

Jean Baptiste Soult, Cabinet Maker
William Russell

OVER a shop in one of the best streets of the Faubourg Saint Antoine, there had been for many years painted in large letters, "Jean Baptiste Soult, Ebenistre" (cabinet maker). Such a name so placed naturally excited a good deal of ironical remark, and the cabinet maker had been compelled by authority to prove his right to call himself by so illustrious a name. He did so, indisputably; adding, that he was distantly related to the famous Marshal, whose baptismal and sire names he bore.

That may or may not have been a little invention of his (there are plenty of Soult's, and of Jean Baptiste's in the part of France where the great soldier and the prosperous ebenistre were born) but he certainly was, like his renowned namesake, an uncompromising Bonapartist, which craze, might no doubt have been a blood disease.

Now Jean Baptiste, as for brevity's sake we will call the honest man—I have never known a more honest man—was also a Republican of the most exalted kind; confounding, by some incomprehensible mental process, as did Béranger and hundreds of other gifted men—the ideas of Despotism and of Liberty, the impersonations of Force and Freedom—singular, yet widespread delusion!

Although Jean Baptiste had given hostages to Fortune—a prosperous business, a considerable investment in *Rentes*, and, above all, his child Joséphine, a duteous, most loveable girl, then in the bloom of her seventeenth summer—he, swayed, dominated by his strong political predilections, in an evil hour, consented, though not, we must suppose, without misgiving, to join a secret society. One, however, composed, generally, of a class of men much superior to the brutal ragamuffins amongst whom I had the honour to be enrolled.

One of the members of that society was a Monsieur Le Moine, Auguste Le Moine, a tall, handsomeish man of forty, who, it was evident by his carriage and general bearing, had served in the army. In the ranks it must have been, as he assumed no military title; yet he was a man of education and refined manners. How or where his previous life had been passed, was a subject respecting which he maintained the strictest reserve, but his professed political opinions—exactly those of Jean Baptiste, with whom he soon formed an intimate acquaintance—were boldly, one might say audaciously, proclaimed in whatever company or place he chanced to find himself.

The simple-minded cabinet maker highly admired the out-spoken, defiant Imperialist-Republican, invited him to his house, lent him money, introduced him to tailors, and finally invited him to take up his abode altogether with him. Le Moine very gladly consented, and one of the best apartments in the house was fitted up for his use; all which favours he repaid by highly-wrought descriptions of the campaigns of Spain and Portugal, in which his excellent host's, "illustrious relative" played so distinguished a part, and with respect to which he pretended to be in possession of exclusive, and certainly peculiar information. In fact, if the "*memoires inedites*," from which he professed to quote, were to be relied on, those campaigns were a series of brilliant French victories over "Vilanton" and his troops, coincident with

masterly maneuvers, the strategic object of which was to get quit of the perfidious peninsula—the whole triumphant business having been crowned by the illustrious relative’s glorious victory over that same “pauvre Vilainton” under the very walls of Toulouse! It is, however, but simple justice to Le Moine to say that I have seen in France printed school-histories of the Spanish war, of which the said “*memoires inedit*” were scarcely caricatures. It would, in fact, be impossible to obtain a remunerative sale of a work in France, which should candidly admit that French armies had suffered a succession of defeats. A sad, pitiable weakness on the part of my, in many respects, gloriously-gifted countrymen.

There never was a more voracious *gobe-mouche* than honest Jean Baptiste. The quantities of snuff with which, upon such occasions the delighted cabinetmaker gratified his nose, the emphatic taps upon the lid of the box, marking time to some more than usually audacious bounce; and the hilarious *bonhomme*, with which he pressed it upon all present—(it will be presently seen how I came to be one of Monsieur Le Moine’s casual auditors)—were amusing to behold. The absorbed, earnest attention with which Joséphine listened, was *not* amusing: quite the reverse. Le Moine’s Belial tones seemed to have a strangely fascinating power over her. The beams and smiles that usually decked her innocent, girlish face, vanished; she became excited—pale, and there was a troubled, terrified, yet enthusiastic expression in her soft, brown eyes. I feared for Joséphine.

Well, this Auguste Le Moine—this high-flying Imperialist-Republican, was, as the reader will perhaps have anticipated, a brother mouchard, in the confidential employ of Louis Philippe’s government!

We were not acting in concert—were indeed total strangers to each other. In fact, I was *moucharding him!* Here it is necessary to go into a little explanation.

In the Paris Prefecture of Police, there are several distinct departments, each having its own separate, distinct organisation. One paramount principle governs them all—that the mouchards attached to one section shall not be known to the mouchards of another section. This stringent rule is based upon the maxim that it may be sometimes necessary to set a rogue to catch a rogue—the appreciative reader will admit that I am candour itself—and that if rogue No. 1, saw that rogue No. 2, was at his heels, No. 1’s heels would never be tripped up. It is clear, simple, that. Never by any chance is a mouchard allowed to appear in his character of mouchard, in a public court. He always remains “*derrière le rideau.*” When I made the *razzia* mentioned in the last paper, I was only [known] by my companions as an ordinary officer of police entrusted with a special duty by Monsieur le Sous-Préfet. And yet the elaborate organisation of the Paris Prefecture of Police does not save the authorities themselves from often being “moucharded”—humbugged would be the English equivalent, I presume for that peculiarly French word. For example, it is well known that M. Lucien de la Hodde, (I knew him well,) was, after the revolution which tumbled Louis-Philippe out of his citizen throne, promoted to a high and confidential office, in the most influential department of the Prefecture of Police. He was universal president, so to speak, of the Secret Societies, believed to be a republican to the backbone, and was all the while an employé of the Louis Philippist government! That, to him, fatal secret was revealed by the reports furnished by him, found in the archives of the Prefecture,—but that which was not then discovered was, that M. Lucien de la Hodde had been all along a paid

agent of Louis Napoleon! Again: Louis Napoleon not long after the Coup d'Etat, promoted an individual who had been one of his most trusted secret agents to a confidential and lucrative post. No sooner was the nomination bruited amongst other aspirants to office, than documents were officiously disinterred from the same archives, which proved that Louis Napoleon's secret agent was also, and at the same time, Louis Philipp's secret agent, employed to watch "le neveu de mon Oncle's" movements in London!

Enough of explanation. I proceed. The reports sent in by M. Le Moine;—his real name, I believe was, Sartines, and I was told that he had served with the Foreign Legion in Africa—the reports, I say, of soi-disant Monsieur Le Moine were ample, and considered by themselves, quite satisfactory. But a suspicion—how generated, I know not—had fastened upon the official mind of the Prefet, Sous-Prefet, or other influential person at the Prefecture, that Mon. Le Moine was an active and skilful agent of the Bonaparte faction—if nine-tenths of the nation—nine-tenths of the nation, that is, if the units making up a nation be counted, not weighed—can be called a faction—that his bold, loud, eloquent advocacy of Imperialist-Republicanism, assumed, as he pretended, to mask his devoted loyalty to the citizen-king's government—his enthusiastic Louis-Phillipist "mouchardism," were, in fact, the expression of his true sentiments, one of the means he employed to hasten the day when the "rayon de gloire," then dimly visible through the fogs of London, should as Viscomte de Persigny, interpreting with remarkable appreciation of the signs of the times predicted—flame in the imperial crown of France. Le Moine's known antecedents strengthened the suspicion reluctantly entertained.

His father, a lieutenant in one of the regiments composing "The Grand Army," had, it was said, displayed great courage at Wagram, been decorated by the Emperor's own hand upon the field of battle, but so serious were the hurts he had received, that he died a few days after receiving "the glittering and adored deceit, of the Cross of the Legion of Honour." The son of such a man would almost necessarily be a devoted partisan of "*le neveu de mon oncle.*"

Well, it being thoroughly understood that I, Theodore Duhamel, with fifty mouchard aliases, was of no politics whatever, or, more correctly, that I did, and always should, chameleon-like, reflect, and truly, the particular line of politics (perhaps not the very deep *red* dye, though I am not quite sure of *that*) which should happen to be in the ascendant for the time—shine with the most powerful lustre—it occurred to the "Autorites" at the Prefecture, who had charge of Monsieur Le Moine, that I was just the person to watch that dubious gentleman, and with utter indifference as to what his real designs might be, whether he was red or tri-coloured Republican, Bonapartist, or faithful Louis Philippist, report truly of his doings as far as I could discover them. Let me not be misunderstood. No one more ardently desired—next to my own individual happiness and prosperity, parbleu!—the happiness, the prosperity, the glory of France.

This was at the time of the "Banquets:"—precious safety-valves for letting off, with more or less of noise and smoke, the pent-up discontent of the country, which M. Guizot's Government was so mad as to prohibit. The public mind was stirred to its profoundest depths—the apprehension of an imminent and terrible crisis universal. Many causes concurred to produce that agitation, to excite that alarm: the supercilious refusal of any extension of the electoral suffrage, so ridiculously circumscribed—about eighty thousand electors for all France; the venomous activity of the secret societies, and not the least potent ingredients in the seething cauldron, were the

horrible murder of his wife by the Duc de Praslin, awakening in the French heart its instinctive, tiger-hatred of “la noblesse,” and the conviction of a Minister of State of the grossest peculation. I pause a moment to remark, that one of the Prince-President’s first acts, after assuming absolute power by right divine of bayonets and cannon, was to throw open the condemned minister’s prison doors. He could not have decently delayed to do so, M. Teste having been a secret and most zealous agent of Louis Napoleon, whilst holding high office under Louis Philippe.

Yes, signs of the coming tempest were visible to the dullest eyes. Yet in the presence of the tremendous peril, the shadow of which fell darker and darker with every passing hour over Paris, the Monarch and Ministry could devise no more effective *paratonnere* than the vigilance of a political police, supported by the bayonets of a disaffected, Bonapartist soldiery!

It will be readily understood that under such circumstances my instructions would be of the most stringent kind. M. Le Moine, there could be little doubt, was a traitor to the Monarchy of July, and he was known to stand highly in the estimation of the conspirators. I was commanded to keep strict, incessant watch over his movements, to dog his steps, furnish a list of his associates, and if there appeared a chance of any advantage accruing therefrom, to favour him with a domiciliary visit, and seize his correspondence. Brèf—Monsieur Le Moine was placed at my discretion. The writ of Habeas Corpus is unknown in France, but under the quasi constitutional regime Authority availed itself of practically unlimited power, rarely and in exceptional instances. *Now*, every man and woman in France are, by express statute, placed “at the discretion” of Messieurs les Autorites—that is, of the Prefet, Procureur-General, and General-in-Chief of the Department, by whose order anyone, without a hearing, without knowing what they are accused or suspected of, may be packed off to Algeria or Cayenne! This, *en passant*.

To have such a gentleman as Auguste Le Moine placed at one’s discretion, with the understanding that energetic action, serviceable to the government, must be initiated without delay by the custodian, was an embarrassing affair. It was, moreover, a task difficult to set about. To obtain a lodgment under the same roof with Monsieur Le Moine was my first consideration. That achieved, desirable opportunities might present themselves. I stumbled at that first step. Jean Baptiste Soult, had no lodging room in his house for M. Abattucci, of Corsican parentage, but born and educated in France, whose father, a Chavalier of the Legion of Honour, had fallen at Waterloo, absolutely under the eye of the great Emperor. (Nothing, I well know, in that strain, would be too strong for Jean Baptiste’s digestive powers.) The excellent Ebénistre was extremely sorry, desolated, that he could not find accommodation in his house for so distinguished a gentleman as M. Abatucci; but positively he could not; and the tradesman whose name I could not recollect, if he had been any time in the neighbourhood, should have known that he, Jean Baptiste Soult—.”

“Ah, yes; and a relative, I have been told, of the great marshal?”

“It is true—distantly related to the illustrious Marshal—the tradesman should have known, I was saying, that Jean Baptiste Soult did not habitually let any of his apartments. In parting he begged to express a hope that M. Abatucci, whenever passing that way, would honour him with a call—an invitation which I accepted with *empressement*.

This check was soon partially remedied. Nearly opposite the cabinet maker's establishment was a private house, in one of the windows of which was a printed bill announcing "Chambres garnies à louer," (furnished rooms to let.) One of these—a front apartment—I engaged, and took possession of the same day.

I could now watch M. Le Moine's movements, myself unseen, unsuspected, and I could improve my acquaintance with Jean Baptiste Soult. That knowledge, as to whom Le Moine went out, and came back, I mean, might have results.

The house was kept by a widow, Madame Tussaud, who boasted that she was a cousin, several degrees removed of the Madame Tussaud who had made, or was making, an immense fortune in London, by the exhibition of wax figures.

That may or may not have been true. I believe it was true, because I found her to be a generally truthful person.

Well I was now in possession of an observatory from which I could watch the exits and entrances of M. Le Moine. Such a position, utilised by a zealous cultivation of Jean Baptiste's friendship, might suffice to enable me to successfully carry out the instructions of my superiors at the Prefecture.

It was easy enough to conciliate Jean Baptiste's friendship. I had only heartily to ditto Mon. Le Moine's heroic humbug, descriptive of the "illustrious relative's" magnificent victories, and assert in the most sounding rhodomontade I could command, that France had never been really great, glorious, and free, except during the Consulate and Empire, never would again be great, glorious, and free, till another Napoleon, "le Neveu de mon Oncle," swayed the Presidential sceptre of France, to entirely win the honest man's heart. It is positive that I could have borrowed money of him to any decent amount, had that been my game. Once or twice I feared that Jean Baptiste half suspected that the sounding stuff I was so glibly liberal of, was mere mocking persiflage. The shocking doubt passed away as quickly, suddenly, as it arose, and Jean Baptiste continued to esteem and believe in me—next to his friend, Le Moine. In the presence of that worthy man, I, of course, displayed "un grand talent pour le silence," subduing my own passionate appreciation of Imperialist-Republican principles, to quiet, deferential acquiescence in his eloquent exposition of those principles. I thus became a great favourite of his, as well as of Jean Baptiste.

Le Moine went out every day at about noon, and remained away till five, when he returned to dine with Jean Baptiste and Joséphine, who out of compliment to their distinguished guest—he was related, bless you, to half the Napoleonic nobility—had substituted the aristocratic five for the bourgeois one o' clock dinner hour.

From twelve to five were valuable hours to me. Jean Baptiste was then busy in his workshops at the back of the premises, Joséphine confined to the shop. An ardent lover of books, I had gratefully availed myself of Jean Baptiste's invitation to peruse, in a small back-room on the first floor, where they were kept, a choice collection of Bonapartist books, amongst them Louis

Napoleon's "Du Canon," "Ideès Napoleoniennes," and handsomely bound files of the Progrès du Pas de Calais, during the period that "Le Rayon de Gloire," illumined its columns.

This gave me the range of the first floor, the only occupied portion of which was Le Moine's apartment. It was not difficult to procure keys that would open the door of the room, and the desk in which he kept his papers. I was thus enabled to take copies of Le Moine's letters, five and six of which he often received in a day, at leisure; which copies were duly forwarded by post to the Prefecture.

Several of the letters had an interest, other than political, for me. *They were from Le Moine's wife* who was living with their children, at Rheims. They were very brief; requests for money—little else. Evidently Le Moine was not an esteemed, beloved, or loving husband. That was no concern of mine, but it did concern me to let Jean Baptiste know that his confidential, trusted bachelor friend, Le Moine, who was paying such earnest, if indirect courtship to susceptible Joséphine, was a married man with a large family. Yet how to do so, without, if challenged, daring to say whence I had derived my information? The difficulty was serious, and I did not adopt the happiest means of obviating it.

Eugène Dubarle, a medical student, and amiable young man, had previous to the advent of Le Moine been a frequent and welcome visitor at Jean Baptiste's house, the attraction to him being, without question, Joséphine. He had found favour, I understood, with the damsel, and *personally* with her father. Unfortunately he was, hereditarily, as exalté—a legitimist in politics, as Jean Baptiste was Bonapartean. Dubarle, too, when roused, was hot and bitter of speech, and upon one occasion, myself being present, stung by the sarcastic comments of Le Moine, aimed with civilly-toned, but venomous virulence at him, and graciously received, smiled at by Joséphine, he launched out with a fierce, passionate invective against the Corsican Brigand, as he chose to designate Napoleon le Grand.

Brouhaha! Uproar! Tempest! Fierce exclamation! Jean Baptiste, mildest of men, was enraged beyond measure—Joséphine indignant, the scene terminating by a stern intimation from the outraged Ebenistre, that he should for the future decline the honour of M. Dubarle's acquaintance. The fiery young man rejoined that he desired nothing better, went off in unmitigated rage, and Le Moine more than ever was master of the situation.

Now, I was strongly of opinion that dazzled, fascinated, carried for a time off her feet, as Mademoiselle Soult evidently was by the seductive homage of a practised roué she still felt a real preference for Eugène Dubarle. Acting upon that opinion, I penned an anonymous letter to the hastily discarded lover, informing him that M. Le Moine, who, the writer had heard was a rival of his for a certain young lady's favour, was a married man, the father of a family; and that the wife's address was No. 15, Rue dez Capuchins, Rheims.

This note I posted before breakfast, and on the very same day, Eugène Dubarle presented himself at Jean Baptiste's for the first time since the quarrel. He was paler than usual, and much agitated. He apologised to Jean Baptiste, bowed somewhat proudly to Joséphine, and seated himself, without being invited to do so. The situation was an embarrassing one, for all present. Jean Baptiste who had, mechanically, as one may say, accepted the young man's proffered hand,

snuffed prodigiously. Joséphine crimsoned with blushes, looked any where but in the direction of the newcomer, with whom Le Moine exchanged haughty, defiant glances. Presently recovering his scarcely ruffled nonchalance, Le Moine resumed the topic upon which he had been dilating—the eternal one of Napoleon and your “illustrious relative’s” glorification, when of a sudden, thunder fell in the midst.

“Is it your opinion, M. Le Moine,” interrupted Dubarle. “Is it your opinion that in the event of the French nation recovering, as you phrase it, the thread of its true destiny, by raising again the popular throne of the Napoleons, the hero of Strasburg would elect to be crowned, as our old line of Monarchs were *at Rheims*?”

“At Rheims! What can it signify to me or to you, where a Napoleon may elect to be crowned?” said Le Moine, startled by the bitter irony of Dubarle’s tone, and the peculiar emphasis which he had placed upon “Rheims.”

“Yes, Rheims,” continued Dubarle, “where your wife, Madame Le Moine, and children, are living; and not in a very prosperous condition, I am told.”

“What—what did you say,” stammered M. Le Moine, starting up from his chair. “What did you say?”

Jean Baptiste and his daughter had also risen, and both stood gazing alternately from Le Moine to Dubarle—from Dubarle to Le Moine.

“I said, *parbleu*, that your wife, Madame Le Moine and children, reside at Rheims, in a not too prosperous condition, which is to be lamented. If you, *par hazard*, have lost their address, I can supply you with it. ‘Madame Le Moine, No. 15, Rue des Capuchins, Rheims.’”

“Liar!” shouted Le Moine, in a furious voice, and white with dismay and rage, “Liar!”

“This is not the fitting place for requiting, as it deserves, Monsieur Le Moine’s politeness,” retorted Dubarle, with exultant bitterness, “but a fitting place and time will present themselves, never fear!”

Just then the door of the apartment was flung open, and five or six Sergens de ville entered. They had come to arrest Auguste Le Moine, accused of conspiring with others against the Government. Le Moine’s immediate destination was the prison Mazas.

“Liar! Coward! Scoundrel!” exclaimed Le Moine, with foaming passion, and addressing Dubarle. “I owe this to you!”

“That is false! I did not imagine you had sufficient courage to conspire against a state.”

“Liar! A liar always!” hoarsely shouted Le Moine, whilst madly struggling with the Sergens de Ville. “Liar! A liar always!”

Presently recognising the insanity of resistance, he resigned himself to destiny, was led off, but as he left the room, let fly a Parthian arrow at his triumphant enemy. “Jean Baptiste Soult,” said he, as MM. les Sergens pushed, dragged him away. “Jean Baptiste Soult, my friend, that liar and traitor, that Henri-Cinquist Dubarle will next denounce *you*. After that, may God protect Joséphine!”

He was gone, and when I looked round Joséphine had disappeared. A furious scene followed between Jean Baptiste and Dubarle. All the ardent sympathies, the hates, the prejudices of the strongly feeling Ebenistre were called into play by the arrest of his friend Le Moine, at, he firmly believed, the instigation of Dubarle. His words were stabs, and every stroke drew blood. He presume to the favour of Mademoiselle Soult! Not only would he himself rather see his child the wife of a chiffonier, of the poorest man in France who was not a slave in soul, than the bride of Dubarle! She herself, Joséphine herself, did not perhaps hate—no, he was too contemptible a creature to excite in Mademoiselle Soult so strong a sentiment as hate; but she most heartily despised him—him and his absurd pretension—as he, her father, had long known (O Jean Baptiste!) The scene terminated by Dubarle’s exit in a towering rage, but not till he, in his turn, had flung scathing words of defiance, scorn, contempt, in the face of Jean Baptiste Soult—of the father of that Joséphine, whom he, in the veiled temple of his heart, so passionately adored!

I need hardly say that it was the transcripts of his letters, forwarded to the Prefecture by unsuspected M. Abatucci, that had really caused the arrest of Le Moine. Yes, and a good result had been arrived at. Le Moine was shut up in Mazas, and it would be long before he issued thence, if ever, in a position to prosecute his machinations against the peace and honour of the Soult family.

My mission as regarded Le Moine was accomplished, and I gave up my domicile at Madame Tussaud’s. Previously to doing so, I took the precaution of requesting the good woman, who had become strongly interested by what I had permitted myself to impart to her—in “cette amable, charmante Joséphine”—to promptly acquaint me, by letter, with any significant circumstance relating to the Soult family that might come to her knowledge, addressed to me, under cover to Mr. Theodore Duhamel, Rue de la Paix. There could be no significant circumstance, I was quite sure, affecting that family, that would not come to the knowledge of a woman—*vive et babillarde*—like her. I also took quiet friendly leave of Jean Baptiste. His daughter I did not see after the abusive expulsion of Dubarle, till the hour of the catastrophe of this drama had struck.

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The police precautions adapted, and I suppose relied upon, by the French ministry were as impotent to check the impetuous tide of revolution, as your famous Mr. Smith’s Madame Partington’s broom was to sweep back the Atlantic Ocean. In February, 1848, as we all know, the tempest broke. The fountains of the seething deeps of sedition were broken up. The government perished even as the fool dieth. The tactics of the Insurrection were comprised in Daton’s famous formula, “L’Audace, et encore l’Audace,” and at any time during the two first of the three glorious days, it would have collapsed in the grasp of a but moderately-vigorous resistance. But I have no intention, in these pages, to enter into the details of a *coup de canaille*, from which the fall of France, from her high place amongst free nations must always be dated.

It chanced that upon the very day when the Paris populace, for whom the insane decree prohibiting the great “Banquet,” was the preconcerted signal, for placing themselves “en œuvre,” (going to work,) broke into open revolt—I was employed in enquiries amongst the widowed Duchesse D’Orléan’s household with respect to the mysterious disappearance of a number of valuable jewels from a casket in the boudoir of her Royal Highness. I was still engaged in that duty on the third day of the revolt, when the triumph of the insurrection being no longer doubtful, that heroic princess, taking counsel only of her courage, determined to present herself with her children before the Chamber of Deputies—the only legal representatives of France—in assertion of her own and their right.

I, with I think, all the male members of the household, pressed after that queenly woman, entered the chamber, close after her, and found herself, as she did, amidst a crowd of shouting ruffians. The craven reply to the affecting appeal of the duchess was made by Thiers, giving articulate, faithful utterance to the panic-terror of the assembly, “La. Marée monte—monte encore!” (the tide is rising—rises still)—he exclaimed, then with the mass of the members, fled cowering, and with them departed the liberties of France. You recognised that bitter truth, Monsieur Thiers, when on the morning of the 2nd of December, 1851, I, with other slavish satellites of the perjured Prince-President, surprised and commanded you to rise from your luxurious bed curtained with crimson velvet, lace-lined, and accompany us to Mazas!

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As the duchess and her children were being hurried, hustled, I may say, out of the hall, a strong grasp was placed upon my arm! Turning quickly round, I found myself face to face with Madame Tussaud.

“*Dieu merci!* that I have found you at last,” she said in a hurried, whisper, “Poor Mademoiselle Soult has been carried off by brutal force. Taking advantage of the anarchy which everywhere prevails three or four brigands, hired, it is known, by Dubarle, have committed the abominable outrage.”

“Dubarle!” said I, as yielding to the woman’s impulse, I pressed with her through the clamorous crowd; “Dubarle! It is impossible!”

“It is true, nevertheless. The brigands admitted in the hearing of the servant, Lisette, that they were employed by Dubarle.”

“Proof positive to my mind, Madame Tussaud, that they were not employed by Dubarle. I can guess who it really is that has struck the blow. The political prisoners in the prison Mazas were, I remember to have heard, released yesterday by the mob. Unfortunate Joséphine.”

“*Pour comble de malheur,*” continued Madame Tussaud; “Jean Baptiste Soult was brought home seriously wounded in the head by a sabre-stroke about an hour after his child had been carried off. The terrible tidings which awaited him smote the bereaved father to the ground as with a

thunderbolt. He has not spoken since, and it is feared will never rise from his bed again. Ah! *mon Dieu!* the revolutionists have much to answer for!”

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Lisette Hamon’s tale was soon told. She and Mademoiselle Joséphine had sat up all night anxiously awaiting the return home of Jean Baptiste, who had been absent since about noon the previous day. Towards morning, but long before it was light, there was loud knocking at the street-door. Believing it was Jean Baptiste who demanded admittance, daughter and servant both hastened to the door, which was no sooner opened, than in rushed three men—who seized, and in a twinkling effectually gagged the astounded women. Lisette believed five minutes had scarcely elapsed before Joséphine was driven off in a *fiacre*, in waiting a few yards off. “Present,” said the leading ruffian, addressing Lisette, “Present M. Dubarle’s compliments to le Coquin Rouge, (the “Red Rogue,”) your master, and tell him that it is thus the Henri Cinquist Dubarle, requites the insults of a Bonapartist Jacobin!”

“A shallow subterfuge, device, trick, whatever word best expresses a clumsy transparent invention,” said I. “Dubarle has had as much to do with the abduction of Mademoiselle Joséphine as myself.”

“*Vous croyez ca*, Monsieur Abatucci. Others think differently. Monsieur Le Moine, for example, who—”

“Monsieur Le Moine!”

“*Mais oui*, Monsieur Le Moine.”

“When did you last see M. Le Moine?”

“He is with Monsieur Sault at this moment.”

“Hundred devils!”

“Signor Abatucci has, it appears, singular ideas,” quietly rejoined Lisette Hamon, a shrewd wench herself, *soi dit en passant*, “Signor Abatucci has, it appears, singular ideas. So have I, at times, singular ideas, and about Monsieur Le Moine.”

“When and where did Monsieur Jean Baptiste Sault receive his wound?”

“Near the Hotel du Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, as I understand.”

“Was his friend Le Moine near him at the time?”

“He must have been so, since he, Le Moine, assisted in bringing him home.”

“A sabre-stroke, you told me, on the head. Inflicted from behind?”

“Yes, from behind, the chirurgien stated.”

“Enough! I will see my suffering friend, Jean Baptiste Sout. Conduct me, if you please.”

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Poor Jean Baptiste was lying in a state of partial paralysis—loss of speech, chiefly. Judging by the expression of his watchful restless eyes, the mind was perfectly clear, keenly apprehensive of all that passed around him. His life, the surgeon had declared was not in any danger, unless erysipelas should supervene. M. Le Moine had gone away a few minutes before I entered the sick chamber.

As gently, and with as confident a tone as I could assume, I sought to console the afflicted father by predicting that I should soon recover his child, and a promise that I would not lose a moment in prosecuting the search after her. The strong pressure of his hand, the quick suffusion of his eyes, thanked me, and I left.

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Dubade was not at his lodgings, had not been there during the previous twenty-four hours. What might that mean? My strong faith in his honour and rectitude of feeling, passionate impulsive, as I knew him to be, was rudely shaken.

I was completely at fault. The inquiries I made that day, the next, and the next, led to nothing. Le Moine, in high favour with the Provisional Government, could not be questioned, least of all by me, whose vocation and real name had, I found, been made known to him by the new Prefect of Police. I despaired of the unhappy Joséphine, prisoned in the clutch, I could hardly doubt, of that consummate conspirator and scoundrel.

Still, what had become of Dubarle? Had he fallen in one of the street fights? It might be so!

Yes, might, but was not so. A letter addressed to Signor Abatucci, at Madame Tussaud’s, apprised me that he was temporarily residing at a cottage orné, near Fougères, the proprietor of which was a Monsieur Deslandes. He was very desirous of seeing me without delay. There were interests of deepest moment which he was anxious to place under my charge. Not one word of Joséphine Sout!

I thoughtlessly showed the letter to M. Tussaud, *femme vive et babillarde*, and upon terms of close intimacy with Lisette Hamon, though I knew her to be. She at once jumped to the conclusion that there could be no longer a doubt it was indeed Dubarle who had carried off Mademoiselle Sout, and who already weary of his prize, wished to consult me as to the best plan, in his own interest, well understood, of getting rid of the ruined girl. Such a conclusion was too absurd for serious refutation, and simply remarking that I should set off at once for Fougères, I bade the rashly-judging woman, adieu. Within an hour afterwards, Lisette Hamon believed with her that the triumphant ravisher was Dubarle, which belief, together with the name of the place

where his daughter and her betrayer might be found, were communicated to, and impressed upon, the excited brain of Jean Baptiste himself, by Lisette Hamon, before the day was two hours older. Jean Baptiste had, it is necessary to observe, recovered from the attack of paralysis, and though still weak and feverish, had been authoritatively pronounced to be convalescent.

It was a smart half-hour's walk from Fougères to Monsieur Deslande's cottage orné. Madame Deslandes was within, but her husband and M. Dubarle had gone out together, and she did not expect their return in less than two hours. "If I was the person whom M. Dubarle expected from Paris," added the good woman, "I should be glad to hear that the young lady, whose civil marriage with Monsieur Dubarle had taken place that morning at Fougères—"

"Married! married this morning! Not till this morning; and it is ten days since Mademoiselle Soult was brutally seized and carried off! It is an infamy, permit me to say, of which I could not have believed Dubarle would have been guilty. Yes, an infamy, and not the less so, because Mademoiselle Soult has found herself compelled to condone the outrage. May I speak with the bride?"

"Madame Dubarle is unwell, and just now asleep. When she awakes you can speak with her. And permit *me* to observe," continued Madame Deslandes, in a grave, and somewhat bitter tone. "Permit *me* to observe, that Monsieur Dubarle, whom I have known from infancy—he is my foster-son—will never be *justly* accused of a bad action. Chargeable with folly he may be, is, in my opinion so chargeable, in this unhappy affair. Be seated, Monsieur," added the good dame. "Eugène Dubarle is anxious that you should be his interpreter with the young lady's father, who—"

"To be sure—to be sure," I interrupted, with heat. "Having first possessed himself of the lady, he is next desirous of securing the *dot* (dowry)."

"Once again, you are mistaken. Eugène Dubarle does not covet, will not, be assured, accept a liard of the father's money.

"To do so would be to degrade the sacrifice—the painful, cruel, sacrifice, according to me, which Eugène, under the influence of a credulous, romantic tenderness has made, into a vile, money speculation. You do not know my foster-son, Monsieur. He may be poor in a positive sense, but he is proud, independent, as the richest man in France—the pride, the independence of honour, I mean. After hearing what I have to say, you will estimate him more justly, and I shall speak with entire frankness."

The warm-hearted woman did speak with entire frankness, and at great length. I must epitomise the narrative.

Mademoiselle Soult dragged from her father's house by ruffians hired by Le Moine was conveyed to a house of shame in Paris, and kept a close prisoner there for seven days. The outrage was prompted,—Madame Deslandes suggested, therein echoing Dubarle's opinion, was prompted, less by illicit passion for Joséphine, than by a fierce determination to be avenged upon Dubarle, to whom he attributed his arrest, and who he knew was devotedly attached to

Mademoiselle Soult. During five of those seven days Dubarle was staying with M. and Madame Deslandes. He had sought shelter with them till the Saturnalia in the capital should have subsided. Order restored, he had gone back to Paris, and returned the very next day, bringing with him Mademoiselle Soult, his civil marriage with whom had, as before stated, taken place that morning. On the morrow, the blessing of the church would be given to the union, which, *fait accompli*, it was not doubted that Jean Baptiste, informed through me of all the circumstances, would accept.

This was the substance of the story, as told to Madame Deslandes by Dubarle, the exact verity of which I had neither the means nor the inclination to rigorously test. Madame Deslandes evidently believed that her foster-son had, under the influence of a too generous tenderness, sacrificed himself to save the reputation of Joséphine. I, fully coincided in that opinion, till I found that Dubarle's faith in his bride's stainless purity was unclouded by a doubt; and that, after closely observing Joséphine herself, I saw that, pale, weak as she was, not the faintest shadow of deceit dimmed the clear candour of a face of which that expression had always been the principal charm.

I readily undertook to see and explain matters to Jean Baptiste Soult, and everything having been said that it was deemed desirable to say, I was about to depart for Paris. We, Monsieur Deslandes and I, the evening being fine and warm for the season of the year, had been taking wine in his large, finely cultivated garden, the back gate of which chanced to be wide open. The lover and his bride, he with his arm round Joséphine's waist, were seated in a kind of rustic chaise longue, not ten paces from the open gate, to which my back, as I shook hands with M. Deslandes, was for the moment turned. Suddenly, the sharp crack of a pistol shot, followed by piercing screams, rang through the air. Jean Baptiste Soult had entered unobserved through the garden-gate, saw, as he believed, his lost child, clasped by the arm of her seducer, that seducer the hated Dubarle; and without a word of warning, in a transport of delirious rage, shot the young man through the back. The screams were Joséphine's.

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The wound did not prove fatal, though a long period of suffering elapsed before Dubarle was out of danger, during which time Joséphine did not minister to her husband with tenderer solicitude than did Jean Baptiste himself. I should explain that it was given out Dubarle had been wounded by accident, and no suspicion to the contrary having arisen, a legal enquiry had not been instituted.

Meanwhile Jean Baptiste had sold his business, and removed to a house belonging to him in the Boulevard du Temple. He was a changed man; had become silent, reserved, and rarely discussed politics. From Dubarle he had exacted a solemn pledge never, should he chance to meet with Le Moine, to show any resentment, or make the slightest allusion to the outrage upon Joséphine. He himself avoided all mention of the subject, *except to me*. Thus whilst Joséphine and her husband believed he had dismissed the hateful subject from his mind, I knew that he was constantly brooding over it—meditating how he could avenge the dishonour of his daughter without bringing public scandal upon her name, which in the general ear had not been associated with that of Le Moine, who, for his own sake, had kept strict silence on the matter. Though always the

doting father, Jean Baptiste was not like Dubarle, just to Joséphine; and nothing, it was plain, could shake the gloomy conviction that had settled upon his mind, and was cankering, festering at his heart.

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A considerable time passed before Jean Baptiste was offered a chance of gratifying his burning thirst for vengeance. Le Moine, appointed one of the Commissioners for preaching up, in doubtful departments, the excellence of the actual government, with the object of securing the election of thorough-going republican candidates for seats in the Assembly, had left Paris on his mission. He remained several months absent, and after he returned, Jean Baptiste found it difficult to meet with him, and impossible for a long while, when he chanced to do so at a Café or Restaurant, to fasten a legitimate quarrel upon him.

An opportunity eagerly seized, at last occurred at the Freres Provençaux, where both dined in near proximity with each other. A hot political dispute arose between Le Moine and one of his companions, which Jean Baptiste found a pretext for joining in. Not having been present, I cannot state the precise particulars; but I understood that the quarrel was initiated by an assertion by Jean Baptiste, that Le Moine, who declaimed so gravely against Kings—against Royalism of every shade, had himself been a paid active mouchard agent of Louis Philippe’s Government. Le Moine retorted by an angry denial. Jean Baptiste, desiring nothing better than that, flung back the denial in his enemy’s teeth, adding that he had not only been a Louis-Philippist mouchard, but was actually a liar and a rascal! A glass of wine flung in his face was Le Moine’s rejoinder, and Baptiste’s game was made. It was settled there should be a meeting in the Bois de Boulogne, in precisely two hours from that time.

Jean Baptiste drove from the Frères Provençaux direct to my lodgings, and requested me to act as his second, in the duel, à mort, about to take place. For several reasons I positively declined the honour, and suggested that Sous-Lieutenant Gaspard, an acquaintance of mine, and an expert in such affairs, would, I had no doubt, undertake the required duty. I knew where at that time of day to meet with the Sous-Lieutenant, who at once, and with gaieté de cœur, acceded to our joint-request.

His cheerful countenance fell when I named my friend’s antagonist.

“*Diable!*—Auguste Le Moine! You could not, *sacre bleu*, have selected a more dangerous customer in all Paris. His skill in the use of both sword and pistol is something wonderful, and he has nerves of iron. Are you well practised, Monsieur Sault,” added the Sous-Lieutenant, “in the use of either weapons.”

Jean Baptiste was compelled to confess that he was *not* well practised in the use of either sword or pistol. He should take his chance nevertheless.

“A pretty chance!” exclaimed Gaspard. “*Peste!* A duel à l’outrance, too! That *coquin* Le Moine will, as certainly—. You must fight?” added the Sous-Lieutenant, interrogatively.

“To be sure—to be sure—the question is absurd. I must consider how I can manage to give you a chance with such a *bourreau des crânes*, as Le Moine. Let me see—let me see. You must pledge me your word of honour,” resumed the Sous-Lieutenant after brief reflection; “You must pledge me your word of honour that you will fight this duel with the weapon, and after the fashion I mean to propose, or not at all?”

Jean Baptiste readily gave the required word of honour, and would at that moment, it struck me, have preferred, had he a choice, the “not at all,” alternative.

“*Bon!*” said Gaspard. “And now let us have some wine. We have quite an hour to spare.”

The grave concern manifested by Gaspard, who was a good-hearted fellow, spite of his predilection for duels à mort, deepened as the time for setting out drew near. Again he suggested that the encounter might, perhaps, be avoided with honour. Mutual apologies, for example—

Jean Baptiste, whose momentarily-shaken nerves the wine had restrung, answered that the duel could not, should not be avoided. He trusted in Lieutenant Gaspard’s assurance, that notwithstanding that scélérat, Le Moine’s duelling skill, he, Soult, should have an equal chance of killing, as of being killed.

“It is just, and I undertake either that there shall be no duel, or that the chances shall be equal. A fearful chance for each of you. Your affairs, in case of accident, will be found ‘en règle?’” he added. “That is well, and now we will enjoy our wine.”

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“I hope you will go with us?” said Jean Baptiste, apart to me in a tremulous tone. “Not to take any active part in the affair, but that in case of—of accident, the intelligence may as tenderly as possible, be broken to poor Joséphine.”

It was impossible to refuse such a request. I felt indeed—and the reflection was a painful one—that I, with the best intentions, had been the primary cause of the catastrophe about to be consummated in the Bois de Boulogne. But for the information relative to Le Moine’s wife and family obtained in my detective capacity, and rashly communicated to Dubarle—his bitter quarrel with Le Moine, and the abduction of Joséphine would never, in all probability, have taken place!

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Le Moine and his second were at the selected rendezvous before us. “Le Capitaine Laval,” exclaimed Sous-Lieutenant Gaspard, directly he saw who Le Moine’s friend was, “That is fortunate.”

“You have the choice of weapons,” said Captain Laval, after an interchange of cold civilities. “Which do you choose?”

“Pistols,” replied Gaspard.

“Very well; let us load them.”

“One moment, Captain Laval,” said Gaspard. “My friend here, Monsieur Jean Baptiste, Soult, who is totally unskilled in the use of either pistol or sword, will not have the slightest chance with your friend Le Moine. It will be a murder—not a duel!”

“I do not comprehend,” said Laval. “What do you propose, or why are you here?”

“I propose that the chances shall be made equal for both combatants.”

“I agree *d’ avance*, if you will point out *how* the chances can be made equal.”

“Nothing more easy, Captain Laval. You and I take these pistols. We load one, and do not load the other. Both then shall be placed in a hat; the duellists will toss for first choice, and possessed of the weapons, shall stand close together, the muzzles of the pistols pressed against their foreheads. We give the signal; the triggers are pulled, *crack*—the head of one is blown off—the other stands erect, unharmed. Nothing can be more fair, more just,” added Gaspard, with a laughing sneer. “Monsieur Auguste Le Moine, whom I know to be a devoutly pious person—I have myself frequently seen him in a state of edifying *reccueillemet* at the Madeline—will, I am quite sure, willingly accept a mode of arbitrement which is in fact an invocation of the justice of God.”

Le Moine and Laval stared at each other—at Gaspard, in blank, bewildered astonishment.

“Can you be serious?” asked Laval.

“Serious as death. There is, you must remember, a precedent for the proposal. M. Le Moine has, consequently, he being the challenger—”

“Yes; technically.”

“M. Le Moine being the challenger, has no option but to accept a proposal which gives him an equal chance with the person he has challenged to mortal combat—unless he chooses to tender an apology.”

“No—no—no apology,” exclaimed Jean Baptiste, of whom at sight of Le Moine the demon of vengeance had again taken full possession.

“A retired Ebenistre will receive no apology from me,” said Le Moine. “The alternative proposition is absurd, outrageous. Nevertheless, I place the affair unreservedly in your hands, Captain Laval.”

“Monsieur Soult’s social position, you knew and should have remembered before you assaulted him,” said Captain Laval. “As Lieutenant Gaspard remarks,” he added, “there is a precedent for this mode of duel. I consent, therefore, on your behalf.”

“Quick, then! Let us have done with it. I am generally fortunate at games of chance,” he added.

“That is quite true,” remarked Gaspard, between whom and Le Moine there was evidently bitter feud. “That is quite true, but loaded dice and loaded pistols are different kinds of playthings, *Dieu merci!*”

He then, with Captain Laval, went aside to make preparation for the duel. That was soon done. The manner of presenting the pistols to the combatants was varied at Laval’s suggestion. Both were capped, one loaded; the captain approached with one in each hand, holding by the end of the barrels, with the butts presented, first to Le Moine, who won the toss for choice, as if there could be any choice in the matter. Captain Laval had insisted, in order to prevent the possibility of suspicion, that he himself should not know which was the loaded pistol.

It was a fearful moment when the duelists were placed so near each other that the muzzles of the cocked pistols were within an inch of their foreheads, and their forefingers touched the hair-triggers. Le Moine’s self-command was wonderful. True, he was deadly pale, but otherwise impassive as a statue. Jean Baptiste was not so cool, so steady, composed. His hand trembled visibly, but he did not for a moment, as one could see by his sternly-compressed lips, and flashing eyes, falter in resolution. His illustrious namesake could hardly have behaved better under the circumstances.

“Listen, Messieurs,” said le Capitaine Laval. “I shall call out distinctly, one—two—three, pausing half-a-minute between each number. This, Lieutenant Gaspard and I have agreed shall be done, in order to give either of you the option of avoiding this extraordinary duel by the tender of an apology.”

“Attention, Messieurs One—two!” There was considerably more than half-a-minute’s pause but no sign of yielding being given by either of the men, the fearful “Three” was reluctantly uttered by the captain, instantly followed by a sharp, single report. Le Moine’s good fortune at games of chance had deserted him! His head had been blown to atoms! Jean Baptiste was erect, wildly staring at the corpse, and the sustaining excitement passed away, would himself have fallen had I not seized and upheld him by the arm.

“The game is played out,” said Captain Laval. “Let us begone. You, Duhamel, will, I suppose, give notice to the authorities of what has occurred.”

I undertook to do so; and Jean Baptiste, Sous-Lieutenant Gaspard, and Captain Laval left for Paris.

I have but one word to add—an instructive one. Jean Baptiste Soult never recovered the nervous shock inflicted by that terrible duel. He died at Charenton before the grass had grown upon Le Moine’s grave.

Experiences of a French Detective Officer, 1864