

Josephine pressed his head to her bosom. "Oh, you may certainly love me a little," she replied, with a touching smile; "I have really deserved it of you."

"Sire," said the emperor, advancing a few steps, "now bid the lady farewell. We must go."

"Papa!" cried the boy, joyously—"papa, we must take the dear lady with us; she is so good, and I love her. Let her live with us in the Tuileries, and always stay with us. I want her to do so, and you, too, papa, do you not?"

Josephine's eyes filled with tears, and she looked at the emperor with an expression of unutterable woe. He immediately averted his face, perhaps to prevent Josephine from noticing his emotion. "Come, sire," he said imperiously, "it is high time; it is growing dark. Take leave of madame!"

"Oh, no; I will not take leave of her!" cried the boy, vehemently. "I say to her rather—Come with us to the Tuileries!"

"It cannot be, sire," said Josephine, smiling amidst her tears.

"Why?" cried the boy, impatiently, and throwing back his head. "Come; you may accompany the emperor, and I want you to do so!"

Napoleon, painfully moved by this scene, quickly advanced to the prince, and took his hand. "Come, sire," he said in a tone so grave that the boy dared no longer resist. Submitting to his father's will, he stepped back, and, pleasantly bowing, took leave of the empress.

"We shall meet again," said Josephine, and, turning her tearful eyes to Napoleon, she asked, "We shall meet again, sire, shall we not?"

"Yes," said Napoleon, gravely, "we shall meet again." He then took leave of her with an affectionate look, which fell as a sunbeam upon her desolate heart, and, leading the boy by the hand, turned quickly toward the door. She looked after them in silence and with clasped hands. As the door opened, the emperor turned again with a parting but melancholy glance.

Josephine was again alone. With a groan she fell on her knees, and lifting her face toward heaven, she cried, "My God, protect—preserve him! Whatever I may suffer, oh, let him be happy!"

CHAPTER XLV.

TALLEYRAND.

FOR a week the emperor had scarcely left his cabinet; bending over his maps, he anxiously examined the position of his army, and that of the constantly advancing allies. Every day couriers with news of fresh disasters arrived at Paris; rumors of invading armies terrified the citizens, and disturbed the emperor's temper. It was impossible for the government to conceal the misfortunes which had befallen France from the beginning of the new year. The people knew that Blucher had crossed the Rhine, and, victoriously penetrating France, on the 16th of January had taken up his quarters at Nancy. It was publicly known that a still larger army of the allies, commanded by Prince Schwartzberg, had advanced through Switzerland, Lorraine, and Alsace, taken the fortresses, overcome all resistance, and that both generals had sworn to appear in front of Paris by February, and conquer the capital. All Paris knew this, and longed for peace as the only way to put an end to the sufferings of the nation. The strength and the superiority of the allied army could not be concealed, and it was felt to be impossible to expel the powerful invaders.

Napoleon himself at length saw the necessity of peace, and, conquering his proud heart, he sent the Duke de Vicenza, his faithful friend Caulaincourt, to the headquarters of the allies, to request them to send plenipotentiaries to a peace congress. The allies accepted this proposition, but they declared that, despite the peace congress, the course of the war could not in the least be interrupted; that the operations in the field must be vigorously continued. Napoleon responded to this by decreeing a new conscription, ordering all able-bodied men in France to be enrolled in the national armies. The terrors of war were, therefore, approaching, and yet Paris was in hope that peace would be concluded; Caulaincourt was still at the headquarters of the allies, treating with them about the congress.

Early on the morning of the 23d of January, another dispatch from Caulaincourt to Maret was received at Paris, and the minister immediately repaired to the Tuileries, to communicate it to the emperor. This dispatch confirmed all the

disastrous tidings which had arrived from day to day, and convinced Napoleon and his minister that the vast superiority of the allied armies rendered it impossible for the emperor to rid his country of the formidable invaders.

"Maret," said Napoleon, gloomily, "come and look at this map. What do you see here?"

"Sire, a number of colored pins extending in all directions."

"And a small number of white pins. Well these are my troops; the colored pins designate the armies of my enemies. They are allied; but I—I have no longer a single ally at this hour; I stand alone, and have to meet eight different armies. See here, Maret: there is, in the first place, the grand army of the Russians, Austrians, Bavarians, and Wurtembergers, commanded by Prince Schwartzberg, and accompanied by the allied monarchs; next, there is the grand Prussian army, with the Russian and Saxon corps, under the command of Blucher, the hussar; here stand the Swedes under Bernadotte, reënforced by Russian and English corps, and the German troops of the Confederation of the Rhine; there comes the Anglo-Batavian army; here, farther to the South, is Wellington's army, composed of English, Spaniards, and Portuguese; there, in Italy, is an Austrian corps under Bellegarde; at no great distance from it, the Neapolitan corps under the King of Naples; and, finally, here at Lyons, is another Austrian corps under Bubna. The armies of Schwartzberg, Blucher, and Bernadotte, are about six hundred thousand strong. And now see what forces I have—I cannot call them armies! Augereau's corps is stationed near Lyons; Ney, Marmont, and Mortier, are with their corps here between the Meuse and the Seine; Sebastiani and Macdonald are with the remnants of their corps on the frontier of the Netherlands. Maret, my troops are hardly one hundred thousand; the allies, therefore, are six to one."

"Sire," said Maret, "even a military genius like that of your majesty, will be unable to cope with such odds, and it reflects no dishonor on the bravest to submit to the decrees of Fate."

"It is true," murmured Napoleon, throwing himself into his easy-chair, with his arm leaning on the desk, and his head bent forward—"it is true, I have no sufficient force to oppose them; their armies are six times as strong as mine, and, unless fortune greatly favors me, I must yield!"

"But fortune has forsaken us, sire, and we have no strength

left. Yield, therefore, sire; submit to a stern necessity; comply with the anxious demand of France; restore peace to your people—to the world! Do not endanger, without prospect of success, your precious life, which is necessary to France—your throne, threatened by foreign and domestic foes. All is at stake. Save France, save the throne! Make peace at any cost!"

While Maret was speaking, Napoleon slowly raised his head, and sent a flaming glance on his minister. Now that Maret was silent, the emperor quickly took up an open book from his desk and handed it to Maret. "I will not answer you, duke," said Napoleon, "but Marmontel shall. Read this. Read it aloud."

Maret read: "I know of nothing more sublime than the resolution taken by a monarch living in our times, who would be buried under the ruins of his throne rather than accept terms to which a king should not listen; he was possessed of too proud a soul to descend lower than unavoidable misfortune. He knew full well that courage may restore strength and lustre to a crown, but that cowardice and dishonor never can."*

"That is my reply, Maret," exclaimed Napoleon. "The example of Louis XIV. shall teach me to perish rather than humiliate myself."

"Sire," said Maret, solemnly, "Marmontel is wrong; there is something more sublime than to be buried under the ruins of a throne—a king sacrificing his own greatness to the welfare of a state that must perish with him."

"Never!" exclaimed the emperor, impetuously. "I can die beneath the ruins of my throne, but I cannot sign my own humiliation! Maret, I have made up my mind: I will continue this struggle to the last; I will conquer or die! Tomorrow I set out for the army. Ah, I want to see whether that drunken general of hussars, Blucher, shall not yield to me, notwithstanding his crazy cavalry tricks; whether Schwartzberg, my faithless pupil, who had learned the art of war from me, will meet me in a pitched battle; and whether Bernadotte, my rebellious subject, dare look me in the face. Maret, the decisive struggle is at hand. I will take the field, save Paris, and conquer the enemy. I must call upon all the men of France to defend the sacred soil of our country, and convert every house into a castle, every

* Marmontel, "Grandeur et Décadence des Romains," ch. v.

village into a fortress, so that my enemies shall have to wrest every inch of ground from us at a vast sacrifice. Not another word about peace! Every thing is ready. Troops are hurrying forward from Spain to fill up my army; in a few days they will be here. Between the Seine and the Marne all my forces will unite and put a stop to the advance of the allies upon Paris. We shall occupy a position by which it will be easy for us to divide, disperse, and crush the enemy. Here, in the plain between these rivers, I shall march along the Aube, scatter the allied army, hurl most of my troops at one of its wings, and, by skilful manœuvres, compel the other wing to fall back. The enemy must retreat; I shall profit by it, and when I have gained a great battle over him, I can impose my own terms; I have then conquered an *honorable* peace for France—one that we can subscribe to without blushing. Ah, I see a brilliant future! It is time to begin. My eagles are ascending; they are not ravens or bats—they are soaring to the sun." As the emperor uttered these words his soul illuminated his face; he was again the conqueror, confiding in his star.

Maret looked anxiously, but admiringly, at Napoleon's face, in which great resolutions were beaming, and he read there an assurance and determination that nothing could change. "You have made up your mind, then, sire: the war is to go on, and the peace congress is not to meet?"

"On the contrary," exclaimed Napoleon, smiling, "let it meet, if the allies wish it. While Caulaincourt, Metternich, and Hardenberg, are dictating terms of peace with their pens, we shall do so with our swords, and we shall soon see which will make the more progress. But let us now commence with some movements of peace. We must be on good terms with Spain and Rome. Let Ferdinand return as King to Spain, and as such become my ally. I shall also open the doors of Pope Pius's prison at Fontainebleau; let him return as pope to Rome, and, as God's vicegerent, be on my side. Maret, here are already two allies. In order to conquer, but one is wanting; and it is for you, Maret, to procure it."

"Sire, what is the name of this ally?" asked the Duke de Bassano, in amazement.

"Money! money! and, for the third time, money! Procure me five millions in cash, and I can add one hundred thousand men to my army."

"Ah, sire, our chests are empty!" sighed Maret.

"But I must have money," replied Napoleon, vehemently. "Without it no war can be waged—no victory gained. Five millions, Maret; I need them; I must have them!"

Maret looked thoughtful. Suddenly his face kindled, and his whole frame shook with joy. "Sire, your majesty asks for five millions?"

"Yes, five millions, to begin with."

"Well, then, sire, I can tell you where to find them, and perhaps more."

"Where?"

"Sire, will you pledge me your imperial word not to betray that it was I who told you where to find this money?"

"Certainly, Maret."

"Listen, sire; but permit me to whisper what I do not wish even the walls to hear." He bent close to the emperor's ear.

Napoleon listened with breathless attention, and nodded repeatedly. "You really believe this to be true, Maret?" he then asked, eagerly.

"Sire, I affirm it to be true. It is a secret known only to three persons! It was betrayed to me to gain me over by an act of treachery—but that is altogether another matter; the fact is sufficient."

"And this fact is, that I shall find with my mother the millions that I need?" said the emperor. "Maret, if that is so, I shall have them this very day."

"Your majesty believes so? Madame Letitia—"

"My mother is avaricious, you wish to say? It is true, her extreme economy has often vexed me; to-day it gladdens my heart; for, thanks to her parsimony, I shall find with her what I need for my army. She will deny these millions to me, to be sure; but you told me where to look for them, and I pledge you my word I know how to find and take them! Hush, not another word! I shall have what I want within an hour. Go now, Maret. You will meet the Prince de Benevento in the antechamber. Send him to me. I have to address a few parting words to M. de Talleyrand."

The emperor stood in the middle of the magnificently furnished cabinet when the Prince de Benevento slowly opened the door and entered. The prince bore the emperor's piercing look with a perfectly composed air. Not a feature of his aristocratic countenance expressed any anxiety and his smile did not for an instant vanish from his lips. With a sort of careless bearing he approached the emperor, who allowed him

to come near him, still watching every expression of his countenance.

"I wished to see you," he said, "in order to tell you that I shall set out for the army the day after to-morrow." Talleyrand bowed, but made no reply. "Do you desire to accompany me?" asked the emperor, vehemently.

"Sire, what should I do at the headquarters of the army?" said Talleyrand, shrugging his shoulders. "Your majesty knows well that I could be of very little service in the army—that I am able only to wield the pen."

"And the tongue!" added Napoleon. "But before leaving Paris I will give you some wholesome advice; bridle both your tongue and your pen a little better than you have done of late. I know that you will not shrink from any treachery, and that you are the first rat that will desert the sinking ship; but consider what you are doing. The ship is not yet in danger, and, spreading her sails, she will move proudly on her way."

"I hope she will have favorable winds and deep water," said Talleyrand, bowing carelessly.

Napoleon looked at him with hatred and rage. These equivocal words—the calm, cold tone in which they were uttered, disturbed the emperor, and his blood boiled. "I believe in the sincerity of your wish," he said, "although there are many who assert that you are a traitor. I have given you fair warning; now prove to those who are accusing you, that they are doing you injustice. No intrigues! You will be closely watched. Beware!" Talleyrand bowed again, and his face still retained its indifferent, smiling expression. "Listen now to what I have to say," added Napoleon. "Prior to my departure I desire to put an end to the dissensions with Rome and Spain. The pope will leave Fontainebleau to-morrow and return to Rome. The Infante of Spain, too, is at liberty to return to his country and ascend the throne of his ancestors. Go to-morrow to Valençay. It was you who conveyed Ferdinand thither; you must, therefore, open the doors of his prison that you locked."

"Sire, I thank your majesty for the favor which you desire to confer on me," said Talleyrand, gravely. "But it was not I who arrested the sacred person of the legitimate King of Spain; it was not I who dared to deprive him of his rights—nay, his very liberty. I acted only as the obedient servant of my master, for your majesty's orders made me the jailer of the Infante of Spain."

Napoleon approached Talleyrand, and his flaming eyes seemed to pierce his soul. "What!" he shouted, in a loud voice. "You wish to give yourself now the semblance of innocence in this affair? What! You only executed my orders, and I made you the jailer of the infante! Who was it, then, that urged me to do this? Who was it that told me it was indispensable for me to crush the head of this Spanish hydra? Who wished even to persuade me to more energetic measures than imprisonment, in order to get rid of the royal family of Spain? Who told me at that time that it would be wiser and better for the welfare of Europe to cut the Gordian knot instead of untying it? Do you remember who did all this?"

Talleyrand made no reply. His countenance still exhibiting the same indifferent composure, he seemed scarcely to have heard the rebukes of the emperor. His head slightly bent forward, his eyes half closed, his lips compressed, he stood leaning with one hand on the back of a chair, and with the other playing with his lace-frill. This conduct greatly augmented the emperor's anger. "Will you reply to me?" thundered Napoleon, stamping the floor, and so near to Talleyrand's foot that the prince softly drew it back. "Will you reply to me?"

Talleyrand looked at the emperor with immovable calmness. "Sire," he said, slowly, "I do not know what your majesty means."

"You do not know what I mean?" echoed Napoleon. "If you do not, listen!" Unable longer to overcome his anger, he advanced toward Talleyrand, and the prince drew back. As if beside himself, the emperor raised his clinched fists, and held them toward the prince's face, moving through the large room, while Talleyrand, looking the emperor full in the face, retreated, taking care to get nearer the door.

"I will tell you that you are a traitor," cried Napoleon, rushing forward—"a traitor who would like to deny to-day what he did yesterday, because he believes that another era is dawning, and that he must betray his master before the cock crows for the first time. You wish to deny that it was you who urged me to imprison the Spanish prince? You are impudent enough to tell me that to my face?" So saying, the emperor's clinched fists almost touched the cheek of the prince, who was still receding, and now noticed with a feeling of relief that he had reached the end of his dangerous promenade.

"Do you really dare deny your past in so barefaced a manner?" cried Napoleon, still holding his fist so close to Talleyrand's cheek that he almost felt it.

The prince softly put his hand behind his back, and fortunately succeeded in seizing the door-knob. He opened the door with a hasty jerk so wide that the gentlemen assembled in the anteroom enjoyed the spectacle of Napoleon with uplifted fists threatening his minister.

"Sire," said Talleyrand, in a calm voice, "I shall not dare say any thing; for I know of no reply to what your majesty has said." The prince pointed with a sarcastic smile to the clinched fists of the emperor, and, without complying with the requirements of usual ceremony, he hastened, more rapidly than his lame foot generally permitted him to do, through the antechamber, saluting the gentlemen as he passed with a wave of his hand and a smile. On stepping into the outer room he accelerated his pace, gliding down-stairs as softly as a cat, and hurrying across the hall to his carriage.

"Home," he said aloud, "at a gallop!" When the horses started, Talleyrand leaned back, and said to himself, "This was our last adieu! I shall take good care not to meet Napoleon again, provided he is stupid enough to give me time for making my dispositions."

The emperor in the mean time, half ashamed of himself, reëntered the cabinet, and locked the door. Angry as a lion in his cage, he paced to and fro with quick steps, when suddenly a gentle voice behind him said, "Sire, pray be so gracious as to listen to me!"

The emperor turned with an angry gesture, and saw the Duke de Rovigo standing near the open door of the antechamber. "Well, Savary, what do you want?" he asked in a faint voice. "Shut the door, and come here. Speak! What do you want?"

"Sire, to implore you to be on your guard," said the duke. "Your majesty has just had a violent scene with the Prince de Benevento."

"Who told you so?"

"Sire, we could distinctly hear your majesty's voice in the antechamber; and, when the prince opened the door, the rest, like myself, saw your threatening attitude. In an hour all Paris will know it."

"Well?"

"Sire, the Prince de Benevento is not the man to forget an

insult, and it will mortify him doubly that the world will hear of it."

"Let it mortify him!" cried Napoleon. "All of you have insinuated to me that Talleyrand is a traitor, deserving punishment. I have chastised him; that is all."

"Sire, the chastisement was either too severe, or not severe enough," said Savary, gravely. "Had it been too severe, the generous heart of your majesty would think of offering him some satisfaction; but I know Talleyrand, and am firmly convinced of the truth of my statement—I pronounce him a plotter of dangerous intrigues. Your majesty therefore cannot chastise him too severely; and, having gone so far, you must now go still farther."

"How so? What do you mean?"

"Sire, I mean that your majesty, instead of allowing the Prince de Benevento to return home, ought to send him to Vincennes, and recommend him to the special care of your friend General Daumesnil."

"Ah, I ought to have him arrested!" cried Napoleon, shrugging his shoulders. "I ought to make a martyr out of a traitor!"

"No, sire, punish a traitor, neither more nor less! I know that Talleyrand is one. He is in secret communication with the legitimists, corresponding with the Bourbons, through other hands; at his house, meetings of malcontents and secret royalists are held every day; there the fires are kindled that will soon burst into devouring energy, unless your majesty extinguish them in time. You have disdained to regain Talleyrand by promises or honors. You have insulted him, and he will revenge himself, if the power of doing so be left him. Sire, I venture to remind your majesty of Machiavel, 'One ought never to make half an enemy.'"

"It is true," murmured Napoleon to himself, thoughtfully, "nothing is more dangerous than such half enmities. Under the mask of friendship they betray us the more surely."

"Hence, sire, pray tear this mask from Talleyrand's treacherous face. Meet him as an open enemy. Then either his enmity will be destroyed by terror, or he will betray his intentions."

"I lack proof to convict him," said Napoleon, in a hesitating and wavering tone.

"Well, yes," exclaimed Savary, "you have no proof, but there cannot be the least doubt as to the intrigues which he is

bold enough to plot. The opportunity is too favorable that he should not endeavor to embrace it. Sire, I should like to urge the example of the great police-minister of Louis XV. Whenever M. de Sartines was on the eve of a festival, or any great public ceremony, he sent for all suspicious persons to whom his attention was particularly directed, and said to them, 'I have no charge against you at present, but to-morrow it may be different. Habit you know has power over you, and you are unlikely to resist temptation. It would be incumbent upon me to treat you with extreme rigor. For your sake, as well as mine, be kind enough therefore to repair for a few days to a prison, the choice of which I leave to yourselves.' The suspected persons willingly complied with his request, and no arrests were made."

"You may be right; M. de Sartines was undoubtedly a sagacious police-minister," said the emperor, musingly. "His precaution is good for those who are afraid; but I am not! If I conquer my enemies, I thereby trample in the dust this vile serpent, too, that would sting me, and then would crawl as a worm at my feet. If I yield to my enemies, let the structure which I have built fall upon me. It will not matter then whether Talleyrand's hand, too, broke off a piece of the wall or not; it would have fallen without him. Not another word about it, Savary! My carriage—I will ride to my mother!"

On the evening of the same day, the Prince de Benevento left his palace, entered a hackney-coach, and was driven to one of the remote streets of the Faubourg St. Germain. He stopped in front of a small, mean-looking house; and, when the coach had gone, the prince knocked three times in a peculiar manner at the street door. It opened, and he cautiously entered. No one was to be seen in the lighted hall; but Talleyrand seemed perfectly familiar with the locality; and crossing, without hesitation, a long passage, he ascended the thickly-carpeted staircase. Here was another locked door, beside which was a bell, which the prince rang three times. The door was opened, and he walked through a long corridor. The passage widened, and the prince was now in a brilliant hall, decorated with paintings and gildings. The entrance through the small house was plainly but a circuitous road to one of the palaces of the Faubourg St. Germain where the royalists were plotting mischief. At the end of this hall was a *portière*, in front of which was a richly-liveried footman.

Talleyrand whispered a few words; the servant bowed and opened the door. The prince now entered a saloon, furnished in the most magnificent and tasteful style, where another liveried attendant was waiting. "The Countess du Cayla?" asked the Prince de Benevento.

"She is in her cabinet. Shall I announce your highness?"

"It is unnecessary."

He quickly approached and knocked softly at the door of the cabinet. A sweet voice bade him come in. Before him stood a young lady who welcomed him with a charming smile, but with an air of ill-concealed amazement. "Oh, the Prince de Benevento!" she exclaimed, merrily. "You come to me to-day; but yesterday, when I went to you to bring you greetings from our august master, King Louis XVIII., you feigned not to understand whom I wished to speak of, and imposed silence."

"To-day I come to make amends for what I did yesterday, countess," said Talleyrand, with his graceful kindness. "Be good enough to inform his majesty King Louis XVIII. that he may henceforth count upon my services and my zealous devotedness. I shall assist him in opening the road to Paris, and do all I can that his majesty may soon be able to make his entrance into the capital of his kingdom."

"Then you have forsaken Napoleon openly and unreservedly!" exclaimed the Countess du Cayla, the zealous agent of the Count de Lille, whom at that time none but the royalists secretly called King Louis XVIII. "You are, then, one of us, now and forever?"

"Yes, I consider myself a member of your party," said Talleyrand, "and at heart I was always one of the most faithful and zealous servants of the king. I can prove it, for it was I who led Napoleon, step by step, frequently even in spite of his reluctance, to the brink of ruin, on which he is standing now, and I am ready to give him a last thrust to plunge him into the abyss. The emperor has been guilty of great folly to-day. He ought to have had me arrested, but he failed to do so. For this mistake I shall punish him by profiting by my liberty in the service of his majesty the king. Let us consider, therefore, countess, what we ought to do for the speedy return of King Louis XVIII. to Paris."

"Yes, let us consider that," exclaimed the countess; "and if you have no objection, prince, we shall allow the faithful friends of his majesty to participate in the consultation. Up-

ward of one hundred friends are already assembled in the large saloon, and they are doubtless astonished at my prolonged absence. Come, prince! You will meet an old friend among your new friends."

"Who is it, countess?"

"The Duke d'Otranto!"

"What? Is he here? Has he dared to return?"

"He has, with the emperor's sister, the Princess Eliza Bacciochi; and he is believed to be with her in the south of France, in order to await the course of events. But he has secretly and in disguise come to Paris, in order, like you, to offer his services to King Louis. Late events seem to have converted him into a very zealous royalist, and he openly admits his conversion. He boasts of having said to the Princess Eliza: 'Madame, there is but one way of salvation: the emperor must be killed on the spot.*'"

"In truth, he is right," said Talleyrand, smiling; "that would speedily put an end to all embarrassments. Well, the emperor intends to join the army; perhaps, a hostile bullet may become our ally, and save us further trouble. If not, we shall speak of the matter hereafter. Permit me, countess, to conduct you to the saloon."

CHAPTER XLVI.

MADAME LETITIA.

PROFOUND silence reigned in the palace of "Madame Mère." It was noonday, and the male and female servants, as well as the ladies of honor of the emperor's mother, had left the palace to take elsewhere the dinner which Madame Letitia refused to give them, and for which she paid them every month a ridiculously small sum; only the two cooks, whom madame, notwithstanding her objections, had to keep, in compliance with the express orders of the emperor, were in the kitchen, but under the vigilant supervision of old Cordelia, the faithful servant who had accompanied madame from Corsica to France, and who, since then, notwithstanding all vicissitudes, had remained her companion. Cordelia not only watched the cooks and gave them what was needed for preparing the meals, but, as soon as the dishes were handed to

* "Mémoires du Duc de Rovigo," vol. vi., p. 352.

the servant who was to carry them to the table, she hastened after him in order to prevent him from putting anything aside. When Cordelia went with the servant, she opened, with an air of self-importance, a cupboard fixed in the wall of the corridor, near the dining-room, of which she alone possessed the key, and, as soon as the servant returned with the fragments of the dinner, she locked them in this cupboard with the wine and bread; only on Sundays did the dinner-table of Madame Mère provide any thing for the servants.

To-day, however, was not Sunday, and hence Madame Cordelia herself had placed a bottle, half filled with wine remaining from yesterday's dinner, on the table, at which no one but Madame Letitia was to seat herself, one of the ladies of honor, who always dined with her, having been excused on account of indisposition. Madame Letitia was therefore alone to-day; it was unnecessary for her to submit to the restraint of etiquette, and she yielded with genuine relief to an unwonted freedom. She was in her sitting-room, busily engaged in taking from a large basket, the plebeian appearance of which contrasted strangely with the magnificent Turkish carpet on which it stood, the folded clothes which the washerwoman had just delivered. The appearance of Madame Mère herself was also in some contrast with the gorgeous surroundings amid which she moved.

The room was furnished with princely magnificence, the walls being hung with heavy satin, and curtains of the same description, adorned with gold embroideries, suspended on both sides of the high windows; the richly-carved chairs and sofas were covered with purple velvet, and the tables had marble slabs of Florentine workmanship. A chandelier of rock-crystal hung in solid gold chains from the ceiling; masterly paintings in broad, rich frames were on the silken walls; Japan vases stood on gilded consoles, and numerous costly ornaments added to the splendor of the aristocratic apartment.

Madame Letitia, standing beside the wash-basket, presented a marked contrast with all this. Her tall figure was wrapped in a light white muslin dress trimmed below with rosettes, and from which protruded a rather large foot, covered with a cotton stocking, and encased in a coarse, worn-out shoe. A sash of rose-colored silk, with faded embroidery, encircled her waist; a lace shawl, crossed over her bosom, and tied in a careless knot on her back, enveloped her neck and full shoul-