



**THE HISTORY OF A CRIME THE  
TESTIMONY OF AN EYE-  
WITNESS BY VICTOR HUGO  
THE FIRST DAY**

## ***CONTENTS***

<b><i>CHAPTE R</i></b>		<b><i>PAGE</i></b>
<b><i>I</i></b>	<b><i>SECURITY</i></b>	<b><i>3</i></b>
<b><i>II</i></b>	<b><i>PARIS SLEEPS—THE BELL RINGS</i></b>	<b><i>10</i></b>
<b><i>III</i></b>	<b><i>WHAT HAD HAPPENED DURING THE NIGHT</i></b>	<b><i>14</i></b>
<b><i>IV</i></b>	<b><i>OTHER DOINGS OF THE NIGHT</i></b>	<b><i>44</i></b>
<b><i>V</i></b>	<b><i>THE DARKNESS OF THE CRIME</i></b>	<b><i>48</i></b>
<b><i>VI</i></b>	<b><i>PLACARDS</i></b>	<b><i>52</i></b>

## **THE AMBUSH. CHAPTER I. "SECURITY"**

On December 1, 1851, Charras shrugged his shoulder and unloaded his pistols. In truth, the belief in the possibility of a coup d'etat had become humiliating. The supposition of such illegal violence on the part of M. Louis Bonaparte vanished upon serious consideration. The great question of the day was manifestly the Devincq election; it was clear that the Government was only thinking of that matter. As to a conspiracy against the Republic and against the People, how could any one premeditate such a plot? Where was the man capable of entertaining such a dream? For a tragedy there must be an actor, and here assuredly the actor was wanting. To outrage Right, to suppress the Assembly, to abolish the Constitution, to strangle the Republic, to overthrow the Nation, to sully the Flag, to dishonor the Army, to suborn the Clergy and the Magistracy, to succeed, to triumph, to govern, to administer, to exile, to banish, to transport, to ruin, to assassinate, to reign, with such complicities that the law at last resembles a foul bed of corruption. What! All these enormities were to be committed! And by whom? By a Colossus? No, by a dwarf. People laughed at the notion. They no longer said "What a crime I" but "What a farce ! For after all they

reflected; heinous crimes require stature. Certain crimes are too lofty for certain hands. A man who would achieve an 18th Brumaire must have Arcola in his past and Austerlitz in his future. The art of becoming a great scoundrel is not accorded to the first comer. People said to themselves, Who is this son of Hortense? He has Strasbourg behind him instead of Arcola, and Boulogne in place of Austerlitz. He is a Frenchman, born a Dutchman, and naturalized a Swiss; he is a Bonaparte crossed with a Verhuell; he is only celebrated for the ludicrousness of his imperial attitude, and he who would pluck a feather from his eagle would risk finding a goose's quill in his hand. This Bonaparte does not pass currency in the array, he is a counterfeit image less of gold than of lead, and assuredly French soldiers will not give us the change for this false Napoleon in rebellion, in atrocities, in massacres, in outrages, in treason. If he should attempt roguery it would miscarry. Not a regiment would stir. Besides, why should he make such an attempt? Doubtless he has his suspicious side, but why suppose him an absolute villain? Such extreme outrages are beyond him; he is incapable of them physically, why judge him capable of them morally? Has he not pledged honor? Has he not said, "No one in Europe doubts my

word? " Let us fear nothing. To this could be answered, Crimes are committed either on a grand or on a mean scale. In the first category there is Caesar; in the second there is Mandrin. Caesar passes the Rubicon, Mandrin bestrides the gutter. But wise men interposed, "Are we not prejudiced by offensive conjectures? This man has been exiled and unfortunate. Exile enlightens, misfortune corrects." For his part Louis Bonaparte protested energetically. Facts abounded

in his favor. Why should he not act in good faith? He had made remarkable promises. Towards the end of October, 1848, then a candidate for the Presidency, he was calling at No. 37, Rue de la Tour d' Auvergne, on a certain personage, to whom he remarked, "I wish to have an explanation with you. They slander me. Do I give you the impression of a madman? They think that I wish to revivify Napoleon. There are two men whom a great ambition can take for its models, Napoleon and Washington. The one is a man of Genius, the other is a man of virtue. It is ridiculous to say, 'I will be a man of Genius; it is honest to say , 'I will be man of Virtue'. Which of these depends upon ourselves? Which can we accomplish by our will? To be Genius? No. To be Probity? Yes. The attainment of Genius is not possible; the attainment of Probity is a possibility. And what could I revive of Napoleon? One sole thing—a crime. Truly a worthy ambition! Why should I be considered man? The Republic being established, I am not a great man, I shall not copy Napoleon; but I am an honest man. I shall imitate Washington. My name, the name of Bonaparte, will be inscribed on two pages of the history of France: on the first there will be crime and glory, on the second probity and honor. And the second will perhaps be

worth the first. Why? Because if Napoleon is the greater, Washington is the better man. Between the guilty hero and the good citizen I choose the good citizen. Such is my ambition.

"From 1848 to 1851 three years elapsed. People had long suspected Louis Bonaparte ; but long continued suspicion blunts the intellect and wears itself out by fruitless alarms. Louis Bonaparte had had dissimulating ministers such as Magne and Rouher; but he had also had straight forward ministers such as Léon Faucher and Odilon Barrot; and these last had affirmed that he was upright and sincere. He had been seen to beat his breast before the doors of Ham; his foster sister, Madame Hortense Cornu, wrote to Mieroslawsky, "I am a good Republican, and I can answer for him. "His friend of Ham, Peauger, a loyal man, declared, "Louis Bonaparte is incapable of treason." Had not Louis Bonaparte written the work entitled "Pauperism"? In the intimate circles of the Elysée Count Potocki was a Republican and Count d'Orsay was a Liberal; Louis Bonaparte said to Potocki, "I am a man of the Democracy, "and to D'Orsay, "I am a man of Liberty." The Marquis du Hallays opposed the coup d'état, while the Marquise du Hallays was in its favor. Louis Bonaparte said to the Marquis, "Fear nothing"(it is true that he whispered to the



Marquise, "Make your mind easy") The Assembly, after having shown here and there some symptoms of uneasiness, had grown calm. There was General Neumayer, "who was to be depended upon, "and who from his position at Lyons would at need march upon Paris. Changarnier exclaimed , "Representatives of the people, deliberate in peace." Even Louis Bonaparte himself had pronounced these famous words, "I should see an enemy of my country in any one who would change by force that which has been established by law,"and, moreover, the Army was "force," and the Army possessed leaders, leaders who were beloved and victorious. Lamoricière, Changarnier, Cavaignac, Leflé, Bedeau, Charras; how could any one imagine the Army of Africa arresting the Generals of Africa? On Friday, November 28, 1851, Louis Bonaparte said to Michel de Bourges, "If I wanted to do wrong, I could not. Yesterday, Thursday, I invited to my table five Colonels of the garrison of Paris, and the whim seized me to question each one by himself. All five declared to me that the Army would never lend itself to a coup de force, nor attack the inviolability of the Assembly. You can tell your friends this."—"He smiled," said Michel de Bourges, reassured, "and I also smiled." After this, Michel de Bourges

declared in the Tribune, "this is the man for me." In that same month of November a satirical journal, charged with calumniating the President of the Republic, was sentenced to fine and imprisonment for a caricature depicting a shooting-gallery and Louis Bonaparte using the Constitution as a target. Morigny, Minister of the Interior, declared in the Council before the President "that a Guardian of Public Power ought never to violate the law as otherwise he would be—"a dishonest man," interposed the President. All these words and all these facts were notorious. The material and moral impossibility of the coup d'état was manifest to all. To outrage the National Assembly! To arrest the Representatives! What madness! As we have seen, Charras, who had long remained on his guard, unloaded his pistols. The feeling of security was complete and unanimous. Nevertheless there were some of us in the Assembly who still retained a few doubts, and who occasionally shook our heads, but we were looked upon as fools.

## CHAPTER II. PARIS SLEEPS—THE BELL RINGS

On the 2d December, 1851, Representative Versigny, of the Haute-Saône, who resided at Paris, at No.4, Rue Léonie, was asleep. He slept soundly; he had been working till late at night. Versigny was a young man of thirty-two, soft-featured and fair complexioned, of a courageous spirit, and a mind tending towards social and economical studies. He had passed the first hours of the night in the perusal of a book by Bastiat, in which he was making marginal notes, and, leaving the book open on the table, he had fallen asleep. Suddenly he awoke with a start at the sound of a sharp ring at the bell. He sprang up in surprise. It was dawn. It was about seven o'clock in the morning. Never dreaming what could be the motive for so early a visit, and thinking that someone had mistaken the door, he again lay down, and was about to resume his slumber, when a second ring at the bell, still louder than the first, completely aroused him. He got up in his night-shirt and opened the door. Michel de Bourges and Théodore Bac entered. Michel de Bourges was the neighbor of Versigny; he lived at No.16, Rue de Milan. Théodore Bac and Michel were pale, and appeared greatly agitated. "Versigny," said Michel, "dress yourself at once—Baune has just been arrested."

"Bah!" exclaimed Versigny." Is the Mauguin business beginning again?" "It is more than that," replied Michel. "Baune's wife and daughter came to me half-an hour ago. They awoke me. Baune was arrested in bed at six o'clock this morning." "What does that mean?" asked Versigny. The bell rang again."This will probably tell us," answered Michelde Bourges. Versigny opened the door. It was the Representative Pierre Lefranc. He brought, in truth, the solution of the

enigma. "Do you know what is happening?" said he. "Yes," answered Michel. "Baune is in prison." "It is the Republic who is a prisoner," said Pierre Lefranc. "Have you read the placards?" "No." Pierre Lefranc explained to them that the walls at that moment were covered with placards which the curious crowd were thronging to read, that he had glanced over one of them at the corner of his street, and that the blow had fallen. "The blow!" exclaimed Michel. "Say rather the crime." Pierre Lefranc added that there were three placards— one decree and two proclamations—all three on white paper, and pasted close together. The decree was printed in large letters. The exConstituent Laissac, who lodged, like Michel de Bourges, in the neighborhood (No.4,CitéGaillard), then came in. He brought the same news, and announced further arrests which had been made during the night. There was not a minute to lose. They went to impart the news to Yvan, the Secretary of the Assembly, who had been appointed by the Left, and who lived in the Rue de Boursault. An immediate meeting was necessary. Those Republican Representatives who were still at liberty must be warned and brought together without delay. Versigny said, "I will go and find Victor Hugo. "It was eight o'clock in the morning. I was awake and was

working in bed. My servant entered and said, with an air of alarm,— "A Representative of the people is outside who wishes to speak to you, sir." "Who is it?" "Monsieur Versigny:" "Show him in." Versigny entered, and told me the state of affairs. I sprang out of bed. He told me of the "rendezvous" at the rooms of the exConstituent Laissac. "Go at once and inform the other Representatives," said I. He left me.

### **CHAPTER III.WHAT HAD HAPPENED DURING THE NIGHT**

Previous to the fatal days of June, 1848, the esplanade of the Invalides was divided into eight huge grass plots, surrounded by wooden railings and enclosed between two groves of trees, separated by a street running perpendicularly to the front of the Invalides. This street was traversed by three streets running parallel to the Seine. There were large lawns upon which children were wont to play. The centre of the eight grass plots was marked by a pedestal which under the Empire had borne the bronze lion of St.Mark, which had been brought from Venice; under the Restoration a white marble statue of Louis XVIII.; and under Louis Philippe a plaster bust of Lafayette. Owing to the Palace of the Constituent Assembly having been nearly seized by a crowd of insurgents on the 22d of June, 1848, and there being no barracks in the neighborhood, General Cavaignac had constructed at three hundred paces from the Legislative Palace, on the grass plots of the Invalides, several rows of long huts, under which the grass was hidden. These huts, where three or four thousand men could be accommodated, lodged the troops specially appointed to keep watch over the National Assembly. On the

1<sup>st</sup> December, 1851, the two regiments huddled on the Esplanade were the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 42<sup>d</sup> Regiments of the Line, the 6<sup>th</sup> commanded by Colonel Garderens de Boisse, who was famous before the Second of December, the 42<sup>d</sup> by Colonel Espinasse, who became famous since that date. The ordinary night-guard of the Palace of the Assembly was composed of a battalion of Infantry and of thirty artillerymen, with a captain. The Minister of War, in addition, sent several troopers for



orderly service. Two mortars and six pieces of cannon, with their ammunition wagons, were ranged in a little square courtyard situated on the right of the Cour d'Honneur, and which was called the Cour des Canons. The Major, the military commandant of the Palace, was placed under the immediate control of the Questors. At night fall the gratings and the doors were secured, sentinels were posted, instructions were issued to the sentries, and the Palace was closed like a fortress. The password was the same as in the Place de Paris. The special instructions drawn up by the Questors prohibited the entrance of any armed force other than the regiment on duty. On the night of the 1st and 2d of December the Legislative Palace was guarded by a battalion of the 42d. The sitting of the 1st of December, which was exceedingly peaceable, and had been devoted to a discussion on the municipal law, had finished late, and was terminated by a Tribunal vote. At the moment when M. Baze, one of the Questors, ascended the Tribune to deposit his vote, a Representative, belonging to what was called "Les Bancs Elyséens" approached him, and said in a low tone, "Tonight you will be carried off. "Such warnings as the these were received every day, and, as we have already explained, people

had ended by paying no heed to them. Nevertheless, immediately after the sitting the Questors sent for the Special Commissary of Police of the Assembly, President Dupin being present. When interrogated, the Commissary declared that the reports of his agents indicated "dead calm"—such was his expression—and that assuredly there was no danger to be apprehended for that night. When the Questors pressed him further, President Dupin, exclaiming "Bah!" left the room. On that same day, the 1<sup>st</sup> December, about three o'clock in the afternoon, as General Leflé's father-in-law crossed the boulevard in front of Tortoni's, someone rapidly passed by him and whispered in his ear these significant words, "Eleven o'clock— midnight." This incident excited but little attention at the Questure, and several even laughed at it. It had become customary with them. Nevertheless General Leflé would not go to bed until the hour mentioned had passed by, and remained in the Offices of the Questure until nearly one o'clock in the morning. The shorthand department of the Assembly was done out of doors by four messengers attached to the Moniteur, who were employed to carry the copy of the short hand writers to the printing-office, and to bring back the proof-sheets to the Palace of the Assembly, where M.

Hippolyte Prévost corrected them. M. Hippolyte Prévost was chief of the stenographic staff, and in that capacity had apartments in the Legislative Palace. He was at the same time editor of the musical feuilleton of the *Moniteur*. On the 1<sup>st</sup> December he had gone to the Opéra Comique for the first representation of a new piece, and did not return till after midnight. The fourth messenger from the *Moniteur* was waiting for him with a proof of the last slip of the sitting; M. Prévost corrected the proof, and the messenger was sent off. It was then a little after one o'clock, profound quiet reigned around, and, with the exception of the guard, all in the Palace slept. Towards this hour of the night, a singular incident occurred. The Captain-Adjutant Major of the Guard of the Assembly came to the Major and said, "The Colonel has sent for me," and he added according to military etiquette, "Will you permit me to go?" The Commandant was astonished. "Go," he said with some sharpness, "but the Colonel is wrong to disturb an officer on duty. "One of the soldiers on guard, without understanding the meaning of the words, heard the Commandant pacing up and down, and muttering several times, "What the deuce can he want?" Half an hour afterwards the Adjutant-Major returned. "Well, " asked the Commandant,

"what did the Colonel want with you?" "Nothing," answered the Adjutant, "he wished to give me the orders for to-morrow's duties." The night became further advanced. Towards four o'clock the Adjutant-Major came again to the Major. "Major," he said, "the Colonel has asked for me." "Again!" exclaimed the Commandant. "This is becoming strange; nevertheless, go. "The Adjutant-Major had amongst other duties that of giving out the instructions to the sentries, and consequently had the power of rescinding them. As soon as the Adjutant-Major had gone out, the Major, becoming uneasy, thought that it was his duty to communicate with the Military Commandant of the Palace. He went upstairs to the apartment of the Commandant— Lieutenant Colonel Niols. Colonel Niols had gone to bed and the attendants had retired to their rooms in the attics. The Major, new to the Palace, groped about the corridors, and, knowing little about the various rooms, rang at a door which seemed to him that of the Military Commandant. Nobody answered, the door was not opened, and the Major returned downstairs, without having been able to speak to anybody. On his part the Adjutant-Major re-entered the Palace, but the Major did not see him again. The Adjutant remained near the grated door of the Place

Bourgogne, shrouded in his cloak, and walking up and down the courtyard as though expecting some one. At the instant that five o'clock sounded from the great clock of the dome, the soldiers who slept in the hut-camp before the Invalides were suddenly awakened. Orders were given in a low voice in the huts to take up arms, in silence. Shortly afterwards two regiments, knapsack on back were marching upon the Palace of the Assembly; they

were the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 42d. At this same stroke of five, simultaneously in all the quarters of Paris, infantry soldiers filed out noiselessly from every barrack, with their colonels at their head. The aides-de camp and orderly officers of Louis Bonaparte, who had been distributed in all the barracks, superintended this taking up of arms. The cavalry were not set in motion until three-quarters of an hour after the infantry, for fear that the ring of the horses' hoofs on the stones should wake slumbering Paris too soon. M. de Persigny, who had brought from the Elysée to the camp of the Invalides the order to take up arms, marched at the head of the 42d, by the side of Colonel Espinasse. A story is current in the army, for at the present day, wearied as people are with dishonorable incidents, these occurrences are yet told with a species of gloomy indifference—the story is current that at the moment of setting out with his regiment one of the colonels who could be named hesitated, and that the emissary from the Elysée, taking a sealed packet from his pocket, said to him, "Colonel, I admit that we are running a great risk. Here in this envelope, which I have been charged to hand to you, are a hundred thousand francs in banknotes for contingencies. " The envelope was accepted, and the regiment set out. On the

evening of the 2d of December the colonel said to a lady, "This morning I earned a hundred thousand francs and my General's epaulets." The lady showed him the door. Xavier Durrieu, who tells us this story, had the curiosity later on to see this lady. She confirmed the story. Yes, certainly! she had shut the door in the face of this wretch; a soldier, a traitor to his flag who dared visit her! She receive such a man? No! She could not do that," and, "states Xavier Durrieu, she added, "And yet I have no character to lose." Another mystery was in progress at the Prefecture of Police. Those belated inhabitants of the Cité who may have returned home at a late hour of the night might have noticed a large number of street cabs loitering in scattered groups at different points round about the Rue de Jerusalem. From eleven o'clock in the evening, under pretext of the arrivals of refugees at Paris from Genoa and London, the Brigade of Surety and the eight hundred sergents de ville had been retained in the Prefecture. At three o'clock in the morning a summons had been sent to the forty- eight Commissaries of Paris and of the suburbs, and also to the peace officers. An hour afterwards all of them arrived. They were ushered into a separate chamber, and isolated from each other as much as possible. At five o'clock a bell was

sounded in the Prefect's cabinet. The Prefect Maupas called the Commissaries of Police one after another into his cabinet, revealed the plot to them, and allotted to each his portion of the crime. None refused; many thanked him. It was a question of arresting at their own homes seventy-eight Democrats who were influential in their districts, and dreaded by the Elysée as possible chieftains of barricades. It was necessary, a still more daring outrage, to arrest at their houses sixteen Representatives of the People. For this last task were chosen among the Commissaries of Police such of those magistrates who seemed the most likely to become ruffians. Amongst these were divided the Representatives. Each had his man. Sieur Courtille had Charras, Sieur Desgranges had Nadaud, Sieur Hubaut the elder had M. Thiers, and Sieur Hubaut the younger General Bedeau, General Changarnier was allotted to Lerat, and General Cavaignac to Colin. Sieur Doullens took Representative Valentin, Sieur Benoist Representative Miot, Sieur Allard Representative Cholat, Sieur Barlet took Roger (Du Nord), General Lamoricière fell to Commissary Blanchet, Commissary Gronfier had Representative Greppo, and Commissary Boudrot Representative Lagrange. The Questors were similarly allotted, Monsieur Baze to the Sieur



Primorin, and General Leflé to Sieur Bertoglio. Warrants with the name of the Representatives had been drawn up in the Prefett's private Cabinet. Blanks had been only left for the names of the Commissaries. These were filled in at the moment of leaving. In addition to the armed force which was appointed to assist them, it had been decided that each Commissary should be accompanied by two escorts, one composed of sergents de ville, the other of police agents in plain clothes. As Prefect Maupas had told M. Bonaparte, the Captain of the Republican Guard, Baudinet, was associated with Commissary Lerat in the arrest of General Changarnier. Towards half-past five the fiacres which were in waiting were called up, and all started, each with his instructions. During this time, in another corner of Paris—the old Rue du Temple—in that ancient Soubise Mansion which had been transformed into a Royal Printing Office, and is today a National Printing Office, another section of the Crime was being organized. Towards one in the morning a passer-by who had reached the old Rue du Temple by the Rue de Vieilles- Haudriettes, noticed at the junction of these two streets several long and high windows brilliantly lighted up, These were the windows of the work rooms of the National Printing Office.

He turned to the right and entered the old Rue du Temple, and a moment afterwards paused before the crescent-shaped entrance of the front of the printing-office. The principal door was shut, two sentinels guarded the side door. Through this little door, which was ajar, he glanced into the courtyard of the printing-office, and saw it filled with soldiers. The soldiers were silent, no sound could be heard, but the glistening of their bayonets could be seen. The passer-by surprised, drew nearer. One of the sentinels thrust him rudely back, crying out, "Be off." Like the sergents de ville at the Prefecture of Police, the work men had been retained at the National Printing Office under plea of night-work. At the same time that M. Hippolyte Prévost returned to the Legislative his office, also returning from the Opéra Comique, where he had been to see the new piece, which was by his brother, M. de St. Georges. Immediately on his return the manager, to whom had come an order from the Elysée during the day, took up a pair of pocket pistols, and went down into the vestibule, which communicates by means of a few steps with the courtyard. Shortly afterwards the door leading to the street opened, a fiacre entered, a man who carried a large portfolio alighted. The manager went up to the man, and said to him,

"Is that you, Monsieur de Bévillé?" "Yes," answered the man. The fiacre was put up, the horses placed in a stable, and the coach man shut up in a parlor, where they gave him drink, and placed a purse in his hand. Bottles of wine and louis d' or form the groundwork of this hind of politics. The coachman drank and then went to sleep. The door of the parlor was bolted. The large door of the courtyard of the printing-office was hardly shut than it reopened, gave passage to armed men, who entered in silence, and then reclosed. The arrivals were a company of the Gendarmerie Mobile, the fourth of the first battalion, commanded by a captain named La Roche d'Oisy. As may be remarked by the result, for all delicate expeditions the men of the coup d'état took care to employ the Gendarmerie Mobile and the Republican Guard, that it is to say the two corps almost entirely composed of former Municipal Guards, bearing at heart are vengeful remembrance of the events of February. Captain La Roche d'Oisy brought a letter from the Minister of War, which placed him self and his soldiers at the disposition of the manager of the National Printing Office. The muskets were loaded without a word being spoken. Sentinels were placed in the work rooms, in the corridors, at the doors, at the windows, in fact, everywhere,

two being stationed at the door leading into the street. The captain asked what instructions he should give to the sentries. "Nothing more simple," said the man who had come in the fiacre. "Whoever attempts to leave or to open a window, shoot him. "This man, who, in fact, was De Bévillé, orderly officer to M. Bonaparte, withdrew with the manager into the large cabinet on the first story, a solitary room which looked out on the garden. There he

communicated to the manager what he had brought with him, the decree of the dissolution of the Assembly, the appeal to the Army, the appeal To the People, the decree convoking the electors, and in addition, the proclamation of the Prefect Maupas and his letter to the Commissaries of Police. The four first documents were entirely in the handwriting of the President, and here and there some erasures might be noticed. The compositors were in waiting. Each man was placed between two gendarmes, and was forbidden to utter a single word, and then the documents which had to be printed were distributed throughout the room, being cut up in very small pieces, so that an entire sentence could not be read by one workman. The manager announced that he would give them an hour to compose the whole. The different fragments were finally brought to Colonel Béville, who put them together and corrected the proof sheets. The machining was conducted with the same precautions, each press being between two soldiers. Notwithstanding all possible diligence the work lasted two hours. The gendarmes watched over the workmen. Béville watched over St. Georges. When the work was finished a suspicious incident occurred, which greatly resembled at reason within at reason. To a traitor a greater traitor. This

species of crime is subject to such accidents. Bévillè And St. Georges, the two trusty confidants in whose hands lay the secret of the coup d'état, that is to say the head of the President;—that secret, which ought at no price to be allowed to transpire before the appointed hour, under risk of causing everything to miscarry, took it into their heads to confide it at once to two hundred men, in order "to test the effect," as the ex-Colonel Bévillè said later on, rather naively. They read the mysterious document which had just been printed to the Gendarmes Mobiles, who were drawn up in the courtyard. These ex-municipal guards applauded. If they had hooted, it might be asked what the two experimentalists in the coup d'état would have done. Perhaps M. Bonaparte would have waked up from his dream at Vincennes. The coachman was then liberated, the fiacre was horsed, and at four o'clock in the morning the orderly officer and the manager of the National Printing Office, hence forward two criminals, arrived at the Prefecture of Police with the parcels of the decrees. Then began for them the brand of shame. Prefect Maupas took them by the hand. Bands of bill-stickers, bribed for the occasion, started in every direction, carrying with them the decrees and proclamations. This was precisely the hour at which the

Palace of the National Assembly was invested. In the Rue de l'Université there is a door of the Palace which is the old entrance to the Palais Bourbon, and which opened into the avenue which leads to the house of the President of the Assembly. This door, termed the Presidency door, was according to custom guarded by a sentry. For some time past the Adjutant-Major, who had been twice sent for during the night by Colonel Espinasse, had remained motionless and silent, close by the sentinel. Five minutes after, having left the huts of the Invalides, the 42d Regiment of the line, followed at some distance by the 6th Regiment, which had marched by the Rue de Bourgogne, emerged from the Rue de l'Université. "The regiment," says an eye-witness, "marched as one steps in a sickroom." It arrived with a stealthy step before the Presidency door. This ambuscade came to surprise the law. The sentry, seeing these soldiers arrive, halted, but at the moment when he was going to challenge them with a *qui-vive*, the Adjutant Major seized his arm, and, in his capacity as the officer empowered to countermand all instructions, ordered him to Give free passage to the 42d, and at the same time commanded the amazed porter to open the door. The door turned upon its hinges, the soldiers spread themselves

through the avenue. Persigny entered and said, "It is done." The National Assembly Was invaded. At the noise of the footsteps the Commandant Mennier ran up. "Commandant," Colonel Espinasse cried out to him, "I come to relieve your battalion." The Commandant turned pale for a moment, and his eyes remained fixed on the ground. Then suddenly he put his hands to his shoulders, and tore off his epaulets, he drew his sword, broke it across his knee, threw the two fragments on the pavement, and, trembling with rage, exclaimed with a solemn voice, "Colonel, you disgrace the number of your regiment." "All right, all right," said Espinasse. The Presidency door was left open, but all the other entrances remained closed. All the guards were relieved, all the sentinels changed, and the battalion of the night guard was sent back to the camp of the Invalides, the soldiers piled their arms in the avenue, and in the Cour d'Honneur. The 42d, in profound silence, occupied the doors outside and inside, the courtyard, the reception-rooms, the galleries, the corridors, the passages, while every one slept in the Palace. Shortly afterwards arrived two of those little chariots which are called "forty sons," and two fiacres, escorted by two detachments of the Republican Guard and of the Chasseurs de Vincennes, and



by several squads of police. The Commissaries Bertoglio and Primorin alighted from the two chariots. As these carriages drove up a personage, bald, but still young, was seen to appear at the grated door of the Place de Bourgogne. This personage had all the air of a man about town, who had just come from the opera, and, in fact, he had come from thence, after having passed through a den. He came from the Elysée. It was De Morny. For an instant he watched the soldiers piling their arms, and then went onto the Presidency door. There he exchanged a few words with M. de Persigny. A quarter of an hour afterwards, accompanied by 250 Chasseurs de Vincennes, he took possession of the ministry of the Interior, startled M. de Thorigny in his bed, and handed him brusquely a letter of thanks from Monsieur Bonaparte. Some days previously honest M. De Thorigny, whose ingenuous remarks we have already cited, said to a group of men near whom M. de Morny was passing, "How these men of the Mountain calumniate the President! The man who would break his oath, who would achieve a coup d'état must necessarily be a worthless wretch." Awaken rudely in the middle of the night, and relieved of his post as Minister like the sentinels of the Assembly, the worthy man, astounded, and rubbing his eyes,

muttered, "Eh! then the President is a——." "Yes," said Morny, with a burst of laughter. He who writes these lines knew Morny. Morny and Walewsky held in the quasi reigning family the positions, one of Royal bastard, the other of Imperial bastard. Who was Morny? We will say, "A noted wit, an intriguer, but in no way austere, a friend of Romieu, and a supporter of Guizot possessing the manners of the world, and the habits of the roulette table, self satisfied, clever, combining a certain liberality of ideas with a readiness to accept useful crimes, finding means to wear a gracious smile with bad teeth, leading a life of pleasure, dissipated but reserved, ugly, good-tempered, fierce, well dressed, intrepid, willingly leaving a brother prisoner under bolts and bars, and ready to risk his head for a brother Emperor, having the same mother as Louis Bonaparte, and like Louis Bonaparte, having some father or other, being able to call himself Beauharnais, being able to call himself Flahaut, and yet calling himself Morny, pursuing literature as far as light comedy, and politics, as far as tragedy, a deadly free liver, possessing all the frivolity consistent with assassination, capable of being sketched by Marivaux and treated of by Tacitus, without conscience, irreproachably elegant, infamous, and amiable, at

need a perfect duke. Such was this malefactor.” It was not yet six o’clock in the morning. Troops began to mass themselves on the Place de la Concorde, where Leroy Saint Arnaud on horseback held a review. The Commissaries of Police, Bertoglio and Primorin ranged two companies in order under the vault of the great staircase of the Questure, but did not ascend that way. They were accompanied by agents of police, who knew the most secret recesses of the Palais Bourbon, and who conducted them through various passages. General Leflé was lodged in the Pavilion inhabited in the time of the Duc de Bourbon by Monsieur Feuchères. That night General Leflé had staying with him his sister and her husband, who were visiting Paris, and who slept in a room, the door of which led into one of the corridors of the Palace. Commissary Bertoglio knocked at the door, opened it, and together with his agents abruptly burst into the room, where a woman was in bed. The general's brother-in-law sprang out of bed, and cried out to the Questor, who slept in an adjoining room, "Adolphe, the doors are being forced, the Palace is full of soldiers. Get up!" The General opened his eyes, he saw Commissary Bertoglio standing beside his bed. He sprang up. "General," said the Commissary, "I have come to fulfil a duty." "I understand,"

said General Leflé, "you are a traitor." The Commissary stammering out the words, "Plot against the safety of the State," displayed a warrant. The General, without pronouncing a word, struck this infamous paper with the back of his hand. Then dressing himself, he put on his full uniform of Constantine and of Médéah, thinking in his imaginative, soldier-like loyalty that there were still generals of Africa for the soldiers whom he would find on his way. All the generals now remaining were brigands. His wife embraced him; his son, a child of seven years, in his night shirt, and in tears, said to the Commissary of Police, "Mercy, Monsieur Bonaparte." The General, while clasping his wife in his arms, whispered in her ear, "There is artillery in the courtyard, try and fire a cannon. "The Commissary and his men led him away. He regarded these policemen with contempt, and did not speak to them, but when he recognized Colonel Espinasse, his military and Breton heart swelled with indignation. "Colonel Espinasse," said he, "you are a villain, and I hope to live long enough to tear the buttons from your uniform. "Colonel Espinasse hung his head, and stammered, "I do not know you. "A major waved his sword, and cried, "We have had enough of lawyer generals." Some soldiers crossed their bayonets

before the unarmed prisoner, three sergents de ville pushed him into a fiacre, and a sub-lieutenant approaching the carriage, and looking in the face of them an who, if he were a citizen, was his Representative, and if he were a soldier was his general, flung this abominable word at him, "Canaille!" Meanwhile Commissary Primorin had gone by a more roundabout way in order the more surely to surprise the other Questor, M. Baze. Out of M. Baze's apartment a door led to the lobby communicating with the chamber of the Assembly. Sieur Primorin knocked at the door. "Who is there?" asked a servant, who was dressing. "The Commissary of Police," replied Primorin. The servant, thinking that he was the Commissary of Police of the Assembly, opened the door .At this moment M. Baze, who had heard the noise, and had just awakened, put on a dressing-gown, and cried, "Do not open the door." He had scarcely spoken these words when a man in plain clothes and three sergents de ville in uniform rushed into his chamber. The man, opening his coat, displayed his scarf of office, asking M. Baze, "Do you recognize this?" "You are a worthless wretch," answered the Questor. The police agents laid their hands on M. Baze."You will not take me away, "he said. "You, a Commissary of Police, you, who are a

magistrate, and know what you are doing, you outrage the National Assembly, you violate the law, you are a criminal!" A hand-to-hand struggle ensued—four against one. Madame Baze and her two little girls giving vent to screams, the servant being thrust back with blows by the sergents de ville."You are ruffians," cried out Monsieur Baze. They carried him away by main force in their arms, still struggling, naked, his dressing-gown being torn to shreds, his body being covered with blows, his wrist torn and bleeding. The stairs, the landing, the courtyard, were full of soldiers with fixed bayonets and grounded arms. The Questor spoke to them. "Your Representatives are being arrested, you have not received your arms to break the laws!" A sergeant was wearing a brand new cross. "Have you been given the cross for this?" The sergeant answered, "We only know one master." "I note your number," continued M. Baze. "You are a dishonored regiment." The soldiers listened with a stolid air, and seemed still asleep. Commissary Primorin said to them, "Do not answer, this has nothing to do with you. "They led the Questor across the courtyard to the guard-house at the Porte Noire. This was the name which was given to a little door contrived under the vault opposite the treasury of the

Assembly, and which opened upon the Rue de Bourgogne, facing the Rue de Lille. Several sentries were placed at the door of the guard-house, and at the top of the flight of steps which led thither, M. Baze being left there in charge of three sergents de ville. Several soldiers, without their weapons, and in their shirt-sleeves, came in and out. The Questor appealed to them in the name of military honor. "Do not answer," said the sergent de ville to the soldiers. M. Baze's two little girls had followed him with terrified eyes, and when they lost sight of him the youngest burst into tears. "Sister," said the elder, who was seven years old, "let us say our prayers," and the two children, clasping their hands, knelt down. Commissary Primorin, with his swarm of agents, burst into the Questor's study, and laid hands on everything. The first papers which he perceived on the middle of the table, and which he seized, were the famous decrees which had been prepared in the event of the Assembly having voted the proposal of the Questors. All the drawers were opened and searched. This overhauling of M. Baze's papers, which the Commissary of Police termed a domiciliary visit, lasted more than an hour. M. Baze's clothes had been taken to him, and he had dressed. When the "domiciliary visit" was over, he was taken out of the guard-

house. There was a fiacre in the courtyard, into which he entered, together with the three sergents de ville. The vehicle, in order to reach the Presidency door, passed by the Cour d'Honneur and then by the Cour de Canonis. Day was breaking. M. Baze looked into the courtyard to see if the cannon were still there. He saw the ammunition wagons ranged in order with their shafts raised, but the places of the six cannon and the two mortars were vacant. In the avenue of the Presidency the fiacre stopped for a moment. Two lines of soldiers, standing at ease, lined the footpaths of the avenue. At the foot of a tree were grouped three men: Colonel Espinasse, whom M. Baze knew and recognized, a species of Lieutenant- Colonel, who wore a black and orange ribbon round his neck, and a Major of Lancers, all three sword in hand, consulting together. The windows of the fiacre were closed; M. Baze wished to lower them to appeal to these men; the sergents de ville seized his arms. The Commissary Primorin then came up, and was about to re enter the little chariot for two persons which had brought him. "Monsieur Baze," said he, with that villainous kind of courtesy which the agents of the coup d'état willingly blended with their crime, "you must be uncomfortable with those three men in the fiacre. You are



cramped; come in with me." "Let me alone," said the prisoner. "With these three men I am cramped; with you I should be contaminated." An escort of infantry was ranged on both sides of the fiacre. Colonel Espinasse called to the coachman, "Drive slowly by the Quai d'Orsay until you meet a cavalry escort. When the cavalry shall have assumed the charge, the infantry can come back." They set out. As the fiacre turned into the Quai d'Orsay a picket of the 7<sup>th</sup> Lancers arrived at full speed. It was the escort: the troopers surrounded the fiacre, and the whole galloped off. No incident occurred during the journey. Here and there, at the noise of the horses' hoofs, windows were opened and heads put forth; and the prisoner, who had at length succeeded in lowering a window heard startled voices saying, "What is the matter?" "The fiacre stopped." "Where are we?" asked M. Baze. "At Mazas," said a sergent de ville. The Questor was taken to the office of the prison. Just as he entered he saw Baune and Nadaud being brought out. There was a table in the centre, at which Commissary Primorin, who had followed the fiacre in his chariot, had just seated himself. While the Commissary was writing, M. Baze noticed on the table a paper which was evidently a jail register, on which were these names, written in

the following order: Lamoricière, Charras, Cavaignac, Changarnier, Leflé, Thiers, Bedeau, Roger (du Nord), Chambolle. This was probably the order in which the Representatives had arrived at the prison. When Sieur Primorin had finished writing, M. Baze said, "Now, you will be good enough to receive my protest, and add it to your official report." "It is not an official report," objected the Commissary, "it is simply an order for committal." "I intend to write my protest at once," replied M. Baze. "You will have plenty of time in your cell," remarked a man who stood by the table. M. Baze turned round. "Who are you?" "I am the governor of the prison," said the man. "In that case," replied

M. Baze, "I pity you, for you are aware of the crime you are committing. "The man turned pale, and stammered a few unintelligible words. The Commissary rose from his seat; M. Baze briskly took possession of his chair, seated himself at the table, and said to Sieur Primorin, "You are a public officer; I request you to add my protest to your official report." "Very well," said the Commissary, "let it be so." Baze wrote the protest as follows:— "I, the under signed, Jean-Didier Baze, Representative of the People, and Questor of the National Assembly, carried off by violence from my residence in the

Palace of the National Assembly, and conducted to this prison by an armed force which it was impossible for me to resist, protest in the name of the National Assembly and in my own name against the outrage on national representation committed upon my colleagues and upon myself. "Given at Mazas on the 2d December 1851, at eight o'clock in the morning. "BAZE."

While this was taking place at Mazas, the soldiers were laughing and drinking in the courtyard of the Assembly. They made their coffee in the saucepans. They had lighted enormous fires in the courtyard; the flames, fanned by the wind, at times reached the walls of the Chamber. A superior official of the Questure, an officer of the National Guard, Ramond de la Croisette, ventured to say to them, "You will set the Palace on fire;" where upon a soldier struck him a blow with his fist. Four of the pieces taken from the Cour de Canons were ranged in battery order against the Assembly; two on the Place de Bourgogne were pointed towards the grating, and two on the Pont de la Concorde were pointed towards the grand staircase. As side-note to this instructive tale let us mention a curious fact. The 42d Regiment of the line was the same which had arrested Louis Bonaparte at Boulogne. In 1840 this regiment lent it said to the law against

the conspirator. In 1851 it lent it said to the conspirator against the law: such is the beauty of passive obedience.

## CHAPTER IV. OTHER DOINGS OF THE NIGHT

During the same night in all parts of Paris acts of brigandage took place. Unknown men leading armed troops, and themselves armed with hatchets, mallets, pincers, crow bars, life-preservers, swords hidden under their coats, pistols, of which the butts could be distinguished under the folds of their cloaks, arrived in silence before a house, occupied the street, encircled the approaches, picked the lock of the door, tied up the porter, invaded the stairs, and burst through the doors upon a sleeping man, and when that man, awakening with a start, asked of these bandits, "Who are you?" their leader answered, "A Commissary of Police." So it happened to Lamoricière who was seized by Blanchet, who threatened him with the gag; to Greppo, who was brutally treated and thrown down by Gronfier, assisted by six men carrying a dark lantern and a pole-axe; to Cavaignac, who was secured by Colin, a smooth-tongued villain, who affected to be shocked on hearing him curse and swear; to M. Thiers, who was arrested by Hubaut (the elder); who professed that he had seen him" tremble and weep, "thus adding false hood to crime; to Valentin, who was assailed in his bed by Dourlens, taken by the feet and shoulders, and thrust into a padlocked police van;

to Miot, destined to the tortures of African casemates; to Roger (du Nord), who with courageous and witty irony offered sherry to the band its. Charras and Changarnier were taken unawares. They lived in the Rue St. Honoré, nearly opposite to each other, Changarnier at No.3, Charras at No.14. Ever since the 9<sup>th</sup> of September Changarnier had dismissed the fifteen men armed to the teeth by whom he had hitherto been guarded during the night, and on the 1st December, as we have said, Charras had unloaded his pistols. These empty pistols were lying on the table when they came to Arrest him. The Commissary of Police threw himself upon them. "Idiot," said Charras to him, "if they had been loaded, you would have been a dead man. "These pistols, we may note, had been given to Charras upon the taking of Mascara by General Renaud, who at the moment of Charras' arrest was on horseback in the street helping to carry out the coup d'état. If these pistols had remained loaded, and if General Renaud had had the task of arresting Charras, it would have been curious if Renaud's pistols had killed Renaud. Charras assuredly would

not have hesitated. We have already mentioned the names of these police rascals. It is useless to repeat them. It was Courtille who arrested Charras, Lerat who arrested Changarnier, Desgranges who arrested Nadaud. The men thus seized in their own houses were Representatives of the people; they were inviolable, so that to the crime of the violation of their persons was added this high treason, the violation of the Constitution. There was no lack of impudence

in the perpetration of these outrages. The police agents made merry. Some of these droll fellows jested. At Mazas the under-jailors jeered at Thiers, Nadaud reprimanded them severely. The Sieur Hubaut (the younger) awoke General Bedeau. "General, you are a prisoner."—"My person is inviolable."—"Unless you are caught red-handed, in the very act."—"Well," said Bedeau, "I am caught in the act, the instant of being asleep." They took him by the collar and dragged him to a fiacre. On meeting together at Mazas, Nadaud grasped the hand of Greppo, and Lagrange grasped the hand of Lamoricière. This made the police gentry laugh. A colonel, named Thirion, wearing a commander's cross round his neck, helped to put the Generals and the Representatives into jail. "Look me in the face," said Charras to him. Thirion moved away. Thus, without counting other arrests which took place later on, there were imprisoned during the night of the 2d of December, sixteen Representatives and seventy-eight citizens. The two agents of the crime furnished a report of it to Louis Bonaparte. Morny wrote "Boxed up;" Maupas wrote "Quadded." The one in drawing-room slang, the other in the slang of the galleys. Subtle gradations of language.



## CHAPTER V. THE DARKNESS OF THE CRIME

Versigny had just left me. While I dressed hastily there came in a man in whom I had every confidence. He was a poor cabinet-maker out of work, named Girard, to whom I had given shelter in a room of my house, a carver of wood, and not illiterate. He came in from the street; he was trembling. "Well," I asked, "what do the people say?" Girard answered me,— "People are dazed. The blow has been struck in such a manner that it is not realized. Workmen read the placards, say nothing, and go to their work. Only one in a hundred speaks. It is to say, 'Good!' This is how it appears to them. The law of the 31<sup>st</sup> May is abrogated—'Well done!' Universal suffrage is re-established—'Also well done!' The reactionary majority has been driven away—'Admirable!' Thiers is arrested— 'Capital!' Changarnier is seized—'Bravo!' Round each placard there are claqueurs. Ratapoil explains his coup d'état to Jacques Bonhomme, Jacques Bonhomme takes it all in. Briefly, it is my impression that the people give their consent." "Let it be so," said I. "But," asked Girard of me, "what

will you do, Monsieur Victor Hugo? "I took my scarf of office from a cupboard, and showed it to him. He understood. We Shook hands. As he went out Carini entered. Colonel Carini is an intrepid man. He had commanded the cavalry under Mieroslawsky in the Sicilian insurrection. He has, in a few moving and enthusiastic pages, told the story of that noble revolt. Carini is one of those Italians who love France as we Frenchmen love Italy. Every warm-hearted man in this

century has two fatherlands—the Rome of yesterday and the Paris of to-day. "Thank God," said Carini to me, "you are still free," and he added, "The blow has been struck in a formidable manner. The Assembly is invested. I have come from thence. The Place de la Révolution, the Quays, the Tuileries, the boulevards, are crowded with troops. The soldiers have their knapsacks. The batteries are harnessed. If fighting takes place it will be desperate work." I answered him, "There will be fighting." And I added, laughing, "You have proved that the colonels write like poets; now it is the turn of the poets to fight like colonels." I entered my wife's room; she knew nothing, and was quietly reading her paper in bed. I had taken about me five hundred francs in gold. I put on my wife's bed a box containing nine hundred francs, all the money which remained to me, and I told her what had happened. She turned pale, and said to me, "What are you going to do?" "My duty." She embraced me, and only said two words:—"Do it." My breakfast was ready. I ate a cutlet in two mouthfuls. As I finished, my daughter came in. She was startled by the manner in which I kissed her, and asked me, "What is the matter?" "Your mother will explain to you." And I left them. The Rue de la Tour d' Auvergne was as quiet and

deserted as usual. Four workmen were, however, charting near my door; they wished me "Good morning." I cried out to them, "You know what is going on?" "Yes," said they. "Well. It is treason! Louis Bonaparte is strangling the Republic. The people are hacked. The people must defend themselves." "They will defend themselves." "You promise me that?" "Yes," they answered. One of them added, "We swear it." They kept their word. Barricades were constructed in my street (Rue de la Tour d'Auvergne), in the Rue des Martyrs, in the Cité Rodier, in the Rue Coquenard, and at Notre-Dame de Lorette.

## CHAPTER VI. "PLACARDS"

On leaving these brave men I could read at the corner of the Rue de la Tour d'Auvergne and the Rue des Martyrs, the three in famous placards which had been posted on the walls of Paris during the night. Here they are. "PROCLAMATION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC. "Appeal to the People. "FRENCH MEN! The present situation can last no longer. Everyday which passes enhances the dangers of the country. The Assembly, which ought to be the firmest support of order, has become a focus of conspiracies. The patriotism of three hundred of its members has been unable to check its fatal tendencies. Instead of making laws in the public interest it forges arms for civil war; it attacks the power which I hold directly from the People, it encourages all bad passions, it compromises the tranquillity of France; I have dissolved it, and I constitute the whole People a judge between it and me. "The Constitution ,as you know, was constructed with the object of weakening before hand the power which you were about to confide to me. Six millions of votes formed an emphatic protest against it, and yet I have faithfully respected it. Provocations, calumnies, outrages, have found me unmoved. Now, however, that the fundamental compact is no

longer respected by those very men who incessantly invoke it, and that the men who have ruined two monarchies wish to tie my hands in order to overthrow the Republic, my duty is to frustrate their treacherous schemes, to maintain the Republic, and to save the Country by appealing to the solemn judgment of the only Sovereign whom I recognize in France—the People. "I therefore make a loyal appeal to the whole nation, and I say to you: If you wish to continue this condition of

uneasiness which degrades us and compromises our future, choose another in my place, for I will no longer retain a power which is impotent to do good, which renders me responsible for actions which I cannot prevent, and which binds me to the helm when I see the vessel driving towards the abyss. "If on the other hand you still place confidence in me, give me the means of accomplishing the great mission which I hold from you. "This mission consists in closing the era of revolutions, by satisfying the legitimate needs of the People, and by protecting them from subversive passions. It consists, above all, in creating institutions which survive men, and which shall in fact form the foundations on which something durable may be established. "Persuaded that the instability of power, that the preponderance of a single