of money can bring such misery its possession must bestow intense happiness. Henceforth I will devote all my energies to getting money."

He set to work with a greedy activity, which increased each day. Finally, after long weary years of toil and struggle, he was worth a million in gold, besides immense tracts of land. He had often said that he would never leave Brazil, that he wanted to end his days in Rio. He had forgotten that love for his native land never dies in the heart of a Frenchman. Now that he was rich, he wished to die in France. He made inquiries, and found that the law of limitations would permit him to return without being disturbed by the authorities. He left his property in charge of an agent, and embarked for France, taking a large portion of his fortune with him. Twenty-three years and four months had elapsed since he fled from home. An iron mill was for sale near Oloron, on the borders of the Garas; he bought it with the intention of utilizing the immense quantity of wood, which, for want of means of transportation, was being wasted in the mountains. He was soon settled comfortably in his new home, and enjoying a busy, active life.

One evening, as he was ruminating over the past, the servant brought him a card, and said the gentleman was waiting to see him. He read the name on the card: Louis de Clameran. Like one in a dream, he tottered toward the door, gasping, in a smothered, broken voice: "My brother! oh, my brother!" Hurriedly passing by the frightened servant, he ran down stairs. In the passage stood a man; it was Louis. Gaston threw his arms around his neck and held him in a close embrace for some minutes, and then drew him into the room. Seated close beside him, with his two hands tightly clasped in those of Louis, Gaston gazed at his brother as a fond mother could gaze at her son just returned from the battlefield. "Are you married, Louis?" "No."

"Then we will have to do the best we can, and keep house for ourselves. We will live together like two old bachelors, as we are, and be as happy as kings; we will lead a gay life and enjoy everything that can be enjoyed. I feel 20 years younger already. The sight of your face renews my youth, and I feel as active and strong as I did the night I swam across the swollen Rhone." "I think you look the younger." "Would you have recognized me?" "Instantly. You are very little changed." And Louis was right. He himself had an old, worn-out, used-up appearance, while Gaston, in spite of his gray hair and weather-beaten face, was a robust man, in the full maturity of his prime. "We must thank Providence for this happy meeting," he replied. "Three days ago a friend of mind returned from the baths, and mentioned that he had heard that a Marquis of Clameran was near there, and in the Pyrenees. You can imagine my surprise. I instantly supposed that some impostor had assumed our name. I took the next train, and finally found my way here."

CHAPTER XIX.

"Then you did not expect to see me?" "My dear brother, how could I hope for that? I thought that you were drowned 23 years ago." "Drowned! Mlle. de la Verberie certainly told you of my escape. She promised that she would go herself, the next day, and tell my father of my safety."

Louis assumed a distressed look, as if he hesitated to tell the sad truth, and said, in a regretful tone: "Alas! she never told us." Gaston's eyes flashed with indignation. He thought that perhaps Valentine had been glad to get rid of him. After a long silence Gaston arose, and walked up and down the room as if to shake off a feeling of sadness, then he said, cheerfully: "Well, it is of no use to mourn over the past. All the memories in the world, good or bad, are not worth one slender hope for the future; and thank God, we have a bright future before us. Let us bury the past, and enjoy life together."

Louis was silent. Gaston kept up an uninterrupted stream of questions. He wished to know all that had happened during his absence. "What about Clameran?" he abruptly asked. Louis hesitated a moment. Should he tell the truth, or not? "I have sold Clameran," he finally said. "The chateau, too?" "Yes." "You acted as you thought best," said Gaston, sadly, "but it seems to me that if I had been in your place I should have kept the old homestead. Our ancestors lived there for many generations, and our father lies buried there."

Seeing that Louis' face remained clouded he went on: "Ah, I see what annoys you, my dear Louis; you are rich, and think that I am poor, and too proud to accept anything from you. Is it not so?" Louis started at this question. How could he reply so as not to commit himself? "I am not rich," he finally said. "The salary of an office which I hold in Paris is all that I have to support me." "Yet you wanted to pay me back half of the family inheritance! Louis, that is unkind; you are not acting as a brother should."

Louis hung his head. Gaston was unconsciously telling the truth. "I should be a burden to you, Gaston." "A burden! Why, Louis, you must be mad! Did I not tell you I am very rich? Do you suppose that you have seen all I possess? This house and the iron-works do not constitute a fourth of my fortune. Do you think that I would have risked my twenty years' savings in an experiment of this sort? The forge may be a failure, and then what would become of me if I had nothing else?" "I have invested money which yields me an income of eighty thousand francs. Besides, my grants in Brazil have been sold, and my agent has already deposited four hundred thousand francs to my credit as part payment."

Louis trembled with pleasure. He was, at last, to know the extent of the danger hanging over him. Gaston had finally broached the subject which had caused him so much anxiety, and he determined that it should now be explained before their conversation ended. "Who is your agent?" he asked, with assumed indifference. "My old partner at Rio. He deposited the money at my Paris banker's."

"Is this banker a friend of yours?" "No; I never heard of him until my banker at Pau recommended him to me as an honest, reliable man; he is immensely wealthy, and stands at the head of the financiers in Paris. His name is Fauvel, and he lives on the Rue de Provence." Although prepared for hearing almost anything, and determined to bear no agitation, Louis turned deadly pale. "Do you know this banker?" asked Gaston. "Only by reputation." "Then we can make his acquaintance together; for I intend accompanying you to Paris, when you return there to settle up your affairs before establishing yourself here to superintend the forge."

At this unexpected announcement of a step which would prove his utter ruin, Louis was stupefied. In answers to his brother's questioning look he gasped out: "You are going to Paris?" "Certainly I am. Why should I not go." "There is no reason why." "I hate Paris, although I have never been there. But I am called there by interest; by sacred duties," he hesitatingly said. "The truth is, I understand that Mlle. de la Verberie lives in Paris, and I wish to see her." "Ah!" Gaston was silent and thoughtful for some moments, and then said, nervously: "I will tell you, Louis, why I wish to see her. I left our family jewels in her charge, and I wish to recover them." "Do you intend, after a lapse of twenty-three years, to claim these jewels?" "Yes—or rather no. I only make the jewels an excuse for seeing her. I must see her because—because—she is the only woman I ever really loved!" "But how will you find her?" "Oh! that is easy enough. Anyone can tell me the name of her husband, then I will go to see her. Perhaps the shortest way to find out would be to write to Beaucaire. I will do so to-morrow."

Louis trembled like a man who had just made a narrow escape from death. He well knew that he would have to fly the country if Gaston learned the truth. It was necessary to prevent it ever reaching him this side of the grave. A few days after Gaston was suddenly taken ill. CHAPTER XVII. He had a sort of vertigo, and was so dizzy that he was forced to lie down. "I know what is the matter," he said. "I have often been ill in this way at Rio. A couple of hours' sleep will cure me. I will go to bed, and you can send some one to awaken me when dinner is ready. Louis; I shall be all right by that time." At the same time he ordered Manuel, his old Spanish servant, who had lived with him for ten years, to prepare him some lemonade. The next day Gaston appeared to be much better. He ate his breakfast, and was about to take a walk when the pains of the previous day suddenly returned, in a more violent form. Without consulting his brother Louis sent to Oloron for Dr. C—, whose wonderful cures at Eau

CHAPTER XVIII.

During the month of Louis' absence Mme. Fauvel was in a state of comparative happiness. Never had this mother and wife—this pure, innocent woman, in spite of her first and only fault—enjoyed such tranquillity. She felt as one under the influence of enchantment, while reveling in the sunshine of filial love, which almost bore the character of a lover's passion, for Raoul's devotion was ardent and constant, his manner so tender and winning that anyone would have taken him for Mme. Fauvel's suitor. As she was still at her country seat, and M. Fauvel went to business every morning at nine o'clock, and did not return till six, she had the whole of her time to devote to Raoul. When she had spent the morning with him at his house in Vesinet she would often bring him home to dine and pass the evening with her. All his past faults were forgiven, or rather the whole blame of them was laid upon Clameran, for, now that he was absent, had not Raoul once more become her noble, generous, affectionate son, the pride and consolation of her life? Raoul enjoyed the life he was leading, and took such an interest in the part he was playing, that his act-

Bonnes had won him a wide reputation. The doctor declared that there was no danger, and merely prescribed a dose of valerian, and a blister with some grains of morphia sprinkled on it. But in the middle of the night all the symptoms suddenly changed for the worse. The pain in the head was succeeded by a fearful oppression, and the sick man thus suffered torture in trying to get his breath; daybreak found him still tossing restlessly from pillow to pillow. When Dr. C— came early in the morning he appeared very much surprised at this change for the worse. He inquired if they had not administered an overdose of morphia. Manuel said that he had put the blister on his master, and the doctor's directions had been accurately followed. The doctor after having examined Gaston, and found his breathing heavy and irregular, prescribed a heavy dose of sulphate of quinine; he then retired, saying he would return the next day. As soon as the doctor had gone Gaston sent for a friend of his, a lawyer, to come to him as soon as possible. "For Heaven's sake, what do you want with a lawyer?" inquired Louis. "I want his advice, brother. It is useless to try and deceive ourselves; I know I am extremely ill. Only timid fools are superstitious about making their wills; if I defer it any longer I may be suddenly taken without having arranged my affairs. I would rather have the lawyer at once, and then my mind would be at rest."

Gaston did not think he was about to die; but, knowing the uncertainty of life, determined to be prepared for the worst; he had too often imperiled his life, and been face to face with death, to feel any fear now. He had made his will while ill at Bordeaux, but now that he had found Louis, he wished to make him his partner and possessor of half his fortune should he survive. The strangest sensations now filled Louis' breast. He was in a state of delirious excitement often felt by persons suddenly raised from poverty to affluence. Whether Gaston lived or died, Louis was the lawful possessor of an income of twenty-five thousand francs, without counting the eventual profits of the iron works. At no time in his life had he hoped for or dreamed of such wealth. His wildest wishes were surpassed. What more could he want? "Alas! he wanted the power of enjoying these riches; they had come too late. This fortune, fallen from the skies, should have filled his heart with joy; whereas it only made him melancholy and angry. This unlooked-for happiness seemed to have been sent by cruel fate as a punishment for his past sins. What could be more terrible than seeing this haven of rest open to him, and to be prevented from enjoying it because of his own vile plottings? Although his conscience told him that he deserved this misery he blamed Gaston entirely for his present torture. Yes, he held Gaston responsible for the horrible situation in which he found himself. His letters to Raoul for several days expressed all the fluctuations of his mind, and revealed glimpses of coming evil. Gaston would never be turned from his search for his first love, as he proved by calling for her in the most beseeching tones when he was suffering the worst paroxysms of pain. He grew no better. In spite of the most careful nursing his symptoms changed, but showed no improvement. Each attack was more violent than the preceding. At midnight Gaston's sufferings returned with renewed violence, and a fatal termination seemed inevitable. Gaston's pain left him in a measure, but he was growing weaker every moment. His mind wandered, and his feet were as cold as ice. On the fourteenth day of his illness, after lying in a stupor for several hours, he revived sufficiently to make Louis promise to carry on the iron works, embrace him for the last time, and sunk back on his pillow in a dying state. As the bell tolled for noon he quietly breathed his last, murmuring, softly: "In three years, Valentine; wait for me."

Now, Louis was in reality Marquis of Clameran, and besides was a millionaire. Two weeks later, having made arrangements with the engineer in charge of the iron works to attend to everything during his absence, he took his seat in the train for Paris. He had sent the following telegram to Raoul the night previous: "I will see you to-morrow."

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