

A background image showing a person's hands holding pink dumbbells in a gym setting. The person is wearing a grey t-shirt. The dumbbells are in the foreground, and the person's arms are extended. The background is blurred, showing other people and gym equipment.

**ALEXANDRE
DUMAS**

***THE MEMOIRS
OF A PHYSICIAN
(THE COMPLETE
FIVE-VOLUME
EDITION)***

Alexandre Dumas

The Memoirs of a Physician (The Complete Five-Volume Edition)

EAN 8596547385073

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



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Chapter I.

The Grand Master Of The Secret Society.

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On the left bank of the Rhine, near the spot where the Selz rivulet springs forth, the foothill ranges rise of many mountains, of which the bristling humps seem to rush northerly like herds of frightened buffaloes, disappearing in the haze. These mountains tower over a deserted region, forming a guard around one more lofty than the rest, whose granite brow, crowned with a ruined monastery, defies the skies. It is Thunder Mount.

On the sixth of May, 1770, as the great river wavelets were dyed in the rainbow hues of the setting sun, a man who had ridden from Maintz, after a journey through Poland, followed the path out of Danenfels Village until it ended, and, then, alighting and leading his steed, tied it up in the pine woods.

"Be quiet, my good *Djerid* (javelin)," said the horseman to the animal with this Arabian name which bespoke its blood, and its speed; "and good-bye, if we never meet again."

He cast a glance round him as if he suspected he were overheard.

The barb neighed and pawed with one foot.

"Right, *Djerid*, the danger is around us."

But as if he had made up his mind not to struggle with it, the venturesome stranger drew the charges from a pair of splendid pistols and cast the powder and bullets on the sward before replacing them in the holsters. He wore a steel-hilted sword which he took off with the belt, and

fastened it to the stirrup leather so as to hang from the saddle-horn point down.

These odd formalities being done, he ungloved, and searching his pockets produced nail-scissors and pocket-knife, which he flung over his shoulder without looking to see whither they went.

Drawing the longest possible breath, he plunged at random into the thicket, for there was no trace of a path.

He was a man about thirty, taller than the average, but so wonderfully well built that the utmost strength and skill seemed to circulate in his supple and nervy limbs. He wore a black velvet overcoat with gilt buttons; the flaps of an embroidered waistcoat showed below its lowest buttons, and the buckskin riding breeches defined legs worthy to be a sculptor's models; the elegant feet were cased in patent leather boots.

His countenance was a notable mixture of power and intelligence, with all the play of Southern races; his glance, able to display any emotion, seemed to pierce any one on whom it fell with beams that sounded the very soul. His cheeks had been browned by a sun hotter than that of France. His mouth was large but finely shaped, and parted to reveal magnificent teeth, all the whiter from his dark complexion. His hand was small but muscular; his foot long but fine.

Scarcely had he taken a dozen steps within the glade before he heard faint footsteps. He rose on tiptoe and perceived that unseen hands had unhitched Djerid and were leading him away. He frowned slightly, and a faint smile curled his full cheeks and choicely chiseled lips.

He continued into the heart of the forest.

For a space the twilight guided him, but soon that died out, and he stood in gloom so dense that he had to stop lest he blundered blindly.

"I reached Danenfels from Maintz," he said, aloud, "as there was a road. I reached this forest as there was a path: I

am here as there was some light: but I must stop now as I have no sight."

Scarcely had he spoken, in a dialect part French, part Sicilian, than a light flashed out only fifty paces off.

"Thanks! I will follow the light as long as it leads."

The light at once moved onward, regularly and steadily, like a stage lamp managed by the lime-light operator.

At a hundred paces, a breath in the adventurer's ear made him wince.

"Turn and you die!" came this whisper.

"All right," answered the stranger.

"Speak, and you die!" whispered a voice on the left-hand. He bowed without speaking.

"But," said a voice seeming to issue from the bowels of the earth, "if you are afraid, go back to the plain, by which it will be clear that you are daunted, and renounce your errand."

The traveler waved his hand to imply that he was going ahead, and ahead he went.

But it was so late and the shade so deep that he stumbled during the hour the magic light preceded him, but he did not murmur or show any tremor in fear, while he heard not a breath.

All of a sudden, the light went out!

He had passed through the woodland, for on lifting his eyes, he could see a few stars glitter on the darksome sky.

He kept on in the same direction till he saw loom up the somber mass of the ruins of a castle—its spectre. At the same time his foot met its fallen stones.

A clammy thing wound itself round his forehead and sealed his eyes. He could no longer see even the shadows. It was a wet linen cloth. It must have been an expected thing, for he made no resistance to being blindfolded. But he put forth his hand silently as a blinded man naturally does to grope. The gesture was understood, for on the instant a cold, dry, bony hand clutched his fingers. He knew

it was a skeleton's, but had it possessed feeling, it must have owned that his own hand no more trembled.

For a hundred yards the seeker was dragged forward rapidly.

All at once the bandage was plucked aloof, and he stopped; he had reached the top of the Thunder Mount.

Before him rose the moldy, mossy steps of the portico of the old Castle of Donnerberg. On the first slab stood the phantom with the osseous hand which had guided him thither. From head to foot a long shroud enwrapped it; through a slit the dead eyes peered without luster. The fleshless hand pointed into the ruins where the goal seemed to be a hall too high up to be viewed, but with the collapsed ceiling flickering with a fickle light.

The traveler nodded in consent. Slowly the ghost mounted the steps one by one, till amid the ruins. The man followed with the same solemn and tranquil pace regulating his walk, and he also entered.

Behind him slammed the principal door as noisily as a ringing bronze gate.

The phantom guide had paused on the threshold of a round hall hung with black and illumined with greenish hues of three lamps.

"Open your eyes," said the ghastly guide.

"I see," replied the other, stopping ten paces from him.

Drawing a double-edged sword from his shroud with a swift and haughty gesture, the phantom smote with it a brazen column which boomed a note like a gong.

Immediately, all around, the slabs of the hall floor rose up, and countless ghosts like the guide, stole in with drawn swords and took posts on steps where they stood like statues on their pedestals, cold and motionless. They stood out against the sable drapery.

Higher than the steps was a dais for seven chairs; on these six ghosts took place, leaving one seat vacant; they were chiefs.

"What is our number, brothers?" challenged one of the six rising in the middle.

"Three hundred is the right tally," answered the spectres, with one voice thundering through the hall and dying amid the black hangings.

"Three hundred," said the presiding chief, "representing each ten thousand associates; three hundred swords worth three millions of daggers. What do you want, stranger?" he demanded, turning to the intruder.

"To see the Light," was the rejoinder.

"The paths leading to the Mountain of Fire are hard and toilsome—fear you not to tread them?"

"I fear nothing."

"You can not turn back once you start. Bear this in mind."

"I mean to stop only at the goal."

"Are you ready to take the oath?"

"Say it and I will repeat."

The president lifted his hand and slowly and solemnly uttered these words:

"In the name of the Master Carpenter, swear to break all carnal bonds tying you to whomsoever, and above all to those to whom you may have pledged faith, obedience or service."

The new-comer in a firm voice repeated what was pronounced.

"From this out," continued the president, "you are absolved from plights made to native land and rulers. Swear to reveal to your new leader what you have seen and done, heard or learned, read or guessed, and further to spy and discover all passing under your eyes."

On his ceasing the novice repeated.

"Honor and respect the Water of Death," went on the president without a change of voice, "as a prompt means in skilled hands, sure and needful, to purge the globe by the death or insanity of those who strive to stifle the Truth or snatch it from our hands."

An echo could not more faithfully repeat the vow.

"Avoid Spain, Naples, and all accursed lands; and moreover the temptation to let out what you learn and hear—for the lightning is less swift to strike than we with our unseen but inevitable blade, wheresoever you may flee. Now, live in the name of the Supernal Three!"

In spite of the final threat, no emotion could be descried on the novice's face, as he reiterated the words with as calm a tone as he used at the outset.

"Now, deck the applicant with the sacred ribbon," said the president.

Two shrouded figures placed on the bent brow of the stranger a sky-blue ribbon with silver letters and female figures; the ends of the badge were tied behind on the nape. They stepped aside, leaving him alone again.

"What do you want?" asked the chief officer.

"Three things: the iron hand to strangle tyranny; the fiery sword to drive the impure from earth; and the diamond scales to weigh the destinies of mankind."

"Are you prepared for the tests?"

"Who seeks to be accepted, should be ready for everything."

"The tests!" shouted the ghosts.

"Turn round," said the president.

The stranger faced a man, pale as death, bound and gagged.

"Behold a traitor who revealed the secrets of the Order after taking such an oath as you did. Thus guilty, what think you he deserves?"

"Death."

"Death!" cried the three hundred sword-bearers.

Instantly the unhappy culprit, despite superhuman resistance, was dragged to the back of the hall. The initiated one saw him wrestling and writhing in the torturers' hands and heard his voice hissing past the gag. A poniard flashed in the lamplight like lightning, and after it fell, with a

slapping sound of the hilt, the dead body landed heavily on the stone floor.

"Justice has been executed," observed the stranger, turning round to the terrifying circle, whose greedy eyes had gazed on him out of their grave clothes.

"So you approve of the execution?"

"Yes, if the slain were truly guilty."

"And would you drink the downfall of any one who sold the secrets of this Ancient Association?"

"In any beverage."

"Bring hither the cup," said the arch-officer.

One of the two executioners drew near with a skull brimming with a warm and ruddy liquid. The stranger took the goblet by its brass stem and said, as he held it up: "I drink to the death of all false brothers." Lowering the cup to his lips, he drained it to the last drop, and calmly returned it to the giver.

A murmur of astonishment ran around the assemblage, as the phantoms glanced at one another.

"So far well. The pistol," said the chief.

A ghost stole up to the speaker holding a pistol in one hand, and powder and ball in the other, without the novice seeming to deign a glance in that direction.

"Do you promise passive obedience to the brotherhood, even though it were to recoil on yourself?"

"Whoso enters the household of the Faithful is no longer his own property."

"Hence you will obey any order given you?"

"Straightway."

"Take this firearm and load it."

"What am I to do with it?"

"Cock it."

The stranger set the hammer, and the click of it going on full cock was plainly heard in the deep stillness.

"Clap the muzzle to your temple," ordered the president, and the suppliant obeyed without hesitating.

The silence deepened over all; the lamps seemed to fade, and the bystanders had no more breath than ghosts.

"Fire!" exclaimed the president.

The hammer fell and the flint emitted sparks in the pan; but it was only the powder there which took fire and no report followed its ephemeral flame.

An outcry of admiration burst from nearly every breast, and the president instinctively held out his hand toward the novice.

But two tests were not enough for some doubters who called out: "The dagger!"

"Since you require it, bring the dagger," said the presiding officer.

"It is useless," interrupted the stranger, shaking his head disdainfully.

"What do you mean?" asked several voices.

"Useless," repeated the new-comer, in a voice rising above all the others, "for you are wasting precious time. I know all your secrets, and these childish proofs are unworthy the head of sensible beings. That man was not murdered; the stuff I drank was wine hid in a pouch on his chest; the bullet and powder I loaded the trick-pistol with fell into a hollow in the stock when the weapon was cocked. Take back the sham arm, only good to frighten cowards. Rise, you lying corpse; you cannot frighten the strong-minded."

A terrible roar shook the hall.

"To know our mysteries, you must be an initiate or a spy," said the president.

"Who are you?" demanded three hundred voices together, as a score of swords shone in the grip of the nearest and were lowered by the regular movement of trained soldiers toward the intruder's bosom.

Calm and smiling, he lifted his head, wound round with the sacred fillet, and replied:

"I am the Man for the Time."

Before his lordly gaze the blades lowered unevenly as they on whom it fell obeyed promptly or tried to resist the influence.

"You have made a rash speech," said the president, "but it may have been spoken without your knowing its gravity."

"I have replied as I was bound," said the other, shaking his head and smiling.

"Whence come you, then?" questioned the chief.

"From the quarter whence cometh the Light," was the response.

"That is the East, and we are informed that you come from Sweden."

"I may have passed through there from the Orient," said the stranger.

"Still we know you not. A second time, who are you?"

"I will tell you in a while, since you pretend not to know me; but, meantime, I will tell you who you are."

The spectres shuddered and their swords clanked as they shifted them from the left to the right hands again to point them at his breast.

"To begin with you," said the stranger, pointing to the chief, "one who fancies himself a god and is but a forerunner—the representative of the Swedish Circles—I will name you, though I need not name the others. Swedenborg, have not the angels, who speak familiarly with you, revealed that the Man you expect was on the way?"

"True, they told me so," answered the principal, parting his shroud the better to look out.

This act, against the rule and habit during the rites, displayed the venerable countenance and snowy beard of an old man of eighty.

"And on your left," continued the stranger, "sits the representative of Great Britain, the chief of the Scottish Rites. I salute your lordship. If the blood of your forefathers runs in your veins, England may hope not to have the Light die out."

The swords dropped, for anger was yielding to surprise.

"So this is you, captain?" went on the stranger to the last leader on the president's left; "in what port have you left your handsome cruiser, which you love like a lass. The *Providence* is a gallant frigate, and the name brings good luck to America."

"Now for your turn, Prophet of Zurich," he said to the man on the right of the chief. "Look me in the face, since you have carried the science of Physiognomy to divination, and tell me if you do not read my mission in the lines of my face?"

The person addressed recoiled a step.

"As for you, descendant of Pelagius, for a second time the Moors must be driven out of Spain. It would be an easy matter if the Castilians have not lost the sword of the Cid."

Mute and motionless dwelt the fifth chief: the voice seemed to have turned him to stone.

"Have you nothing to say to me?" inquired the sixth delegate, anticipating the denouncer who seemed to forget him.

"Yea, to you I have to say what the Son of the Great Architect said to Judas, and I will speak it in a while."

So replied the traveler, fastening on him one of those glances which pierced to the heart.

The hearer became whiter than his shroud, while a murmur ran round the gathering, wishful to call the accused one to account.

"You forget the delegate of France," observed the chief.

"He is not among you—as you well know, for there is his vacant place," haughtily made answer the stranger. "Bear in mind that such tricks make them smile who can see in the dark; who act in spite of the elements, and live though Death menaces them."

"You are a young man to speak thus with the authority of a divinity," resumed the principal. "Reflect, yourself—impudence only stuns the ignorant or the irresolute."

"You are all irresolute," retorted the stranger, with a smile of supreme scorn, "or you would have acted against me. You are ignorant, since you do not know me, while I know ye all. With boldness alone I succeed against you, but boldness would be vain against one with irresistible power."

"Inform us with a proof of this power," said the Swedenborg.

"What brings ye together?"

"The Supreme Council."

"Not without intention," went on the visitant, "have you come from all quarters, to gather in the sanctuary of the Terrible Faith."

"Surely not," replied the Swede; "we come to hail the person who has founded a mystic empire in the Orient, uniting the two hemispheres in a commonalty of beliefs, and joining the hands of human brotherhood."

"Would you know him by any token?"

"Heaven has been good enough to unveil it by the intermediation of its angels," answered the visionary.

"If you hold this secret alone and have not revealed it to a soul, tell it aloud, for the time has come."

"On his breast," said the chief of the Illuminati, "he wears a diamond star, in the core of which shines the three initials of a phrase known to him alone."

"State those initials."

"L. P. D."

With a rapid stroke the stranger opened his overcoat, coat and waistcoat and showed on the fine linen front, gleaming like flame, a jeweled plate on which flared the three letters in rubies.

"HE!" ejaculated the Swede: "can this be he?"

"Whom all await?" added the other leaders, anxiously.

"The Hierophant of Memphis—the Grand Copt?" muttered the three hundred voices.

"Will you deny me now?" demanded the Man from the East, triumphantly.

"No," cried the phantoms, bowing to the ground.

"Speak, Master," said the president and the five chiefs, bowing, "and we obey."

The visitor seemed to reflect during the silence, some instants long.

"Brothers," he finally said, "you may lay aside your swords uselessly fatiguing your arms, and lend me an attentive ear, for you will learn much in the few words I address you. The source of great rivers is generally unknown, like most divine things: I know whither I go, but not my origin. When I first opened my eyes to consciousness, I was in the sacred city of Medina, playing about the gardens of the Mufti Suleyman. I loved this venerable old man like a father, but he was none of mine, and he addressed me with respect though he held me in affection. Three times a day he stood aside to let another old man come to me whose name I ever utter with gratitude mixed with awe. This august receptacle of all human wisdom, instructed in all things by the Seven Superior Spirits, bore the name of Althotas. He was my tutor and master, and venerable friend, for he is twice the age of the oldest here."

Long shivers of anxiety hailed this speech, spoken in solemnity, with majestic gesticulation and in a voice severe while smooth.

"One day in my fifteenth year, in the midst of my studies, my old master came to me with a phial in hand. 'Acharat,' he said—it was my name—I have always told you that nothing is born to die forever in this world. Man only lacks clearness of mind to be immortal. I have found the beverage to scatter the clouds, and next will discover that to dispel death. Yesterday I drank of this distillation: I want you to drink the rest to-day.'

"I had extreme trust in my teacher but my hand trembled in taking this phial, like Eve's in taking the apple of Life.

"'Drink,' he said, smiling. And I drank.

"'Sleep,' he said, laying his hands on my head. And I slept.

"Then all that was material about me faded away, and the soul that solitarily remained lived again, like Pythagoras, for centuries through which it had passed. In the panorama unfolded before it, I beheld myself in previous existence, and, awaking, comprehended that I was more than man."

He spoke with so strong a conviction, and his eyes were fixed heavenward with so sublime an expression that a murmur of admiration hailed him: astonishment had yielded to wonder, as wrath had to astonishment.

"Thereupon," continued the Enlightened One, "I determined to devote my existence at present, as well as the fruit of all my previous ones, to the welfare of mankind. Next day, as though he divined my plan, Althotas came to me and said:

"'My son, your mother died twenty years ago as she gave birth to you; for twenty years your sire has kept hidden by some invincible obstacle; we will resume our travels and if we meet him, you may embrace him—but not knowing him.' You see that all was to be mysterious about me, as with all the Elect of heaven.

"At the end of our journeys, I was a Theosophist. The many cities had not roused my wonderment. Nothing was new to me under the sun. I had been in every place formerly in one or more of my several existences. The only thing striking me was the changes in the peoples. Following the March of Progress, I saw that all were proceeding toward Freedom. All the prophets had been sent to prop the tottering steps of mankind, which, though blind at birth, staggers step by step toward Light. Each century is an age for the people. Now you understand that I come not from the Orient to practice simply the Masonic rites, but to say: Brothers, we must give light to the world. France is chosen to be the torch-bearer. It may consume, but it will be a wholesome conflagration, for it will enlighten the world. That

is why France has no delegate here; he may have shrunk from his duty. We want one who will recoil from nothing—and so I shall go into France. It is the most important post, the most perilous, and I undertake it."

"Yet you know what goes on there?" questioned the president.

Smiling, the man called Acharat replied: "I ought to know, for I have been preparing matters. The king is old, timid, corrupt, but less antiquated and hopeless of cure than the monarchy he represents. Only a few years further will he sit on the throne. We must have the future laid out from when he dies. France is the keystone of the arch. Let that stone be wrenched forth by the six millions of hands which will be raised at a sign from the Inner Circle, and down will fall the monarchical system. On the day when there shall be no longer a king in France, the most insolently enthroned ruler in Europe will turn giddy, and spring of his own accord into the gulf left by the disappearance of the throne of Saint Louis."

"Forgive the doubt, most venerated Master," interrupted the chief on the right, with the Swiss accent, "but have you taken all into calculation?"

"Everything," replied the Grand Copt, laconically.

"In my studies, master, I was convinced of one truth—that the characteristics of a man were written on their faces. Now, I fear that the French people will love the new rulers of the country you speak of—the sweet, clement king, and the lovely amiable queen. The bride of the Prince Royal, Marie Antoinette, is even now crossing the border. The altar and the nuptial bed are being made ready at Versailles. Is this the moment to begin your reformation?"

"Most illustrious brother," said the supreme chief to the Prophet of Zurich, "if you read the faces of man, I read the features of the future. Marie Antoinette is proud and will obstinately continue the conflict, in which she will fall beneath our attacks. The Dauphin, Louis Auguste, is good

and mild; he will weaken in the strife and perish like his wife, and with her. But each will fall and perish by the opposite virtue and fault. They esteem each other now—we will not give them time to love one another, and in a year they will entertain mutual contempt. Besides, brothers, why should we debate on the point whence cometh the light, since it is shown to me? I come from out of the East, like the shepherds guided by the star, announcing a new birth of man. To-morrow, I set to work, and with your help I ask but twenty years to kill not a mere king but a principle. You may think twenty years long to efface the idea of royalty from the hearts of those who would sacrifice their children's lives for the little King Louis XV. You believe it an easy matter to make odious the lilyflowers, emblem of the Bourbon line, but it would take you ages to do it.

"You are scattered and tremble in your ignorance of one another's aspirations. I am the master-ring which links you all in one grand fraternal tie. I tell you that the principles which now you mutter at the fireside; scribble in the shadows of your old towers; confide to one another under the rose and the dagger for the traitor or the imprudent friend who utters them louder than you dare—these principles may be shouted on the housetops in broad day, printed throughout Europe and disseminated by peaceful messengers, or on the points of the bayonets of five hundred soldiers of Liberty, whose colors will have them inscribed on their folds. You tremble at the name of Newgate Prison; at that of the Inquisition's dungeon; or of the Bastille, which I go to flout at—hark ye! We shall all laugh pity for ourselves on that day when we shall trample on the ruins of the jails, while our wives and children dance for joy. This can come to pass only after the death of monarchy as well as of the king, after religious powers are scorned, after social inferiority is completely forgotten, and after the extinction of aristocratic castes and the division of noblemen's property. I ask for a generation to destroy an old world and rear a new

one, twenty seconds in Eternity, and you think it is too much!"

A long greeting in admiration and assent hailed the somber prophet's speech. It was clear that he had won all the sympathy of the mysterious mandarins of European intellect. Enjoying his victory just a space, the Grand Copt resumed:

"Let us see now, brothers, since I am going to beard the lion in his den, what you will do for the cause for which you pledged life, liberty and fortune? I come to learn this."

Silence, dreadful from its solemnity, followed these words. The immobile phantoms were absorbed in the thoughts which were to overthrow a score of thrones. The six chiefs conferred with the groups and returned to the president to consult with him before he was the first to speak.

"I stand for Sweden," he said. "I offer in her name the miners who raised the Vasas to the throne—now to upset it, together with a hundred thousand silver crown pieces."

Drawing out tablets, the Hierophant wrote this offer. On the president's left spoke another:

"I am sent by the lodges of England and Scotland. I can promise nothing for the former country, which is burning to fight us Scots. But in the name of poor Erin and poor Scotia, I promise three thousand men, and three thousand crowns yearly."

"I," said the third speaker, whose vigor and rough activity was betrayed beneath the winding sheet fettering such a form. "I represent America, where every stick and stone, tree and running brook, and drop of blood belong to rebellion. As long as we have gold in our hills, we will send it ye; as long as blood to shed, we will risk it; but we cannot act till we ourselves are out of the yoke. We are so divided as to be broken strands of a cable. Let a mighty hand unite but two of the strands, and the rest will twist up with them into a hawser to pull down the crowned evils from their

pride of place. Begin with us, most venerable master. If you want the French to be delivered from royalty, make us free of British domination."

"Well spoken," said the Hierophant of Memphis. "You Americans shall be free, and France will lend a helping hand. In all languages, the Grand Architect hath said: 'Help each other!' Wait a while. You will not have long to bide, my brother."

Turning to the Switzer, he drew these words from him:

"I can promise only my private contribution. The sons of our republic have long supplied troops to the French monarchy. They are faithful bargainers, and will carry out their contracts. For the first time, most venerated Master, I am ashamed of their loyalty."

"Be it so, we must win without them and in their teeth. Speak, Spain!"

"I am poor," said the grandee, "and have but three thousand brothers to supply. But each will furnish a thousand *reals* a year. Spain is an indolent land, where man would doze though a bed of thorns."

"Be it so," said the Grand Master. "Speak, you, brother."

"I speak for Russia and the Polish clubs. Our brothers are discontented rich men, or serfs doomed to restless labor and untimely death. In the name of the latter, owning nothing, not even life, I can promise nothing; but three thousand rich men will pay twenty louis a head every year."

The other deputies came forward by turns, and had their offers set down in the Copt's memorandum book as they bound themselves to fulfill their plight.

"The word of command," said the leader, "already spread in one part of the world, is to be dispensed through the others. It is symbolized by the three letters which you have seen. Let each one wear them in the heart as well as on it, for we, the Sovereign Master of the shrines of the Orient and the West, we order the ruin of the Lilies. L. P. D. signifies *Lilia Pedibus Destrue*—Trample Lilies Under! I order you of

Spain, Sweden, Scotland, Switzerland and America, to Trample down the Lilies of the Bourbon race."

The cheering was like the roar of the sea, under the vault, escaping by gusts down the mountain gorges.

"In the name of the Architect, begone," said the Master. "By stream and strand and valley, begone by the rising of the sun. You will see me once more, and that will be on the day of triumph. Go!"

He terminated his address with a masonic sign which was understood solely by the six chiefs, who remained after the inferiors had departed. Then the Grand Copt took the Swede aside.

"Swedenborg, you are really an inspired man, and heaven thanks you by my voice. Send the cash into France to the address I shall give you."

The president bowed humbly, and went away amazed by the second sight which had unveiled his name.

"Brave Fairfax," said the Master to another, "I hail you as the worthy son of your sire. Remind me to General Washington when next you write to him."

Fairfax retired on the heels of Swedenborg.

"Paul Jones," went on the Copt to the American deputy, "you have spoken to the mark, as I expected of you. You will be one of the heroes of the American Republic. Be both of you ready when the signal is flying."

Quivering as though inspired by a holy breath, the future capturer of the *Serapis* likewise retired.

"Lavater," said the Master to the Swiss, "drop your theories for it is high time to take up practice; no longer study what man is, but what he may become. Go, and woe to your fellow countrymen who take up arms against us, for the wrath of the people is swift and devouring even as that of the God on high!"

Trembling, the physiognomist bowed and went his way.

"List to me, Ximenes," said the Copt to the Spaniard; "you are zealous, but you distrust yourself. You say, Spain

dozes. That is because no one rouses her. Go and awake her; Castile is still the land of the Cid."

The last chief was skulking forward when the head of the Masons checked him with a wave of the hand.

"Schieffort, of Russia, you are a traitor who will betray our cause before the month is over; but before the month is out, you will be dead."

The Muscovite envoy fell on his knees; but the other made him rise with a threatening gesture, and the doomed one reeled out of the hall.

Left by himself in the deserted and silent hall, the strange man buttoned up his overcoat, settled his hat on his head, pushed the spring of the bronze door to make it open, and went forth. He strode down the mountain defiles as if they had long been known to him, and without light or guide in the woods, went to the further edge. He listened, and hearing a distant neigh, he proceeded thither. Whistling peculiarly, he brought his faithful Djerid to his hand. He leaped lightly into the saddle, and the two, darting away headlong, were enwrapped in the fogs rising between Danenfels and the top of the Thunder Mountain.

Chapter II.

The Living-wagon In The Storm.

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A week after the events depicted, a living-wagon drawn by four horses and conducted by two postboys, left Pont-a-Mousson, a pretty town between Nancy and Metz. Nothing like this caravan, as show people style the kind, had ever crossed the bridge, though the good folks see theatrical carts of queer aspect.

The body was large and painted blue, with a baron's insignia, surmounting a J. and a B., artistically interlaced. This box was lighted by two windows, curtained with muslin, but they were in the front, where a sort of driver's cab hid them from the vulgar eye. By these apertures the inmate of the coach could talk with outsiders. Ventilation was given this case by a glazed skylight in the "dickey," or hind box of the vehicle, where grooms usually sit. Another orifice completed the oddity of the affair by presenting a stovepipe, which belched smoke, to fade away in the wake as the whole rushed on.

In our times one would have simply imagined that it was a steam conveyance and applauded the mechanic who had done away with horses.

The machine was followed by a led horse of Arab extraction, ready saddled, indicating that one of the passengers sometimes gave himself the pleasure and change of riding alongside the vehicle.

At St. Mihiel the mountain ascent was reached. Forced to go at a walk, the quarter of a league took half an hour.

Toward evening the weather turned from mild and clear to tempestuous. A cloud spread over the skies with frightful rapidity and intercepted the setting sunbeams. All of a sudden the cloud was stripped by a lightning flash, and the

startled eye could plunge into the immensity of the firmament, blazing like the infernal regions. The vehicle was on the mountain side when a second clap of thunder flung the rain out of the cloud; after falling in large drops, it poured hard.

The postboys pulled up. "Hello!" demanded a man's voice from inside the conveyance, "what are you stopping for?"

"We are asking one another if we ought to go on," answered one postillion with the deference to a master who had paid handsomely.

"It seems to me that I ought to be asked about that. Go ahead!"

But the rain had already made the road downward slippery.

"Please, sir, the horses won't go," said the elder postillion.

"What have you got spurs for?"

"They might be plunged rowels deep without making the balky creatures budge; may heaven exterminate me if——"

The blasphemy was not finished, as a dreadful lightning stroke cut him short. The coach was started and ran upon the horses, which had to race to save themselves from being crushed. The equipage flew down the sloping road like an arrow, skimming the precipice.

Instead of the traveler's voice coming from the vehicle, it was his head.

"You clumsy fellows will kill us all!" he said. "Bear to the left, deuce take ye!"

"Oh, Joseph," screamed a woman's voice inside, "help! Holy Madonna, help us!"

It was time to invoke the Queen of Heaven, for the heavy carriage was skirting the abyss; one wheel seemed to be in the air and a horse was nearly over when the traveler, springing out on the pole, grasped the postboy nearest by the collar and slack of the breeches. He raised him out of his

boots as if he were a child, flung him a dozen feet clear, and taking his place in the saddle, gathered up the reins, and said in a terrifying voice to the second rider:

"Keep to the left, rascal, or I shall blow out your brains!"

The order had a magical effect. The foremost rider, haunted by the shriek of his luckless comrade, followed the substitute impulse and bore the horses toward the firm land.

"Gallop!" shouted the traveler. "If you falter, I shall run right over you and your horses."

The chariot seemed an infernal machine drawn by nightmares and pursued by a whirlwind.

But they had eluded one danger only to fall into another.

As they reached the foot of the declivity, the cloud split with an awful roar in which was blended the flame and the thunder.

A fire enwrapped the leaders, and the wheelers and the leaders were brought to their haunches as if the ground gave way under them. But the fore pair, rising quickly and feeling that the traces had snapped, carried away their man in the darkness. The vehicle, rolling on a few paces, stopped on the dead body of the stricken horse.

The whole event had been accompanied by the screams of the woman.

For a moment of confusion, none knew who was living or dead.

The traveler was safe and sound, on feeling himself; but the lady had swooned. Although he guessed this was the case, it was elsewhere that he ran to aid—to the rear of the vehicle.

The led horse was rearing with bristling mane, and shaking the door, to the handle of which his halter was hitched.

"Hang the confounded beast again!" muttered a broken voice within; "a curse on him for shaking the wall of my laboratory." Becoming louder, the same voice added in Arabic: "I bid you keep quiet, devil!"

"Do not wax angry with Djerid, master," said the traveler, untying the steed and fastening it to the hind wheel; "he is frightened, and for sound reasons."

So saying, he opened a door, let down the steps, and stepped inside the vehicle, closing the door behind him.

He faced a very aged man, with hooked nose, gray eyes, and shaking yet active hands. Sunken in a huge armchair, he was following the lines of a manuscript book on vellum, entitled "The Secret Key to the Cabinet of Magic," while holding a silver skimmer in his other hand.

The three walls—for this old man had called the sides of the living-wagon "walls"—held bookcases, with shelves of bottles, jars and brass-bound boxes, set in wooden cases like utensils on shipboard so as to stand up without upsetting. The old man could reach these articles by rolling the easy chair to them; a crank enabled him to screw up the seat to the level of the highest. The compartment was, in feet, eight by six and six in height. Facing the door was a furnace with hood and bellows. It was now boiling a crucible at a white heat, whence issued the smoke by the pipe overhead exciting the mystery of the villagers wherever the wagon went through.

The whole emitted an odor which in a less grotesque laboratory would have been called a perfume.

The occupant seemed to be in bad humor, for he grumbled:

"The cursed animal is frightened: but what has he got to disturb him, I want to know? He has shaken my door, cracked my furnace, and spilt a quarter of my elixir in the fire. Acharat, in heaven's name, drop the beast in the first desert we cross."

"In the first place, master," returned the other smiling, "we are not crossing deserts, for we are in France; and next, I would not abandon a horse worth a thousand louis, or rather priceless, as he is of the breed of Al Borach."

"I will give you a thousand over and over again. He has lost me more than a million, to say nothing of the days he has robbed me of. The liquor would have boiled up without loss of a drop, in a little longer, which neither Zoroaster nor Paracelsus stated, but it is positively advised by Borri."

"Never mind, it will soon be boiling again."

"But that is not all—something is dropping down my chimney."

"Merely water—it is raining."

"Water? Then my elixir is spoilt. I must renew the work—as if I had any time to spare!"

"It is pure water from above. It was pouring, as you might have noticed."

"Do I notice anything when busy? On my poor soul, Acharat, this is exasperating. For six months I have been begging for a cowl to my chimney—I mean this year. You never think of it, though you are young and have lots of leisure. What will your negligence bring about? The rain to-day or the wind to-morrow confound my calculations and ruin all my operations. Yet I must hurry, by Jove! for my hundredth year commences on the fifteenth of July, at eleven at night precisely, and if my elixir of life is not then ready, good-night to the Sage Althotas."

"But you are getting on well with it, my dear master, I think."

"Yes, by my tests by absorption, I have restored vitality to my paralyzed arm. I only want the plant mentioned by Pliny, which we have perhaps passed a hundred times or crushed under the wheels. By the way, what rumbling is that? Are we still going?"

"No; that is thunder. The lightning has been playing the mischief with us, but I was safe enough, being clothed in silk."

"Lightning? Pooh! wait till I renew my life and can attend to other matters. I will put a steel bridle on your electric