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BY

HENRY WILLIAM HERBERT,

AUTHOR OF "THE CAVALIERS OF ENGLAND"—"THE ROMAN TRAITOR"—"CROMWELL,"
"THE BROTHERS"—"CAPTAINS OF THE OLD WORLD," ETC.



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LEGENDS

OF

THE NORMAN CONQUERORS.



THE SAXON'S OATH.

“My tongue hath sworn, but still my mind is free.”

THE son of Godwin was the flower of the whole Saxon race. The jealousies which had disturbed the mind of Edward the Confessor had long since passed away; and Harold, whom he once had looked upon with eyes of personal aversion, he now regarded almost as his own son. Yet still the Saxon hostages—Ulfnoth, and the young son of Swerga, who in the time of his mad predilection for the Normans, and his unnatural distrust of his own countrymen, had been delivered for safe keeping to William, duke of Normandy—still lingered, melancholy exiles, far from the white cliffs of their native land. And now, for the first time since their departure, did the aspect of affairs appear propitious for their liberation; and Harold, brother of one, and uncle of the other, full of proud confidence in his own intellect and valor, applied to Edward for permission that he might cross the English channel, and, personally visiting the Norman, bring back the hostages in honor and security to the dear land of their forefathers. The countenance of the Confessor fell at the request; and, conscious probably in his own heart of some rash promise made in days long past, and long repented, to the ambitious William, he manifested a degree of agitation amounting almost to alarm.

“Harold,” he said, after a long pause of deliberation—“Harold, my son, since you have made me this request, and that your noble heart seems set on its accomplishment, it shall not be my part to do constraint or violence to your affectionate and patriotic wishes. Go, then, if such be your resolve, but go without *my* leave, and contrary to *my* advice. It is not that I would not have your brother and your kinsman home, but that I do distrust the means of their deliverance; and sure I am, that should you go in person, some terrible disaster shall befall ourselves and this our country. Well do I know Duke William; well do I know his spirit—brave, crafty, daring, deep, ambitious, and designing. You, too, he hates especially, nor will he grant you anything, save at a price that shall draw down an overwhelming ruin on you who pay it, and on the throne of which you are the glory and the stay. If we would have these hostages delivered at a less ransom than the downfall of our Saxon dynasty—the misery of merry England—another messenger than thou must seek the wily Norman. Be it, however, as thou wilt, my friend, my kinsman, and my son.”

Oh, sage advice, and admirable counsel! advice how fatally neglected—counsel how sadly frustrated! Gallant, and brave, and young; fraught with a noble sense of his own powers, a full reliance on his own honorable purposes; untaught as yet in that, the hardest lesson of the world's hardest school, distrust of others, suspicion of all men—Harold set forth upon his journey, as it were, on an excursion in pursuit of pleasure. Surrounded by a train of blithe companions, gallantly mounted, gorgeously attired, with falcon upon fist, and greyhounds bounding by his side, gayly and merrily he started, on a serene autumnal morning, for the coast of Sussex. There he took ship; and scarcely was he out of sight of land, when, as it were at once to justify the words of Edward, the wind, which had been on his embarkation the fairest that could blow from heaven,

suddenly shifted round, the sky was overcast with vast clouds of a leaden hue, the waves tossed wildly with an ominous and hollow murmur ; and, ere the first day had elapsed, as fierce a tempest burst upon his laboring barks as ever baffled mariner among the perilous shoals and sandbanks of the narrow seas. Hopeless almost of safety, worn out with unaccustomed toil and hard privations, for three days and as many nights they battled with the stormy waters ; and on the morning of the fourth, when the skies lightened, and the abating violence of the strong gales allowed them to put in, and come to anchor, where the Somme pours its noble stream into the deep, through the rich territories of the count of Ponthieu, they were at once made prisoners, robbed of their personal effects, held to a heavy ransom, and cast as prisoners-of-war into the dungeon-walls of Belram, to languish there until the avarice of the count Guy should be appeased with gold.

Still Harold bore a high heart and a proud demeanor, bearding the robber-count even to his teeth, set him at defiance, proclaiming himself an ambassador from England to the duke of Normandy, and claiming as a right the means of making known to William his unfortunate condition. This, deeming it perchance his interest so to do, the count at once conceded ; and before many days had passed, Harold might see, from the barred windows of his turret-prison, a gallant band of lancers, arrayed beneath the Norman banner, with a pursuivant and trumpet at their head, wheeling around the walls of the grim fortress. A haughty summons followed, denouncing “ the extremities of fire and of the sword against the count de Ponthieu, his friends, dependants, and allies, should he not instantly set free, with all his goods and chattels, his baggage and his horses, friends, followers, and slaves, unransomed with all honor, Harold, the son of Godwin, the friend and host of William, high and puissant duke of Normandy ! ” Little, however, did mere

menaces avail with the proud count de Ponthieu ; nor did the Saxon prince obtain his liberty till William had paid down a mighty sum of silver, and invested Guy with a magnificent demesne on the rich meadows of the Eaune.

Then once more did the son of Godwin ride forth a freeman, in the bright light of heaven, escorted—such were the strange anomalies of those old times—by a superb array of lances, furnished for his defence by the same count de Ponthieu, who, having held him in vile. durance until his object was obtained, as soon as he was liberated on full payment of the stipulated price, had thenceforth treated him as a much-honored guest, holding his stirrup at his castle-gate when he departed, and sending a strong guard of honor to see him in all safety over the frontier of the duke's demesne. Here, at the frontier town, William's high senechal attended his arrival ; and gay and glorious was his progress through the rich fields of Normandy, until he reached Rouen. The glorious chase—whether by the green margin of some brimful river they roused the hermit-tyrant of the waters, that noblest of the birds of chase, to make sport for their long-winged falcons, or through the sere trees of the forest pursued the stag or felon wolf with horn, hound, and halloo—diversified the tedium of the journey ; while every night some feudal castle threw wide its hospitable gates to greet with revelry and banqueting the guest of the grand duke. Arrived at Rouen, that powerful prince himself, the mightiest warrior of the day, rode forth beyond the gates to meet the Saxon ; nor did two brothers long estranged meet ever with more cordiality of outward show than these, the chiefs of nations long destined to be rival and antagonistic, till from their union should arise the mightiest, the wisest, the most victorious, and enlightened, and free race of men, that ever peopled empires, or spread their language and their laws through an admiring world. On that first meeting, as he embraced his

guest, the princely Norman announced to him that his young brother and his nephew were thenceforth at his absolute disposal.

“The hostages are yours,” he said—“yours, at your sole request; nor would I be less blithe to render them, if Harold stood before me himself a landless exile, than as I see him now, the first lord of a powerful kingdom, the most trusty messenger of a right noble king. But, of your courtesy, I pray you leave us not yet awhile; though if you will do so, my troops shall convey you to the seashore, my ships shall bear you home!—but, I beseech, do this honor to your host, to tarry with him for a little space: and as you be the first—for so you are reported to us—in all realities and sports of Saxon warfare, so let us prove your prowess, and witness you our skill, in passages of Norman chivalry.”

In answer to this fair request, what could the Saxon do but acquiesce? Yet, even as he did so, the words of the gray-headed king came sensibly upon his memory, and he began to feel as if in truth the net of the deceiver were already round about him with its inevitable meshes. Still, having once assented, nothing remained for him but to fulfil, as gracefully as possible, his half-unwilling promise. So joyously, however, were the days consumed—so gayly did the evenings pass, among festivities far more refined and delicate than were the rude feasts of the sturdy Saxons, wherein excess of drink and vulgar riot composed the chief attractions—that, after one short week had flown, all the anxieties and fears of Harold were lost in admiration of the polished manners of his Norman hosts, and the high qualities of his chief entertainer. From town to town they passed in gay cortége, visiting castle after castle in their route, and ever and anon testing the valor and the skill each of the other, in those superb encounters of mock warfare—the free and gentle passage of arms—which in the education of

the warlike Normans were second only to the real shock of battle, which was to them, not metaphorically, the very breath of life.

Nor in these jousts and tournaments, whether with headless lance or blunted broadsword, or in the deadlier though still amicable strife at *outrance*, did not the Saxon, though unused to the *menêge* of the destrier and equestrian combat with the lance, win high renown and credit with his martial hosts. The Saxon tribes had, from their earliest existence as a people, been famed as infantry; their arms, a huge and massive axe; a short, sharp, two-edged sword, framed like the all-victorious weapon of the Romans; a target, and ponderous javelin, used ever as a missile. Cavalry, properly so called, although their leaders sometimes rode into the conflict, they had none; and by a natural consequence, one of that people for the first time adopting the complete panoply, mounting the barbed war-horse, and tilting with the long lance of the Gallic chivalry, must have engaged with the practised champions of the time at a fearful disadvantage. Still, even at this odds, such was the force of emulation acting upon a spirit elastic, vigorous, and fiery, backed by a powerful and agile frame, inured to feats of strength and daring, that little time elapsed ere Harold could abide the brunt of the best lance of William's court, not only without the risk of reputation, but often at advantage. After a long and desperate encounter, wherein the Saxon prince had foiled all comers, hurling three cavaliers to earth with one unsplintered lance, William, in admiration of his bravery, insisted on bestowing on his friend, with his own honored blade, the accolade of knighthood—buckled the gilded spurs upon his heels; presented him with the complete apparel of a knight—the lance, with its appropriate bandrol—the huge, two-handed war-sword; and, above all, the finest charger of his royal stables, which, constantly supplied from the best blood of Andalusia, at that time were esteemed

the choicest stud in Europe. It may now be supposed that honors such as these, coming too from a Norman, for the most part esteemed the scorner of the Saxon race—nor this alone, but from the most renowned and famous warrior of the day—produced a powerful effect on the enthusiastic and ambitious spirit of the young Englishman; nor did the wily duke fail to observe the operation of his deep-laid manœuvres, nor, when observed, did he neglect by every means to strengthen the impression he had made. To this end, therefore, not courtesies alone, nor the high-prized distinctions of military honor, nor gorgeous gifts, nor personal deference, were deemed sufficient instruments. To finish what he had himself so well begun, to complete the ensnarement of the Saxon's senses, the aid of woman was called in—woman, all-powerful, perilous, fascinating woman! Nor did he lack a fair and willing bait wherewith to give his prize. In his own court, filled as it was with the most lovely, or at least—thanks to the prowess of the Norman spear—the most renowned of Europe's ladies, there was not one that could compete in beauty, wit, or grace, with Alice, his bright daughter. Too keen a player with the passions and the characters of men—too wise a judge of that most wondrous compound, that strange mass of inconsistencies, of evil and of good, of honor and deceit, the human heart—too close a calculator of effects and causes, was William, to divulge his purpose, or to hint his wishes, even to the obedient ear of Alice. He cared not—he—whether she loved, or feigned to love, so that his object was effected. Commanding ever his wildest passions, using them but as instruments and tools to bend or break men to his purposes, he never dreamed or recked of their ungovernable force upon the minds of others. It was but a few days after the arrival of his guest, that he discovered how he gazed after, and with signs of evident and earnest admiration, on the young damsel, to whose intimacy he had been studiously

admitted as an especial and much-honored friend of his host: and her father, to fan this flame on Harold's part, it needed little art from so consummate an intriguer as the duke; while as to Alice, young as she was, and thoughtless, delighted with attention, and attracted by the fine form and high repute of the young stranger, and yet more by the raciness and trifling singularities of his foreign though high-bred deportment—a fond, paternal smile, and an approving glance, as she toyed with her young admirer, sufficed to give full scope to her vivacious inclinations.

Daily the Norman's game became more intricate, daily more certain; when suddenly, just as the Saxon—flattered and half-enamored as he was, began to feel that he had no excuse for lingering longer at a distance from his country and his sovereign—began to speak of a return before the setting-in of winter, an accident occurred, which, with his wonted readiness of wit, William turned instantly to good account.

The ducal territories, which had descended to the Norman line from their first champion, Rollo, were separated by the small stream of Coësnor from the neighboring tract of Brittany, to which all the succeeding princes had possessed a claim since Charles the Simple, in the treaty of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte, had ceded it to that great duke, the founder of the Norman dynasty. The consequence of this pretence—for such in fact it was—were endless bickerings, small border wars, aggressions and reprisals, burnings, and massacres, and vengeance! Some trivial skirmish had occurred upon this frontier, just as the duke had perceived that he must either suffer Harold to depart before his projects were accomplished, or force him to remain by open violence. In such a crisis he resolved at once upon his line of action; and, instantly proclaiming war, he raised the banner of his dukedom, summoned his vassals, great and small, to render service for their military tenures; and in announcing

to his guest his march against the forces of his hereditary foe, claimed his assistance in the field as a true host from his well-proved guest, and a godfather-in-arms from the son whom he had admitted to the distinguished honor of the knightly accolade. Intoxicated with ambition and with love, madly desirous of acquiring fame among the martial Normans, and fancying, with a vanity not wholly inexcusable, that he was doing service to his country in acquiring the respect of foreign powers, he met half-way the proffer. And, in the parlance of the day, right nobly did he prove his gilded spurs of knighthood. In passing the Coësnor, which, like the See, the Seluna, and the other streams that cross the great Grève of St. Michel, is perilous from its spring-tide and awful quicksands, Harold displayed, in recovering several soldiers, who, having quitted the true line of march, were on the point of perishing, a noble union of intrepidity and strength.

During the whole course of the war, the Norman and his guest had but one tent and one table; side by side in the front of war they charged the enemy, and side by side they rode upon the march, beguiling the fatigue and labor with gay jests or graver conversation: and now so intimate had they become, so perfect was the confidence reposed by the frank Englishman in his frank-seeming friend, that the sagacious tempter felt the game absolutely in his power, and waited but a fitting opportunity for aiming his last blow. Nor was it long ere the occasion he had sought, occurred. Some brilliant exploits, performed in the last skirmish of the campaign, by the intended victim of his perfidy, gave him a chance to descant on the national and well-proved hardihood and valor of this Saxon race. Thence, by a stroke of masterly and well-timed tact, he touched upon the beauties, the fertility, the noble forests, and the rich fields of England—the happy days which he had passed amid the hospitalities of that fair island. The praises of the reign-

ing monarch followed, a topic wherein Harold freely and eagerly united with his host.

“You were but young in those days,” William continued, “and scarce, I trow, can recollect the scenes which to my older memory are but as things of yesterday. Then, then, indeed, our races were at variance, and your good sire—peace to his soul!—worked me and mine sore scathe and trouble. Yet was it natural, most natural! For in those times your excellent and venerable king—long may he sway the sceptre he so honors!—lived with me upon terms of the most close and cordial friendship. Ay, in good sooth, we were as two brothers—living beneath the same roof, eating of the same board, and drinking from one cup! Not thou and I, my Harold, are more sure comrades. Ay! and he promised me—this in thy private ear—if ever he should gain the throne of England, to leave me by his will, in default of his own issue, heir to that noble kingdom. I doubt not of his troth nor loyalty, though it is years since we spoke of it. You have more lately been about him: hast ever heard him speak of it? What thinkest thou of his plighted faith? He is not one, I do believe, to register a vow in heaven, and fall from it!”

Taken thus by surprise, annoyed and much embarrassed by the turn their converse had thus taken, Harold turned pale, and actually stammered, as he made reply:—

“He never had presumed to question his liege lord and king on matters of such import. The king had never dropped the slightest hint to him concerning the succession. If he had sworn, doubtless he would perform his oath: he was famed, the world over, for his strict sanctity; how, then, should he be perjured? He doubted not, had he so promised, the duke would have no reason to complain of any breach of faith in good King Edward’s testament.”

“Ay! it is so,” said William, musingly, as it appeared to

Harold, although in truth his every word had been premeditated long before. "I had so hoped it would be; and, by my faith, right glad am I that you confirm me in mine aspirations. By your aid, my good friend—with the best Saxon on my side—all else is certain; and by my faith, whatever you shall ask of me, were it my daughter's hand in marriage, surely it shall be yours when I am king of England!"

Again the words of the Confessor flashed on the mind of the ill-fated Saxon, and he foresaw at once the terrible result of this unwilling confidence. At the same time he saw no means of present extrication, and, with an air of evident embarrassment, he answered in words half-evasive, yet sufficiently conclusive, as he hoped, to stop, for the time being, the unpleasing topic. But this was far from the intent of William, who, having read with an intuitive and almost supernatural sagacity the thought that flashed across the brain of Harold, determined that he should commit himself in terms decisive, and admitting of no dubious explanation. Taking it, then, for granted that he had replied fully in the affirmative—

"Since, then," he said, "you do engage so loyally to serve me, you shall engage to fortify for me the castle on the heights of Dover; to dig in it good wells of living water; and, at my summons, to surrender it! You shall give me your sister, that she may be espoused unto the noblest of my barons; and you shall have to wife my daughter Alice: some passages, I trow, have gone between ye ere now. Moreover, as a warrant of your faith, your brother Ulfnoth shall yet tarry with me; and when I come to England to possess my crown, then will I yield him to you!"

In all its force, the madness of his conduct now glared upon the very soul of Harold. He saw the guilt he had incurred already; the peril he had brought upon the kinsmen he had come to save; the wo that might result to his loved country!

But, seeing this, he saw no better means than to feign acquiescence with this unworthy project, holding himself at liberty to break thereafter an unwilling promise.

No more was said upon the subject. They rode onward as before, but the light-hearted pleasure of the Saxon was destroyed; and though the great duke feigned not to perceive the changed mood of his comrade, he had resolved already that he should yet more publicly commit himself ere he should leave the realm.

At Avranches, but three days after their discourse, William convoked a grand assembly of his lords and barons—the mightiest and the noblest of his vavasours and vassals—the pride of Normandy. There, in the centre of the hall, he caused an immense chest to be deposited, filled to the very brim with the most holy relics—bones of the martyred saints—fragments of the true cross—all that was deemed most sacred and most awful by the true-hearted catholic—and covered with a superb cloth of gold, as though it were an ordinary slab or table. There, seated in high state, upon his chair of dignity—a drawn sword in his hand, wearing his cap of maintenance, circled by *fleurs-de-lis*, upon his head, and clad in ermined robes of state—he held *cour pleusère* of his nobles. The Saxon stood among them, honored among the first at all times, and now the more especially distinguished, that it was his farewell reception previous to his departure for England. After presenting him with the most splendid gifts, and making the most liberal professions of attachment, “Harold,” exclaimed the duke, “before we part, I call on you, before this noble company, here to confirm by oath your promise made to me three days since, ‘to aid me in obtaining, after the death of Edward, the throne and crown of England; to take my daughter Alice to wife; and to send me your sister hither, that I may find for her a princely spouse among my vavasours!’”

Taken a second time at fault, and daring not thus openly to falsify his word—but with a blank and troubled aspect, unsatisfied with his internal reservation, and conscious of his perjury—Harold laid both his hands on two small reliquaries which lay, as if by chance, upon the cloth of gold; and swore, provided he should live, to make good all those promises—“so might God aid him.” And with one deep, solemn acclamation, the whole assembly echoed those last words: “So may God aid him! may God aid! God aid!” At the same instant, on a signal from the duke, the cloth of gold was drawn aside, and Harold saw the sacrilege he must commit, so deeply sworn on things so holy, should he repent, or falsify his oath! He saw, and shuddered visibly, as though he had been stricken by an ague; yet presently, by a powerful effort, rallying all his courage to his aid, he made his last farewells, departed, loaded with gifts and honors, but with a melancholy heart; and sailed immediately for England, leaving the brother, for whose liberty he came a suitor, ten times more deeply forfeit than he had been before. On his first interview with Edward, he related all that had occurred—even his own involuntary oath. And the old sovereign trembled, and grew pale, but manifested nothing of surprise or anger!

“I knew it,” he replied, in calm but hollow tones; “I knew it, and I did forewarn you, how that your visit to the Norman should bring misery on you, and ruin on our country! As I forewarned you, so has it come to pass! So shall it come to pass hereafter, till all hath been fulfilled: God only grant that I live not to see it!”

THE NORMAN'S VENGEANCE.

“God and good angels fight on *William's* side,
And *Harold* fall in height of all his pride.”—SHAKSPERE.

EDWARD the Confessor was dead; and dying, had bequeathed the crown of merry England to Harold, son of Godwin, destined, alas! to be the last prince of the Saxon race who should possess the throne of the fair island. The oath which he had sworn to William, duke of Normandy, engaging to assist him in obtaining that same realm, which had now fallen to himself, alike by testament of the late king, and by election of the people, dwelt not in the new monarch's bosom! Selfishness and ambition, aided, perhaps, and strengthened by the suggestions of a sincere patriotism, that whispered to his soul the baseness of surrendering his countrymen, their lives, their liberties, their fortunes, and his loved native land, into the stern hands of a foreign ruler, determined him to brave the worst, rather than keep the oath, which, with its wonted sophistry, self-interest was ready to represent involuntary and of no avail. Not long, however, was he allowed to flatter himself with hopes that the tempest, excited by his own weak duplicity, might possibly blow over. The storm-clouds were already charged with thunder destined to burst almost at once on his devoted head. The cry of warfare had gone forth through Christendom; the pope had launched the dreadful bolt of inter-

dict and excommunication against the perjured Saxon, and all who should adhere to him in his extremity; nay, more, had actually granted to the Norman duke, by virtue of his holy office as God's vicegerent and dispenser of all dignities on earth, the sovereignty of the disputed islands. In token of his perfect approbation of the justice of his cause, the Roman pontiff had sent, moreover, to the duke, a ring of gold, containing an inestimable relic, a lock of hair from the thrice-mitred temples of St. Peter, the first Roman bishop; a consecrated banner blest by himself—the same which had been reared, in token of the greatness and supremacy of holy church, by those bold Normans, Raoul and William of Montreuil, above the captured battlements of every tower and castle through the bright kingdom of Campania. Thus doubly armed, once by the justice of his cause, and yet more strongly by the sanction of the church, the bold duke hesitated not to strive by force of arms to gain that rich inheritance, which he had hoped to win by the more easy agency of guile and of persuasion.

A herald, sent with a most noble train, bore William's terms to the new monarch. "William, the duke of Normandy," he said, boldly, but with all reverence due to his birth and present station, "calls to your memory the oath, which you swore to him by your hand and by your mouth, on good and holy relics!"

"True it is," answered Harold, "that I did so swear; but under force I did so, not by free will of mine! Moreover, I did promise that which 'twas not mine to grant. My royalty belongs not to myself, but to my people, in trust of whom I hold it. I may not yield it but at their demand; let them but second William, and instantly the crown he seeks for shall be his! Farther, without my people's leave, I may not wed a woman of a stranger race. My sister, whom he would have espoused unto the noblest of his barons—she hath been dead a year. Will he, that I should send her corpse?"

A little month elapsed, and during that brief interval, Harold neglected nothing that might preserve the crown he had determined never, except with life, to yield to his fierce rival. A powerful fleet was instantly appointed to cruise upon the Downs, and intercept the French invaders; a mighty army was collected on the coast, and each and all the Saxon landholders, nobles, and thanes, and franklins, bound themselves by strong oaths "never to entertain or truce, or treaty, with the detested Normans, but to die freemen, or freemen to conquer."

A second time the herald came in peace, demanding, in tones fair and moderate, that Harold, if he might not keep *all* the conditions of his oath, would fulfil part, at least, and wed Alice, his betrothed wife already, the daughter of the puissant duke, who, thereupon, would yield to him, as being his daughter's dower, all right and title to the crown, which he now claimed as his by heritage.

Harold again returned a brief and stern refusal; resolved, that as he would not yield the whole, he would not, by conceding part, risk the alienation of the love—which he possessed in an extraordinary degree—of the whole English people. Then burst the storm at once. From every part of Europe, where the victorious banners of the Normans were spread to the wind of heaven, adventurers flocked to the consecrated standard of their kinsman.

Four hundred vessels of the largest class, and more than twice that number of the transports of the day, were speedily assembled in the frith of Dives, a stream which falls into the sea between the Seine and Orne. There, for a month or better, by contrary winds and furious storms, they were detained inactive. At length, a southern breeze rose suddenly, and by its aid they made the harbor of Saint Valery; but there, again, they were detained by times more stormy than before; and, superstitious as all men of that period were, the soldiers soon

began to tremble and to murmur; strange tales of dreams, and prodigies were circulated, and the spirit of that vast host, of late so confident and proud, sank hourly. At length, whether at the instigation of their own fanatical belief, or as a last resource, or hoping to distract the minds of men from gloomier considerations, the Norman chiefs appointed a procession round the harbor of Saint Valery; bearing the holiest relics, and among them, the bones of the good saint himself, the patron and nomenclator of the town; and ere the prayers were ended, lo! the wind shifted once again, and now blew steadily and fair, swelling the canvass with propitious breath, and driving out each vane and streamer at full length, toward their destined port.

The same storm, which had held William on his Norman coast, windbound and motionless, which he had cursed as unpropitious and disastrous, fifty times every day, for the last month, had been, in truth—so little is the foresight, and so ignorant the wisdom even of the most sagacious among mortals—had been, in truth, the agent by which his future conquest was to be effected. Those gales which pent the Norman galleys in their harbors, had forced the English fleet, shattered and storm-tossed, to put in for victuals and repairs, leaving the seas unguarded to the approach of the invaders. Nor was this all! Those self-same gales had wafted from the northward another fleet of foemen, the Norwegian host of the bold sea-king, Harold Hardrada, and the treacherous Tosti, the rebel brother of the Saxon monarch. Debarking in the Humber, they had laid waste the fertile borders of Northumberland and Yorkshire; had vanquished, in a pitched battle, Morcar and Edwin, and the youthful Waltheof—who had made head against them with their sudden levies, raised from the neighboring countries—had driven them into the walls of York, and there were now besieging them with little hope of rescue or relief. Meanwhile,

the king, who had, for months, been lying in the southern portion of the realm, in Essex, Kent, or Sussex, awaiting, at the head of the best warriors of his kingdom, the arrival of his most inveterate foeman—summoned by news of this irruption, unexpected, yet, as it seemed most formidable, into his northern provinces, lulled into temporary carelessness by the long tarrying of his Norman enemy; and hoping, as it indeed seemed probable, that the prevailing wind would not change so abruptly, but that he might, by using some extraordinary diligence and speed, attack and overpower the besieging force at York, and yet return to Dover in time to oppose, with the united force of his whole nation, the disembarkation of the duke—had left his post and travelled with all speed toward York, leading the bravest and best-disciplined of his army against the fierce Norwegians, while the shores of Sussex remained comparatively naked and defenceless. A bloody and decisive battle, fought at the bridge of Staneford, over the river Derwent, rewarded his activity and valor—a battle in which he displayed no less his generalship and valor, than the kind generosity and mercy of his nature. Riding, himself, in person, up to the hostile lines, before the first encounter, sheathed in the complete armor of the Norman chivalry—which, since his visit to the continent, he had adopted—“Where,” he cried, in his loudest tones, “is Tosti, son of Godwin?”

“Here stands he,” answered the rebel, from the centre of the Norwegian phalanx, which, with lowered spears, awaited the attack.

“Thy brother,” replied Harold, concealed by the frontlet of his barred helmet from all recognition, “sends thee his greeting—offers thee peace, and friendship, and all thine ancient honors.”

“Good words!” cried Tosti, “mighty good, and widely different from the insults he bestowed on me last year! But if I

should accept the offer, what will he grant to Harold, son of Sigurd?"

"Seven feet of English earth," replied the king; "or, since he be gigantic in his stature, he shall have somewhat more!"

"Let Harold, then address himself to battle," answered Tosti. "None but a liar ever shall declare that Tosti, son of Godwin, has played a traitor's part to Harold, son of Sigurd!"

There was no more of parley. With a shock, that was heard for leagues, the hosts encountered; and in the very first encounter, pierced by an arrow in the throat, Hardrada fell, and to his place succeeded that false brother and rebellious subject, Tosti, the Saxon. Again the generous Harold offered him peace and liberal conditions! again his offers were insultingly rejected! and once again, with a more deadly fury than before, the armies met, and, this time, fought it out, till not a leader or a chief of the Norwegian host was left alive, save Olaf, Harold's son, and the prince bishop of the Orkneys—Tosti, himself, having at length obtained the fate he merited so richly. A third time peace and amity were offered, and now they were accepted; and swearing friendship to the English king for ever, the Norsemen left the fatal land, whereon yet weltered in their gore their king, the noblest of their chiefs, and twice five thousand of the bravest men of their brave nation. But glorious as that day was justly deemed—and widely as it was sung and celebrated by the Saxon bards—perfect as was the safety which it wrought to all the northern counties—and freely as it suffered Harold to turn his undivided forces against whatever foe might dare set hostile foot on English soil inviolate—still was that day decisive of his fate!—decisive of the victory of William, whose banners were already floating over the narrow seas in proud anticipation of their coming triumph!

It was a bright and beautiful morning in September, when

the great fleet of William put to sea, the galley of the grand duke leading. She was a tall ship, of the largest tonnage then in use, well manned, and gallantly equipped; from the main-topmast streamed the consecrated banner of the pope, and from her peak, a broad flag with a blood-red cross. Her sails were, not as now, of plain white canvass, but gorgeously adorned with various colors, and blazoned with the rude incipient heraldry, which, though not then a science, was growing gradually into esteem and use. In several places might be seen depicted the three Lions, which were even then the arms of Normandy; and on her prow was carved, with the best skill of the French artist, a young child with a bended bow, and a shaft quivering on the string. Fair blew the breeze, and free the gallant ship careered before it—before the self-same wind which at the self-same moment was tossing on its joyous pinions the victorious banners of the Saxon king. Fair blew the breeze, and fast the ship of William sped through the curling billows—so fast that, ere the sun set in the sea, the fleet was hull down in the offing, though staggering along under all press of sail. Night sank upon the sea; and faster flew the duke; and as the morning broke, the chalky cliffs of Albion were in full view, at two or three leagues distance. William, who had slept all that night as soundly and as calmly as a child, stood on the deck ere it was light enough to see the largest object on the sea, one mile away. His first glance was toward the promised land, he was so swiftly nearing; his second, toward the offing, where he hoped to see his gallant followers. Brighter and brighter grew the morning, but not a speck was visible upon the clear horizon. “Up to the topmast, mariners,” cried the bold duke; “up to the topmast-head! And now what see ye?” he continued, as they sprang up in rapid emulation to that giddy height.

“Naught,” cried the first—“naught but the sea and sky!”

“Anchor, then—anchor, presently; we will await their coming, and in the meanwhile, Sir Seneschal, serve us a breakfast of your best, and see there be no lack of wines, the strongest and the noblest!” and, on the instant, the heavy plunge was heard of the huge anchor in the deep; the sails were furled; and like a living creature endowed with intellect, and moving by volition, the gallant ship swung round, awaiting the arrival of her consorts.

The feast was spread, and, from the high duke on the poop to the most humble mariner on the forecastle, the red wine flowed for all in generous profusion. Again a lookout was sent up, and now he cried, “I see far, far, to seaward, the topsails of four vessels.” A little pause consumed in revelry and feasting, and once again the ship-boy climbed the mast. “I see,” he said, the third time, “a forest on the deep, of masts and sails!”

“God aid! God aid!” replied the armed crew—“God aid!” and, with the word, again they weighed the anchor, and, ere three hours had passed, the whole of that huge armament rode at their moorings off the beach at Pevensey.

There was no sign of opposition or resistance; and on the third day after Harold's victory at Staneford, the Norman host set foot on English soil. The archers were the first to disembark—armed with the six-foot bows, and cloth-yard shafts, then, for the first time, seen in England, soon destined to become the national weapon of its stout yeomanry. Their faces closely shorn, and short-cut hair, their light and succinct garments, were seen by the affrighted peasantry, who looked upon their landing from a distance, with equal terror and astonishment. Next came the men-at-arms, sheathed in their glittering hauberks and bright hose-of-mail, with conical steel helmets on their heads, long lances in their hands, and huge two-handed swords transversely girt across their persons. After

them landed the pioneers, the laborers, and carpenters, who made the complement of that immense army, bearing with them, piece after piece, three fortresses of timber, arranged beforehand, and prepared to be erected on the instant, wherever they should come to land. Last of the mighty host, Duke William left his galley, and the long lines fell into orderly and beautiful array, as he was rowed to land. In leaping to that wished-for shore, the Norman's right foot struck the gunwale of the shallop, and he fell headlong on the sand, face downward. Instantly, through the whole array, a deep and shuddering murmur rose—"God guard us—'tis a sign of evil!"

But ere the sounds had passed away, he had sprung to his feet. "What is it that you fear?" he shouted, in clear and joyous tones, "or what dismays you? Lo! I have seized this earth in both mine hands, and, by the splendor of our God, 'tis yours!"

Loud was the cheer of gratulation which peeled seaward far, and far into the bosom of the invaded land, at that most brilliant and successful repartee—and with alacrity and glee—confident of success, and high in daring courage—the Norman host marched, unopposed, in regular and terrible array, toward Hastings. Here on the well-known heights, to this day known by the commemorative name of Battle, the wooden fortresses were speedily erected; trenches were dug; and William's army sat down for the night upon the land, which was thenceforth to be their heritage—thenceforth for evermore.

The news reached Harold as he lay at York, wounded and resting from his labors, and on the instant, with his victorious army, he set forth, publishing, as he marched along, his proclamation to all the chief of provinces and shires, to arm their followers, and meet him with all speed at London. The western levies came without delay; those from the north, owing to distance, were some time behind; and yet, could Harold have

been brought by any means to moderate his fierce and desperate impatience, he would, ere four days had elapsed, have found himself, at least, in the command of twice two hundred men. But irritated to the utmost by the sufferings of his countrymen, whose lands were pitilessly ravaged, whose tenements were burned for miles around the Norman camp, whose wives and daughters were subjected to every species of insult and indignity, the Saxon king pressed onward. And though his forces did not amount to one-fourth part of the great duke's array, still, he was resolved to encounter them, precipitate and furious as a madman.

On the eighteenth day after the defeat of Tosti and Hardrada, the Saxon army was encamped over against the fortified position of the invaders. On that same day, a monk, Sir Hugues Maigrot, came to find Harold, with proposals from the foe, offering him peace on one of three conditions—either that he should yield the kingdom presently—or leave it to the arbitration of the pope—or, finally, decide the matter by appeal to God in single combat.

To each and all of these proposals, the Saxon answered bluntly in the negative. “I will not yield my kingdom! I will not leave it to the pope! I will not meet the duke in single combat!”

Again the monk returned. “I come again,” he said, “from William. ‘Tell Harold,’ said the duke, ‘if he will hold him to his ancient compact, I yield him all the lands beyond the Humber; I give his brother Gurth all the demesnes his father, Godwin, held. If he refuse these my last proffers, tell him before his people, he is a perjured liar, accursed of the pope, and excommunicated—he, and all those that hold to him!’”

But no effect had the bold words of William on the stern spirits of the English. “Battle,” they cried—“no peace with the Normans. Battle—immediate battle!” and with that an-

swer did the priest return to his employer ; and either host prepared for the appeal to that great arbiter, the sword.

Fairly the morning broke which was to look upon the slaughter of so many thousands ; broad and bright rose the sun before whose setting one of those two magnificent and gallant armies must necessarily be involved in utter ruin. As the first rays were visible upon the eastern sky, Odo, the bishop of Bayeux, William's maternal brother, performed high mass before the marshalled troops, wearing his cope and rochet over his iron harness. The holy rites performed, he leaped upon his snow-white charger, and, with his truncheon in his hand, arrayed the cavalry, which he commanded.

It was a glorious spectacle, that mighty host, arrayed in three long columns of attack, marching with slow and orderly precision against the palisaded trenches of the Saxons. The men-at-arms of the great counts of Boulogne and Ponthieu composed the first ; the second being formed by the auxiliary bands of Brittany, Poitou, and Maine ; and in the third, commanded by the duke in person—mounted on a superb Andalusian charger, wearing about his neck the reliquary on which his rival had sworn falsely, and accompanied by a young noble, Tunstan the White, bearing the banner of the pope—were marshalled all the flower and strength of Normandy. Scattered along the front of the advance were multitudes of archers, lightly equipped in quilted jerkins, with long yew bows, and arrows of an ell in length, mingled with crossbow-men with arbalests of steel, and square, steel-headed quarrels.

Steadily they advanced, and in good order ; while, in their entrenched camp, guarded by palisades of oak morticed together in a long line of ponderous trellis-work, the Englishmen awaited their approach, drawn up around their standard, which—blazoned with the white dragon, long both the ensign and the war-cry of their race—was planted firmly in the earth, surrounded

by the dense ranks of heavy infantry which formed the strength of their array.

Just as the charge began, William rode out before the lines, and thus addressed his soldiery: "Turn your hearts wholly to the combat! set all upon the die, either to fall or conquer! For if we gain, we shall be rich and glorious. That which I gain, shall be your gain; that which I conquer, yours! If I shall win this land, ye shall possess it! Know, too, and well remember this, that not to claim my right have I come only, but to revenge—ay, to revenge our gentle nation on all the felonies, the perjuries, the treasons of the English!—the English, who, in profound peace, upon Saint Brice's eve, ruthlessly slew the unarmed and defenceless Danes; who decimated the bold followers of Alfred, *my* kinsman and *your* countryman, and slew himself by shameless treachery! On, then, with God's aid, Normans! on, for revenge and victory!"

Then out dashed from the lines the boldest of his vavasours, the Norman Taillefer, singing aloud the famous song—well known through every province of proud France—the song of Charlemagne and Rollo—tossing aloft the while his long, two-handed war-sword, and catching it adroitly as it fell; while at each close of that proud, spirit-stirring chant, each warrior of that vast array thundered the burden of the song—"God aid! God aid!"

Then, like a storm of hail, close, deadly, and incessant, went forth the volleyed showers from arbalast and long-bow; while infantry and horse charged in unbroken order against the gates and angles of the fort. But with a cool and stubborn hardihood the Saxon infantry stood firm. Protected by the massive palisades from the appalling volleys of the archery, they hurled their short and heavy javelins with certain aim and deadly execution over their stout defences; while their huge axes, wherever they came hand to hand, shivered the Norman spears like

reeds, and cleft the heaviest mail, even at a single blow! Long, and with all the hot, enthusiastic valor of their race, did the assailants crowd around the ramparts; but it was all in vain—they could not scale them in the face of that indomitable infantry; they could not force one timber from its place; and they at length recoiled, weary and half-subdued, toward the reserve of William.

After a short cessation, again the archery advanced; but, by the orders of the duke, their volleys were no longer sent point-blank, but shot at a great elevation, so that they fell in a thick, galling shower, striking the heads and wounding the unguarded faces of the bold defenders. Harold himself, who fought on foot beside his standard, lost his right eye at the first flight; but not for that did he desert his post, or play less valiantly the part of a determined soldier and wise leader. Again with that tremendous shout of “Nôtre Dame—God aid! God aid!” which had, in every realm of Europe, sounded the harbinger of victory, the horse and foot rushed on to the attack; while from their rear that heavy and incessant sleet of bolt, and shaft, and ^xbullet,[?] fell fast and frequent into the dense ranks of the still-undaunted English. At no point did they force their way, however, even when fighting at this desperate advantage. At no point did a single Norman penetrate a gate, or overtop a palisade; while at one entrance so complete was the repulse of the attacking squadrons, that they recoiled, hard pressed by the defenders, to a ravine at some considerable distance from the trenches, deep, dangerous, and filled with underwood and brambles; these, as they fell back in confusion, their horses stumbling and unable to recover, were overthrown and slain pell-mell, and half defeated. One charge of cavalry, one shock of barbed horse, would have insured the total rout of the invaders; but—wo for England on that day!—cavalry she had none, nor barbed horse, to complete gloriously the work her

sturdy footmen had commenced so gallantly. Still, great was the disorder, great was the disarray and peril, of the foreign soldiery. The cry went through the host that the great duke was slain; and, though he flung himself amid the flyers, with his head bare, that they might recognise his features—threatening, cursing, striking at friend and foe with indiscriminating violence—it was well nigh an hour before he could restore the semblance of any discipline or order. This, once accomplished, he advanced again; and yet a third time, though he exerted every nerve, was he repulsed at every point in terrible disorder, and with tremendous loss.

Evening was fast approaching; and well did William know that, if the following morning should find the Saxons firm in their unforced entrenchments, his hopes were vain and hopeless! The country, far and near, was rousing to the Saxon war-cry; and to the Normans, not to conquer, was to be conquered utterly; and to be conquered was to perish, one and all! Valor or open force, it was too evident, could effect nothing against men as valiant and as strong, posted with more advantage. Guile was his last resource; and guile, as usual, prevailed!

A thousand of his cavaliers advanced, as though about to charge the trenches at full speed, with lances lowered, and with their wonted *ensenzie*, "God aid!" But as they neared the palisades, by preconcerted stratagem, as if they had lost heart, they suddenly drew bridle, all as a single man, and fled, as it appeared, in irretrievable disorder, back, back to the main body! Meanwhile, throughout the lines, the banners were waved to and fro disorderly, and the ranks shifted, and spears rose and fell, and all betokened their complete disorganization. The sight was too much even for the cool hardihood of Saxon courage. With one tremendous shout they rushed from their entrenchments—which, had they held to them, not forty-fold

the force of William could have successfully assailed—and, wielding with both hands their bills and axes, plunged head-long in pursuit. That instant, all was over! For, at a moment's notice, at a concerted signal of a single trumpet, the very men they deemed defeated wheeled into line; and with their spears projecting ten feet, at the least, before their chargers' poytrels, their long plumes floating backward in the current caused by their own quick motion, the chivalry of France bore down on their pursuers, breathless, confused, and struggling. It was a massacre, but not a rout; for not a man turned on his heel, or even thought to fly: but back to back, in desperate groups, they fought after their ranks were broken, hewing with their short weapons at the mail-clad lancers, who securely speared them from the backs of their barbed horses—asking not, nor receiving quarter—true sons of England to the last, annihilated but not conquered! Night fell, and Gurth, and Leofwyn, and Harold, lay dead around their standard—pierced with innumerable wounds, gory, and not to be discerned, so were their features and their forms defaced and mangled by friend or foeman. Yet still, when all was lost, without array or order, standards, or chiefs, or hopes, the Englishmen fought on—till total darkness sank down on the field of slaughter, and utter inability to slay caused a brief pause in the unsparing havoc. Such was the vengeance of the Norman!

THE FAITH OF WOMAN.

“Two things there be on earth that ne'er forget —
A woman, and a dog — where once their love is set!” — OLD MS.

It was the morning after the exterminating fight at Hastings. The banner blessed of the Roman pontiff streamed on the tainted air, from the same hillock whence the dragon standard of the Saxons had shone unconquered to the sun of yester-even! Hard by was pitched the proud pavilion of the conqueror, who, after the tremendous strife and perilous labors of the preceding day, reposed himself in fearless and untroubled confidence upon the field of his renown; secure in the possession of the land, which he was destined to transmit to his posterity for many a hundred years, by the red title of the sword.

To the defeated Saxons, morning, however, brought but a renewal of those miseries which, having yesterday commenced with the first victory of their Norman lords, were never to conclude, or even to relax, until the complete amalgamation of the rival races should leave no Normans to torment, no Saxons to endure; all being merged at last into one general name of English, and by their union giving origin to the most powerful, and brave, and intellectual people, the world has ever looked upon since the extinction of Rome's freedom.

At the time of which we are now speaking, nothing was

thought of by the victors save how to rivet most securely on the necks of the unhappy natives their yoke of iron ; nothing by the poor, subjugated Saxons, but how to escape for the moment the unrelenting massacre which was urged far and wide by the remorseless conquerors throughout the devastated country. With the defeat of Harold's host, all national hope of freedom was at once lost to England. Though, to a man, the English population were brave and loyal, and devoted to their country's rights, the want of leaders—all having perished side by side on that disastrous field—of combination, without which myriads are but dust in the scale against the force of one united handful—rendered them quite unworthy of any serious fears, and even of consideration, to the bloodthirsty barons of the invading army. Over the whole expanse of level country which might be seen from the slight elevation whereon was pitched the camp of William, on every side might be descried small parties of the Norman horse, driving in with their bloody lances, as if they were mere cattle, the unhappy captives ; a few of whom they now began to spare, not from the slightest sentiment of mercy, but literally that their arms were weary with the task of slaying, although their hearts were yet insatiate of blood.

It must be taken now into consideration by those who listen with dismay and wonder to the accounts of pitiless barbarity—of ruthless, indiscriminating slaughter on the part of men whom they have hitherto been taught to look upon as brave indeed as lions in the field, but not partaking of the lion's nature after the field was won—not only that the seeds of enmity had long been sown between those rival people, but that the deadly crop of hatred had grown up, watered abundantly by the tears and blood of either ; and, lastly, that the fierce fanaticism of religious persecution was added to the natural rancor of a war waged for the ends of conquest or extermination. The Saxon

nation, from the king downward to the meanest serf who fought beneath his banner, or buckled on the arms of liberty, were all involved under the common ban of the pope's interdict. They were accursed of God, and handed over by his holy church to the kind mercies of the secular arm; and therefore, though but yesterday they were a powerful and united nation, to-day they were but a vile horde of scattered outlaws, whom any man might slay wherever he should find them, whether in arms or otherwise—amenable for blood neither to any mortal jurisdiction, nor even to the ultimate tribunal to which all must submit hereafter, unless deprived of their appeal like these poor fugitives, by excommunication from the pale of Christianity. For thirty miles around the Norman camp, pillars of smoke by day, continually streaming upward to the polluted heaven, and the red glare of nightly conflagration, told fatally the doom of many a happy home! Neither the castle nor the cottage might preserve their male inhabitants from the sword's edge, their females from more barbarous persecution. Neither the sacred hearth of hospitality nor the more sacred altars of God's churches might protect the miserable fugitives; neither the mail-shirt of the man-at-arms nor the monk's frock of serge availed against the thrust of the fierce Norman spear. All was dismay and havoc, such as the land wherein those horrors were enacted has never witnessed since, through many a following age.

High noon approached, and in the conqueror's tent a gorgeous feast was spread. The red wine flowed profusely, and song and minstrelsy arose with their heart-soothing tones, to which the feeble groans of dying wretches bore a dread burden from the plain whereon they still lay struggling in their great agonies, too sorely maimed to live, too strong as yet to die. But, ever and anon, their wail waxed feebler and less frequent; for many a plunderer was on foot, licensed to ply his odious calling in the full light of day—reaping his first if not his rich-

est booty from the dead bodies of their slaughtered foemen. Ill fared the wretches who lay there, untended by the hand of love or mercy, "scorched by the death-thirst, and writhing in vain;" but worse fared they who showed a sign of life to the relentless robbers of the dead, for then the dagger—falsely called that of mercy—was the dispenser of immediate immortality. The conqueror sat at his triumphant board, and barons drank his health: "First English monarch, of the pure blood of Normandy!"—"King by the right of the sword's edge!"—"Great, glorious, and sublime!" Yet was not his heart softened, nor was his bitter hate toward the unhappy prince who had so often ridden by his side in war, and feasted at the same board with him in peace, relinquished or abated. Even while the feast was at the highest, while every heart was jocund and sublime, a trembling messenger approached, craving on bended knee permission to address the conqueror and king—for so he was already schooled by brief but hard experience to style the devastator of his country.

"Speak out, Dog Saxon!" cried the ferocious prince; "but since thou must speak, see that thy speech be brief, an' thou wouldst keep thy tongue uncropped thereafter!"

"Great duke and mighty," replied the trembling envoy, "I bear you greeting from Elgitha, herewhile the noble wife of Godwin, the queenly mother of our late monarch—now, as she bade me style her, the humblest of your suppliants and slaves. Of your great nobleness and mercy, mighty king, she sues you, that you will grant her the poor leave to search amid the heaps of those our Saxon dead, that her three sons may at least lie in consecrated earth—so may God send you peace and glory here, and everlasting happiness hereafter!"

"Hear to the Saxon slave!" William exclaimed, turning as if in wonder toward his nobles; "hear to the Saxon slave, that dares to speak of consecrated earth, and of interment for the

accursed body of that most perjured, excommunicated liar! Hence! tell the mother of the dead dog, whom you have dared to style your king, that for the interdicted and accursed dead the sands of the seashore are but too good a sepulchre!"

"She bade me proffer humbly to your acceptance the weight of Harold's body in pure gold," faintly gasped forth the terrified and cringing messenger, "so you would grant her that permission."

"Proffer us gold! what gold, or whose? Know, villain, all the gold throughout this conquered realm *is* ours. Hence, dog and outcast, hence! nor presume e'er again to come, insulting us by proffering, as a boon to our acceptance, that which we *own* already, by the most indefeasible and ancient right of conquest!—Said I not well, knights, vavasours, and nobles?"

"Well! well and nobly!" answered they, one and all. "The land is ours, and all that therein is: their dwellings, their demesnes, their wealth, whether of gold, or silver, or of cattle—yea, they themselves are ours! themselves, their sons, their daughters, and their wives—our portion and inheritance, to be our slaves for ever!"

"Begone! you have our answer," exclaimed the duke, spurning him with his foot; "and hark ye, arbalast-men and archers, if any Saxon more approach us on like errand, see if his coat of skin be proof against the quarrel of the shaft!"

And once again the feast went on; and louder rang the revelry, and faster flew the wine-cup, round the tumultuous board. All day the banquet lasted, even till the dews of heaven fell on that fatal field, watered sufficiently already by the rich gore of many a noble heart. All day the banquet lasted, and far was it prolonged into the watches of the night; when, rising with the wine-cup in his hand—"Nobles and barons," cried the duke, "friends, comrades, conquerors, bear witness to my vow! Here, on these heights of Hastings, and more especially upon

yon mound and hillock, where God gave to us our high victory, and where our last foe fell—there will I raise an abbey to HIS eternal praise and glory. Richly endowed, it shall be, from the first fruits of this our land. BATTLE, it shall be called, to send the memory of this, the great and singular achievement of our race, to far posterity; and, by the splendor of our God, wine shall be plentier among the monks of Battle, than water in the noblest and richest cloister else, search the world over! This do I swear: so may God aid, who hath thus far assisted us for *our* renown, and will not now deny his help, when it be asked for *his own* glory!”

The second day dawned on the place of horror, and not a Saxon had presumed, since the intolerant message of the duke, to come to look upon his dead. But now the ground was needed whereon to lay the first stone of the abbey William had vowed to God. The ground was needed; and, moreover, the foul steam from the human shambles was pestilential on the winds of heaven. And now, by trumpet-sound, and proclamation through the land, the Saxons were called forth, on pain of death, to come and seek their dead, lest the health of the conquerors should suffer from the pollution they themselves had wrought. Scarce had the blast sounded, and the glad tidings been announced once only, ere from their miserable shelters, where they had herded with the wild beasts of the forest—from wood, morass, and cavern, happy if there they might escape the Norman spear—forth crept the relics of that persecuted race. Old men and matrons, with hoary heads, and steps that tottered no less from the effect of terror than of age—maidens, and youths, and infants—too happy to obtain permission to search amid those festering heaps, dabbling their hands in the corrupt and pestilential gore which filled each nook and hollow of the dinted soil, so they might bear away, and water with their tears, and yield to consecrated ground, the relics of

those brave ones, once loved so fondly, and now so bitterly lamented. It was toward the afternoon of that same day, when a long train was seen approaching, with crucifix, and cross, and censer—the monks of Waltham abbey, coming to offer homage for themselves, and for their tenantry and vassals, to him whom they acknowledged as their king; expressing their submission to the high will of the Norman pontiff—justified, as they said, and proved by the assertion of God's judgment upon the hill of Hastings. Highly delighted by this absolute submission, the first he had received from any English tongue, the conqueror received the monks with courtesy and favor, granting them high immunities, and promising them free protection, and the unquestioned tenor of their broad demesnes for ever. Nay, after he had answered their address, he detained two of their number—men of intelligence, as with his wonted quickness of perception he instantly discovered—from whom to derive information as to the nature of his newly-acquired country and newly-conquered subjects. Osgad and Ailric, the deputed messengers from the respected principal of their community, had yet a further and higher object than to tender their submission to the conqueror. Their orders were, at all and every risk, to gain permission to consign the corpse of their late king and founder to the earth previously denied to him. And soon, emboldened by the courtesy and kindness of the much-dreaded Norman, they took courage to approach the subject, knowing it interdicted, even on pain of death; and, to their wonder and delight, it was unhesitatingly granted.

Throughout the whole of the third day succeeding that unparalleled defeat and slaughter, those old men might be seen toiling among the naked carcasses, disfigured, maimed, and festering in the sun, toiling to find the object of their devoted veneration. But vain were all their labors—vain was their search, even when they called in the aid of his most intimate attend-

ants, ay, of the mother that had borne him! The corpses of his brethren, Leofwyn and Gurth, were soon discovered; but not one eye, even of those who had most dearly loved him, could now distinguish the maimed features of the king.

At last, when hope itself was now almost extinct, some one named Edith—Edith the Swan-necked! She had been the mistress—years ere he had been, or dreamed of being, king—to the brave son of Godwin. She had beloved him in her youth with that one, single-minded, constant, never-ending love, which but few, even of her devoted sex, can feel, and they but once, and for one cherished object. Deserted and dishonored when he she loved was elevated to the throne, she had not ceased from her true adoration; but, quitting her now-joyless home, had shared her heart between her memories and her God, in the sequestered cloisters of the nunnery of Croyland. More days elapsed ere she could reach the fatal spot, and the increased corruption denied the smallest hope of his discovery: yet, from the moment when the mission was named to her, she expressed her full and confident conviction that she could recognise that loved one so long as but one hair remained on that head she had once so cherished! It was night when she arrived on the fatal field, and by the light of torches once more they set out on their awful duty. “Show me the spot,” she said, “where the last warrior fell;” and she was led to the place where had been found the corpses of his gallant brethren: and, with an instinct that nothing could deceive, she went straight to the corpse of Harold! It had been turned already to and fro many times by those who sought it; his mother had looked on it, and pronounced it not her son’s: but that devoted heart knew it at once—and broke! Whom rank, and wealth, and honors had divided, defeat and death made one!—and the same grave contained the cold remains of Edith the Swan-necked and the last scion of the Saxon kings of England.

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THE ERRING ARROW.

“Tis merry, 'tis merry, in good green-wood,
When the navis and merle are singing,
When the deer sweeps by, and the hounds are in cry,
And the hunter's horn is ringing.”—LADY OF THE LAKE.

As beautiful a summer's morning as ever chased the stars from heaven, was dawning over that wide tract of waste and woodland, which still, though many a century has now mossed over the ancestral oaks which then were in their lusty prime, retains the name by which it was at that day styled appropriately—the “New Forest.” Few years had then elapsed since the first Norman lord of England had quenched the fires that burned in thirty hamlets; had desecrated God's own altars, making the roofless aisles of many a parish church the haunt of the grim wolf or antlered red-deer; turning fair fields and cultured vales to barren and desolate wastes—to gratify his furious passion for that sport which has so justly been entitled the mimicry of warfare. Few years had then elapsed, yet not a symptom of their old fertility could now be traced in the wild plains waving with fern, and overrun with copsewood, broom, and brambles; unless it might be found in the profuse luxuriance with which this thriftless crop had overspread the champaign once smiling like a goodly garden with every meet production for the sustenance of man.

It was, as has been said, as beautiful a summer's morning as ever eye of man beheld. The sun, which had just raised the verge of his great orb above the low horizon, was checkering the mossy greensward with long, fantastic lines of light and shadow, and tinging the gnarled limbs of the huge oaks with ruddy gold; the dew, which lay abundantly on every blade of grass and every bending wild-flower, had not yet felt his power, nor raised a single mist-wreath to veil the brightness of the firmament; nor was the landscape, that lay there steeped in the lustre of the glowing skies, less lovely than the dawn that waked above it: long sylvan avenues sweeping for miles through every variation of the wildest forest-scenery—here traversing in easy curves wide undulations clothed with the purple heather; here sinking downward to the brink of sheets of limpid water; now running straight through lines of mighty trees, and now completely overbowed as they dived through brakes and dingles, where the birch and holly grew so thickly mingled with the prickly furze and creeping eglantine as to make twilight of the hottest noontide. Such were the leading features of the country which had most deeply felt, and has borne down to later days most evident memorials of, the Norman's tyranny.

Deeply embosomed in these delicious solitudes—surrounded by its flanking walls, and moat brimmed from a neighboring streamlet, with barbican and ballium, and all the elaborate defences that marked the architecture of the conquering race—stood Malwood keep, the favorite residence of Rufus, no less than it had been of his more famous sire. Here, early as was the hour, all was already full of life, full of the joyous and inspiring confusion that still characterizes, though in a less degree than in those days of feudal pomp, the preparations for the chase. Tall yeomen hurried to and fro—some leading powerful and blooded chargers, which reared, and pawed the

earth, and neighed till every turret echoed to the din; some struggling to restrain the mighty bloodhounds which bayed and strove indignantly against the leash; while others, lying in scattered groups upon the esplanade of level turf, furbished their cloth-yard shafts, or strung the six-foot bows, which, for the first time, had drawn blood in England upon the fatal field of Hastings.

It might be seen, upon the instant, it was no private retinue that mustered to the "mystery of forests," as in the quaint phrase of the day the noble sport was designated. A hundred horses, at the least, of the most costly and admired breeds, were there paraded: the huge, coal-black *destrier* of Flanders, limbed like an elephant, but with a coat that might have shamed the richest velvet by its sleekness; the light and graceful Andalusian, with here and there a Spaniard, springy, and fleet, and fearless — while dogs, in numbers infinitely greater, and of races yet more various, made up the moving picture: bloodhounds to track the wounded quarry by their unerring scent; slowhounds to force him from his lair; gazehounds and lymmers to outstrip him on the level plain; mastiffs to bay the boar, "crook-kneed and dew-lapped like Thessalian bulls;" with terriers to unkenel beasts of earth, and spaniels to rouse the fowls of air. Nor were these all, for birds themselves were there, trained to make war on their own race: the long-winged hawks of Norway, with lanners from the isle of Man; merlins, and jersfalcons, and gosshawks. No tongue could tell the beauty of the creatures thus assembled: some scarcely half-reclaimed, and showing their wild nature at every glance of their quick, flashing eyes; some docile and affectionate, and in all things dependent upon man, to whom, despite caprice, and cruelty, and coldness, they are more faithful in his need than he, proud though he be, dare boast himself toward his fellow. No fancy could imagine the superb and lavish gorgeousness of their equipment.

A long, keen bugle-blast rang from the keep, and in an instant a hundred bows were strung, a hundred ready feet were in the stirrup. Again it rang, longer and keener than before, and every forester was in his saddle ; while from the low-browed arch, bending their stately heads quite to their saddle-bows, over the echoing drawbridge a dozen knights rode forth, the followers and comrades of their king.

Scarcely above the middle size, but moulded in most exquisite proportion, thin-flanked, deep-chested, muscular, and lithe, and agile, there was not one of all his train, noble, or squire, or yeoman, who could display a form so fitted for the union of activity with strength, of beauty with endurance, as could the second William. His hair, from which he had derived his famous soubriquet, was not of that marked and uncomely hue which we should now term red, but rather of a bright and yellowish brown, curled closely to a classical and bust-like head ; his eye was quick and piercing ; his features, severally, were well formed and handsome ; yet had the eye a wavering, and restless, and at times even downcast expression ; and the whole aspect of the face told many a tale of pride, and jealousy, and passion — suspicion that might be roused to cruelty, and wilfulness that surely would be lashed by any opposition to violent and reckless fury. But now the furrows on the brow were all relaxed, the harsh lines of the mouth smoothed into temporary blandness. “Forward, messires !” he cried, in Norman-French ; “the morning finds us sluggards. What, ho ! Sir Walter Tyrrel, shall we two company to-day, and gage our luck against these gay gallants ?”

“Right jovially, my liege,” returned the knight whom he addressed. A tall, dark-featured soldier rode beside his bridler, bearing a bow which not an archer in the train could bend. “Right jovially will we — an’ they dare cope with us ! What sayest thou, De Beauchamp — darest thou wager thy

black boar-hound against a cast of merlins—thyself and Vermandois against his grace and me?”

“Nay, thou shouldst gage him odds, my Walter,” Rufus interposed; “thy shaft flies ever truest, nor yield I to any bow save thine!”

“To his, my liege?” cried Beauchamp, “thou yield to his! Never drew Walter Tyrrel so true a string as thou; he lacks the sleight, I trow, so ekes it out with strength! Tyrrel must hold him pleased if he rate second i’ the field.”

“How now, Sir Walter?” shouted the king; “hearest thou this bold De Beauchamp, and wilt thou yield the bucklers?—not thou, I warrant me, though it be to thy king!”

“So please your highness,” Tyrrel answered; “’tis but a sleight to ’scape our wager—’scaping the shame beside of yielding! He deems us over-strong for him, and so would part us!”

“Nay, by my halydom,” Rufus replied with a gay smile, “but we will have it so. We two will ride in company, each shooting his own shaft for his own hand. I dare uphold my arrow for twenty marks of gold, and my white Alan, against thy Barbary bay. Darest thou, Sir Walter?”

“I know not *that*—I dare not!” answered Tyrrel; “but your grace wagers high, nor will I lightly lose Bay Barbary: if so our wager stand, I shoot no roving shaft.”

“Shoot as thou wilt, so stands it!”

“Amen!” cried Tyrrel, “and I doubt not to hear your grace confess Tyrrel hath struck the lordlier quarry.”

“Away, then, all! away!” and, setting spurs to his curvetting horse, the monarch led the way at a hard gallop, followed by all his train—a long and bright procession, their gay plumes and many-colored garments offering a lively contrast to the deep, leafy verdure of July, and their clear weapons glancing lifelike to the sunshine.

They had careered along, with merriment and music, perhaps three miles into the forest, when the deep baying of a hound was heard, at some short distance to the right, from a thick verge of coppice. Instantly the king curbed in his fiery horse, and raised his hand on high, waving a silent halt. "Ha! have we outlaws here?" he whispered close in the ear of Tyrrel. "'Fore God, but they shall rue it!"

Scarcely had he spoken, when a buck burst from a thicket, and, ere it made three bounds, leaped high into the air and fell, its heart pierced through and through by the unerring shaft of an outlying ranger, who the next instant stepped out of his covert, and, catching sight of the gay cavalcade confronting him—the sounds of whose approach he must have overlooked entirely in the excitement of his sport—turned hastily as if to fly. But it was all too late: a dozen of the king's retainers had dashed their rowels into their horses' flanks the instant he appeared, and scarcely had he discovered their advance before he was their prisoner.

"A Saxon, by my soul," cried Rufus, with a savage scowl, "taken red-hand, and in the fact! Out with thy wood-knife, Damian! By the most holy Virgin, we will first mar his archery, and then present him with such a taste of venison as shall, I warrant me, appease his hankering for one while. Off with his thumb and finger! off with them speedily, I say, an' thou wouldst 'scape his doom! Ha! grinnest thou, villain?" he continued, as a contortion writhed the bold visage of his victim, who, certain of his fate, and hopeless of resistance or of rescue, yielded with stubborn resolution to his torturers—"an' this doth make thee smile, thou shalt laugh outright shortly! Hence with him, now, Damian and Hugonet; and thou, Raoul, away with thee—set toils enow, uncouple half a score of brachs and slowhounds, and see thou take me a right stag of ten ere vespers!—Barebacked shalt thou ride on him to

the forest, thou unchanced Saxon thief, and see how his horned kinsmen will entreat thee! See that the dog escape ye not, or ye shall swing for it. Bind him, and drag him hence to the old church of Lyme; hold him there, on your lives, till sunset! And ye—lead thither his wild charger: we will sup there upon the greensward, as we return to Malwood, and thou shalt make us merry with thy untutored horsemanship. Now for our wager, Walter! Forward—hurrah!” and on again they dashed, until they reached the choicest hunting-ground of all that spacious woodland—the desolate and desert spot where once had stood the fairest village of the land.

Unroofed and doorless, in different stages of decay, a score or two of cottages, once hospitable, happy homes of a free peasantry, stood here and there amid the brushwood which had encroached upon the precincts; while in the midst the desecrated church of Lyme reared its gray tower, now overgrown with ivy, and crumbling in silent ruin. Upon the cross which crowned the lowly tower, there sat, as they approached, a solitary raven—nor, though the whoop and horn rang close below his perch, did he show any sign of wildness or of fear; but, rising slowly on his wing, flapped round and round in two or three slow circles, and then with a hoarse croak resumed his station. The raven was a favorite bird with the old hunters; and when the deer was slain he had his portion, thence named “the raven’s bone.” Indeed, so usual was the practice, that this bird, the wildest by its nature of all the things that fly, would rarely shun a company which its sagacity descried to be pursuers of the sylvan game.

“What! sittest thou there, old black-frock, in our presence?” shouted the king, bending his bow; “but we will teach thee manners!” Still, the bird moved not, but again sent forth his ominous and sullen croak above the jocund throng. The bow was raised—the cord was drawn back to the monarch’s ear:

it twanged, and the next moment the hermit-bird came fluttering down, transfixed by the long shaft, with painful and discordant cries, and fell close at the feet of Rufus's charger.

There was a murmur in the crowd; and one, a page who waited on the king, whispered with a pale face and agitated voice into his fellow's ear: "I have heard say—

'Whose shaft 'gainst raven's life is set,
Shaft's feather his heart-blood shall wet!'"

The red king caught the whisper, and turning with an inflamed countenance and flashing eye on the unwitting waker of his wrath—"Dastard and fool!" he shouted; and, clinching his gloved hand, he dealt the boy so fierce a blow upon the chest, that he fell to the earth like a lifeless body, plunging so heavily upon the sod head-foremost, that the blood gushed from nose, ears, mouth, and he lay senseless and inanimate as the surrounding clay. With a low, sneering laugh, the tyrant once more spurred his charger forward, amid the smothered execrations of his Norman followers, boiling with indignation for that one of their noble and victorious race should have endured the foul wrong of a blow, though it were dealt him by a monarch's hand. And there were scowling brows, and teeth set hard, among the very noblest of his train; and, as the glittering band swept on, the father of the injured boy—a dark-browed, aged veteran, who had couched lance at Hastings to win the throne of earth's most lovely island for that base tyrant's sire—reined in his horse, and, leaping to the earth, upraised the body from the gory turf, and wiped away the crimson stream from the pale features, and dashed pure water, brought from a neighboring brooklet in a comrade's bacinet, upon the fair young brow—but it was all in vain! The dying child rolled upward his faint eyes; they rested on the anxious lineaments of that war-beaten sire, who, stern and fiery to all else, had ever to that motherless boy been soft and tender as a woman. "Father," he gasped,

while a brief, painful smile illuminated with a transient gleam his ashy lips—"mercy, kind mother Mary! Father—father"—the words died in the utterance; the dim eyes wavered—closed; the head fell back upon the stalwart arm that had supported it, and, with one long and quivering convulsion, the innocent soul departed!

Some three or four—inferior barons of the train, yet each a gentleman of lineage and prowess in the field, each one in his own estimate a prince's peer—had paused around the desolate father and his murdered child; and now, as the old man gazed hopelessly upon the features of his first-born and his only, the sympathy which had moistened their hard eyes and relaxed their iron features was swallowed up in a fierce glare of indignation, irradiating their scarred and war-seamed visages with that sublime expression, from which, when glowing on the face of a resolute and fearless man, the wildest savage of the forest will shrink in mute dismay. The father, after a long and fearful struggle with his more tender feelings—wringing his hard hands till the blood-drops started redly from beneath every nail—lifted his face, more pale and ashy in its hues than that of the inanimate form which he had loved so tenderly; and as he lifted it he caught the fierce glow mantling on the front of each well-tried companion, and his own features lightened with the self-same blaze: his hand sank downward to the hilt of the long poniard at his girdle, and the fingers worked with a convulsive tremor as they griped the well-known pommel, and an exulting smile curled his mustached lip, prophetic of revenge. Once more he bowed above the dead; he laid his broad hand on the pulseless heart, and printed a long kiss on the forehead; then lifting, with as much tenderness as though they still had sense and feeling, the relics of the only thing he loved on earth, he bore them from the roadside into the shelter of a tangled coppice; unbuckled his long military mantle, and spreading it

above them, secured it at each corner by heavy stones, a temporary shelter from insult or intrusion. This done, in total silence he rejoined his friends, who had foreborne to offer aid where they perceived it would be held superfluous. Without one word, he grasped the bridle of his charger, tightened his girths, and then, setting no foot to stirrup, vaulted almost without an effort into the steel-bound demipique. Raising his arm aloft, he pointed into the long aisles of the forest, wherein the followers of Rufus had long since disappeared.

“Our thoughts are one!” he hissed, in accents scarcely articulate, between his grinded teeth; “what need of words? Are not we soldiers, gentlemen, and Normans, and shall not deeds speak for us?”

Truly he said, their thoughts were one!—for each had severally steeled his heart as by a common impulse: and now, without a word, or sign, or any interchange of sentiments, feeling that each understood the other, they wheeled their horses on the tyrant’s track, and at a hard trot rode away, resolved on instant vengeance.

Meanwhile, the hunters had arrived at their appointed ground. The slowhounds were uncoupled and cast loose; varlets with hunting-poles, and mounted grooms, pressed through the under-wood; while, in each open glade and riding of the forest, yeomen were stationed with relays of tall and stately gazehounds, to slip upon the hart the instant he should break from the thick covert. The knights and nobles galloped off, each with his long-bow strung, and cloth-yard arrow notched and ready, to posts assigned to them—some singly, some in pairs; all was replete with animation and with fiery joy.

According to the monarch’s pleasure, Tyrrel rode at his bridle-hand, for that day’s space admitted as his comrade and his rival. Two splendid bloodhounds, coal-black, but tawny on the muzzle and the breast, so accurately trained that they re-

quired no leash to check their ardor, ran at the red king's heel; but neither page nor squire, such was his special mandate, accompanied their master. And now the loud shouts of the foresters and the deep baying of the pack gave note that the chase was on foot; and by the varied cadences and different points whence pealed the soul-exciting clamors, Rufus, a skilful and sagacious sportsman, immediately perceived that two if not three of the noble animals they hunted must have been roused at once. For a few seconds he stood upright in his stirrups, his hand raised to his ear, lest the slight summer breeze should interrupt the welcome sounds.

“This way,” he said, in low and guarded tones, “this way they bend; and with the choicest buck—hark to old Hubert's holloa! and *there, there*, Tyrrel, list to that burst—list to that long, sharp yell! Beshrew my soul, if that be not stanch Palamon—that hound is worth ten thousand. Ha! they are now at fault. Again! brave Palamon again! and now they turn; hark how the echoes roar! Ay, they are crossing now the Deer-leap dingle; and now, now, as their notes ring out distinct and tuneful, they gain the open moorland. Spur, Tyrrel, for your life! spur, spur! we see him not again till we reach Bolderwood”—and, with the word, he raised his bugle to his lips, and wound it lustily and well till every oak replied to the long flourish.

Away they flew, driving their foaming chargers, now through the tangled underwood with tightened reins, now with free heads careering along the level glades, now sweeping over the wide brooks that intersect the forest as though their steeds were winged, and now, at distant intervals, pausing to catch the fitful music of the pack. After a furious chase of at least two hours, the sounds still swelling on their right, nearer and nearer as they rode the farther, the avenue through which they had been galloping for many minutes was intersected at right angles

by one yet wider though neglected, and, as it would seem, disused, for many marshy pools might be seen glittering to the sun, which was now fast descending to the westward, and many plants of ash and tufted hazels had sprung up, marring the smoothness of its surface. Here, by a simultaneous motion, and as it seemed obedient to a common thought, both riders halted.

“He must cross, Tyrrel, he *must* cross here,” cried the excited monarch; “ay, by the life of Him who made us—and that before we be ten minutes older. I will take stand even here, where I command both alleys: ride thou some fifty yards or so, to the right; stand by yon rowan sapling. And mark me—see’st thou yon scathed but giant oak?—Now, if he pass on this side, mine is the first shot; if on the other, thine. I will not balk thy fortunes; meddle not thou with mine!”

They parted—the king sitting like a statue on his well-trained but fiery Andalusian, the rein thrown loosely on the horse’s neck, and the bow already half bent in the vigorous right hand; the baron riding, as he had been commanded, down the neglected avenue, till he had reached the designated tree, when he wheeled round his courser and remained likewise motionless, facing the king, at that brief interval.

Nearer and nearer came the baying of the pack, while ever and anon a sharp and savage treble, mixed with the deeper notes, gave token to the skilful foresters that they were running with the game in view. Nearer it came, and nearer; and now it was so close, that not an echo could be traced amid the stormy music: but with the crash no human shout was blended, no bugle lent its thrilling voice to the blithe uproar, no clang of hoofs announced the presence of pursuers. All, even the best and boldest riders, saving those two who waited there in calm, deliberate impatience, had long been foiled by the quick turns and undiminished pace maintained by the stout quarry.

The crashing of the branches might now be heard distinctly,

as they were separated by some body in swift motion ; and next the laboring sobs of a beast overdone with toil and anguish ; the waving of the coppice followed in a long, sinuous line, resembling in some degree the wake of a fleet ship among the rolling billows. Midway it furrowed the dense thicket between the king and Tyrrel, but with an inclination toward the former. His quick eye noted his advantage : his bow rose slowly and with a steady motion to its level ; it was drawn to its full extent—the forked steel head pressing against the polished yew, the silken string stretched home to the right ear. The brambles were forced violently outward, and with a mighty but laborious effort the hunted stag dashed into the more open space. Scarcely had he cleared the thicket, before a sharp and ringing twang announced the shot of Rufus. So true had been his aim, that the barbed arrow grazed the withers of the game—a hart of grease, with ten tines on his noble antlers—leaving a gory line where it had razed the skin ; and so strong was the arm that launched it, that the shaft, glancing downward, owing to the king's elevation and the short distance of the mark at which he aimed, was buried nearly to the feathers in the soft, mossy greensward. The wounded stag bounded at least six feet into the air ; and Tyrrel, deeming the work already done, lowered his weapon. But the king's sight was truer. Raising his bridle-hand to screen his eyes from the rays, now nearly level, of the setting sun—"Ho !" he cried, "Tyrrel, shoot—in the fiend's name shoot !"

Before the words had reached his ear, the baron saw his error ; for, instantly recovering, the gallant deer dashed onward, passing immediately beneath the oak-tree which Rufus had already mentioned. Raising his bow with a rapidity which seemed incredible, Tyrrel discharged his arrow. It struck, just at the correct elevation, against the gnarled trunk of the giant tree ; but, swift as was its flight, the motion of the wound-

ed deer was yet more rapid: he had already crossed the open glade, and was lost in the thicket opposite. Diverted from its course, but unabated in its force, the Norman shaft sped onward; full, full and fairly it plunged into the left side of the hapless monarch, unguarded by the arm which he had cast aloft. The keen point actually drove clear through his body, and through his stout buff coat, coming out over his right hip; while the goose-feather, which had winged it to its royal mark, was literally dabbled in his life-blood!

Without a breath, a groan, a struggle, the Conqueror's son dropped lifeless from his saddle. His horse, freed from the pressure of the master-limbs that had so well controlled him, reared upright as the monarch fell, and, with a wild, quick snort of terror, rushed furiously away into the forest. The blood-hounds had already, by the fierce cunning of their race, discovered that their game was wounded, and had joined freshly with his old pursuers; while he, who did the deed, gazed for one moment horror-stricken on the work of his right hand, and then, without so much as drawing nigh to see if anything of life remained to his late master, casting his fatal bow into the bushes, put spurs to his unwearied horse, and drew not bridle till he reached the coast; whence, taking ship, he crossed the seas, and fell in Holy Land, hoping by many deeds of wilful bloodshed—such is the inconsistency of man—to win God's pardon for one involuntary slaughter.

Hours rolled away. The sun had set already, and his last gleams were rapidly departing from the skies, nor had the moon yet risen, when six horsemen came slowly, searching as it were for traces on the earth, up the same alley along which Tyrrel and the king had ridden with such furious speed since noontide. The lingering twilight did not suffice to show the features of the group, but the deep tones of the second rider were those of the bereaved and vengeful father.

“How now?” he said, addressing his words to the man who led the way, mounted upon a shaggy forest-pony; “how now, Sir Saxon!—is it for this we saved thee from the tyrant’s hangmen, that thou shouldst prove a blind guide in this matter?”

“Norman,” replied the other, still scanning, as he spoke, the ground dented and torn by the fresh hoof-tracks, “my heart thirsts for vengeance not less than thine; nor is our English blood less stanch, although it be less fiery, than the hottest stream that swells the veins of your proud race! I tell you, Rufus hath passed here, and he hath not turned back. You *shall* have your revenge!”

Even as he spoke, the beast which he bestrode set his feet firm and snuffed the air, staring as though his eyeballs would start from their sockets, and uttering a tremulous, low neigh. “Blood hath been shed here! and that, I trow, since sunset! Jesu! what have we now?” he cried, as his eye fell upon the carcass that so lately had exulted in the possession of health, and energy, and strength, and high dominion. “By ‘Thor the Thunderer, it is the tyrant’s corpse!”

“And slain,” replied the father, “slain by another’s hand than mine! Curses, ten thousand curses, on him who shot this shaft!” While he was speaking he dismounted, approached the body of his destined victim, and gazed with an eye of hatred most insatiably savage upon the rigid face and stiffening limbs; then drawing his broad dagger—“I have sworn!” he muttered, as he besmeared its blade with the dark, curdled gore—“I have sworn! Lie there and *rot*,” he added, spurning the body with his foot. “And now we must away, for we are known and noted; and, whoso did the deed, ’tis we shall bear the blame of it. We must see other lands. I will but leave a brief word with the monks of Lymington, that they commit my poor boy to a hallowed tomb, and then farewell, fair England!”

And they, too, rode away, nor were they ever seen again on British soil ; nor—though shrewd search was made for them until the confessor of Tyrrel, when that bold spirit had departed, revealed the real slayer of the king—did any rumor of their residence or fortunes reach any mortal ear.

The moon rose over the New Forest broad and unclouded, and the dew fell heavy over glade and woodland. The night wore onward, and the bright planet set, and one by one the stars went out—and still the king lay there untended and alone. The morning mists were rising, when the rumbling sound of a rude cart awoke the echoes of that fearful solitude. A charcoal-burner of the forest was returning from his nocturnal labors, whistling cheerfully the burden of some Saxon ballad, as he threaded the dark mazes of the green-wood. A wiry-looking cur—maimed, in obedience to the forest-law, lest he should chase the deer reserved to the proud conquerors alone—followed the footsteps of his master, who had already passed the corpse, when a half-startled yelp, followed upon the instant by a most melancholy howl, attracted the attention of the peasant. After a moment's search he found, although he did not recognise, the cause of his dog's terror ; and, casting it upon his loaded cart, bore it to the same church whereat but a few hours before the living sovereign had determined to glut his fierce eyes with the death-pangs of his fellow-man. Strange are the ways of Providence. That destined man lived after his intended torturer ! And, stranger yet, freed from his bonds, that he might minister unto the slaughter of that self-same torturer, he found his purpose frustrate—frustrate, as it were, by its accomplishment—his meditated deed anticipated, his desperate revenge forestalled.—“ Verily, vengeance is mine,” saith the Lord, “ and I will repay it.”

THE SAXON PRELATE'S DOOM.

“Die, prophet, in thy speech!”—KING HENRY VI.

THE mightiest monarch of his age, sovereign of England—as his proud grandsire made his vaunt of yore—by right of the sword’s edge ; grand duke of Normandy, by privilege of blood ; and liege lord of Guienne, by marriage with its powerful heritress ; the bravest, the most fortunate, the wisest of the kings of Europe, Henry the Second, held his court for the high festival of Christmas in the fair halls of Rouen. The banquet was already over, the revelry was at the highest, still, the gothic arches ringing with the merriment, the laughter, and the blended cadences of many a minstrel’s harp, of many a troubere’s lay. Suddenly, while the din was at the loudest, piercing through all the mingled sounds, a single trumpet’s note was heard—wailing, prolonged, and ominous—as was the chill it struck to every heart in that bright company—of coming evil. During the pause which followed, for at that thrilling blast the mirth and song were hushed as if by instinct—a bustle might be heard below, the tread of many feet, and the discordant tones of many eager voices. The great doors were thrown open, not with the stately ceremonial that befitted the occasion, but with a noisy and irreverent haste that proved the urgency or the importance of the new-comers. Then, to the wonder

of all present, there entered—not in their wonted pomp, with stole, and mitre, crozier dalmatique and ring, but in soiled vestments, travel-worn and dusty, with features haggard from fatigue, and sharpened by anxiety and fear—six of the noblest of old England's prelates, led by the second dignitary of the church, York's proud archbishop. Hurrying forward to the dais, where Henry sat in state, they halted all together at the step, and in one voice exclaimed:—

“Fair sir, and king, not for ourselves alone, but for the holy church, for your own realm and crown, for your own honor, your own safety, we beseech you—”

“What means this, holy fathers?” Henry cried, hastily, and half alarmed, as it would seem, by the excited language of the churchmen. “What means this vehemence—or who hath dared to wrong ye, and for why?”

“For that, at your behest, we dared to crown the youthful king, your son! Such, sire, is our offence. Our wrong—that we your English prelates are excommunicated, and—”

“Now, by the eyes of God!”* exclaimed the king, breaking abruptly in upon the bishop's speech, his noble features crimsoned by the indignant blood, that rushed to them at mention of this foul affront, “Now, by the eyes of God, if all who have consented to his consecration be accursed, then am I so myself!”

“Nor is this all,” replied the prelate, well pleased to note the growing anger of the sovereign, nor is this all the wrong. The same bold man, who did you this affront, an' you look not the sharper, will light a blaze in England that shall consume right speedily your royal crown itself. He marches to and fro, with troops of horse, and bands of armed footmen, stirring the Saxon churls against the gentle blood of Normandy, nay, seeking even to gain entrance into your garrisons and castles.”

* For this strange but authentic oath, see Thierry's “Norman Conquest,” whence most of these details are taken.

“Do I hear right,” shouted the fiery prince, striking his hand upon the board with such fierce vehemence, that every flask and tankard rang. “Do I hear right—and is it but a dream that I am England’s king? What! *one* base vassal; *one* who has fattened on the bread of our ill-wasted charity; *one* beggar, who first came to our court with all his fortunes on his back, bestriding a galled, spavined jade; *one* wretch like this insult at once a line of sovereign princes—trample a realm beneath his feet—and go unpunished and scathe-free? What! was there not one man, one only, of the hordes of recreant knights who feast around my board, to free his monarch from a shaveling who dishonors and defies him? Break off the feast—break off, I say! no time for revelry and wine!—To council, lords, to council! We must indeed bestir us, an’ we would hold the crown our grandsire won, not for himself alone, nor for his race—who, by God’s grace, will wear it, spite priest, cardinal, or pope—but for the gentle blood of Norman chivalry!”

Rising at once, he led the way to council; and, with wild haste and disarray, the company dispersed. But as the hall grew thin, four knights remained behind in close converse—so deep, so earnest, that they were left alone, when all the rest, ladies, and cavaliers, and chamberlains, and pages, had departed, and the vast gallery, which had so lately rung with every various sound of human merriment, was silent as the grave. There was a strange and almost awful contrast between the strong and stately forms of the four barons—their deep and energetic whispers, the fiery glances of their angry eyes, the fierce gesticulations of their muscular and well-turned limbs—and the deserted splendors of that royal hall: the vacant throne, the long array of seats; the gorgeous plate, flagons, and cups, and urns of gold and marquetry; the lights still glowing, as it were, in mockery over the empty board; the wine unpoured—the harps untouched and voiceless.

“Be it so—be it so!” exclaimed, in louder tones than they had used before, one, the most striking in appearance of the group; “be it so—let us swear! Richard le Breton, Hugues de Morville, William de Traci—even as I shall swear, swear ye—by God, and by our trusty blades, and by our Norman honor!”

“We will,” cried all, “we swear! we be not recreant, nor craven, as our good swords shall witness!”

“Thus, then,” continued the first speaker, drawing his sword, and grasping a huge cup of wine, “thus, then, I, Reginald Fitz-Urse, for mine own part, and for each one and all of ye, do swear—so help me God and our good Lady!—never to touch the winecup; never to bend before the shrine; never to close the eyes in sleep; never to quit the saddle, or unbelt the brand; never to pray to God; never to hope for heaven—until the wrong we reck of be redressed!—until the insult done our sovereign be avenged!—until the life-blood of his foeman stream on our battle-swords as streams this nobler wine!”

Then, with the words—for not he only, but each one of the four, holding their long, two-handed blades extended at arms' length before them with all their points in contact, and in the other hand grasping the brimming goblets, had gone through, in resolute, unflinching tones, the fearful adjuration—then, with the words, they all dashed down the generous liquor on the weapons, watched it in silence as it crimsoned them from point to hilt, and sheathing them, all purple as they were, hurried, not from the hall alone, but from the palace; mounted their fleetest war-steeds, and, that same night, rode furiously away toward the nearest sea.

The fifth day was in progress after King Henry's banquet, when, at the hour of noon, four Norman knights, followed by fifty men-at-arms, sheathed cap-à-pie in mail, arrayed beneath the banner of Fitz-Urse, entered the town of Canterbury at a

hard gallop. The leaders of the band alone were clad in garbs of peace, bearing no weapon but their swords, and singularly ill-accoutred for horse-exercise, being attired in doublets of rich velvet, with hose of cloth of gold or silver, as if in preparation for some high and festive meeting. Yet was it evident that they had ridden miles in that unsuitable apparel; for the rich velvet was besmeared with many a miry stain, and the hose dashed with blood, which had been drawn profusely by the long rowels of their gilded spurs.

Halting in serried order at the market-cross, the leader of the party summoned, by an equerry, the city mayor to hear the orders of the king; and, when that officer appeared—having commanded him, “on his allegiance, to call his men to arms, and take such steps as should assuredly prevent the burghers of the town from raising any tumult on that day, whate’er might come to pass”—with his three friends, and twelve, the stoutest, of the men-at-arms who followed in their train, rode instantly away to the archbishop’s palace.

The object of their deadly hatred, when the four knights arrived, was in the act of finishing his noonday meal; and all his household were assembled at the board, from which he had just risen. There was no sign of trepidation, no symptom of surprise, much less of fear or consternation, in his aspect or demeanor, as one by one his visitors stalked unannounced into the long apartment. Yet was there much indeed in the strange guise wherein they came—in their disordered habits, in the excitement visibly depicted on their brows, haggard from want of sleep, pale with fatigue and labor, yet resolute, and stern, and terse, with the resolve of their dread purpose—to have astonished, nay, dismayed the spirit of one less resolute in the defence of what he deemed the right than Thomas à-Becket. Silently, one by one, they entered, the leader halting opposite the prelate, with his arms folded on his breast, and his three

comrades forming as it were in a half-circle around him. Not one of them removed the bonnet from his brow, or bowed the knee on entering, or offered any greeting, whether to the temporal rank or spiritual station of their intended victim; but gazed on him with a fixed sternness that was far more awful than any show of violence. This dumb-show, although it needs must occupy some time in the description, had lasted perhaps a minute, when the bold prelate broke the silence, addressing them in clear, harmonious tones, and with an air as dignified and placid as though he had been bidding them to share the friendly banquet.

“Fair sirs,” he said, “I bid ye welcome; although, in truth, the manner of your entrance be not in all things courteous, nor savoring of that respect which should be paid, if not to me—who am but as a worm, the meanest of His creatures—yet to the dignity whereunto HE has raised me! Natheless, I bid ye hail! Please ye disclose the business whereon ye now have come to me.”

Still not a word did they reply—but seated themselves all unbidden, still glaring on him with fixed eyes, ominous of evil. At length Fitz-Urse addressed him, speaking abruptly, and in tones so hoarse and hollow—the natural consequence of his extreme exertions, four days and nights having been actually passed in almost constant travel—that his most intimate associate could not have recognised his voice.

“We come,” he said, “on the king’s part, to take—and that, too, on the instant—some order with your late proceedings: to have the excommunicated presently absolved; to see the bishops, who have been suspended, forthwith re-established; and to hear what *you* may now allege concerning your design against your sovereign lord and master!”

“It is not I,” Thomas replied, still calmer and more dignified than the fierce spirits who addressed him, “it is not I who

have done this. It is the sovereign pontiff, God's own supreme vicegerent, who, of his own will, excommunicated my late brother of York. He alone, therefore, can absolve him. I have no power in't. As for the rest, let them but make submission, and straightway shall they be restored!"

"From whom, then," Reginald Fitz-Urse demanded, "from whom, then, hold you your archbishopric—from England's king, or from the pope of Rome?"

"My spiritual rights, of God and of the pope—my temporal privileges, of the king," was the prompt answer.

"The king, then, gave you *not*?" the baron asked again. "Beware, I warn you, beware how you do answer me: the king, I say, gave you *not* ALL that you enjoy?"

"He did not," answered Becket, without moving a single muscle of his composed but haughty countenance; although, at the reply, the fiery temper of his unwelcome visitors was made more clearly manifest, as a deep, angry murmur burst simultaneously from all their lips, and they wrung with fierce gestures their gloved hands, as if it was with difficulty they restrained themselves from violence more open in its character.

"Ye threaten me, I well believe," exclaimed the stately prelate, "but it is vain and useless. Were all the swords in England brandished against my head, ye should gain nothing, nothing from me."

"We will do more than threaten," answered Fitz-Urse; and rising from his seat, rushed out of the apartment, followed by his companions, crying aloud, even before they crossed the threshold, "To-arms, Normans, to-arms!"

The doors were closed behind them, and barred instantly with the most jealous care; while Reginald and the conspirators, meeting the guard whom they had left without, armed themselves cap-à-pie in the courtyard before the palace-gates, as if for instant battle, with helmet, hood-of-mail, and hauberk;

their triangular steel-plated shields hanging about their necks ; their legs protected by mail-hose, fitting as closely and as flexible as modern stockings ; their huge two-handed swords belted about them in such fashion, that their cross-guarded hilts came over their left shoulders, while their points clanked against the spur on their right heels.

There was no pause ; for, snatching instantly an axe from the hands of a carpenter who chanced to be at work in the courtyard, Fitz-Urse assailed the gate. Strong as it was, it creaked and groaned beneath the furious blows, and the long corridors within rolled back the threatening sounds in deep and hollow echoes. Within the palace all was confusion and dismay, and every face was pale and ghastly, save his alone who had the cause for fear.

“Fly ! fly, my lord !” cried the assistants, breathless with terror ; “fly to the altar ! There, there, at least, shall you be safe !”

“Never !” the prelate answered, his bold spirit as self-possessed and calm in that most imminent peril as though he had been bred from childhood upward to the performance of high deeds and daring ; “never will I turn back from that which I have set myself to do ! God, if it be his pleasure, shall preserve me from yet greater straits than these ; and if it be not so his will to do, then God forbid I should gainsay him !” Nor would he stir one foot, until the vesper-bell, rung by the sacristan, unwitting of his superior’s peril, began to chime from the near walls of the cathedral. “It is the hour,” he quietly observed, on hearing the sweet cadence of the bells, “it is the hour of prayer ; my duty calls me. Give me my vestments—carry my cross before me !” And, attiring himself as though nothing of unusual moment were impending, he traversed, with steps even slower than his wont, the cloister leading from his dwelling to the abbey ; though, ere he left the palace, the din

of blows had ceased, and the fierce shout of the assailants gave token that the door had yielded. Chiding his servitors for their excess of terror, as unworthy of their sacred calling, he still walked slowly onward, while the steel-shod footsteps of his foemen might be heard clashing on the pavement but a few yards behind him. He reached the door of the cathedral; entered without casting so much as one last glance behind; passed up the nave, and going up the steps of the high altar, separated from the body of the church by a slight rail of ornamental iron-work, commenced the service of the day.

Scarcely had he uttered the first words, when Reginald, sheathed, as has been heretofore described, in complete panoply, with his two-handed sword already naked, rushed into the cathedral.

“To me!” he cried, with a fierce shout, “to me, valiant and loyal servants of the king!” while close behind him followed, in like array, with flashing eyes, and inflamed visages, and brandished weapons, his sworn confederates; and without the gates their banded men-at-arms stood in a serried circle, defying all assistance from the town. Again his servitors entreated Becket to preserve himself, by seeking refuge in the dark crypts beneath the chancel, where he might rest concealed in absolute security until the burghers should be aroused to rescue; or by ascending the intricate and winding turret-stairs to the cathedral-roof, whence he might summon aid ere he could possibly be overtaken: but it was all in vain. Confiding in the goodness of his cause, perhaps expecting supernatural assistance, the daring prelate silenced their prayers by a contemptuous refusal; and even left the altar, to prevent one of the monks from closing the weak, trellised gates, which marked the holiest precincts. Meanwhile, unmoved in their fell purpose, the Normans were at hand.

“Where is the traitor?” cried Fitz-Urse, but not a voice re-

plied; and the unwonted tones were vocal yet beneath the vaulted roof in lingering echoes, when he again exclaimed, "Where—where is the archbishop?"

"Here stands he," Becket answered, drawing his lofty person up to its full height, and spreading his arms forth with a gesture of perfect majesty. "Here stands he, but no traitor! What do ye in God's house in such apparel? what is your will, or purpose?"

"That you die, presently!" was the reply, enforced by the uplifted weapon and determined features of the savage baron.

"I am resigned," returned the prelate, the calm patience of the martyr blent with a noble daring that would have well become a warrior on the battle-field. "Ye shall not see me fly before your swords! But in the name of the all-powerful God, whom ye dishonor and defy, I do command ye injure no one of my companions, layman or priest." His words were interrupted by a heavy blow across his shoulders, delivered, with the flat of his huge sword, by Reginald.

"Fly!" he said, "fly, priest, or you are dead!" But the archbishop moved not a step, spoke not a syllable. "Drag him hence, comrades," continued the last speaker; "away with him beyond the threshold—we may not smite him here!"

"Here—here, or nowhere!" the archbishop answered—"here, in the very presence, and before the altar, and the image, of our God!" And, as he spoke, he seized the railings with both hands, set his feet firm, and, being of a muscular and powerful frame, sustained by daring courage and highly-wrought excitement, he succeeded in maintaining his position, in spite of the united efforts of the four Norman warriors.

Meanwhile, all the companions of the prelate had escaped, by ways known only to themselves—all but one faithful follower—the Saxon, Edward Grim, his cross-bearer since his first elevation to the see of Canterbury—the same who had so

boldly spoken out after the conference of Clarendon ; and the conspirators began to be alarmed lest, if their purpose were not speedily accomplished, the rescue should arrive and frustrate their intentions. Their blood, moreover, was heated by the struggle ; and their fierce natures, never much restrained by awe or reverence for things divine, burst through all bonds.

“ Here, then, if it so please you !—here !” cried William de Traci, striking, as he spoke, a blow with the full sweep of both his arms wielding his ponderous weapon, at the defenceless victim’s head. But the bold Saxon suddenly stretched out his arm to guard his beloved master. Down came the mighty blow—but not for that did the true servitor withdraw his naked limb—down came the mighty blow, and lopped the unflinching hand, sheer as the woodman’s bill severs the hazel-twig !

Still, Becket stood unwounded. “ Strike ! strike, you others !” shouted the Norman, as he grasped the maimed but still-resolved protector of his master, and held him off by the exertion of his entire strength ; “ strike ! strike !” And they did strike, fearlessly—mercilessly ! Hugues de Morville smote him with a mace upon his temples, and he fell, stunned, but still alive, face downward on the pavement ; and Reginald Fitz-Urse, whirling his espaldron around his head, brought it down with such reckless fury upon the naked skull, that the point clove right through it, down to the marble pavement, on which it yet alighted with a degree of violence so undiminished, that it was shivered to the very hilt, and the strong arms of him who wielded it were jarred up to the shoulders, as if by an electric shock. One of the men-at-arms, who had rushed in during the struggle, spurned with his foot the motionless and senseless clay.

“ Thus perish all,” he said, “ all foemen of the king, and of the gentle Normans—all who dare, henceforth, to arouse the base and slavish Saxons against their free and princely masters !”

Thus fell the Saxon prelate, ruthlessly butchered at the very shrine of God—not so much that he was a Romish priest, and an upholder of the rights of Rome, as that he was a Saxon-man, a vindicator of the liberties of England! Yet, though the pope absolved that king whose cruel will had, in truth, done the deed, yet was that deed not unavenged. If the revolt and treachery of all most dear to him, the hatred of his very flesh and blood, the unceasing enmity of his own sons, a miserable old age, and a heart-broken death-bed—if these things may be deemed Heaven's vengeance upon murder—then, of a surety, that murder was avenged!

THE FATE OF THE BLANCHE NAVIRE.*

“The bark that held a prince went down,
The sweeping waves rolled on,
And what was England’s glorious crown
To him who wept a son?”—HEMANS.

THE earliest dawning of a December’s morning had not yet tinged the eastern sky, when in the port of Barfleur the stirring bustle which precedes an embarkation broke loudly on the ear of all who were on foot at that unseemly hour; nor were these few in number, for all the population of that town—far more considerable than it appears at present, when mightier cities, some rendered so by the gigantic march of commerce, some by the puissant and creative hands of military despotism, have sprung on every side into existence, and overshadowed its antique renown—were hastening through the narrow streets toward the water’s edge. The many-paned, stone-latticed casements gleamed with a thousand lights, casting a cheerful glare over the motley multitude which swarmed before them with all the frolic merriment of an unwonted holyday. All classes and all ranks might there be seen, of every age and sex: barons

* The title given by the chroniclers to this ill-fated vessel is “The *Blanche Nef*,” the latter word being the old French for the modern term, which we have substituted. Singularly enough, the ancient word survives as the name of a piece of antique gold plate modelled like a ship, in which the napkins of the royal table are served in the high ceremonials of the court of France.

and lords of high degree, clad in the rich attires of a half-barbarous yet gorgeous age, mounted on splendid horses, and attended by long retinues of armed and liveried vassals; ladies and demoiselles of birth and beauty curbing their Spanish jennets, and casting sidelong looks of love toward the favored knights curveting in the conscious state of proud humility beside their bridle-reins—as clearly visible as at high noon, in the broad radiance of the torches that accompanied their progress; while all around them and behind crowded the humbler throng of mariners and artisans, with here a solemn burgher, proud in his velvet pourpoint and his golden chain, and there a barefoot monk, far prouder in his frock of sackcloth and his knotted girdle; and ever and anon a group of merry maidens, with their high Norman caps and short jupons of parti-colored serge, crowding around the *jongleur** with his ape and gittern—or pressing on to hear the loftier professor† of the *gai-science*, girded with sword and dagger in token of his gentle blood, and followed by his boy bearing the harp, which then had power to win, not with the low-born and vulgar throng, but with the noble and the fair, high favor for its wandering master!

The courts and thoroughfares of the old town—for it was old even then—by slow degrees grew silent and deserted; and, ere the sun was well above the wave, the multitudes which thronged them had rolled downward to the port, and stood in dense ranks gazing on its calm and sheltered basin. Glorious indeed and lovely was the sight when the first yellow rays

* The juggler of the middle ages, who, like the street-musicians of the present time, were mostly Savoyards by birth, generally carried with them the ape or marmoset, even to this day their companion, and added to their feats of strength and sleight of hand both minstrelsey and music.

† The *gai-science*, so early as the commencement of the century of which we write, had its degrees, its colleges, and its professors, who, though itinerants, and dependent for their subsistence on their instrument and voice, considered war no less their trade than song, esteeming themselves, and moreover admitted by others to be, in the fullest sense, gentlemen.

streamed over the still waters : they waked the distant summits of the hills behind the town into a sudden life ; they kissed the crest of every curling ripple that dimpled with its “ innumerable laughter ” the azure face of ocean ; but, more than all, they seemed to dwell upon two noble barks, which lay, each riding at a single anchor, at a short arrow-shot from the white sands that girt as with a silver frame the liquid mirror of the harbor.

Fashioned by the best skill of that early day, and ornamented with the most lavish splendor, though widely different from the floating castles of modern times, those vessels—the picked cruisers of the British navy—were in their structure no less picturesque than in their decoration royally magnificent. Long, low, and buoyant, they floated lightly as birds upon the surface ; their open waists already bristling with the long oars by which, after the fashion of the Roman galley, they were propelled in serene weather ; their masts clothed with the wings which seemed in vain to woo the breeze ; their elevated sterns and forecastles blazing with tapestries of gold and silver, reflected in long lines of light, scarcely broken by the dancing ripples. The larger of the two bore on her foresail, blazoned in gorgeous heraldry, the arms of England. The second, somewhat smaller, but if anything more elegant in her proportions, and fitted with a nicer taste, although less sumptuous, was painted white from stem to stern ; her oars, fifty in number, of the same spotless hue, were barred upon the blades with silver ; and on her foresail of white canvass, overlaid with figured damask, were wrought, among a glittering profusion of devices, in characters of silver, the words “ *La Blanche Navire.* ” Beyond them, in the outer bay, a dozen ships or more were dimly seen through the mist-wreaths which the wintry sun was gradually scattering—their canvass hanging in festoons from their long yard-arms, and their decks crowded, not with mariners alone, but with the steel-clad forms of men-at-arms and archers, the

gallant train of the third Norman who had swayed the destinies of England.

The youngest son of the sagacious Conqueror, after the death of the "Red king," by a rare union of audacity and cunning, Henry, had seized the sceptre of the fair island—the hereditary right of his romantic, generous, and gallant brother, who with the feudatories of his Norman duchy was waging war upon the Saracen, neglectful of his own and of his subjects' interests alike, beneath the burning sun of Syria. Already firmly seated in his usurped dominion ere Robert returned homeward, nor yet contented with his ill-gained supremacy, he had wrung from the bold crusader, partly by force but more by fraud, his continental realms; and adding cruelty which scarcely can be conceived to violence and fraud, deprived him of Heaven's choicest blessing, sight, and cast him—of late the most renowned and glorious knight in Christendom—a miserable, eyeless captive into the towers of Cardiff, his dungeon while he lived, and after death his tomb!

No retributive justice had discharged its thunders upon the guilty one; no gloom sat on his smooth and lordly brow, no thorns had lurked beneath the circle of Henry's blood-bought diadem. Fortune had smiled on every effort; had granted every wish, however wild; had sanctioned every enterprise, however dubious or desperate: he never had known sorrow; and from his restless, energetic soul, remorse and penitence were banished by the incessant turmoil of ambition and the perpetual excitement of success. And now his dearest wish had been accomplished—the most especial aim and object of his life perfected with such absolute security, that his insatiate soul was satisfied. Absolute lord of England, and undisputed ruler of the fair Cotentin, he had of late disarmed the league which for a time had threatened his security; detaching from the cause of France the powerful count of Anjou, whose daughter—the

most lovely lady and the most splendid heiress of the time—he had seen wedded to his first-born and his favorite, William. The previous day he had beheld the haughty barons tender the kiss of homage and swear eternal loyalty to the young heir of England, Normandy, and Anjou; the previous night he had sat glad and glorious at the festive board, encompassed by all that was fair, and noble, and high-born, in the great realms he governed, and among all that proud and graceful circle his eye had looked on none so brave and beautiful as that young, guiltless pair for whom he had imbrued, not his hands only, but his very soul, in blood! He sat on the high dais, beneath the gilded canopy; and as he quaffed the health of those who had alone a kindly tenure of his cold and callous heart, a noble knight approached with bended knee, and placing in his hand a mark of gold—"Fair sir," he said, "I, a good knight and loyal—Thomas Fitz-Stephen—claim of your grace a boon. My father, Stephen Fitz-Evrard, served faithfully and well, as long as he did live, your father William—served him by sea, and steered the ship with his own hand which bore him to that glorious crown which he right nobly won at Hastings. I pray you, then, fair king, that you do sell to me, for this gold mark, the fief I crave of you: that, as Fitz-Evrard served the first King William, so may Fitz-Stephen serve the first King Henry. I have right nobly fitted—ay, on mine honor, as beseems a mighty monarch—here, in the bay of Barfleur, 'the Blanche Navire.' Receive it at my hands, great sir, and suffer me to steer you homeward; and so may the blessed Virgin and her Son send us the winds which we would have!"

"Good knight and loyal," answered the prince, as he received the proffered coin, "grieved am I, of a truth, and sorrowful, that altogether I may not confer on you the fief which of good right you claim: for lo! the bark is chosen—nay, more, apparelled for my service—which must to-morrow, by Heaven's mercy,

bear me to that land whither your sire so fortunately guided mine. But since it may not be that I may sail myself, as would I could do so, in your good bark, to your true care will I intrust what I hold dearer than my very soul—my sons, my daughters—mine and my country's hope; and as your father steered the FIRST, so shall you steer the THIRD King William, that shall be, to the white cliffs of England!"

"Well said, my liege!" cried Foulke, the count of Anjou, a noble-looking baron of tall and stately presence, although far past the noon of manhood, the father of the lovely bride; "to better mariner or braver ship than stout Fitz-Stephen and La Blanche Navire, was never freight intrusted! Quaff we a full carouse to their blithe voyage! How sayest thou, daughter mine," he added, turning to the blushing girl, who sat attired in all the pomp of newly-wedded royalty beside her youthful lover—"how sayest thou? wouldst desire a trustier pilot, or a fleeter galley?"

"Why," she replied, with a smile half-sweet, half-sorrowful, while a bright tear-drop glittered in her eye—"why should I seek for fleetness, when that same speed will but the sooner bear me from the sight of our fair France, and of thee, too, my father?"

"Dost thou, then, rue thy choice?" whispered the ardent voice of William in her ear; "and wouldst thou tarry here, when fate and duty summon me hence for England?"

Her full blue eye met his, radiant with true affection, and her slight fingers trembled in the clasp of her young husband with a quick thrill of agitation, and her lips parted, but the words were heard by none save him to whom they were addressed; for, with the clang of beakers, and the loud swell of joyous music, and the glad merriment of all the courtly revellers, the toast of the bride's father passed round the gleaming board: "A blithe and prosperous voyage—speed to the Blanche Navire, and joy to all who sail in her!"

Thus closed the festive evening, and thus the seal of destiny was set upon a hundred youthful brows, foredoomed, alas! to an untimely grave beneath the ruthless billows.

The wintry day wore onward; and, wintry though it was, save for a touch of keenness in the frosty air, and for the leafless aspect of the country, it might have passed for a more lightsome season; the sky was pure and cloudless as were the prospects and the hopes of the gay throng who now embarked secure and confident beneath its favorable omens. The sun shone gayly as in the height of summer, and the blue waves lay sleeping in its lustre as quietly as though they ne'er had howled despair into the ears of drowning wretches! There was no thought of peril or of fear—how should there be? The ships were trustworthy; the seamen skilful, numerous, and hardy; the breezes fair, though faint; the voyage brief; the time propitious.

The day wore onward; and it was high noon before the happy king—his every wish accomplished, secure as he conceived himself, and firm in the fruition of his blood-bought majesty—rowed with his glittering train on board the royal galley. Loud pealed the cheering clamors of his Norman subjects, bidding their sovereign hail; but louder yet they pealed, when, with its freight of ladies, the second barge shot forth—William and his fair sister, and yet fairer bride, and all the loveliest of the dames that graced the broad Cotentin.

Not yet, however, were the anchors weighed—not yet were the sails sheeted home; for on the deck of the king's vessel, beneath an awning of pure cloth-of-gold, a gorgeous board was spread. Not in the regal hall of Westminster could more of luxury have been brought together than was displayed upon that galley's poop. Spread with the softest ermine—meet carpet for the gentle feet that trod it—cushioned with seats of velvet, steaming with perfumes the most costly, it was a scene

resembling more some fairy palace than the wave-beaten fabric that had braved many a gale, and borne the flag of England through many a storm in triumph. And there they sat and feasted, and the red wine-cup circled freely, and the song went round: their hearts were high and happy, and they forgot the lapse of hours; and still the reveller's shout was frequent on the breeze, and still the melody of female tones, blent with the clang of instrumental music, rang in the ears of those who loitered on the shore, after the sun had bathed his lower limb in the serene and peaceful waters.

Then, as it were, awaking from their trance of luxury, the banqueters broke off. Skiff after skiff turned shoreward, till none remained on board the royal ship except the monarch and his train, and that loved son with his bright consort, whom, parting from them there, he never was to look upon again! The courses were unfurled, topsails were spread, and pennants floated seaward; and, as the good ship gathered way, the father bade adieu—adieu, as he believed it, but for one little night—to all he loved on earth; and their barge, manned by a score of powerful and active rowers, wafted the bridal party to the *Blanche Navire*, which, as her precious freight drew nigh, luffed gracefully and swiftly up to meet them, as though she were a thing of life, conscious and proud of the high honor she enjoyed in carrying the united hopes of Normandy and England.

Delay—there was yet more delay! The night had settled down upon the deep before the harbor of Barfleur was fairly left behind; and yet so lovely was the night—with the moon, near her full, soaring superbly through the cloudless sky, and myriads on myriads of clear stars weaving their mystic dance around her—that the young voyagers walked to and fro the deck, rejoicing in the happy chance that had secured to them so fair a time for their excursion: and William sat aloof, with

his sweet wife beside him, indulging in those bright anticipations, those golden dreams of happiness, which indeed make futurity a paradise to those who have not learned, by the sad schoolings of experience, that human life is but another name for human sorrow.

Fairer—the breeze blew fairer ; and every sail was set and drawing, and the light ripples burst with a gurgling sound like laughter about the snow-white stem ; and, still to waft them the more swiftly to their home, fifty long oars, pulled well and strongly by as many nervous arms, glanced in the liquid swell. The bubbles on the surface were scarcely seen as they flashed by, so rapid was their course ; and a long wake of boiling foam glanced in the moonshine, till it was lost to sight in the far distance. The port was far behind them ; and the king's ship, seen faintly on the glimmering horizon, loomed like a pile of vapor far on their starboard bow. And still the music rang upon the favorable wind, and still the rowers sang amid their toil, and still the captain sent the deep bowl round. The helmsman dozed upon the tiller—the watch upon the forecastle had long since stretched themselves upon the deck—in the deep slumbers of exhaustion and satiety.

“ Give way ! my merry men, give way ! ” such was the jovial captain's cry ; “ pull for the pride of Normandy—pull for your country's fame, men of the fair Cotentin. What ! will ye let yon island-lubbers outstrip ye in the race ? More way ! more way ! ”

And with unrivalled speed the *Blanche Navire* sped on. A long black line stretches before her bow, dotting the silvery surface with ragged and fantastic shades ; but not one eye has marked it ! On she goes, swifter yet and swifter, and still the fatal shout is ringing from her decks : “ Give way, men of Cotentin ! give more way ! ” Now they are close upon it, and now the dashing of the surf about the broken ledges—for that

black line is the dread Raz de Gatteville, the most tremendous reef of all that bar the iron coast of Normandy! The hoarse and hollow roar must reach the ears even of those who sleep. But no! the clangor of the exulting trumpets, and the deep booming of the Norman nakir, and that ill-omened shout, "Give way—yet more—more way!" has drowned even the all-pervading roar of the wild breakers. On, on she goes, fleet as the gazehound darting upon its antlered prey; and now her bows are bathed by the upflashing spray; and now—hark to that hollow shock, that long and grinding crash!—hark to that wild and agonizing yell sent upward by two hundred youthful voices, up to the glorious stars that smiled as if in mockery of their ruin. There rang the voice of the strong, fearless men; the knight who had spurred oft his destrier amid the shivering of lances and the rending clash of blades, without a thought unless of high excitement and fierce joy; the mariner who, undismayed, had reefed his sail, and steered his bark aright, amid the wildest storm that ever lashed the sea to fury—now utterly unnerved and paralyzed by the appalling change from mirth and revelry to imminent and instant death.

So furious was the rate at which the galley was propelled, that, when she struck upon the sharp and jagged rocks, her prow was utterly stove inward, and the strong tide rushed in, foaming and roaring like a mill-stream! 'Ten seconds' space she hung upon the perilous ledge, while the waves made a clear breach over her, sweeping not only every living being, but every fixture—spars, bulwarks, shrouds, and the tall masts themselves—from her devoted decks. At the first shock, with the instinctive readiness that characterizes, in whatever peril, the true mariner, Fitz-Stephen, rallying to his aid a dozen of the bravest of his men, had cleared away and launched a boat; and, even as the fated bark went down, bodily sucked into the whirling surf, had seized the prince and dragged him with a

stalwart arm into the little skiff, which had put off at once, to shun the drowning hundreds who must have crowded in and sunk her on the instant.

“Pull back!—God’s death!—pull back!” cried the impetuous youth, as he looked round and saw that he alone of all his race was there; “pull back, ye dastard slaves, or by the Lord and Maker of us all, though ye escape the waves, ye ’scape not my revenge!”—and, as he spoke, he whirled his weapon from the scabbard and pressed the point so closely to Fitz-Stephen’s throat, that its keen temper razed the skin; and, terrified by his fierce menaces, and yet more by the resolute expression that glanced forth from his whole countenance, they turned her head once more toward the reef, and shot into the vortex, agitated yet and boiling, wherein the hapless galley had been swallowed. A female head, with long, fair hair, rose close beside the shallop’s stern, above the turbulent foam. William bent forward: he had already clutched those golden tresses—a moment, and she would have been enfolded in his arms—another head rose suddenly! another—and another—and another! Twenty strong hands grappled the gunwale of the skiff with the tenacity of desperation. There was a struggle, a loud shout, a heavy plunge, and the last remnant of the *Blanche Navire* went down, actually dragged from beneath the few survivors by the despairing hands of those whom she could not have saved or succored had she been of ten times her burden.

All, all went down! There was a long and awful pause, and then a slight splash broke the silence, a faint and gurgling sigh, and a strong swimmer rose and shook the brine from his dark locks; and lo, he was alone upon the deep! Something he saw at a brief distance, distinct and dark, floating upon the surface, and with a vigorous stroke he neared it—a fragment of a broken spar. Hope quickened at his heart, and love of life, almost forgotten in the immediate agony and terror, returned

in all its natural strength. He seized a rope, and by its aid reared himself out of the abyss ; and now he sat, securely as he deemed it, upon a floating fragment on which, one little hour before, he would not have embarked for all the wealth of India. Scarcely had he reached his temporary place of safety, before another of the sufferers swam feebly up and joined him, and then a third, the last of the survivors. The first who reached the spar—it was no other than Fitz-Stephen—had perused with an anxiety the most sickening and painful the faces of the new-comers : he knew them, but they were not the features he would have given his own life to see in safety—Berault, a butcher of Rouen, and Godfrey, a renowned and gallant youth, the son of Gilbert, count de L'Aigle. “The prince—where is the prince?” Fitz-Stephen cried to each, as he arrived ; “hast thou not seen the prince?” And each, in turn, replied : “He never rose again—he, nor his brothers, nor his sister, nor his bride, nor one of all their company!”—“Wo be to me!” Fitz-Stephen cried, and letting go his hold, deliberately sank into the whirling waters ; and, though a strong man and an active swimmer, chose to die with the victims whom his rashness had destroyed, rather than meet the indignation of their bereaved father, and bear the agonies of his own lifelong remorse.

Three days elapsed before the tidings reached King Henry, who in the fearful misery of hope deferred had lingered on the beach, trusting to hear that, from some unknown cause, the galley of his son might have put back to Barfleur. On the third day, Berault, the sole survivor of that night of misery, was brought in by a fishing-boat which had preserved him ; and, when he had concluded his narration, Robert of Normandy had been revenged, although his wrongs had been a hundred-fold more flagrant than they were. Henry, though he lived years, NEVER SMILED AGAIN !

THE SAXON'S BRIDAL.

THERE are times in England when the merry month of May is not, as it would now appear, merely a poet's fiction; when the air is indeed mild and balmy, and the more conspicuously so, that it succeeds the furious gusts and driving hailstorms of the boisterous March, the fickle sunshine and capricious rains of April. One of these singular epochs in the history of weather it was in which events occurred, which remained unforgotten for many a day, in the green wilds of Charnwood forest.

It was upon a soft, sweet morning, toward the latter end of the month, and surely nothing more delicious could have been conceived by the fancy of the poet. The low west wind was fanning itself among the tender leaves of the new-budded trees, and stealing over the deep meadows, all redolent with dewy wild flowers, waving them with a gentle motion, and borrowing a thousand perfumes from their bosoms. The hedgerows were as white with the dense blossoms of the hawthorn as though they had been powdered over by an untimely snowstorm; while everywhere along the wooded banks the saffron primrose and its sweet sister of the spring, the violet, were sunning their unnumbered blossoms in the calm warmth of the vernal sunshine. The heavens, of a pure, transparent blue, were laughing with a genial lustre, not flooded by the dazzling glare of

midsummer, but pouring over all beneath their influence a lovely, gentle light, in perfect keeping with the style of the young scenery; and all the air was literally vocal with the notes of innumerable birds, from the proud lark, "rejoicing at heaven's gate," to the thrush and blackbird, trilling their full, rich chants from every dingle, and the poor linnet, piping on the spray. Nothing—no, nothing—can be imagined that so delights the fancy with sweet visions, that so enthrals the senses, shedding its influences even upon the secret heart, as a soft, old-fashioned May morning. Apart from the mere beauties of the scenery—from the mere enjoyment of the bright skies, the dewy perfumes that float on every breeze, the mild, unscorching warmth—apart from all these, there is something of a deeper and a higher nature in the thoughts called forth by the spirit of the time; a looking forward of the soul to fairer things to come; an excitement of a quiet hope within, not very definite, perhaps, nor easily explained, but one which almost every man has felt, and contrasted with the languid and pallid satiety produced by the full heat of summer, and yet more with the sober and reflective sadness that steals upon the mind as we survey the russet hues and the sere leaves of autumn. It is as if the newness, the fresh youth of the season, gave birth to a corresponding youth of the soul. Such are the sentiments which many men feel now-a-days, besides the painter, and the poet, and the soul-rapt enthusiast of nature: but those were iron days of which we write, and men spared little time in thought from action or from strife, nor often paused to note their own sensations, much less to ponder on their origin or to investigate their causes.

The morning was such as we have described—the scene a spot of singular beauty within the precincts of the then-royal forest of Charnwood, in Leicestershire. A deep but narrow stream wound in a hundred graceful turns through the rich

meadow-land that formed the bottom of a small, sloping vale, which had been partially reclaimed, even at that day, from the waste; though many a willow-bush fringing its margin, and many a waving ash, fluttering its delicate tresses in the air, betrayed the woodland origin of the soft meadow. A narrow road swept down the hill, with a course little less serpentine than that of the river below, and crossed it by a small, one-arched stone bridge, overshadowed by a gigantic oak-tree, and scaled the opposite acclivity in two or three sharp, sandy zig-zags. Both the hillsides were clothed with forest, but still the nature of the soil or some accidental causes had rendered the wood as different as possible; for, on the farther side of the stream, the ground was everywhere visibly covered by a short, mossy turf, softer and more elastic to the foot than the most exquisite carpet that ever issued from the looms of Persia, and overshadowed by huge and scattered oaks, growing so far apart that the eye could range far between their shadowy vistas; while on the nearer slope—the foreground, as it might be called, of the picture—all was a dense and confused mass of tangled shrubbery and verdure. Thickets of old, gnarled thorn-bushes, completely overrun and matted with woodbines; coppices of young ash, with hazel interspersed, and eglantine and dog-roses thickly set between; clumps of the prickly gorse and plumelike broom, all starry with their golden flowerets, and fern so wildly luxuriant, that in many places it would have concealed the head of the tallest man, covered the ground for many a mile through which the narrow road meandered.

There was one object more in view—one which spoke of man even in that solitude, and man in his better aspect. It was the slated roof and belfry, all overgrown with moss and stone-crop, of a small wayside chapel, in the old Saxon architecture, peering out from the shadows of the tall oaks which overhung it in the far distance. It was, as we have said, very small, in

the old Saxon architecture, consisting, in fact, merely of a vaulted roof supported upon four squat, massy columns, whence sprung the four groined ribs which met in the centre of the arch. Three sides alone of this primitive place of worship, which would have contained with difficulty forty persons, were walled in, the front presenting one wide, open arch, richly and quaintly sculptured with the indented wolf's teeth of the first Saxon style. Small as it was, however, the little chapel had its high altar, with the crucifix and candle, its reading-desk of old black oak, its font, and pix, and chalices, and all the adjuncts of the Roman ritual. A little way to the left might be discovered the low, thatched eaves of a rustic cottage, framed of the unbarked stems of forest-trees—the abode, probably, of the officiating priest; and close beside the walls of the little church a consecrated well, protected from the sun by a stone vault, of architecture corresponding to the chapel.

Upon the nearer slope, not far from the roadside, but entirely concealed from passers by the nature of the ground and the dense thickets, there were collected, at an early hour of the morning, five men, with as many horses, who seemed to be awaiting, in a sort of ambush, some persons whom they would attack at unawares. The leader of the party, as he might be considered, as much from his appearance as from the deference shown to him by the others, was a tall, active, powerful man, of thirty-eight or forty years, with a bold and expressive countenance—expressive, however, of no good quality, unless it were the fiery, reckless daring which blazed from his broad, dark eye, and that was almost obscured by the cloud of insufferable pride which lowered upon his frowning brow, and by the deep, scar-like lines of lust, and cruelty, and scorn, which ploughed his weather-beaten features. His dress was a complete suit of linked chain-mail—hauberk, and sleeves, and hose—with shoes of plaited steel, and gauntlets wrought in scale,

covering his person from his neck downward in impenetrable armor. He had large gilded spurs buckled upon his heels, and a long, two edged dagger, with a rich hilt and scabbard, in his belt; but neither sword, nor lance, nor any other weapon of offence, except a huge steel mace, heavy enough to fell an ox at a single blow, which he grasped in his right hand; while from his left hung the bridle of a tall, coal-black Norman charger, which was cropping the grass quietly beside him. His head was covered by a conical steel cap, with neither crest, nor plume, nor visor, and mail-hood falling down from it to protect the neck and shoulders of the wearer.

The other four were men-at-arms, clad all in suits of armor, but less completely than their lord: thus they had steel shirts only, with stout buff breeches and heavy boots to guard their lower limbs, and iron skullcaps only, without the hood, upon their heads, and leather gauntlets upon their hands; but, as if to make up for this deficiency, they were positively loaded with offensive weapons. They had the long, two-handed sword of the period belted across their persons, three or four knives and daggers of various size and strength at their girdles, great battle-axes in their hands, and maces hanging at their saddle-bows. They had been tarrying there already several hours, their leader raising his eyes occasionally to mark the progress of the sun as he climbed up the azure vault, and muttering a brief and bitter curse as hour passed after hour, and those came not whom he expected.

“Danian,” he said at length, turning to the principal of his followers, who stood nearer to his person, and a little way apart from the others—“Danian, art sure this was the place and day? How the dog Saxons tarry! Can they have learned our purpose?”

“Surely not, surely not, fair sir,” returned the squire, “seeing that I have mentioned it to no one, not even to Raoul, or

Americ, or Guy, who know no more than their own battle-axes the object of their ambush. And it was pitch-dark when we left the castle, and not a soul has seen us here ; so it is quite impossible they should suspect—and hark ! there goes the bell ; and see, sir, see—there they come, trooping through the oak-trees down the hill !”

And indeed, as he spoke, the single bell of the small chapel began to chime with the merry notes that proclaim a bridal, and a gay train of harmless, happy villagers might be seen, as they flocked along, following the footsteps of the gray-headed Saxon monk, who, in his frock and cowl, with corded waist and sandalled feet, led the procession. Six young girls followed close behind him, dressed in blue skirts and russet jerkins, but crowned with garlands of white May-flowers, and May-wreaths wound like scarfs across their swelling bosoms, and hawthorn-branches in their hands, singing the bridal carol in the old Saxon tongue, in honor of the pride of the village, the young and lovely Marian. She was indeed the very personification of all the poet's dreams of youthful beauty—tall and slender in her figure, yet exquisitely, voluptuously rounded in every perfect outline, with a waist of a span's circumference, wide, sloping shoulders, and a bust that, for its matchless swell, as it struggled and throbbed with a thousand soft emotions, threatening to burst from the confinement of her tight-fitting jacket, would have put to shame the bosom of the Medicean Venus. Her complexion, wherever the sun had not too warmly kissed her beauties, was pure as the driven snow ; while her large, bright-blue eyes, red, laughing lip, and the luxuriant flood of sunny, golden hair, which streamed down in wild, artless ringlets to her waist, made her a creature for a prince's, or more, a poet's adoration.

But neither prince nor poet was the god of that fair girl's idolatry, but one of her own class, a Saxon youth, a peasant—

nay, a serf—from his very cradle upward the born thrall of Hugh de Mortemar, lord of the castle and the hamlet at its foot, named, from its situation in the depths of Charnwood, Ashby in the Forest. But there was now no graven collar about the sturdy neck of the young Saxon, telling of a suffering servitude; no dark shade of gloom in his full, glancing eye; no sullen doggedness upon his lip: for he was that day, that glad day, a freeman—a slave no longer—but free, free, by the gift of his noble master; free as the wild bird that sung so loudly in the forest; free as the liberal air that bore the carol to his ears. His frock of forest-green and buskins of the untanned deer-hide set off his muscular, symmetrical proportions, and his close-curved, short auburn hair showed a well-turned and shapely head. Behind this gay and happy pair came several maids and young men, two-and-two; and after these, an old, gray-headed man, the father of the bride—and leaning on his arm an aged matron, the widowed mother of the enfranchised bridegroom.

Merrily rang the gay, glad bells, and blithely swelled up the bridal chorus as they collected on the little green before the ancient arch, and slowly filed into the precincts of the forest shrine; but very speedily their merriment was changed into dismay and terror and despair, for scarcely had they passed into the sacred building, before the knight, with his dark followers, leaped into their saddles, and thundering down the hill at a tremendous gallop, surrounded the chapel before the inmates had even time to think of any danger. It was a strange, wild contrast, the venerable priest within pronouncing even then the nuptial blessing, and proclaiming over the bright young pair the union made by God, which thenceforth no man should dissever—the tearful happiness of the blushing bride, the serious gladness of the stalwart husband, the kneeling peasantry, the wreaths of innocent flowers; and at the gate, the

stern, dark men-at-arms, with their scarred savage features, and their gold-gleaming harness and raised weapons. A loud shriek burst from the lips of the sweet girl, as, lifting her eyes to the sudden clang and clatter that harbingered those dread intruders, she saw and recognised upon the instant the fiercest of the Norman tyrants—dreaded by all his neighbors far and near, but most by the most virtuous and young and lovely—the bold, bad baron of Maltravers. He bounded to the earth as he reached the door, and three of his followers leaped from their horses likewise, one sitting motionless in his war-saddle, and holding the four chargers. “Hold, priest!” he shouted, as he entered, “forbear this mummery; and thou, dog Saxon, think not that charms like these are destined to be clasped in rapture by any arms of thy slow, slavish race!” and with these words he strode up to the altar, seemingly fearless of the least resistance, while his men kept the door with brandished weapons. Mute terror seized on all, paralyzed utterly by the dread interruption—on all but the bold priest and the stout bridegroom.

“Nay, rather forbear thou, Alberic de Maltravers! These two are one for ever—wo be to those who part them!”

“Tush, priest—tush, fool!” sneered the fierce baron, as he seized him by the arm, and swinging him back rudely, advanced upon the terrified and weeping girl, who was now clinging to the very rails of the high altar, trusting, poor wretch, that some respect for that sanctity of place which in old times had awed even heathens, might now prevail with one whom no respect for anything divine or human had ever yet deterred from doing his unholy will.

“Ha! dog!” cried he, in fiercer tones, that filled the chapel as it were a trumpet, seeing the Saxon bridegroom lift up a heavy quarter-staff which lay beside him, and step in quietly but very resolutely in defence of his lovely wife—“Ha! dog

and slave, dare you resist a Norman and a noble?—back, serf, or die the death!” and he raised his huge mace to strike him.

“No serf, sir, nor slave either,” answered the Saxon, firmly, “but a freeman, by my good master’s gift, and a landholder.”

“Well, master freeman and landholder,” replied the other, with a bitter sneer, “if such names please you better, stand back—for Marian lies on no bed but mine this night—stand back, before worse come of it!”

“I will die rather,” was the answer.—“Then die! fool! die!” shouted the furious Norman, and with the words he struck full at the bare brow of the dauntless Saxon with his tremendous mace—it fell, and with dint that would have crushed the strongest helmet into a thousand splinters—it fell, but by a dexterous slight the yeoman swung his quarter-staff across the blow, and parried its direction, although the tough ash-pole burst into fifty shivers—it fell upon the carved rails of the altar and smashed them into atoms; but while the knight, who had been somewhat staggered by the impetus of his own misdirected blow, was striving to recover himself, the young man sprang upon him, and grappling him by the throat, gained a short-lived advantage. Short-lived it was indeed, and perilous to him that gained—for although there were men enough in the chapel, all armed with quarter staves, and one or two with the genuine brown bill, to have overpowered the four Normans, despite their war array—yet so completely were they overcome by consternation, that not one moved a step to aid him; the priest, who had alone showed any spark of courage, being impeded by the shrieking women, who, clinging to the hem of his vestments, implored him for the love of God to save them.

In an instant that fierce grapple was at an end, for in the

twinkling of an eye, two of the men-at-arms had rushed upon him and dragged him off their lord.

“Now by the splendor of God’s brow,” shouted the enraged knight, “thou art a sweet dog thus to brave thy masters. Nay, harm him not. Raoul”—he went on—“harm not the poor dog;”—as his follower had raised his battle-axe to brain him—“harm him not, else we should raise the ire of that fool, Mortemar! Drag him out—tie him to the nearest tree, and this good priest beside him—before his eyes we will console this fair one.” And with these words he seized the trembling girl, forcing her from the altar, and encircling her slender waist in the foul clasp of his licentious arms. “And ye,” he went on, lashing himself into fury as he continued,—“and ye churl Saxons, hence!—hence dogs and harlots to your kennels!”

No farther words were needed, for his orders were obeyed by his own men with the speed of light, and the Saxons overjoyed to escape on any terms, rushed in a confused mass out of the desecrated shrine, and fled in all directions, fearful of farther outrage. Meanwhile, despite the struggles of the youth, and the excommunicating anathemas which the priest showered upon their heads, the men-at-arms bound them securely to the oak-trees, and then mounting their horses, sat laughing at their impotent resistance, while with a refinement of brutality worthy of actual fiends, Alberic de Maltravers bore the sweet wife clasped to his iron breast, up to the very face of her outraged, helpless husband, and tearing open all her jerkin, displayed to the broad light the whole of her white, panting bosom, and poured from his foul, fiery lips a flood of lustful kisses on her mouth, neck, and bosom, under the very eyes of his tortured victim. To what new outrage he might have next proceeded, must remain ever doubtful, for at this very instant the long and mellow blast of a clearly-winded bu-

gle came swelling through the forest succeeded by the bay of several bloodhounds, and the loud, ringing gallop of many fast approaching.

“Ha!” shouted he, “ten thousand curses on him! here comes De Mortemar. Quick—quick—away! Here, Raoul, take the girl, buckle her tight to your back with the sword-belt, and give me your twohanded blade; I lost my mace in the chapel!—That’s right! quick! man—that’s right—now, then, be off—ride for your life—straight to the castle; we will stop all pursuit. Fare thee well, sweet one, for a while—we will conclude hereafter what we have now commenced so fairly!”

And as he spoke, he also mounted his strong charger, and while the man, Raoul, dashed his spurs rowel-deep into his horse’s flanks, and went off at a thundering gallop, the other four followed him at a slower pace, leaving the Saxons in redoubled anguish—redoubled by the near hope of rescue.

But for once villany was not permitted to escape due retribution, for ere the men-at-arms, who led the flight, had crossed the little bridge, a gallant train came up at a light canter from the wood, twenty or thirty archers, all with their long bows bent, and their arrows notched and ready, with twice as many foresters on foot, with hounds of every kind, in slips and leashes, and at their head a man of as noble presence as ever graced a court or reined a charger. He was clad in a plain hunting-frock of forest-green, with a black velvet bonnet and a heron’s plume, and wore no other weapon but a light hunting-sword—but close behind him rode two pages, bearing his knightly lance with its long pennon, his blazoned shield, and his twohanded broadsword. It was that brave and noble Norman, Sir Hugh de Mortemar. His quick eye in an instant took in the whole of the confused scene before him, and understood it on the instant.

“Alberic de Maltravers!” he cried, in a voice clear and loud as the call of a silver trumpet, “before God he shall rue it,” and with the words he snatched his lance from the page, and dashing spurs into his splendid Spanish charger, thundered his orders out with the rapid rush of a winter’s torrent. “Bend your bows, archers,—draw home your arrows to the head! stand, thou foul ravisher, dishonest Norman, false gentleman, and recreant knight! Stand on the instant, or we shoot! Cut loose the yeoman from the tree, ye varlets, and the good priest. Randal, cast loose the bloodhounds down to the bridge across yon knoll, and lay them on the track of that flying scoundrel. Ha! they will meet us.”

And so in truth they did; for seeing that he could not escape the deadly archery, Alberic de Maltravers wheeled short on his pursuers, and shouted his war-cry—“Saint Paul for Alberic!—false knight and liar in your throat. Saint Paul! Saint Paul! charge home,”—and with the words the steel-clad men-at-arms drove on, expecting by the weight of their harness to ride down and scatter the light archery like chaff. Unarmed although he was, De Mortemar paused not—not for a moment!—but galloped in his green doublet as gallantly upon his foe as though he had been sheathed in steel. He had but one advantage—but one hope!—to bear his iron-clad opponent down at the lance point, without closing—on! they came, on!—Maltravers swinging his twohanded sword aloft, and trusting in his mail to turn the lance’s point—De Mortemar with his long spear in rest—“Saint Paul! Saint Paul!”—they met! the dust surged up in a dense cloud! the very earth appeared to shake beneath their feet!—but not a moment was the conflict doubtful. Deep! deep! throughed his linked mail, and through his leathern jerkin, and through his writhing flesh, the grinded spear-head shove into his bosom, and came out at his back, the ash-staff breaking in the wound. Down he went, horse and

man!—and down, at one close volley of the gray goose shafts, down went his three companions!—one shot clear through the brain by an unerring shaft—the others stunned and bruised, their horses both slain under them. “Secure them,” shouted Hugh, “bind them both hand and foot, and follow,”—and he paused not to look upon his slain assailant, but galloped down the hill, followed by half his train, the bloodhounds giving tongue fiercely, and already gaining on the fugitive. It was a fearful race, but quickly over!—for though the man-at-arms spurred desperately on, his heavy Norman horse, oppressed, moreover, by his double load, had not a chance in competing with the proud Andalusian of De Mortemar. Desperately he spurred on—but now the savage hounds were up with him—they rushed full at the horse’s throat and bore him to the earth—another moment, Raoul was a bound captive, and Marian, rescued by her liege lord, and wrapped in his own mantle, was clasped in the fond arms of her husband!

“How now, good priest,” exclaimed Sir Hugh, “are these two now fast wedded?”

“As fast, fair sire, as the holy rites may wed them.”

“Then ring me, thou knave, Ringan, a death-peal! Thou, Gilbert, and thou, Launcelot, make me three halts, quick—nay! four—the dead knight shall swing, as his villany well merits, beside the living knaves!—Sing me a death-chant, priest, for these are judged to death, unhouselled and unshriven!”

Not a word did the ruffians answer, they knew that prayer was useless, and with dark frowning brows, and dauntless bearing, they met their fate, impenitent and fearless. For Marian begged their lives in vain. De Mortemar was pitiless in his just wrath! And the spurs were hacked from the heels of the dead knight, and the base halter twisted round his cold neck, and his dishonored corpse hung up upon the very tree to which

he had bade bind the Saxon bridegroom. And the death-peals were sung, and the death-hymn was chanted ; and ere the sounds of either had died away in the forest echoes, the three marauders writhed out their villain souls in the mild air, and swung three grim and ghastly monuments of a foul crime and fearful retribution — and this dread rite consummated the Saxon's bridal !

LEGENDS
OF
THE CRUSADERS.

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THE SYRIAN LADY;

A SKETCH OF THE CRUSADES.

“Yes, love indeed is light from heaven;
A spark of that immortal fire
With angels shared, by Allah given,
To lift from earth our low desire.
Devotion wafts the mind above,
But heaven itself descends in love.”—THE GLAOUR.

THERE is something in the first approach of spring—in the budding of the young leaves, the freshness of the genial atmosphere, the songs of the small birds, the increasing warmth and lustre of the sun—as contrasted with the gloomy winter which has just departed, that can not fail to awaken ideas of a gay and lively character in all hearts accessible to the influences of gratitude and love. In compliance, as it were, with this feeling, a custom has more or less generally prevailed among all nations, and in all ages, of celebrating the arrival of this season by merriment, and song, and rural triumph. Like many others, admirable practices of the olden time, the setting apart to joy and innocent festivity of the first of May is now gradually falling into neglect; but at the period of which we are about to treat, not Christmas itself could be observed with more reverential care than its inviting rival. On May-day, the evergreens which had decked the cottage and the church, the

castle and the cloister, gave way to garlands of such flowers as the mellowing influences of the season had already called into their existence of beauty and perfume; troops of morris-dancers paraded the public way with their fantastic dresses, glittering blades, and intricate evolutions; feasting and wassail, without which even pleasure itself was then deemed incomplete, prevailed on every side; in the crowded city, or in the secluded valley; in the hut of the serf, or in the turreted keep of his warlike lord; in the gloom of the convent, or in the glitter of the court, the same feelings were excited, the same animation glowed in every countenance, the same triumphant demonstrations of joy hailed the glad harbinger of sunshine and of summer.

In England, above all other lands—the merry England of antiquity—was this pleasing festival peculiarly dear to all classes of society; at all times a period eagerly anticipated, and rapturously enjoyed, never perhaps was its arrival celebrated by all men with wilder revelry, with more enthusiastic happiness, than on the year which had accomplished the deliverance of their lion-hearted monarch from the chains of perfidious Austria. It seemed to the whole nation as though, not only the actual winter of the year, with his dark accompaniments of snow and storm, but the yet more oppressive winter of anarchy and misrule, of usurpation and tyranny, were about to pass away from the people, which had so long groaned under the griping sway of the bad John, or been torn by the savage strife of his mercenary barons; while their legitimate and honored sovereign was dragging his dreary hours along in the dungeon, from which he had but now escaped, through the devoted fidelity and unrivalled art of the minstrel Blondel.

Now, however, the king was on the throne of his fathers, girt with a circle of three gallant spirits, who had shed their blood like water on the thirsty deserts of Syria; earning not

only earthly honor and renown, but, as their imperfect faith had taught them to believe, the far more lofty guerdon of eternal life. Now their national festival had returned—they were called upon by the thousand voices of nature to give the rein to Pleasure, and why should they turn a deaf ear to her inspiring call?

The streets of London—widely different indeed from the vast wilderness of walls, which has risen like a phoenix from the ashes of its predecessor, but even at that early age a vast and flourishing town—were thronged, from the earliest dawn, by a constant succession of smiling faces: old and young, men and maidens, grave citizens and stern soldiers, all yielding to the excitement of the moment, all hurrying from the intricate lanes of the city to greet their king, who had announced his intention of holding a court at Westminster, and proceeding thence, at high noon, to feast with the city dignitaries in Guildhall. The open stalls, which then occupied the place of shops, were adorned by a display of their richest wares, decorated with wreaths of a thousand bright colors;—steel harness from the forges of Milan; rich velvets from the looms of Genoa; drinking-cups and ewers of embossed gold, glittered in every booth. The projecting galleries, which thrust forward their irregular gables far across the narrow streets, were hung with tapestries of price; while garlands of flowers, stretched from side to side, and the profusion of hawthorn boughs, with their light green leaves and snowy blossoms, lent a sylvan appearance to the crowded haunts of the metropolis. From space to space the streets were guarded by the city-watch in their white cassocks and glittering head-pieces; while ever and anon the train of some great lord came winding its way, with led horses in costly caparison, squires and pages in the most gorgeous fashion of the day, the banner and the knightly armor of the baron borne before him, from his lodgings in the Minories, or the more

notorious Chepe. The air was literally alive with music and light laughter; even the shaven and cowled monk, as he threaded his way through the motley concourse—suffered the gravity of his brow to relax into a smile when he looked upon the undisguised delight of some fair girl, escorted by her trusty bachelor; now stopping to gaze on the foreign curiosities displayed in decorated stalls; now starting in affected terror from the tramp and snort of the proud war-horse, or mustering a frown of indignation at the unlicensed salutation of its courtly rider; now laughing with unsuppressed glee at the strange antics of the *mummers* and *morricers*, who, in every disguise that fancy could suggest, danced and tumbled through the crowded ways—heedless of the disturbance they excited, or the danger they incurred from the hoofs of chargers which were prancing along in constant succession, to display the equestrian graces and firm seat of some young aspirant for the honors of chivalry.

The whole scene was in the highest degree picturesque, and such as no other age of the world could afford. The happiness which, although fleeting and fictitious, threw its bright illumination over the whole multitude, oblivious of the cares, the labors, and the sorrows of to-morrow, afforded a subject for the harp of the poet, no less worthy his inspired meditations than the gorgeous coloring and the rich costume of the middle ages might lend to the pencil of a Leslie or a Newton.

In a chamber overlooking with its Gothic casements this scene of contagious mirth—alone, unmoved by the gay hum which told of happiness in every passing breeze—borne down, as it would appear, by the weight of some secret calamity—sat Sir Gilbert à-Becket, of glorious form and unblemished fame. The bravest of the brave on the battle-plain, unequalled for wisdom in the hall of council, he had been among the first of those bold hearts who had buckled on their mighty armor to

fight the good fight of Christianity—to rear the cross above the crescent—and to redeem the Savior's sepulchre from the contaminating sway of the unbeliever.

There was not one among the gallant thousands who had followed their lion-hearted leader from the green vales of England to the sultry sands of Palestine, whose high qualities had been more frequently tried, or whose undaunted valor was more generally acknowledged, than the knight à-Becket; there was not one to whose lance the chivalrous Richard looked more confidently for support, nor one to whose counsel he more willingly inclined his ear. In the last desperate effort before the walls of Ascalon—when, with thirty knights alone, the English monarch had defied the concentrated powers, and vainly sought an opponent in the ranks of sixty thousand mussulmans—his crest had shone the foremost in those fierce encounters which have rendered the name of the Melec Ric a terror to the tribes of the desert that has endured even to the present day. It was at the close of this bloody encounter, that, conquered by his own previous exertions rather than by the prowess of his foemen—his armor hacked and rent, his war-steed slain beneath him—he had been overwhelmed by numbers while wielding his tremendous blade beside the bridle-rein of his king, and borne away by the Saracens into hopeless captivity.

Days and months had rolled onward, and the limbs of the champion were wasted and his constitution sapped by the vile repose of the dungeon; yet never for an instant had his proud demeanor altered, or his high spirit quailed beneath the prospect of an endless slavery. All means had been resorted to by his turbaned captors to induce him to adopt the creed of Mohammed. Threat of torments such as was scarcely endured even by the martyrs of old; promises of dominion, and wealth, and honor; the agonies of thirst and hunger; the allurements of beauty almost superhuman—had been brought to assail the

faith of the despairing but undaunted prisoner : and each temptation had been tried but to prove how unflinching was his resolution, and how implicit his faith in that Rock of Ages which he had ever served with enthusiastic, at least, if erring zeal, and with a fervency of love which no peril could shake, no pleasure could seduce from its serene fidelity.

At length, when hope itself was almost dead within his breast ; when ransom after ransom had been vainly offered ; when the noblest moslem captives had been tendered in exchange for his inestimable head ; and, to crown the whole, when the no-longer united powers of the crusading league had departed from the shores on which they had lavished so much of their best blood—his deliverance from the fetters of the infidel was accomplished by one of those extraordinary circumstances which the world calls chance, but which the Christian knows how to attribute to the infinite mercies of an overruling Providence. The eagerness of the politic sultan—whose name ranks as high among the tribes of Islam as the glory of his opponents among the pale sons of Europe—to obtain proselytes from the nations which he had the sagacity to perceive were no less superior to the wandering hordes of the desert in arts than in arms, had led him to break through those laws which are so intimately connected with the religion of Mohammed—the laws of the harem ! As the pious faith of the western warrior appeared to gain fresh vigor from every succeeding temptation, so did the anxiety of his conqueror increase to gain over to his cause a spirit the value of which was daily rendered more and more conspicuous. In order to bring about this end, after every other device had failed, he commanded the admission to the Briton's cell of the fairest maiden of his harem—a maid whose pure and spotless beauty went further to prove her unblemished descent than even the titles which were assigned to the youthful Leila, of almost royal birth.

Dazzled by her charms, and intoxicated by the fascination of her manner, her artless wit, and her delicate timidity, so far removed from the unbridled passion of such other eastern beauties as had visited his solitude, the Christian soldier betrayed such evident delight in listening to her soft words, and such keen anxiety for a repetition of the interview, that the oriental monarch believed that he had in sooth prevailed. Confidently, however, as he had calculated on the conversion of the believing husband by the unbelieving wife, the bare possibility of an opposite result had never once occurred to his distorted vision. But truly has it been said, "*Magna est veritas et prævalebit!*" The damsel who had been sent to create emotion in the breast of another, was the first to become its victim herself: she whose tutored tongue was to have won the prisoner from the faith of his fathers, was herself the first to fall away from the creed of her race. Enamored, beyond the reach of description, of the good knight, whose attractions of person were no less superior to the boasted beauty of the oriental nobles, than his rich and enthusiastic mind soared above their prejudiced understandings, she had surrendered her whole soul to a passion as intense as the heat of her native climate; she had lent a willing ear to the fervid eloquence of her beloved, and had drunk in fresh passion from the very language which had won her reason from the debasing superstitions of Islamism to the bright and everlasting splendors of the Christian faith. From this moment the eastern maid became the bride of his affections, the solace of his weary hours, the object of his brightest hopes. He had discovered that she was worthy of his love; he was sure that her whole being was devoted to his welfare; and he struggled no longer against the spirit with which he had battled, as unworthy his country, his name, and his religion.

It was not long ere the converted maiden had planned the escape, and actually effected the deliverance, of her affianced

lover. She had sworn to join him in his flight ; she had promised to accompany him to his distant country, and to be the star of his ascendant destinies, as she had been the sole illuminator to his hours of desolation and despair.

Rescued from his fetters, he had lain in concealment on the rocky shores of the Mediterranean, anxiously awaiting the vessel which was to convey him to the land of his birth, and her whose society alone could render his being supportable. The vessel arrived : but what was the agony of his soul on learning that she whom he prized above light, and life, and all save virtue, had fallen a sacrifice to the furious disappointment of her indignant countrymen ! Maddened with grief, and careless of an existence which had now become a burden rather than a treasure, he would have returned to avenge the wrongs of his lost Leila, and perish on her grave, had not her emissaries—conscious that in such a case the fate which had befallen the mistress must undoubtedly be theirs likewise—compelled him to secure their common safety by flight.

After weary wanderings, he had returned a heart-stricken wretch to his native England, at that moment rejoicing with unfeigned delight at the recovery of her heroic king. He sometimes mingled in the labors of the council or the luxuries of the banquet, but it was evident to all that his mind was far away ! that for him there might indeed be the external semblance of joy, but that all within was dark and miserable ! It was plain that, in the words of the poet—

“That heavy chill had frozen o’er the fountains of the tears,
And though the eye may sparkle still, ’t is where the ice appears.”

On this morning of universal joy—to him a period fraught with the gloomiest recollections, for it was the anniversary of that sad day on which he had parted from the idol of his heart, never to behold her more !—on this morning he had secluded himself from the sight of men ; he was alone with his memory !

His eyes indeed rested on the letters of an illuminated missal which lay open before him ; but the long, dark lock of silky hair which was grasped in his feverish hand, showed too plainly that his grief was still of that harrowing and fiery character which prevents the mind from tasting as yet the consolations of Divine truth. He had sat thus for hours, unconscious of the passing multitude, whose every sound was borne to his unheeding ears by the fresh breeze of spring. His courtly robe and plumed bonnet, his collar, spurs, and sword, lay beside him, arranged for the approaching festival by his officious page ; but no effort could have strung his nerves or hardened his heart on that day to bear with the frivolous ceremonies and false glitter of a court. He recked not now whether his presence would lend a zest to the festival, or whether his absence might be construed into offence. The warrior, the politician, the man, were merged in the lover ! Utter despondency had fallen upon his spirit. Like the oak of his native forests, he was proud and unchanged in appearance, but the worm was busy at his heart. Even tears would have been a relief to the dead weight of despair which had benumbed his very soul ; but never, since that fatal hour, had one drop relieved the aching of his brain, or one smile gleamed across his haggard features. Mechanically he fulfilled his part in society : he moved, he spoke, he acted, like his fellow-men ; but he was now become, from the most ardent and impetuous of his kind, a mere creature of habit and circumstance.

So deeply was he now absorbed in his dark reveries, that the increasing clamor of the multitude had escaped his attention, although the character of the sounds was no longer that of unmingled pleasure. The voices of men, harsh and pitched in an unnatural key, rude oaths, and tumultuous confusion, proclaimed that, if not engaged in actual violence, the mob was at least ripe for mischief. More than once, during the continu-

ance of these turbulent sounds, had the plaintive accents of a female voice been distinctly audible—when on a sudden a shriek arose of such fearful import, close beneath the casements of the abstracted baron, that it thrilled to his very heart. It seemed to his excited fancy that the notes of a well-remembered voice lent their music to that long-drawn cry; nay, he almost imagined that his own name was indistinctly blended in that yell of fear.

With the speed of light he had sprung to his feet, and hurried to the lattice; but twice before he reached it, had the cry repeated, calling on the name of “Gilbert!” with a plaintive energy that could no longer be mistaken. He gained the embrasure, dashed the trellised blinds apart, and there—struggling in the licentious grasp of the retainers who ministered to the brutal will of some haughty noble—her raven tresses scattered to the winds of heaven, her turbaned shawl and flowing caftan rent and disordered by the rude hands of lawless violence—he beheld a female form of unrivalled symmetry, clad in the well-remembered garments of the East. Her face was turned from him, and the dark masses of hair which had escaped from their confinement entirely concealed her features; still there was an undefined resemblance which acted so keenly upon his feelings, that the thunder of heaven could scarcely burst with a more appalling crash above the heads of the guilty than did the powerful tones of the crusader as he bade them, “as they valued life, release the damsel!” With a rapid shudder which ran through every limb at his clear summons, she turned her head. It was—it was his own lost Leila! the high and polished brow; the eyes that rivalled in languor the boasted organs of the wild gazelle; the rapturous ecstasy that kindled every lineament as she recognised her lover’s form—

——— “the voice that clove through all the din,
As a lute’s pierceth through the cymbal’s clash,
Jarred but not drowned by the loud brattling” —

were all, all Leila's! To snatch his sword from its scabbard, to vault at a single bound from the lofty casement, to force his way through the disordered press, to level her audacious assailants to the earth, was but a moment's work for the gigantic power of the knight, animated as he now was by all those feelings which can minister valor to the most timid, and give strength to the feeblest arm! He beheld her whom he had believed to be snatched for ever from his heart, nor could hundreds of mail-clad soldiers have withstood his furious onset! He had already clasped his recovered treasure in one nervous arm, while with the other he brandished aloft the trusty blade, which had so often carried havoc and terror to the centre of the moslem lines; when the multitude, enraged at the interference of a stranger with what to them appeared the laudable occupation of persecuting a witch or infidel, seconded by the bold ruffians who had first laid hand upon the lovely foreigner, rushed bodily onward, threatening to overpower all resistance by the weight of numbers.

Gallantly, however, and at the same time mercifully, did Sir Gilbert à-Becket support his previous reputation. Dealing sweeping blows with his huge falchion on every side, yet shunning to use the point or edge, he had cleft his way in safety to the threshold of his own door. Yet even then the final issue of the strife was far from certain; for so sudden had been the exit of the baron, and from so unusual an outlet, that none of his household were conscious of their lord's absence, and the massy portal was closed against the entrance of the lawful owner. Stones and staves flew thick around him; and so fiercely did the leaders of the furious mob press upon his retreat, that, yielding at length to the dictates of his excited spirit, he dealt the foremost a blow which would have cloven him to the teeth though he had been fenced in triple steel; thundering at the same time with his booted heel against the oaken

leaves of his paternal gate, and shouting to page and squire within till the vaulted passages rang forth in startled echoes.

At this critical moment the din of martial music, which had long been approaching, heralded the royal procession; though so actively were the rioters engaged in their desperate onset, and so totally engrossed was the baron in the rescue of his recovered bride, that neither party were aware of it until its clangor rang close at hand, and a dazzling cavalcade of knights and nobles came slowly on the scene of action.

Of stature almost gigantic, noble features, and kingly bearing—his garb glittering with gold and jewels till the dazzled eye could scarcely brook its splendor; backing a steed which seemed as though its strength and spirit might have borne Goliath to the field; and wielding a blade which no other arm in Christendom could have poised even for a second—the lion-hearted Richard, followed by every noble of his realm, dashed with his native impetuosity into the centre.

“Ha! St. George!” he shouted, in a voice heard clearly above the mingled clang of instruments and the tumult of the conflict; “have ye no better way to keep our festival than thus to take base odds on one? Shame on ye, vile recreants! What, ho!” he cried, as he recognised the person of the knight, “our good comrade à-Becket thus hard bested! Hence to your kennels, ye curs of England!—dare ye match yourselves against the Lion and his brood?”

Loud rang the acclamations of the throng, accustomed to the blunt boldness of their warrior-king, and losing sight of his haughty language in joy for his return and admiration of the additional glory which had accrued to the whole nation from the prowess of its champion: “God save thee, gallant lion-heart! Never was so brave a knight! never so noble a king!”

Louder still was the wonder of the monarch and his assembled court when they learned the strange adventure which had

been brought to so fair a conclusion by their unexpected succor. The lady threatened with the lasting indignation of the royal Saladin, though never really in danger of life, had devised the false report of her own death—knowing that it were hopeless for her to dream of flight, so long as the eyes of all were concentrated on her in dark and angry suspicion; and knowing also that no dread of instant dissolution nor hope of liberty could have induced her devoted lover to have quitted the land while she remained in “durance vile.”

When the first excitement—caused by the escape of a prisoner so highly esteemed as was the bold crusader—had ceased to agitate the mussulman divan, and affairs had returned to their usual course—easily escaping from the vigilance of the haram guard, she had made good her flight to the seabathed towers of Venice, and thence to the classic plains of Italy. Then it was that the loneliness of her situation, the perils, the toils, the miseries which she must necessarily endure, weighed no less heavily on her tender spirits, than the unwonted labor of so toilsome a journey on her delicate and youthful frame. Ignorant of any European language, save the name of her lover, and the metropolis of his far-distant country, her sole reply to every query was the repetition, in her musical, although imperfect accents, of the words—“London,” “Gilbert.” Marvellous it is to relate—and were it not, in good sooth, history too marvellous—that her talismanic speech did at length convey her through nations hostile to her race, through the almost uninhabited forest, and across the snowy barrier of the Alps, through realms laid waste by relentless banditti, and cities teeming with licentious and merciless adventurers, to the chalky cliffs and verdant meadows of England! For weeks had she wandered through the streets of the vast metropolis, jeered by the cruel, and pitied, but unaided, by the merciful—tempted by the wicked, and shunned by the virtu-

ous—repeating ever and anon her simple exclamation, “Gilbert, Gilbert!” till her strength was well nigh exhausted, and her spirits were fast sinking into utter despondency and despair.

On the morning of the festival she had gone forth with hopes renewed, when she perceived the concourse of nobles crowding to greet their king—for she knew her Gilbert to be high in rank and favor—and fervently did she trust that this day would be the termination of her miseries. Again was she miserably deceived; so miserably that, perchance, had not the very assault which had threatened her with death or degradation restored her, as it were by magic, to the arms of him whom she had so tenderly and truly loved, she had sunk that night beneath the pressure of grief and anxiety, too poignant to be long endured. But so it was not ordained by that perfect Providence, which, though it may for a time suffer bold vice to triumph, and humble innocence to mourn, can ever bring real good out of seeming evil; and whose judgments are so inevitably, in the end, judgments of mercy and of truth, that well might the minstrel king declare of old, in the inspired language of holy writ—

“I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.”

THE TRIALS OF A TEMPLAR;

A SKETCH OF THE CRUSADES.

“The Lord is on my side; I will not fear what can man do unto me.”

PSALM cxviii. 6.

A SUMMER-DAY in Syria was rapidly drawing toward its close, as a handful of European cavalry, easily recognised by their flat-topped helmets, cumbrous hauberks, and chargers sheathed like their riders, in plate and mail, were toiling their weary way through the deep sand of the desert, scorched almost to the heat of molten lead by the intolerable glare of an eastern sun. Insignificant in numbers, but high of heart, confident from repeated success, elated with enthusiastic valor, and inspiring sense of a holy cause, they followed the guidance of their leader, one of the best and most tried lances of the temple, careless whither, and secure of triumph; their steel armor glowing like burnished gold, their lance-heads flashing in the level rays of the setting orb, and the party-colored banner of the Beauseant hanging motionless in the still atmosphere.

Before them lay an interminable waste of bare and dusty plain, broken into long swells succeeding each other in monotonous regularity, though occasionally varied by stunted patches of thorny shrubs and dwarf palm-trees. As they wheeled round one of these thickets, their commander halted suddenly at the

sight of some fifty horsemen, whose fluttering garb and turbaned crowns, as well as the springy pace of their Arab steeds, proclaimed them natives of the soil, winding along the bottom of the valley beneath him, with the stealthy silence of prowling tigers. Although the enemy nearly trebled his own force in numerical power, without a moment's hesitation Albert of Vermandois arrayed his little band, and before the infidels had even discovered his presence, much less drawn a blade, or concentrated their scattered line, the dreaded war-cry rung upon their ears—"Ha! Beuseant! for the temple! for the temple!" and down thundered the irresistible charge of the western crusaders on their unguarded flank. Not an instant did the Saracens withstand the brunt of the Norman lance; they broke away on all sides, leaving a score of their companions stretched to rise no more on the bloody plain. Scarcely, however, had the victors checked their blown horses, or reorganized their phalanx, disordered by the hot struggle, when the distant clang of cymbal, horn, and kettle-drum mingled with the shrill *lelies* of the heathen sounding in every direction, announced that their march had been anticipated, their route beset, themselves surrounded. Hastily taking possession of the vantage-ground afforded by an abrupt hillock, and dismissing the lightest of his party to ride for life to the Christian camp, and demand immediate aid, Albert awaited the onset with the stern composure which springs from self-possession. A few minutes sufficed to show the Christians the extent of their embarrassment, and the imminence of their peril. Three heavy masses of cavalry were approaching them from as many different quarters; their gaudy turbans, gilded arms, and waving pennons of a hundred hues, blazing in marked contrast to the stern and martial simplicity of the iron soldiers of the west. To the quick eye of Albert it was instantly evident that their hope consisted in protracting the conflict till the arrival of succor; and

even this hope was diminished by the unwonted velocity with which the Mohammedans hurried to the attack. It seemed as if they also were aware that, in order to conquer, they must conquer quickly; for, contrary to their usual mode of fighting, they charged resolutely upon the very lances of the motionless Christians, who, in a solid circle, opposed their mailed breasts in firm array to their volatile antagonists. Fiercely, however, as they charged, their lighter coursers recoiled before the bone and weight of the European war-steeds. The lances of the crusaders were shattered in the onset; but to the thrust of these succeeded the deadly sweep of the twohanded swords, flashing above the cimiers of the infidel with the sway of some terrific engine. Time after time the eastern warriors rushed on, time after time they retreated, like the surf from some lonely rock on which it has wasted its thunders in vain. At length they changed their plan, and wheeling in rapid circles, poured their arrows in as fast, and for a time as fruitlessly, as the snow-storm of a December day. On they came again, right upon the point where Vermandois was posted, headed by a tall chieftain, distinguished no less by his gorgeous arms than by his gallant bearing. Rising in his stirrups, when at a few paces distance, he hurled his long javelin full in the face of the crusader. Bending his crest to the saddle-bow, as the dart passed harmlessly over him, Albert cast his massive battle-axe in return. The tremendous missile rustled past the chief at whom it was aimed, and smote his shield-bearer to the earth, at the very moment when an arrow pierced the templar's charger through the eyeball to the brain. The animal, frantic with the pain, bounded forward and rolled lifeless, bearing his rider with him to the ground; yet even in that last struggle the stern knight clave the turbaned leader down to the teeth before he fell. Five hundred horse dashed over him—his array was broken—his companions were hewn from their saddles, even before

their commander was snatched from beneath the trampling hoofs, disarmed, fettered, and reserved for a doom to which the fate of his comrades had been a boon of mercy. Satisfied with their success, and aware that a few hours at the farthest must bring up the rescue from the Christian army, the Saracens retreated as rapidly as they had advanced; all night long they travelled with unabated speed toward their inaccessible fastnesses, in the recesses of their wild mountains. Arrived at their encampment, the prisoner was cast into a dungeon hewn from the living rock. Day after day rolled heavily on, and Albert lay in utter darkness, ignorant of his destiny, unvisited by any being except the swart and bearded savage who brought the daily pittance, scarcely sufficient for the wants of his wretched existence.

Albert of Vermandois, a Burgundian youth of high nobility, and yet more exalted renown, had left his native land stung almost to madness by the early death of her to whom he had vowed his affections, and whose name he had already made "glorious by his sword," from the banks of the Danube to the pillars of Hercules. He had bound the cross upon his breast, he had mortified all worldly desires, all earthly passions, beneath the strict rule of his order. While yet in the flush and pride of manhood, before a gray hair had streaked his dark locks, or a single line wrinkled his lofty brow, he had changed his nature, his heart, his very being; he had attained a height of dignity and fame scarcely equalled by the best and noblest warriors of the temple. The vigor of his arm, the vast scope of his political foresight, no less than the unimpeached rigor of his morals, had long rendered him a glory to his brotherhood, a cause of terror and an engine of defeat to the Saracen lords of the Holy Land. Many a league had been formed to overpower, many a dark plot hatched to inveigle him; but so invariably had he borne down all odds in open warfare before

his irresistible lance, so certainly had he hurled back all secret treasons with redoubled vengeance on the heads of the schemers, that he was almost deemed the possessor of some cabalistic spell, framed for the downfall and destruction of the sons of Islam.

Deep were the consultations of the infidel leaders concerning the destiny of their formidable captive. The slaughter actually wrought by his hand had been so fearful, the ravages produced among their armies by his policy so unbounded, that a large majority were in favor of his instant execution; nor could human ingenuity devise, or brute cruelty perform, more hellish methods of torture than were calmly discussed in that infuriate assembly.

It was late on the third day of his captivity, when the hinges of his dungeon-grate creaked, and a broader glare streamed through the aperture than had hitherto disclosed the secrets of his prisonhouse. The red light streamed from a lamp in the grasp of a dark figure—an imaum, known by his high cap of lambskin, his loose black robes, his parchment cincture, figured with Arabic characters, and the long beard that flowed even below his girdle in unrestrained luxuriance. A negro, bearing food of a better quality, and the beverage abhorred by the prophet, the forbidden juice of the grape, followed—his ivory teeth and the livid circles of his eyes glittering with a ghastly whiteness in the clear lamp-light. He arranged the unaccustomed dainties on the rocky floor: the slave withdrew. The priest seated himself so that the light should reveal every change of the templar's features, while his own were veiled in deep shadow.

“Arise, young Nazarene,” he said, “arise and eat, for tomorrow thou shalt die. Eat, drink, and let thy soul be strengthened to bear thy doom; for as surely as there is one God, and one prophet, which is Mohammed, so surely is the black wing of Azrael outstretched above thee!”

“It is well,” was the unmoved reply. “I am a consecrated knight, and how should a templar tremble?—a Christian, and how should a follower of Jesus fear to die?”

“My brother hath spoken wisely, yet is his wisdom but folly. Truly hast thou said, ‘It is well to die;’ for is it not written that the faithful and the yaoor must alike go hence? But is it the same thing for a warrior to fall amid the flutter of banners and the flourish of trumpets—which are to the strong man even as the breath of his nostrils, or as the mild shower in seedtime to the thirsty plain—and to perish by inches afar from his comrades, surrounded by tribes to whom the very name of his race is a by-word and a scorn?”

“Now, by the blessed light of heaven!” cried the indignant soldier, “rather shouldst thou say a terror and a ruin; for when have the dogs endured the waving of our pennons or the flash of our armor? But it skills not talking—leave me, priest, for I abhor thy creed, as I despise thy loathsome impostor!”

For a short space the wise man of the tribes was silent; he gazed intently on the countenance of his foeman, but not a sign of wavering or dismay could his keen eye trace in the stern and haughty features. “Allah Acbar,” he said at length; “to God all things are possible: would the Christian live?”

“All men would live, and I am but a man,” returned the knight; “yet, praise be to Him where all praise is due, I have never shrunk from death in the field, nor can he fright me on the scaffold. If my Master has need of his servant, he who had power to deliver Israel from bondage, and Daniel from the jaws of the lion, surely he shall deliver my soul from the power of the dog. And if he has appointed for me the crown of martyrdom, it shall ne’er be said that Albert of Vermandois was deaf to the will of the God of battles and the Lord of hosts.”

“The wise man hath said,” replied the slow, musical notes of the priest, in strange contrast to the fiery zeal of the pris-

oner—"the wise man hath said, 'Better is the cottage that standeth firm than the tower which tottereth to its fall.' Will my brother hear reason? Cast away the cross from thy breast, bind the turban upon thy brow, and behold thou shalt be as a prince among our people!"

"Peace, blasphemer! I spit at thee—I despise, I defy thee! I, a worshipper of the living Jehovah, shall I debase myself to the camel-driver of Mecca? Peace! begone!" He turned his face to the wall, folded his arms upon his chest, and was silent. No entreaties, no threats of torment, no promises of mercy, could induce him again to open his lips. His eyes were fixed as if they beheld some shape, unseen by others; his brow was calm, and, but for a slight expression of scorn about the muscles of the mouth, he might have passed for a visionary.

After a time, the imaum arose, quitted the cell, and the warrior was again alone. But a harder trial was yet before him. The door of his prison opened yet once more, and a form entered—a being whom the poets in her own land of minstrelsey would have described under the types of a young date-tree, bowing its graceful head to the breath of evening; of a pure spring in the burning desert; of a gazelle, bounding over the unshaken herbage; of a dove, gliding on the wings of the morning! And of a truth she was lovely: her jetty hair braided above her transparent brow, and floating in a veil of curls over her shoulders; her large eyes swimming in liquid languor; and, above all, that indescribable charm—

"The mind, the music breathing from her face"—

her form slighter and more sylph-like than the maids of Europe can boast, yet rounded into the fairest mould of female beauty—all combined to make up a creature resembling rather a houri of Mohammed's paradise than

"One of earth's least earthly daughters."

For a moment the templar gazed, as if he doubted whether he were not looking upon one of those spirits which are said to have assailed and almost shaken the sanctity of many a holy anchorite. His heart, for the first time in many years, throbbed wildly. He bowed his head between his knees, and prayed fervently; nor did he again raise his eyes, till a voice, as harmonious as the breathing of a lute, addressed him in the lingua-Franca:—

“If the sight of his hand-maiden is offensive to the eyes of the Nazarene, she will depart as she came, in sorrow.”

The soldier lifted up his eyes, and saw her bending over him with so sad an expression of tenderness, that, despite of himself, his heart melted within him, and his answer was courteous and even kind: “I thank thee, dear lady, I thank thee for thy good will, though it can avail me nothing. But wherefore does one so fair, and it may well be so happy as thou art, visit the cell of a condemned captive?”

“Say not condemned—oh, say not condemned! Thy servant is the bearer of life, and freedom, and honor. She saw thy manly form, she looked upon thine undaunted demeanor, and she loved thee—loved thee to distraction—would follow thee to the ends of earth—would die to save thee—has already saved thee, if thou wilt be saved! Rank, honor, life, and love—”

“Lady,” he interrupted her, “listen! For ten long years I have not lent my ear to the witchery of a woman’s voice. Ten years ago, I was the betrothed lover of a maid, I had well-nigh said, as fair as thou art. She died—died, and left me desolate! I have fled from my native land; I have devoted to my God the feelings which I once cherished for your sex. I could not give thee love in return for thy love; nor would I stoop to feign that which I felt not, although it were to win, not temporal, but eternal life.”

“Oh! dismiss me not,” she sobbed, as she threw her white arms around his neck, and panted on his bosom; “oh! dismiss me not thus. I ask no vows; I ask no love. Be but mine; let my country be your country, my God yours—and you are safe and free!”

“My Master,” he replied coldly, as he disengaged her grasp, and removed her from his arms, “hath said, ‘What would it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?’ I have listened to thee, lady, and I have answered thee; but my heart is heavy—for it is mournful to see that so glorious a form should be the habitation of so frail a spirit. I pray thee, leave me! To-morrow I shall meet my God, and I would commune with him now in spirit and in truth!”

Slowly she turned away, wrapped her face in her veil, and moved with faltering steps—wailing as if her heart were about to burst—through the low portal. The gate clanged heavily as she departed; but the sounds of her lamentation were audible long after the last being, who would show a sign of pity for his woes, or of admiration for his merits, had gone forth, never again to return!

All night long the devotions, the fervent and heartfelt prayers of the crusader, ascended to the throne of his Master; and often, though he struggled to suppress the feeling, a petition for his lovely though deluded visiter was mingled with entreaties for strength to bear the fate he anticipated.

Morning came at last, not as in frigid climates of the North—creeping through its slow gradations of gray dawn and dappling twilight—but bursting at once from night into perfect day. The prison-gates were opened for the last time, the fetters were struck off from the limbs of the undaunted captive, and himself led forth like a victim to the sacrifice.

From leagues around, all the hordes of the desert had come together, in swarms outnumbering the winged notes that stream

like dusty atoms in every sunbeam. It was a strange, and, under other circumstances, would have been a glorious spectacle. In a vast sandy basin, surrounded on every side by low but rugged eminences, were the swarthy sons of Syria mustered, rank above rank, to feast their eyes on the unwonted spectacle of a Christian's sufferings. The rude tribes of the remotest regions, Arab and Turcoman, mounted on the uncouth dromedary, or on steeds of matchless symmetry and unstained pedigree, mingling their dark baracans with the brilliant arms and gorgeous garbs of the sultan's court—even the unseen beauties of a hundred harems watched from their canopied litters the preparations for the execution with as much interest and as little concern as the belles of our own day exhibit before the curtain has been drawn aside which is to disclose the performances of a Pedrotti or a Malibran to the enraptured audience.

In the centre of this natural amphitheatre stood the scathed and whitening trunk of a thunder-stricken palm. To this inartificial stake was the captive led. One by one his garments were torn asunder, till his muscular form and splendid proportions were revealed in naked majesty to the wondering multitude. Once, before he was attached to the fatal tree, a formal offer of life, and liberty, and high office in the moslem court, was tendered to him, on condition of his embracing the faith of the prophet—and refused by one contemptuous motion of his hand. He was bound firmly to the stump, with his hands secured far above his head. At some fifty paces distant, stood a group of dark and fierce warriors, with bended bows and well-filled quivers, evidently awaiting the signal to pour in their arrowy sleet upon his unguarded limbs. He gazed upon them with a countenance unmoved and serene, though somewhat paler than its usual tints. His eyes did not, however, long dwell on the unattractive sight: he turned them upward, and

his lips moved at intervals, though no sound was conveyed to the ear of the bystanders.

Some minutes had elapsed thus, when the shrill voice of the muezzin was heard, proclaiming the hour of matin-prayer in his measured chant: "There is no God but God, and Moham-med is his prophet!" In an instant the whole multitude were prostrate in the dust, and motionless as though the fatal blast of the simoom was careering through the tainted atmosphere. A flash of contempt shot across the features of the templar, but it quickly vanished in a more holy expression, as he muttered to himself the words used on a far more memorable occasion, by Divinity itself: "Forgive them, Lord; they know not what they do!"

The pause was of short duration. With a rustle like the voice of the forest when the first breath of the rising tempest agitates its shivering foliage, the multitude rose to their feet. A gallant horseman dashed from the cavalcade which thronged around the person of their sultan, checked his steed beside the archer-band, spoke a few hasty words, and galloped back to his station.

Another minute—and arrow after arrow whistled from the Paynim bows, piercing the limbs and even grazing the body of the templar; but not a murmur escaped from the victim—scarcely did a frown contract his brow. There was an irradiation, as if of celestial happiness, upon his countenance; nor could a spectator have imagined for a moment that his whole frame was almost convulsed with agony, but for the weapons quivering even to their feathered extremities in every joint, and the large blood-drops trickling like rain upon the thirsty soil!

Again there was a pause. Circled by his Nubian guard, and followed by the bravest and the brightest of his court, the sultan himself rode up to the bleeding crusader. Yet, even

there, decked with all the pomp of royalty and pride of war, goodly in person, and sublime in bearing, the monarch of the East was shamed—shamed like a slave before his master—by the native majesty of Christian virtue; nor could the prince at first find words to address the tortured mortal who stood at his feet with the serene deportment which would have be-seemed the judge upon his tribunal no less than the martyr at the stake.

“Has the Nazarene yet learned experience from the bitter sting of adversity? The skill of the leech may yet assuage thy wounds, and the honors which shall be poured upon thee may yet efface thine injuries—even as the rich grain conceals in its luxuriance the furrows of the ploughshare! Will the Nazarene live? or will he die the death of a dog?”

“The Lord is on my side,” was the low but firm reply—“the Lord is on my side: I will not fear what man doeth unto me!”

On swept the monarch’s train, and again the iron shower fell fast and fatally—not as before, on the members, but on the broad chest and manly trunk. The blood gushed forth in blacker streams; the warrior’s life was ebbing fast away—when from the rear of the broken hills a sudden trumpet blew a point of war in notes so thrilling, that it pierced the ears like the thrust of some sharp weapon. Before the astonishment of the crowd had time to vent itself in word or deed, the eminences were crowded with the mail-clad myriads of the Christian forces! Down they came, like the blast of the tornado on some frail and scattered fleet, with war-cry, and the clang of instruments, and the thick trampling of twice ten thousand hoofs. Wo to the sons of the desert in that hour! They were swept away before the mettled steeds and levelled lances of the templars like dust before the wind, or stubble before the devouring flame!

The eye of the dying hero lightened as he saw the banners of his countrymen. His whole form dilated with exultation and triumph. He tore his arm from its fetters, waved it around his blood-stained forehead, and for the last time shouted forth his cry of battle: "Ha! Beauseant! A Vermandois for the temple!" Then, in a lower tone, he cried: "'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'" He bowed his head, and his undaunted spirit passed away.

THE RENEGADO;

A SKETCH OF THE CRUSADES.

—————“how faint and feebly dim
The fame that could accrue to him
Who cheered the band, and waved the sword,
A traitor in a turbaned horde.”—SIEGE OF CORINTH.

FOR well nigh two long years had the walls of Acre rung to the war-cries and clashing arms of the contending myriads of Christian and Mohammedan forces, while no real advantage had resulted to either army, from the fierce and sanguinary struggles that daily alarmed the apprehensions, or excited the hopes of the besieged. The rocky heights of Carmel now echoed to the flourish of the European trumpet, and now sent back the wilder strains of the Arabian drum and cymbal. On the one side were mustered the gigantic warriors of the western forests, from the wild frontiers of Germany, and the shores of the Baltic; while on the other were assembled the Moslems of Egypt, Syria, and Arabia, the wandering tribes from the Tigris to the banks of the Indus, and the swarthy hordes of the Mauritanian desert. Not a day passed unnoted by some bloody skirmish or pitched battle;—at one time the sultan forced his way into the beleaguered city, and the next moment the crusaders plundered the camp of the Mohammedan. As often as by stress of weather the European fleet was driven from its

blockading station, so often were fresh troops poured in to replace the exhausted garrison ; and as fast as the sword of the infidel, or the unsparing pestilence, thinned the camp of the crusaders, so fast was it replenished by fresh swarms of pilgrims, burning with enthusiastic ardor, and aspiring to re-establish the dominion of the Latin kings within the precincts of the holy city.

Suddenly, however, the aspect of affairs was altered ; a change took place in the tactics of the paynim leaders—a change which, in the space of a few weeks, wrought more havoc in the lines of the invaders than months of open warfare. The regular attacks of marshalled front and steady fighting, wherein the light cavalry of the Turkish and Saracen tribes invariably gave way before the tremendous charges of the steel-clad knights, were exchanged for an incessant and harassing war of outposts. Not a drop of water could be conveyed into the Christian camp, unless purchased by a tenfold effusion of noble blood ; not a picket could be placed in advance of their position, but it was inevitably surrounded and cut off ; not a messenger could be despatched to any Latin city, but he was intercepted, and his intelligence rendered subservient to the detriment and destruction of the inventors.

Nor was it long before the author of this new system was discovered. In every affair a chieftain was observed, no less remarkable for his powerful make, far exceeding the stature and slight, though sinewy, frame of his oriental followers, than for his skill in disposing his irregular horsemen, so as to act with the greatest possible advantage against his formidable, but cumbersome opponents. His arms and equipment, moreover, distinguished him yet more clearly than his huge person from his paynim coadjutors. His brows indeed were turbaned, but beneath the embroidered shawl and glittering tiara he wore the massive *cerveilliere* and barred vizor of the European headpiece ;

instead of the fluttering caftan and light hauberk, his whole form was sheathed in solid mail ; the steed which he bestrode showed more bone and muscle than the swift but slender coursers of the desert, and was armed on chest and croup with plates of tempered steel. Nor, though he avoided to risk his light-armed troops against their invulnerable opponents, did he himself shrink from the encounter ; on the contrary, ever leading the attack and covering the retreat, it seemed his especial delight to mingle hand to hand with the best lances of the temple. Many a knight had fallen beneath the sweep of his tremendous blade, and these not of the unknown and unregarded multitude ; for it was ever from among the noblest and the best that he singled out his antagonists—his victims—for of all who had gone against him, not one had been known to return. So great was the annoyance wrought to the armies of the cross by the policy, as well as by the valor of the moslem chief, that every method had been contrived for overpowering him by numbers, or deceiving him by stratagem ; still the sagacity and foresight of the infidel had penetrated their deep devices, with a certainty as unerring as that with which his huge battle-axe had cloven their proudest crests.

To such a pitch had the terror of his prowess extended, that not content with the reality, in itself sufficiently gloomy, the soldiers had begun to invest him with the attributes of a superhuman avenger. It was observed, that save the gold and crimson scarf which bound his iron temples, he was black from head to heel-stirrup, and spur, and crest, the trappings of his charger, and the animal itself, all dark as the raven's wing—that, more than once since he had fought in the van of the mussulmans, strange shouts had been heard ringing above the *lelies* of the paynim, and repeating the hallowed war-cry of the Christian in tones of hellish derision—once, too, when he had utterly destroyed a little band of templars, a maimed and

wounded wretch, who had escaped from the carnage of his brethren, skulking beneath his lifeless horse, averred that, while careering at his utmost speed, the charger of the mysterious warrior had swerved in mad consternation from the consecrated banner, which had been hurled to the earth, and that the sullen head of the rider had involuntarily bowed to the saddle-bow as he dashed onward in his course of blood and ruin ; and in truth there was enough of the marvellous—in the activity by which he avoided all collision with a superior force, and in the victories which he bore off day by day from the men who, till he had come upon the stage, had only fought to conquer—to palliate, if not to justify, some vague and shadowy terrors, in an age when the truth of supernatural interference, whether of saints or demons, was believed as implicitly as the holy writ. Men, who a few weeks before would have gone forth to battle against a threefold array of enemies rejoicing as if to a banquet, now fought faintly, and began to look for safety in a timely retreat, rather than in the deeds of their own right hands, as soon as they beheld the sable form of that adversary, whom all regarded as something more than a mere human foe ; while many believed, that if not a natural incarnation of the evil principle, he was, at least, a mortal endowed with power to work the mischief designed for his performance, by the inveterate malignity of the arch-fiend himself. And it was a fact, very characteristic of the period at which these events occurred, that the most accomplished warriors of the time bestowed as much attention on the framing of periapt, and spell, and all the arms of spiritual war, as on their mere earthly weapons, the spear, the buckler, and the steed.

The middle watch of night was long passed. and the sky was overcast with heavy clouds—what little air was stirring came in blasts as close and scorching as though they issued from the mouth of an oven. The camp of the crusaders

was silent, and sleeping, all but the vigilant guards, ever on the alert to catch the faintest sound, which might portend a sally from the walls of the city, or a surprise of the indefatigable Saladin from without.

In the pavilion of Lusignan, the nominal leader of the expedition, all the chiefs of the crusade had met in deep consultation. But the debate was ended; one by one they had retired to their respective quarters, and the Latin monarch was left alone, to muse on the brighter prospects which were opening to his ambition in the approach of Philip Augustus and the lion-hearted Richard, at the head of such an array of gallant spirits as might justify his most extravagant wishes. Suddenly his musings were interrupted by sounds, remote at first, but gradually thickening upon his ear. The faint blast of a distant trumpet, and the challenge of sentries, was succeeded by the hurried tramp of approaching footsteps; voices were heard in eager and exulting conversation, and lights were seen marshalling the new-comers to the royal tent. A few moments, and a knot of his most distinguished knights stood before him, and, with fettered hands, and his black armor soiled with dust and blood, the mysterious warrior of the desert, a captive in the presence of his conquerors.

The narration of the victory was brief. A foraging-party had ridden forth on the preceding morning, never to return!—for, instructed by his scouts, the infidel had beset their march, had assaulted them at nightfall, and destroyed them to a man. But his good fortune had at last deserted him. A heavy body of knights, with their archers and sergeants, returning from a distant excursion, had come suddenly upon his rear when he was prosecuting his easy triumph. The moslems, finding themselves abruptly compelled to act on the defensive, were seized by one of those panics to which all night-attacks are so liable—were thrown into confusion, routed, and cut to pieces. Their

commander, on the first appearance of the Christians, had charged with his wonted fury, before he perceived that he was deserted by all, and surrounded past the hope of escape. Heretofore he had fought for victory, now he fought for revenge and for death; and never had he enacted such prodigies of valor as now when that valor was about to be extinguished for ever! Quarter was offered to him, and the tender answered by redoubled blows of his weighty axe. Before he could be taken, he had surrounded himself with a rampart of dead; and when at length numbers prevailed, and he was a prisoner, so deep was the respect of the victors toward so gallant a foe, that all former prejudices vanished: and when he had opposed the first attempt to remove his vizor, he was conveyed, unquestioned and in all honor, to the tent of the Latin king.

The time had arrived when further concealment was impracticable. The captive stood before the commander of the crusading force; and the rules of war, no less than the usages of that chivalrous courtesy practised alike by the warriors of the West and their oriental foemen, required that he should remove the vizor which still concealed his features. Still, however, he stood motionless, with his arms folded across his breast, resembling rather the empty panoply which adorns some hero's monument than a being instinct with life, and agitated by all the passions to which the mortal heart is liable. Words were addressed to him in the *lingua-Franca*, or mixed language, which had obtained during those frequent intervals of truce which characterized the nature of the holy wars—breaking into the bloody gloom of strife as an occasional ray of sunshine illuminates the day of storm and darkness—but no effect was produced by their sound on the proud or perhaps uncomprehending prisoner.

For a moment, their former terrors, which had vanished on the fall of their dreaded opponent, appeared to have regained

their ascendancy over the superstitious hearts of the unenlightened warriors : many there were who confidently expected that the removal of the iron mask would disclose the swart and thunder-stricken brow, the fiery glance, and the infernal aspect, of the prince of darkness ! No resistance was offered when the chamberlain of Guy de Lusignan stepped forward, and with all courtesy unlaced the fastenings of the casque and gorget. The clasps gave way, and scarcely could a deeper consternation or a more manifest astonishment have fallen upon the beholders had the king of terrors himself glared forth in awful revelation from that iron panoply. It was no dark-complexioned Saracen—

“In shadowed livery of the burnished sun,”

with whiskered lip and aquiline features, who struck such a chill by his appearance on every heart. The pale skin, the full blue eye, the fair curls that clustered round the lofty brow, bespoke an unmixed descent from the tribes of some northern land of mountain and forest ; and that eye, that brow, those lineaments, were all familiar to the shuddering circle as the reflexion of their own in the polished mirror.

One name burst at once from every lip in accents of the deepest scorn. It was the name of one whose titles had stood highest upon their lists of fame ; whose deeds had been celebrated by many a wandering minstrel even among the remote hills of Caledonia or the morasses of green Erin ; the valor of whose heart and the strength of whose arm had been related far and near by many a pilgrim ; whose untimely fall had been mourned by many a maid beside the banks of his native Rhine ! —“Arnold of Falkenhorst !” The frame of the culprit was convulsed till the meshes of his linked mail clattered from the nervous motion of the limbs which they enclosed ; a crimson flush passed across his countenance, but not a word escaped

from his lips, and he gazed straight before him with a unmeaning stare—how sadly changed from the glance which would so short a time ago have quelled with disdainful lightning the slightest opposition to his pride!

For an instant all remained petrified, as if by the shock and vexation of spirit. The next moment the captive, with naked weapons and bare hands, was exposed to immediate destruction to the wretched

Scarcely, however, was this spirit checked by the grand-master of the order, who stood at the seat of Lusignan. He threw himself between the victim and the uplifted weapons, and shed blood.

“Forbear!” he cried, in the deep tones of detestation. “forbear, soldiers of the cross, and servants of the Most High God! Will ye contaminate your knightly swords with the base gore of a traitor to his standard, a denier of his God? Fitter the axe of the headsman, or the sordid gibbet, for the recreant and coward! Say forth, Beau Sire de Lusignan—have I spoken well?”

“Well and nobly hast thou spoken, Amaury de Montleon,” replied the monarch. “By to-morrow’s dawn shall the captive meet the verdict of his peers; and if they condemn him—by the cross which I wear on my breast, and the faith to which I trust for salvation, shall he die like a dog on the gallows, and his name shall be infamous for ever! Lead him away, Sir John de Crespigny, and answer for your prisoner with your head! And you, fair sirs, meet me at sunrise in the tiltyard: there will we sit in judgment before our assembled hosts, and all men shall behold our doom. ‘Till then, farewell!”

In the dogged silence of despair was the prisoner led away, and in the silence of sorrow and dismay the barons of that proud

d away from the presence of the king : and the night
 solitary and undisturbed.

At the hour of the appointed time for the trial, when
 the sun poured forth its many-tongued multitudes
 of the volatile Frenchman, the proud and taci-
 tude Briton, and the less courtly knights
 crowded to the spot. It was a vast
 palisades, and levelled with the
 of that martial skill on which
 value, and provided with elevated
 es—now to be applied to a more
 silent, every feeling absorbed in
 every brow was knit, and every heart
 that sickening impatience which makes us
 that is concealed from our vision by the dark
 maturity, even if that all be the worst—

“The dark and hideous close,
 Even to intolerable woes!”

This expectation had already reached its highest pitch, when,
 as the sun reared his broad disk in a flood of radiance above
 the level horizon of the desert, a mournful and wailing blast of
 trumpets announced the approach of the judges. Arrayed in
 their robes of peace, with their knightly belts and spurs, rode
 the whilome monarch of Jerusalem, and the noblest chiefs of
 every different nation which had united to form one army under
 the guidance of one commander. Prelates, and peers, and
 knights—all who had raised themselves above the mass, in
 which all were brave and noble, by distinguished talents of
 either war or peace—had been convoked to sit in judgment
 on a cause which concerned no less the welfare of the holy
 church and the interests of religion than the discipline and

laws of war. The peers of France and England, and the dignitaries of the empire, many of whom were present, although their respective kings had not yet reached the shores of Palestine—were clad in their robes and caps of maintenance, the knights in the surcoats and collars of their orders, and the prelates in all the splendor of pontifical decoration. A strong body of knights, whose rank did not as yet entitle them to seats in the council, were marshalled like pillars of steel, in full caparison of battle, around the listed field, to prevent the escape of the prisoner, no less than to guard his person from premature violence, had such been attempted by the enthusiastic and indignant concourse.

Arnold of Falkenhorst—stripped of his Moorish garb, and wearing in its stead his discarded robes of knighthood, his collar and blazoned shield about his neck, his golden spurs on his heel, and his swordless scabbard belted to his side—was placed before his peers, to abide their verdict. Beside him stood a page, displaying his crested burgonet and the banner of his ancient house, and behind him a group of chosen warders, keeping a vigilant watch on every motion. But the precaution seemed needless: the spirits of the prisoner had sunk, and he seemed deserted alike by the almost incredible courage which he had so often displayed, and by the presence of mind for which he had been so widely and so justly famous. His countenance, even to his lips, was as white as sculptured marble, and his eyes had a dead and vacant glare; and scarcely did he seem conscious of the purpose for which that multitude was collected around him. Once, and once only, as his eye fell upon the fatal tree, which cast its long shadow in terrible distinctness across the field of judgment, with its accursed noose, and the ministers of blood around it, a rapid and convulsive shudder ran through every limb; it was but a momentary affection, and, when passed, no sign of emotion could be traced in

his person, unless it were a slight and almost imperceptible rocking of his whole frame from side to side, as he stood awaiting his doom. Utter despondency seemed to have taken possession of his whole soul; and the soldier who had looked unmoved into the very eye of death in the field, sunk like the veriest coward under the apprehensions of that fate which he had no longer the resolution to bear like a man.

The herald stepped forth, in his quartered tabard and crown of dignity, and the trumpeter by his side blew a summons on his brazen instrument that might have waked the dead. While the sounds were yet ringing in the ears of all, the clear voice of the king-at-arms cried aloud: "Arnold of Falkenhorst, count, banneret, and baron, hear! 'Thou standest this day before thy peers, accused of heresy and treason; a forsworn and perjured knight; a deserter from thy banner, and a denier of thy God; leagued with the pagan dogs against the holy church; a recreant, a traitor, and a renegado; with arms in thine hands wert thou taken, battling against the cross which thou didst swear to maintain with the best blood of thy veins! Speak! dost thou disavow the deed?"

The lips of Arnold moved, but no words came forth. It seemed as if some swelling convulsion of his throat smothered his utterance. There was a long pause, all expecting that the prisoner would seek to justify his defection, or challenge—as his last resource—the trial by the judgment of God. The rocking motion of his frame increased, and it almost appeared as if he were about to fall upon the earth. The trumpet's din again broke the silence, and the herald's voice again made proclamation:

"Arnold of Falkenhorst, speak now, or hear thy doom!—and then for ever hold thy peace!"

No answer was returned to the second summons; and, at the command of Lusignan, the peers and princes of the crusade

were called upon for their award. Scarcely had he ceased, before the assembled judges rose to their feet like a single man. In calm determination they laid each one his extended hand upon his breast, and, like the distant mutterings of thunder, was heard the fatal verdict—"Guilty, upon mine honor!"

The words were caught up by the myriads that were collected around, and shouted till the welkin rang: "Guilty, guilty!—To the gibbet with the traitor!"

As soon as the tumult was appeased, Guy de Lusignan arose from his lofty seat, and—the herald making proclamation after him—pronounced the judgment of the court:—

"Arnold of Falkenhorst, whilome count of the empire, belted knight, and sworn soldier of the cross! by thy peers hast thou been tried, and by thy peers art thou condemned! 'Traitor, recreant, and heretic—discourteous gentleman, false knight, and fallen Christian—hear thy doom! The crest shall be erased from thy burgonet; the spurs shall be hewn from thine heels; the bearings of thy shield shall be defaced; the name of thy house shall be forgotten! 'To the holy church are thy lands and lordships forfeit! On the gibbet shalt thou die like a dog, and thy body shall be food for the wolf and the vulture!"

"It is the will of God," shouted the assembled nations, "it is the will of God!"

As soon as the sentence was pronounced—painful, degrading, abhorrent as that sentence was—some portion of the prisoner's anxiety was relieved; at least, his demeanor was more firm. He raised his eyes, and looked steadily upon the vast crowd which was exulting in his approaching degradation. If there was no composure on his brow, neither was there that appearance of abject depression by which his soul and body had appeared to be alike prostrated. Nay, for an instant his eye flashed and his lip curled, as he tore the collar of knighthood and the shield from his neck, and cast them at the feet of

the herald, who was approaching to fulfil the decree. "I had discarded them before," he said, "nor does it grieve me now to behold them thus." Yet, notwithstanding the vaunt, his proud spirit was stung—stung more deeply by the sense of degradation than by the fear of death. The spurs which had so often goaded his charger to glory, amid the acclamations and admiration of thousands, were hacked from his heels by the sordid cleaver; the falcon-crest, which had once been a rallying-point and a beacon amid the dust and confusion of the fight, was shorn from his casque; the quarterings of many a noble family were erased from his proud escutcheon, and the shield itself reversed and hung aloft upon the ignominious tree. The pride which had burst into a momentary blaze of indignation, had already ceased to act upon his flagging spirits; and, when a confessor was tendered to him, and he was even offered the privilege of readmission within the pale of the church, he trembled.

"The crime—if crime there be—is his," he said, pointing toward Guy de Lusignan. "I had served him, and served the cross, as never man did, had he not spurned me with injury, and disgraced me before his court, when I sought the hand of her whom I had rescued by my lance from paynim slavery. Had I been the meanest soldier in the Christian army, my deeds had won me a title to respect, at least, if not to favor. De Lusignan and his haughty daughter drove me forth to seek those rights and that honor from the gratitude of the infidel which were denied by my brothers-in-arms. If I am a sinner, he made me what I am; and now he slays me for it! I say not, 'Let him give me the hand which he then denied me;' but let him spare my life, and I am again a Christian; my sword shall again shine in the van of his array; the plots, the stratagems, the secrets of the moslem, shall be his. I, even I, the scorned and condemned renegado, can do more to replace De Lusignan on

the throne of Jerusalem than the lances of ten thousand crusaders—ay, than the boasted prowess of Cœur de Lion, or the myriads of France and Austria! All this will I do for him—all this, and more—if he but grants me life. I can not—I dare not die!—What said I?—I a Falkenhorst, and dare not!”

“Thy life is forfeit,” replied the unmoved priest; “thy life is forfeit, and thy words are folly. For who would trust a traitor to his liege lord, a deserter of his banner, and a denier of his faith? Death is before thee—death and immortality! Beware lest it be an immortality of evil and despair—of the flame that is unquenchable—of the worm that never dies! I say unto thee, ‘Put not thy trust in princes,’ but turn thee to Him who alone can say, ‘Thy sins be forgiven!’ Bend thy knee before the throne of grace; pluck out the bitterness from thine heart, and the pride from thy soul; and ‘though thy sins be redder than scarlet, behold they shall be whiter than snow!’ Confess thy sins, and repent thee of thy transgressions, and He who died upon the mount for sinners, even he shall open unto thee the gates of everlasting life.”

“It is too late,” replied the wretched culprit, “it is too late! If I die guilty, let the punishment light on those who shall have sent me to my last account. Away, priest! give me life, or leave me!”

“Slave!” cried the indignant priest—“slave and coward, perish!—and be thy blood, and the blood of Him whom thou hast denied, upon thine own head!”

Not another word was spoken. He knew that all was hopeless—that he must die, unpitied and despised; and in sullen silence he yielded himself to his fate. The executioners led him to the fatal tree: his arms were pinioned—the noose adjusted about his muscular neck. In dark and gloomy despair he looked for the last time around him. He gazed upon the

lists, which had so often witnessed the display of his unrivalled horsemanship, and echoed to the applauses which greeted his appearance on the field of mimic war ; he gazed on many a familiar and once-friendly face, all scowling on him in hatred and disdain. Heart-sick, hopeless, and dismayed, he closed his aching eyes ; and, as he closed them, the trumpets, to whose cheering sound he had so often charged in glory, rang forth the signal of his doom ! The pulleys creaked hoarsely—the rope was tightened even to suffocation—and the quivering frame struggled out its last agonies, amid the unheeded execrations of the infuriate multitude !

“Sigh, nor word, nor struggling breath,
Heralded his way to death :
Ere his very thought could pray,
Unanealed he passed away,
Without a hope from mercy’s aid —
To the last, a renegade !”

LEGENDS
OF
FEUDAL DAYS.

THE FALSE LADYE.

CHAPTER I.

THERE were merriment and music in the Chateau des Tournelles—at that time the abode of France's royalty!—music and merriment, even from the break of day! That was a singular age, an age of great transitions. The splendid spirit-stirring soul of chivalry was alive yet among the nations—*yet!* although fast declining, and destined soon to meet its death-blow in the spear-thrust that hurled the noble Henry, last victim of its wondrous system, at once from saddle and from throne! In every art, in every usage, new science had effected even then mighty changes; yet it was the OLD WORLD STILL! Gunpowder, and the use of musketry and ordnance, had introduced new topics; yet still knights spurred their barbed chargers to the shock, still rode in complete steel—and tilts and tournaments still mustered all the knightly and the noble; and banquets at high noon, and balls in the broad daylight, assembled to the board or to the dance, the young, the beautiful, and happy.

There were merriment and music in the court, the hall, the staircase, the saloons of state! All that France held of beautiful, and bright, and brave, and wise, and noble, were gathered

to the presence of their king. And there were many there, well-known and honored in those olden days ; well-known and honored ever after. The first, in person as in place, was the great king ! the proud, and chivalrous, and princely ! becoming his high station at all times and in every place ; wearing his state right gracefully and freely—the second Henry !—and at his side young Francis, the king-dauphin ; with her, the cynosure of every heart, the star of that fair company—Scotland's unrivalled Mary hanging upon his manly arm, and gazing up with those soft, dovelike eyes, fraught with unutterable soul, into her husband's face—into her husband's spirit. Brissac was there, and Joyeuse, and Nevers ; and Jarnac, the renowned for skill in fence, and Vielleville ; and the cardinal Lorraine, and all the glorious Guises and Montmorenci, soon to be famous as the slayer of his king, and every peer of France, and every peerless lady.

Loud pealed the exulting symphonies ; loud sang the chosen minstrelsey—and as the gorgeous sunbeams rushed in a flood of tinted lustre through the rich many-colored panes of the tall windows, glancing on soft voluptuous forms and eyes that might outdazzle their own radiance, arrayed in all the pomp and pride of that magnificent and stately period—a more resplendent scene could scarcely be imagined. That was a day of rich and graceful costumes, when men and warriors thought it no shame to be adorned in silks and velvets, with chains of goldsmith's work about their necks, and jewels in their ears, and on their hatbands, buttons, and buckles, and swordhilts ; and if such were the sumptuous attire of the sterner and more solid sex, what must have been the ornature of the court ladies, under the gentle sway of such a being as Diane de Poitiers, the lovely mistress of the monarch, and arbitress of the soft follies of the court ?

The palace halls were decked with every fanciful variety,

some in the pomp of blazoned tapestries, with banners rustling from the cornices above the jocund dancers, some filled with fresh green branches, wrought into silver arbors, sweet garlands perfuming the air, and the light half excluded or tempered into a mild and emerald radiance by the dense foliage of the rare exotics. Pages and ushers tripped it to and fro, clad in the royal liveries, embroidered with the cognizance of Henry, the fuigist salamander, bearing the choicest wines, the rarest cates, in every interval of the surrounding dance. It would be tedious to dwell longer on the scene; to multiply more instances of the strange mixture, which might be witnessed everywhere, of artificial luxury with semibarbarous rudeness—to specify the graces of the company, the beauty of the demoiselles and dames, the stately bearing of the warrior nobles, as they swept back and forth in the quaint mazes of some antiquated measure, were a task to be undertaken only by some old chronicler, with style as curious and as quaint as the manners he portrays in living colors. Enough for us to catch a fleeting glimpse of the grand pageantry! to sketch with a dashy pencil the groups which he would designate with absolute and accurate minuteness!

But there was one among that gay assemblage, who must not be passed over with so slight a regard, since she attracted on that festive day, as much of wondering admiration for her unequalled beauties as she excited sympathy, and fear, in after-days, for her sad fortunes—but there was now no cloud upon her radiant beauty, no dimness prophetic of approaching tears in her large laughing eyes, no touch of melancholy thought upon one glorious feature—Marguerite de Vaudreuil, the heiress of a ducal fortune, the heiress of charms so surpassing, that rank and fortune were forgotten by all who gazed upon her pure, high brow, her dazzling glances, her seductive smile, the perfect symmetry of her whole shape and person! Her hair, of

the darkest auburn shade, fell in a thousand ringlets, glittering out like threads of virgin gold when a stray sunbeam touched them, fell down her snowy neck over the shapely shoulders and so much of a soft, heaving bosom—veined by unnumbered azure channels, wherein the pure blood coursed so joyously—as was displayed by the falling laces which decked her velvet boddice. Her eyes, so quick and dazzling was their light, almost defied description, possessing at one time the depth and brilliance of the black, melting into the softer languor of the blue—yet they were of the latter hue, and suited truly to the whole style and character of her voluptuous beauty. Her form, as has been noticed, was symmetry itself; and every movement, every step, was fraught with natural and unstudied grace. In sooth, she seemed almost too beautiful for mere mortality—and so thought many a one who gazed upon her, half drunk with that divine delirium which steeps the souls of men who dwell too steadfastly upon such wondrous charms, as she bounded through the labyrinth of the dance, lighter and springier than the world-famed gazelle, or rested from the exciting toil in panting abandonment upon some cushioned settle! and many inquired of themselves, could it be possible that an exterior so divine should be the tenement of a harsh, worldly spirit—that a demeanor and an air so frank, so cordial, and so warm, should be but the deceptive veil that hid a selfish, cold, bad heart. Ay, many asked themselves that question on that day, but not one answered his own question candidly or truly—no! not one man!—for in her presence he had been more or less than mortal, who could pronounce his sentence unmoved by the attractions of her outward seeming.

For Marguerite de Vaudreuil had been but three short months before affianced as the bride of the young Baron de La-Hirè—the bravest and best of Henry's youthful nobles. It had been a love-treaty—no matter of shrewd bartering of hearts—

no cold and worldly convenience—but the outpouring, as it seemed, of two young spirits, each warm and worthy of the other!—and men had envied him, and ladies had held her more fortunate in her high conquest, than in her rank, her riches, or her beauties; and the world had forgotten to calumniate, or to sneer, in admiration of the young glorious pair, that seemed so fitly mated. Three little months had passed—three more, and they had been made one!—but in the interval Charles de La-Hirè, obedient to his king's behest, had buckled on his sword, and led the followers of his house to the Italian wars. With him, scarcely less brave, and, as some thought, yet handsomer than he, forth rode upon his first campaign, Armand de Laguy, his own orphaned cousin, bred like a brother on his father's hearth; and, as Charles well believed, a brother in affection. Three little months had passed, and, in a temporary truce, Armand de Laguy had returned alone, leading the relics of his cousin's force, and laden with the doleful tidings of that cousin's fall upon the field of honor. None else had seen him die, none else had pierced so deeply into the hostile ranks; but Armand had rushed madly on to save his noble kinsman, and failing in the desperate attempt, had borne off his reward in many a perilous wound. Another month, and it was whispered far and near, that Marguerite had dried her tears already; and that Armand de Laguy had, by his cousin's death, succeeded, not to lands and to lordships only, but to the winning of that dead cousin's bride. It had been whispered far and near, and now the whisper was proved true. For on this festive day young Armand, still pale from the effects of his exhausting wounds, and languid from loss of blood, appeared in public for the first time, not in the sable weeds of decent and accustomed wo, but in the gayest garb of a successful bridegroom—his pourpoint of rose-colored velvet strewn thickly with seed-pearl and broideries of silver, his hose of rich white

silk, all slashed and lined with cloth of silver, his injured arm suspended in a rare scarf of the lady's colors, and, above all, the air of quiet confident success with which he offered, and that lovely girl received, his intimate attentions, showed that for once, at least, the tongue of rumor had told truth.

Therefore men gazed in wonder—and marvelled as they gazed, and half condemned!—yet they who had been loudest in their censure when the first whisper reached their ears of so disloyal love, of so bold-fronted an inconstancy, now found themselves devising many an excuse within their secret hearts for this sad lapse of one so exquisitely fair. Henry himself had frowned, when Armand de Laguy led forth the fair betrothed, radiant in festive garb and decked with joyous smiles—but the stern brow of the offended prince had smoothed itself into a softer aspect, and the rebuff which he had determined—but a second's space before—to give to the untimely lovers, was frittered down into a jest before it left the lips of the repentant speaker.

The day was well-nigh spent—the evening banquet had been spread, and had been honored duly—and now the lamps were lit in hall, and corridor, and bower; and merrier waxed the mirth, and faster wheeled the dance. The company were scattered to and fro, some wandering in the royal gardens, which overspread at that day most of the Isle de Paris; some played with cards or dice; some drank and revelled in the halls; some danced unwearied in the grand saloons; some whispered love in ladies' ears in dark sequestered bowers—and of these last were Marguerite and Armand—a long alcove of thick green boughs, with orange-trees between, flowering in marble vases, and myrtles, and a thousand odorous trees, mingling their perfumed shadows, led to a lonely bower, and there alone, in the dim starlight—alone indeed! for they might now be deemed as one, sat the two lovers. One fair hand of the

frail lady was clasped in the bold suitor's right, while his left arm, unconscious of its wound, was twined about her slender waist ; her head reclined upon his shoulder, with all its rich redundancy of ringlets floating about his neck and bosom, and her eyes, languid and suffused, fondly turned up to meet his passionate glances. "And can it be," he said, in the thick broken tones that tell of vehement passion, "and can it be that you indeed love Armand ? I fear, I fear, sweet beauty, that I, like Charles, should be forgotten, were I, like Charles, removed ; for him thou didst love dearly, while on me never didst thou waste thought or word."

"Him—never, Armand, never !—by the bright stars above us—by the great gods that hear us—I never—never *did* love Charles de La-Hirè—never did love man, save thee, my noble Armand. False girlish vanity and pique led me to toy with him at first ; now to my sorrow I confess it—and when thou didst look coldly upon me, and seemedst to woo dark Adeline de Courcy, a woman's vengeance stirred up my very soul, and therefore to punish thee, whom only did I love, I well nigh yielded up myself to torture by wedding one whom I esteemed indeed and honored, but never thought of for one moment with affection ; wilt thou believe me, Armand ?"

"Sweet angel, Marguerite !" and he clasped her to his hot, heaving breast, and her white arms were flung about his neck, and their lips met in a long fiery kiss.

Just in that point of time—in that soft melting moment—a heavy hand was laid quietly on Armand's shoulder—he started, as the fiend sprang up, revealed before the temper of Ithuriel's angel weapon—he started like a guilty thing from that forbidden kiss.

A tall form stood beside him, shrouded from head to heel in a dark riding-cloak of the Italian fashion ; but there was no hat on the stately head, nor any covering to the cold stern impas-

sive features. The high broad forehead as pale as sculptured marble, with the dark chestnut curls falling off parted evenly upon the crown—the full, fixed, steady eye, which he could no more meet than he could gaze unscathed on the meridian sun, the noble features, sharpened by want and suffering and wo—were all! all those of his good cousin.

For a moment's space the three stood there in silence—Charles de La-Hirè reaping rich vengeance from the unconquerable consternation of the traitor! Armand de Laguy bent almost to the earth with shame and conscious terror! and Marguerite half dead with fear, and scarcely certain if indeed he who stood before her were the man in his living presence, whom she had vowed to love for ever; or if it were but the visioned form of an indignant friend returned from the dark grave to thunderstrike the false disturbers of his eternal rest.

“I am in time”—he said at length, in accents slow and unflinching as his whole air was cold and tranquil—in time to break off this monstrous union!—Thy perjuries have been in vain, weak man; thy lies are open to the day. He whom thou didst betray to the Italian's dungeon—to the Italian's dagger—as thou didst then believe and hope—stands bodily before thee.”

A long heart-piercing shriek burst from the lips of Marguerite, as the dread import of his speech fell on her sharpened fears—the man whom she *had* loved—*first* loved!—for all her previous words were false and fickle—stood at her side in all his power and glory—and she affianced to a liar, a base traitor—a foul murderer in his heart!—a scorn and byword to her own sex—an object of contempt and hatred to every noble spirit!

But at that instant Armand de Laguy's pride awoke—for he *was* proud, and brave, and daring!—and he gave back the lie, and hurled defiance in his accuser's teeth.

“Death to thy soul!” he cried; “’tis thou that liest, Charles! Did I not see thee stretched on the bloody plain? did I not sink beside thee, hewed down and trampled under foot, in striving to preserve thee? And when my vassals found me, wert thou not beside me—with thy face scarred, indeed, and mangled beyond recognition—but with the surcoat and the arms upon the lifeless corpse, and the sword in the cold hand? ’Tis thou that liest, man!—’tis thou that, for some base end, didst conceal thy life, and now wouldst charge thy felonies on me; but ’twill not do, fair cousin! The king shall judge between us! Come, lady”—and he would have taken her by the hand, but she sprang back as though a viper would have stung her.

“Back, traitor!” she exclaimed, in tones of the deepest loathing; “I hate thee—spit on thee—defy thee! Base have I been myself, and frail, and fickle; but, as I live, Charles de La-Hirè—but as I live now, and will die right shortly—I knew not of this villany! I did believe thee dead, as that false murderer swore—and—God be good to me!—I did betray thee dead; and now have lost thee living! But for thee, Armand de Laguy—dog! traitor! villain! knave!—dare not to look upon me any more; dare not address me with one accent of thy serpent-tongue! for Marguerite de Vaudreuil, fallen although she be, and lost for ever, is not so all abandoned as, knowing thee for what thou art, to bear with thee one second longer—no! not though that second could redeem all the past, and wipe out all the sin—”

“Fine words, fine words, fair mistress! but on with me thou shalt!”—and he stretched out his arm to seize her, when, with a perfect majesty, Charles de La-Hirè stepped in and grasped him by the wrist, and held him for a moment there, gazing into his eye as though he would have read his soul; then threw him off with a force that made him stagger back ten paces be-

fore he could regain his footing. Then, then, with all the fury of the fiend depicted on his working lineaments, Armand unsheathed his rapier and made a full *longe*, bounding forward as he did so, right at his cousin's heart; but he was foiled again—for with a single, and, as it seemed, slight motion of the sheathed broadsword which he held under his cloak, Charles de La-Hirè struck up the weapon, and sent it whirling through the air to twenty paces' distance.

Just then there came a shout, "The king! the king!"—and, with the words, a glare of many torches, and with his courtiers and his guard about him, the monarch stood forth in offended majesty.

"Ha! what means this insolent broil? What men be these who dare draw swords within the palace precincts?"

"*My sword is sheathed, sire,*" answered De La-Hirè, kneeling before the king, and laying the good weapon at his feet—"nor has been ever drawn, save at your highness' bidding, against your highness' foes. But I beseech you, sire, as you love honesty and honor, and hate deceit and treason, grant me your royal license to prove Armand de Laguy recreant, base, traitorous, a liar, and a felon, and a murderer, hand to hand, in the presence of the ladies of your court, according to the law of arms and honor!"

"Something of this we have heard already," replied the king, "Baron de La-Hirè. But say out, now: of what accuse you Armand de Laguy? Show but good cause, and thy request is granted; for I have not forgot your good deeds in my cause against our rebel Savoyards and our Italian foemen. Of what accuse you Armand de Laguy?"

"That he betrayed me, wounded, into the hands of the duke of Parma; that he dealt with Italian bravos to compass my assassination; that by foul lies and treacherous devices he has trained from me my affianced bride; and last, not least, deprived

her of fair name and honor. This will I prove upon his body, so help me God and my good sword!"

"Stand forth and answer to his charge, De Laguy—speak out! what sayest thou?"

"I say," answered Armand, boldly—"I say that he lies! that he did feign his own death, for some evil ends, and did deceive me, who would have died to succor him; that I, believing him dead, have won from him the love of this fair lady, I admit—but I assert that I did win it fairly, and of good right; and, for the rest, I say he lies doubly when he asserts that she has lost fair name or honor! This is *my* answer, sire; and I beseech you grant *his* prayer, and let us prove our words, as gentlemen of France, and soldiers, forthwith, by singular battle!"

"Amen!" replied the king. "The third day hence, at noon, in the tiltyard, before our court, we do adjudge the combat—and this fair lady be the prize of the victor!"

"No, sire!" interposed Charles de La-Hirè, again kneeling; but before he had the time to add a second word, Marguerite de Vaudreuil, who had stood all the while with her hands clasped, and her eyes riveted upon the ground, sprang forth with a great cry.

"No! no! for God's sake! no! no! sire—great king—good gentleman—brave knight! doom me not to a fate so dreadful. Charles de La-Hirè is all that man can be of good, or great, or noble; but I betrayed him, whom I deemed dead, and he can never trust me living! Moreover, if he would take me to his arms, base as I am and most false-hearted, he should not; for God forbid that my dishonor should blight his noble fame. As for the slave De Laguy—the traitor and low liar—doom me, great monarch, to the convent or the block, but curse me not with such contamination! for, by the heavens I swear, and by the God that rules them, that I will die by my own hand before I wed that serpent!"

“Be it so, fair one,” answered the king, very coldly, “be it so; we permit thy choice—a convent or the victor’s bridal bed shall be thy doom, at thine own option! Meanwhile, your swords, sirs: until the hour of battle ye are both under our arrest. Jarnac, be thou godfather to Charles de La-Hirè; Nevers, do thou like office for De Laguy.”

“By God, not I, sire!” answered the proud duke. “I hold this man’s offence so rank, his guilt so palpable, that, on my conscience, I think your royal hangman were his best godfather!”

“Nevertheless, De Nevers, it shall be as I say! This bold protest of thine is all-sufficient for thine honor; and it is but a form! No words, duke! it must be as I have said! Joyeuse, escort this lady to thy duchess; pray her accept of her as the king’s guest, until this matter be decided. The third day hence at noon, on foot, with sword and dagger, with no arms of defence or vantage; the principals to fight alone, until one die or yield—and so God shield the right!”

CHAPTER II.

IT was a clear, bright day in the early autumn, when the royal tiltyard, on the Isle de Paris, was prepared for a deadly conflict. The tilt-yard was a regular, oblong space, enclosed with stout, squared palisades, and galleries for the accommodation of spectators, immediately in the vicinity of the royal residence of the Tournelles, a splendid Gothic structure, adorned with all the rare and fanciful devices of that rich style of architecture. At a short distance thence rose the tall, gray towers of Nôtre Dame, the bells of which were tolling minutely the dirge for a passing soul.

From one of the windows of the palace a gallery had been

constructed, hung with rich crimson tapestry, leading to a long range of seats, cushioned and decked with arras, and guarded by a strong party of gentlemen in the royal livery, with partisans in their hands, and sword and dagger at the belt. At either end of the list was a tent pitched: that at the right of the royal gallery a plain marquee of canvass, of small size, which had apparently seen much service, and been used in real warfare. The curtain which formed the door of this was lowered, so that no part of the interior could be seen from without; but a parti-colored pennon was pitched into the ground beside it, and a shield suspended from the palisades, emblazoned with bearings, which all men knew to be those of Charles Baron de La-Hirè, a renowned soldier in the late Italian wars, and the challenger in the present conflict. The pavilion at the left, or lower end, was of a widely-different kind—of the very largest sort then in use, completely framed of crimson cloth, lined with white silk, festooned and fringed with gold, and all the curtains looped up to display a range of massive tables, covered with snow-white damask, and loaded with two hundred covers of pure silver! Vases of flowers and flasks of crystal were intermixed upon the board with tankards, flagons, and cups and urns of gold, embossed and jewelled; and behind every seat a page was placed, clad in the colors of the counts de Laguy. A silken curtain concealed the entrance of an inner tent, wherein the count awaited the signal that should call him to the lists.

Strange and indecent as such an accompaniment would be deemed now-a-days to a solemn, mortal conflict, it was then deemed neither singular nor monstrous; and in this gay pavilion Armand de Laguy, the challenged in the coming duel, had summoned all the nobles of the court to feast with him, after he should have slain—so confident was he of victory—his cousin and accuser, Charles Baron de La-Hirè.

The entrances of the tiltyard were guarded by a detachment of the king's sergeants, sheathed cap-à-pie in steel, with shouldered arquebuses and matches ready lighted. The lists were strewn with sawdust, and hung completely with black serge, save where the royal gallery afforded a strange contrast by its rich decorations to the ghastly draperies of the battle-ground. One other object only remains to be noticed: it was a huge block of black oak, dented in many places as if by the edge of a sharp weapon, and stained with splashes of dark gore. Beside this frightful emblem stood a tall, muscular, gray-headed man, dressed in a leathern frock and apron, stained like the block with many a gout of blood, bare-headed and bare-armed, leaning upon a huge two-handed axe, with a blade of three feet in breadth. A little way aloof from these was placed a chair, wherein a monk was seated—a very aged man, with a bald head and beard as white as snow—telling his beads in silence until his ministry should be required.

The space around the lists and all the seats were crowded well-nigh to suffocation by thousands of anxious and attentive spectators; and many an eye was turned to watch the royal seats, which were yet vacant, but which it was well known would be occupied before the trumpet should sound for the onset. The sun was now nearly at the meridian, and the expectation of the crowd was at its height, when the passing-bell ceased ringing, and was immediately succeeded by the accustomed peal, announcing the hour of high noon. Within a moment or two, a bustle was observed among the gentlemen-pensioners; then a page or two entered the royal seats, and, after looking about them for a moment, again retired. Another pause of profound expectation, and then a long, loud blast of trumpets followed from the interior of the royal residence; nearer it rang and nearer, till the loud symphonies filled every ear and thrilled to the core of every heart: and then the king—the dignified

and noble Henry—entered with all his glittering court, princes, and dukes, and peers, and ladies of high birth and matchless beauty, and took their seats amid the thundering acclamations of the people, to witness the dread scene that was about to follow, of wounds, and blood, and butchery!

All were arrayed in the most gorgeous splendor—all except one, a girl of charms unrivalled (although she seemed plunged in the deepest agony of grief) by the seductive beauties of the gayest. Her bright, redundant auburn hair was all dishevelled; her long, dark eyelashes were pencilled in distinct relief against the marble pallor of her colorless cheeks; her rich and rounded form was veiled, but not concealed, by a dress of the coarsest serge, black as the robes of night, and thereby contrasting more the exquisite fairness of her complexion. On her all eyes were fixed—some with disgust, some with contempt, others with pity, sympathy, and even admiration. That girl was Marguerite de Vaudreuil—betrothed to either combatant; the betrayed herself, and the betrayer; rejected by the man whose memory, when she believed him dead, she had herself deserted; rejecting, in her turn, and absolutely loathing him whose falsehood had betrayed her into the commission of a yet deeper treason—Marguerite de Vaudreuil, lately the admired of all beholders, now the prize of two kindred swordsmen, without an option save that between the bed of a man she hated and the lifelong seclusion of the convent.

The king was seated; the trumpets flourished once again, and at the signal the curtain was withdrawn from the tent-door of the challenger, and Charles de La-Hirè stepped calmly out on the arena, followed by his god-father, De Jarnac, bearing two double-edged swords of great length and weight, and two broad-bladed poniards. Charles de La-Hirè was very pale and sallow, as if from ill health or from long confinement, but his step was firm and elastic, and his air perfectly unmoved

and tranquil. A slight flush rose to his pale cheek as he was greeted by an enthusiastic cheer from the people, to whom his fame in the wars of Italy had much endeared him; but the flush was transient, and in a moment he was as pale and cold as before the shout which hailed his entrance. He was clad very plainly in a dark, morone-colored pourpoint, with vest, trunk-hose, and nether socks of black-silk netting, displaying to admiration the outlines of his lithe and sinewy frame. De Jarnac, his godfather, on the contrary, was very foppishly attired with an abundance of fluttering tags, and ruffles of rich lace, and feathers in his velvet cap.

These two had scarcely stood a moment in the lists, before, from the opposite pavilion, De Laguy and the duke de Nevers issued, the latter bearing, like De Jarnac, a pair of swords and daggers. It was observed, however, that the weapons of De Laguy were narrow, three-cornered rapier-blades and Italian stilettoes; and it was well understood that on the choice of the weapons depended much the result of the encounter—De Laguy being renowned above any gentleman in the French court for his skill in the science of defence, as practised by the Italian masters; while his antagonist was known to excel in strength and skill in the management of all downright soldierly weapons, in coolness, in decision, presence of mind, and calm, self-sustained valor, rather than in sleight and dexterity. Armand de Laguy was dressed sumptuously—in the same garb, indeed, which he had worn at the festival whereon the strife arose which now was on the point of being terminated, and for ever!

A few moments were spent in deliberation between the godfathers of the combatants, and then it was proclaimed by De Jarnac that “the wind and sun having been equally divided between the two swordsmen, their places were assigned, and that it remained only to decide upon the choice of the weapons :

that the choice should be regulated by a throw of the dice, and that with the weapons so chosen they should fight until one or other should be *hors de combat*; but that in case that either weapon should be bent or broken, the seconds should cry, 'Hold!' and recourse be had to the other swords; the use of the poniard to be optional, as it was to be used only for parrying, and not for striking; that either combatant striking a blow or thrusting after the utterance of the word 'hold,' or using the dagger to inflict a wound, should be dragged to the block and die the death of a felon!"

This proclamation made, dice were produced, and De Nevers winning the throw for Armand, the rapiers and stilettoes which he had selected were produced, examined carefully, and measured, and delivered to the kindred foemen.

It was a stern and fearful sight; for there was no bravery nor show in their attire, nor aught chivalrous in the way of battle. They had thrown off their coats and hats, and remained in their shirt-sleeves and under-garments only, with napkins bound about their brows, and their eyes fixed each on the other's with intense and terrible malignity.

The signal was now given, and the blades were crossed, and on the instant it was seen how fearful was the advantage which De Laguy had gained by the choice of weapons; for it was with the utmost difficulty that Charles de La-Hirè avoided the incessant longes of his enemy, who, springing to and fro, stamping, and writhing his body in every direction, never ceased for a moment with every trick of feint, and pass, and flourish, to thrust at limb, face, and body, easily parrying himself with the poniard, which he held in his left hand, the less skilful assaults of his enemy. Within five minutes the blood had been drawn in as many different places, though the wounds were but superficial, from the sword-arm, the face, and thigh of De La-Hirè, while he had not as yet pricked ever so lightly his

formidable enemy. His quick eye, however, and firm, active hand, stood him in stead, and he contrived in every instance to turn the thrusts of Armand so far at least aside as to render them innocuous to life. As his blood, however, ebbed away, and as he knew that he must soon become weak from the loss of it, De Jarnac evidently grew uneasy, and many bets were offered that Armand would kill him without receiving so much as a scratch himself.

And now Charles saw his peril, and determined on a fresh line of action. Flinging away his dagger, he altered his position rapidly, so as to bring his left hand toward De Laguy, and made a motion with it as if to grasp his sword-hilt. He was immediately rewarded by a longe, which drove clear through his left arm close to the elbow-joint, but just above it. De Jarnac turned on the instant deadly pale, for he thought all was over; but he erred widely, for De La-Hirè had calculated well his action and his time, and that which threatened to destroy him proved, as he meant it, his salvation: for as quick as light, when he felt the wound, he dropped his own rapier, and grasping Armand's guard with his right hand, he snapped the blade short off in his own mangled flesh, and bounded five feet backward, with the broken fragment still sticking in his arm.

"Hold!" shouted each godfather on the instant; and at the same time De La-Hirè exclaimed, "Give us the other swords, give us the other swords, De Jarnac!"

The exchange was made in a moment: the stilettoes and the broken weapons were gathered up, and the heavy horse-swords given to the combatants, who again faced each other with equal resolution, though now with altered fortunes. "Now, De La-Hirè," exclaimed De Jarnac, as he put the well-poised blade into his friend's hand, "you managed that right gallantly and well: now fight the quick fight, ere you shall faint from pain and bleeding!"

And it was instantly apparent that such was indeed his intention. His eye lightened, and he looked like an eagle about to pounce upon his foe, as he drew up his form to its utmost height, and whirled the long new blade about his head as though it had been but a feather. Far less sublime and striking was the attitude and swordmanship of De Laguy, though he too fought gallantly and well. But at the fifth pass, feinting at his head, Charles fetched a long and sweeping blow at his right leg, and, striking him below the ham, divided all the tendons with the back of the double-edged blade; then, springing in before he fell, plunged his sword into his body, that the hilt knocked heavily at his breast-bone, and the point came out glittering between his shoulders! The blood flashed out from the deep wound, from nose, and ears, and mouth, as he fell prostrate; and Charles stood over him, leaning on his avenging weapon, and gazing sadly into his stiffening features. "Fetch him a priest," exclaimed De Nevers, "for by my halydom he will not live ten minutes!"

"If he live five," cried the king, rising from his seat, "if he live five, he will live long enough to die upon the block; for he lies there a felon and convicted traitor, and by my soul he shall die a felon's doom! But bring him a priest quickly."

The old monk ran across the lists, and raised the head of the dying man, and held the crucifix aloft before his glazing eyes, and called upon him to repent and to confess, as he would have salvation.

Faint and half-choked with blood, he faltered forth the words—"I do—I do confess guilty—oh! doubly guilty!—Pardon, O God!—Charles! Marguerite!"—and as the words died on his quivering lips, he sank down, fainting with the excess of agony.

"Ho, there!—guards, headsman!" shouted Henry; "off with him—off with the villain to the block, before he die an

honorable death by the sword of as good a knight as ever fought for glory !”

“Then De La-Hirè knelt down beside the dying man, and took his hand in his own and raised it tenderly, while a faint gleam of consciousness kindled the pallid features — “ May God as freely pardon thee as I do, O my cousin !” Then turning to the king —

“ You have admitted, sire, that I have served you faithfully and well. Never yet have I sought reward at your hand : let this now be my guerdon. Much have I suffered : even thus let me not feel that my king has increased my sufferings by consigning one of my blood to the headsman’s blow. Pardon him, sire, as I do, who have the most cause of offence ; pardon him, gracious king, as we will hope that a King higher yet shall pardon him and us, who be all sinners in the sight of his all-seeing eye !”

“ Be it so,” answered Henry ; “ it never shall be said of me that a French king refused his bravest soldier’s first claim upon his justice ! Bear him to his pavilion.”

And they did bear him to his pavilion, decked as it was for revelry and feasting ; and they laid him there, ghastly, and gashed, and gory, upon the festive board, and his blood streamed among the choice wines, and the scent of death chilled the rich fragrance of the flowers ! An hour, and he was dead who had invited others to triumph over his cousin’s slaughter ; an hour, and the court-lackeys shamefully spoiled and plundered the repast which had been spread for nobles !

“ And now,” continued Henry, taking the hand of Marguerite, “ here is the victor’s prize ! Wilt have him, Marguerite ? — ’fore Heaven, but he has won thee nobly ! Wilt have her, De La-Hirè ? — methinks her tears and beauty may yet atone for fickleness produced by treasons such as his who now shall never more betray, nor lie, nor sin, for ever ! —”

“Sire,” replied De La-Hirè, very firmly, “I pardon her; I love her yet!—but I wed not dishonor!”

“He is right,” said the pale girl, “he is right, ever right and noble; for what have such as I to do with wedlock? Fare thee well, Charles—dear, honored Charles! The mists of this world are clearing away from mine eyes, and I see now that I loved thee best—thee only! Fare thee well, noble one! forget the wretch who has so deeply wronged thee—forget me, and be happy. For me, I shall right soon be free!”

“Not so, not so,” replied King Henry, misunderstanding her meaning; “not so, for I have sworn it, and though I may pity thee, I may not be forsworn. To-morrow thou must to a convent, there to abide for ever!”

“And that will not be long,” answered the girl, a gleam of her old pride and impetuosity lighting up her fair features.

“By Heaven, I say for ever!” cried Henry, stamping his foot on the ground angrily.

“And I reply, not long!”

CHAPTER III.

A COLD and dark northeaster, had swept together a host of straggling vapors and thin lowering clouds over the French metropolis—the course of the Seine might be traced easily among the grotesque roofs and Gothic towers which at that day adorned its banks, by the gray ghostly mist which seethed up from its sluggish waters—a small fine rain was falling noiselessly, and almost imperceptibly, by its own weight as it were, from the surcharged and watery atmosphere—the air was keenly cold and piercing, although the seasons had not crept far as yet beyond the confines of the summer. The trees, for

there were many in the streets of Paris, and still more in the faubourgs and gardens of the haute noblesse, were thickly covered with white rime, as were the manes and frontlets of the horses, the clothes, and hair, and eyebrows of the human beings who ventured forth in spite of the inclement weather. A sadder and more gloomy scene can scarcely be conceived than is presented by the streets of a large city in such a time as that I have attempted to describe. But this peculiar sadness was, on the day of which I write, augmented and exaggerated by the continual tolling of the great bell of St. Germain's Auxerrois, replying to the iron din which arose from the gray towers of Nôtre Dame. From an early hour of the day the people had been congregating in the streets and about the bridges leading to the precincts of the royal palace, the Chateau des Tournelles, which then stood—long since obliterated almost from the memory of men—upon the Isle de Paris, the greater part of which was covered then with the courts, and terraces, and gardens of that princely pile.

Strong bodies of the household troops were posted here and there about the avenues and gates of the royal demesne, and several large detachments of the archers of the prévôt's guard—still called so from the arms which they had long since ceased to carry—might be seen everywhere on duty. Yet there were no symptoms of an émeute among the populace, nor any signs of angry feeling or excitement in the features of the loitering crowd, which was increasing every moment as the day waxed toward noon. Some feeling certainly there was—some dark and earnest interest, as might be judged from the knit brows, clinched hands, and anxious whispers which everywhere attended the exchange of thought throughout the concourse—but it was by no means of an alarming or an angry character. Grief, wonder, expectation, and a sort of half-doubtful pity, as far as might be gathered from the words of the

passing speakers, were the more prominent ingredients of the common feeling, which had called out so large a portion of the city's population on a day so unsuited to any spectacle of interest. For several hours this mob, increasing as it has been described from hour to hour, varied but little in its character, save that as the day wore it became more and more respectable in the appearance of its members. At first it had been composed almost without exception of artisans and shop-boys, and mechanics of the lowest order, with not a few of the cheats, bravoës, pickpockets, and similar ruffians, who then as now formed a fraternity of no mean size in the Parisian world. As the morning advanced, however, many of the burghers of the city, and respectable craftsmen, might be seen among the crowd; and a little later many of the secondary gentry and petite noblesse, with well-dressed women and even children, all showing the same symptoms of sad yet eager expectation. Now, when it lacked but a few minutes of noon, long trains of courtiers with their retinues and armed attendants, many a head of a renowned and ancient house, many a warrior famous for valor and for conduct might be seen threading the mazes of the crowded thoroughfares toward the royal palace.

A double ceremony of singular and solemn nature was soon to be enacted there—the interment of a noble soldier, slain lately in an unjust quarrel, and the investiture of an unwilling woman with the robes of a holy sisterhood preparatory to her lifelong interment in that sepulchre of the living body—sepulchre of the pining soul—the convent cloisters. Armand de Laguy!—Marguerite de Vaudreuil!

Many circumstances had united in this matter to call forth much excitement, much grave interest in the minds of all who had heard tell of it!—the singular and wild romance of the story, the furious and cruel combat which had resulted from it—and last not least, the violent, and, as it was generally con-

sidered, unnatural resentment of the king toward the guilty victim who survived the ruin she had wrought.

The story was, in truth, then, but little understood. A thousand rumors were abroad, and of course no one accurately true; yet in each there was a share of truth, and the amount of the whole was perhaps less wide of the mark than is usual in matters of the kind. And thus they ran: Marguerite de Vaudreuil had been betrothed to the youngest of France's famous warriors, Charles de La-Hirè, who after a time fell—as it was related by his young friend and kinsman Armand de Laguy—covered with wounds and honor. The body had been found outstretched beneath the survivor, who, himself desperately hurt, had alone witnessed and in vain endeavored to prevent his cousin's slaughter. The face of Charles de La-Hirè, as all men deemed the corpse to be, was mangled and defaced so frightfully as to render recognition by the features utterly hopeless; yet, from the emblazoned surcoat which it bore, the well-known armor on the limbs, the signet-ring upon the finger, and the accustomed sword clinched in the dead right hand, none doubted the identity of the body, or questioned the truth of Armand's story.

Armand de Laguy, succeeding by his cousin's death to all his lands and lordships, returned to the metropolis, and mixed in the gayeties of that gay period, when all the court of France was revelling in the celebration of the union of the dauphin with the lovely Mary Stuart, in after-days the hapless queen of Scotland.

He wore no decent and accustomed garb of mourning. He suffered no interval, however brief—due to decorum at least, if not to kindly feeling—to elapse, before it was announced that Marguerite de Vaudreuil, the dead man's late betrothed, was instantly to wed his living cousin! Her wondrous beauty, her all-seductive manners, her extreme youth, had in vain pleaded against the general censure of the court—the world. Men

had frowned on her for a while, and women sneered and slandered ; but after a little while, as the novelty of the story wore away, the indignation against her inconstancy ceased, and she was once again installed the leader of the court's unwedded beauties.

Suddenly, on the very eve of her intended nuptials, Charles de La-Hirè returned!—ransomed, as it turned out, by Brissac, from the Italian dungeons of the prince of Parma, and making fearful charges of treason and intended murder against Armand de Laguy. The king had commanded that the truth should be proved by a solemn combat ; had sworn to execute upon the felon's block whichever of the two should yield or confess falsehood ; had sworn that the inconstant Marguerite—who, on the return of De La-Hirè, had returned instantly to her former feelings, asserting her perfect confidence in the truth of Charles, the treachery of Armand—should either wed the victor, or live and die the inmate of the most rigorous convent in his realm.

The battle had been fought yesterday ! Armand de Laguy fell, mortally wounded by his wronged cousin's hand, and with his latest breath declared his treasons, and implored pardon from his king, his kinsman, and his God—happy to perish by a brave man's sword, not by a headman's axe. And Marguerite, the victor's prize—rejected by the man she had betrayed—herself refusing, even if he were willing, to wed with him whom she could but dishonor—had now no option save death or the detested cloister.

And now men pitied—women wept—all frowned, and wondered, and kept silence. That a young, vain, capricious beauty—the pet and spoiled child from her very cradle of a gay and luxurious court, worshipped for her charms like a second Aphrodite, intoxicated with the love of admiration—that such a

one should be inconstant, fickle—should swerve from her fealty to the dead—a questionable fealty always—and be won to a rash second love by the falsehood and treasons of a man young, and brave, and handsome—falsehood which had deceived wise men—that such should be the course of events, men said, was neither strange nor monstrous! It was a fault, a lapse, of which she had been guilty—which might indeed make her future faith suspected, which would surely justify Charles de La-Hirè in casting back her proffered hand—but which at the worst was venial, and deserving no such doom as the soul-chilling cloister.

She had, they said, in no respect participated in the guilt or shared the treacheries of Armand. On the contrary, she, the victim of his fraud, had been the first to denounce, to spit at, to defy him.

Moreover, it was understood that, although De La-Hirè had refused her hand, several of equal and even higher birth than he had offered to redeem her from the cloister by taking her to wife of their free choice. Jarnac had claimed the beauty, and it was whispered that the duke de Nevers had sued to Henry vainly for the fair hand of the unwilling novice.

But the king was relentless. “Either the wife of De La-Hirè, or the bride of God in the cloister!” was his unvarying reply. No further answer would he give—no disclosure of his motives would he make, even to his wisest councillors. Some, indeed, augured that the good monarch’s anger was but feigned, and that, deeming her sufficiently punished already, he was desirous still of forcing her to be the bride of him to whom she had been destined, and whom she still, despite her brief inconstancy, unquestionably worshipped in her heart; for all men still supposed that at the last Charles would forgive the hapless girl, and so relieve her from the living tomb that even now seemed yawning to enclose her. But others—and

they were those who understood the best mood of France's second Henry—vowed that the wrath was real; and felt that, though no man could fathom the cause of his stern ire, he never would forgive the guilty girl, whose frailty, as he swore, had caused such strife and bloodshed.

But now it was high noon; and forth filed from the palace-gates a long and glittering train—Henry and all his court, with all the rank and beauty of the realm, knights, nobles, peers and princes, damsels and dames—the pride of France and Europe. But at the monarch's right walked one, clad in no gay attire—pale, languid, wounded, and warworn—Charles de La-Hirè, the victor. A sad, deep gloom o'ercast his large dark eye, and threw a shadow over his massy forehead. His lip had forgot to smile, his glance to lighten; yet was there no remorse, no doubt, no wavering in his calm, noble features—only fixed, settled sorrow. His long and waving hair of the darkest chestnut, evenly parted on his crown, fell down on either cheek, and flowed over the broad, plain collar of his shirt, which, decked with no embroidery-lace, was folded back over the cape of a plain black pourpoint, made of fine cloth indeed, but neither laced nor passemented, nor even slashed with velvet; a broad scarf of black taffeta supported his weapon—a heavy, double-edged, straight broadsword—and served at the same time to support his left arm, the sleeve of which hung open, tied in with points of riband; his trunk-hose and nether stocks of plain black silk, black velvet shoes, and a slouched hat, with neither feather nor cockade, completed the suit of melancholy mourning which he wore.

In the midst of the train was a yet sadder sight—Marguerite de Vaudreuil, robed in the snow-white vestments of a novice, with all her glorious ringlets flowing in loose redundance over her shoulders and her bosom, soon to be cut close by the fatal scissors—pale as the monumental stone, and only not as

rigid. A hard-featured, gray-headed monk supported her on either hand; and a long train of priests swept after, with crucifix, and rosary, and censer.

Scarcely had this strange procession issued from the great gates of Les Tournelles—the death-bells tolling still from every tower and steeple—before another train, gloomier yet and sadder, filed out from the gate of the royal tiltyard, at the farther end of which stood a superb pavilion. Sixteen black Benedictine monks led the array, chanting the mournful *Miserere*. Next behind these (strange contrast!) strode on the grim, gaunt form, clad in his blood-stained tabard, and bearing full displayed his broad, two-handed axe—fell emblem of his odious calling—the public executioner of Paris. Immediately in the rear of this dark functionary, not borne by his bold captains, nor followed by his gallant vassals with arms reversed and signs of martial sorrow, but ignominiously supported by the grim-visaged ministers of the law, came on the bier of Armand, the last count de Laguy.

Stretched in a coffin of the rudest material and construction, with his pale visage bare, displaying still in its distorted lines and sharpened features the agonies of mind and body which had preceded his untimely dissolution, the bad but haughty noble was borne to his long home in the graveyard of Nôtre Dame. His sword, broken in twain, was laid across his breast, his spurs had been hacked from his heels by the base cleaver of the scullion, and his reversed escutcheon was hung above his head.

Narrowly saved by his wronged kinsman's intercession from dying by the headman's weapon ere yet his mortal wounds should have let out his spirit, he was yet destined to the shame of a dishonored sepulchre. Such was the king's decree—alas! inexorable.

The funeral-train proceeded; the king and his court fol-

lowed. They reached the graveyard. hard beneath those superb gray towers!—they reached the grave, in a remote and gloomy corner, where, in unconsecrated earth, reposed the executed felon. The priests attended not the corpse beyond the precincts of that unholy spot; their solemn chant died mournfully away; no rites were done, no prayers were said above the senseless clay, but in silence was it lowered into the ready pit—silence disturbed only by the deep, hollow sound of the clods that fell fast and heavy on the breast of the guilty noble! For many a day a headstone might be seen—not raised by the kind hands of sorrowing friends, nor watered by the tears of kinsmen, but planted there to tell of his disgraceful doom—amid the nameless graves of the self-slain, and the recorded resting-places of well-known thieves and felons. It was of dark-gray freestone, and it bore these brief words—brief words, but in that situation speaking the voice of volumes:—

“Ci git Armand,
Le dernier Comte de Laguy.”

Three forms stood by the grave—stood till the last clod had been heaped upon its kindred clay, and the dark headstone planted: Henry the king; and Charles the baron de La-Hirè; and Marguerite de Vaudreuil.

And as the last clod was flattened down upon the dead—after the stone was fixed—De La-Hirè crossed the grave to the despairing girl, where she had stood gazing with a fixed, rayless eye on the sad ceremony, and took her by the hand, and spoke so loud that all might hear his words, while Henry looked on calmly, but not without an air of wondering excitement:—

“Not that I did not love thee,” he said, “Marguerite! Not that I did not pardon thee thy brief inconstancy, caused as it was by evil arts of which we will say nothing now—since he

who plotted them hath suffered even above his merits, and is, we trust, now pardoned! Not for these causes, nor for any of them, have I declined thine hand thus far; but that the king commanded, judging it in his wisdom best for both of us. Now Armand is gone hence; and let all doubt and sorrow go hence with him! Let all your tears, all my suspicions, be buried in his grave for ever! I take your hand, dear Marguerite—I take you as mine honored and loved bride—I claim you mine for ever!”

Thus far the girl had listened to him, not blushing, nor with a melting eye, nor with any sign of renewed hope or re-kindled happiness in her pale features—but with cold, resolute attention. But now she put away his hand very steadily, and spoke with a firm, unflinching voice.

“Be not so weak!” she said; “be not so weak, Charles de La-Hirè—nor fancy me so vain! The weight and wisdom of years have passed above my head since yester morning: then was I a vain, thoughtless girl; now am I a stern, wise woman! That I have sinned, is very true—that I have betrayed thee, wronged thee! It may be, had you spoke pardon yesterday—it might have been all well! It may be it had been dishonor in you to take me to your arms; but if to do so had been dishonor yesterday, by what is it made honor now? No! no! Charles de La-Hirè—no! no! I had refused thee yesterday, hadst thou been willing to redeem me, by self-sacrifice, then, from the convent-walls; I had refused thee then, with love warming my heart toward thee—in all honor! Force me not to reject thee *now* with scorn and hatred. Nor dare to think that Marguerite de Vaudreuil will owe to man’s compassion what she owes not to love! Peace, Charles de La-Hirè!—I say, peace! my last words to thee have been spoken, and never will I hear more from thee! And now, Sir King, hear thou—may God judge between thee and me, as thou hast judged!”

If I *was* frail and fickle, nature and God made woman weak and credulous—but made man *not* wise, to deceive and ruin her. If I sinned deeply against this baron de La-Hirè, I sinned not knowingly, nor of premeditation! If I sinned deeply, more deeply was I sinned against—more deeply was I left to suffer—even hadst thou heaped no more brands upon the burning! If to bear hopeless love—to pine with unavailing sorrow—to repent with continual remorse—to writhe with trampled pride!—if these things be to suffer, then, Sir King, had I enough suffered without thy *just* interposition!” As she spoke, a bitter sneer curled her lip for a moment; but as she saw Henry again about to speak, a wilder and higher expression flashed over all her features: her form appeared to distend, her bosom heaved, her eye glared, her ringlets seemed to stiffen, as if instinct with life.

“Nay!” she cried, in a voice clear as the strain of a silver trumpet—“nay, thou shalt hear me out! And thou didst swear yesterday I should live in a cloister-cell for ever! and I replied to thy words then, ‘Not long!’ I have thought better now; and now I answer, ‘NEVER!’ Lo here! lo here! ye who have marked the doom of Armand—mark now the doom of Marguerite! Ye who have judged the treason, mark the doom of the traitress!”

And with the words, before any one could interfere, even had they suspected her intentions, she raised her right hand on high—and all then saw the quick twinkle of a weapon—and struck herself, as it seemed, a quick, slight blow immediately under the left bosom! It seemed a quick, slight blow! but it had been so accurately studied—so steadily aimed and fatally—that the keen blade, scarcely three inches long and very slender, of the best of Milan steel, with nearly a third of the hilt, was driven home into her very heart. She spoke no syllable again, nor uttered any cry!—nor did a single spasm

contract her pallid features, a single convulsion distort her shapely limbs ; but she leaped forward, and fell upon her face, quite dead, at the king's feet !”

Henry smiled not again for many a day thereafter. Charles de La-Hirè died very old, a Carthusian monk of the strictest order, having mourned sixty years and prayed in silence for the sorrows and the sins of that most hapless being.

THE VASSAL'S WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE early sun was shining on as beautiful a morning of the merry month of May as ever lover dreamed or poet sang, over a gentle pastoral scene in the sunny land of France. It was a little winding dale between soft, sloping hills, covered with the tenderest spring verdure, and dotted with small brakes and thickets of hawthorn and sweet-brier; the former all powdered over, as if by a snowstorm, with their sweet, white blossoms, and the others exhaling their aromatic perfume from every dew-spangled bud and leaflet.

To the right hand the narrow dale widened gradually as it took its way—worn, doubtless, in past days by the waters of the noisy brooklet which flowed along its bottom over a bed of many-colored pebbles, among thickets of willow, alder, and hazel—toward a broad and beautiful valley, through which flowed the majestic volume of a great, navigable river. To the left it decreased in width, and ascended rapidly between steep banks to the spring-head of the rivulet, a clear, cold well, covered by a canopy of Gothic architecture rudely chiselled in red sandstone.

Above this the gorge of the ravine—for into such the dell

here degenerated—was thickly overshadowed by a grove of old tufted oak-trees, which might well have rung to the brazen trumpets of the Roman legions, and echoed the wild war-whoops of the barbarous Gauls in the days of the first Cæsar. Sheltered and half-concealed by these, there stood a very small, old-fashioned chapel, in the earliest and rudest style of Norman architecture, exhibiting the short, massive, clustered columns and round-headed arches of that antique style. It had never spire or tower; but on the summit of the steep, peaked roof there was a little crypt or vaulted canopy, supported by four columns, and containing a bell proportioned to the dimensions of the humble village-chapel.

The larger valley presented all the usual beauties of rural landscape scenery at that remote and unscientific day, when lands were principally laid down in pasture, and husbandry consisted mainly in the tending of flocks and herds. There were wide expanses of common ground, dotted here and there with few arable fields now green as the pastures with their young crops of wheat and rye; there were woodlands bright in their new greenery, and apple-orchards, glowing with their fragrant blossoms. There were scattered farmhouses among the orchards; and an irregular hamlet scattered along a yellow road in the foreground, among shadowy elm-trees, all festooned with vines; and far off, on the farthest slope on the verge of the horizon, the towers and pinnacles of a tall, castellated building towered above the grand and solemn woods, which probably composed the chase of some feudal seigneur.

The little dale which I have described was traversed by two separate ways: one, a regular road, so far as any roads of the fourteenth century could be called regular, and adapted for horses and such rude vehicles as the age and the country required; the other, a narrow, winding foot-path, following the bends of the rivulet, which the other crossed by a picturesque

wooden bridge, at about five hundred yards below the well-head and the chapel.

At the moment when my tale commences, the doors of the chapel were thrown wide open, and the little bell was tinkling with a merry chime that harmonized well with the gay aspect of nature—the music of the rejoicing birds which were filling the air with their glee, and the lively ripple of the stream fretting over its pebbly bed.

As if summoned by the joyous cadence of the bells, a numerous party was now seen coming up the foot-path by the edge of the rivulet, apparently from the hamlet in the larger valley, wending their way toward the chapel. It needed but a glance to discover the occasion. It was a bridal-procession, headed by the gray-haired village priest in full canonicals, and some of the elders of the village.

Behind these, lightly tripped six young girls, dressed in white, with crowns of May-flowers on their heads, and garlands of the same woven like scarfs across their bosoms. They were all singularly pretty, having been chosen probably for their beauty from among their playmates: they had all the rich, dark hair, flowing in loose ringlets down their backs; the fine, expressive, dark eyes; the peach-like bloom on the sunny cheeks, and the ripe, red lips, which constitute the peculiar beauty which is almost characteristic of the south of France. Each of these fair young beings carried on her arm a light wicker basket, filled with the bright field-flowers of that sunny land and season—the purple violet, the rich jonquil, and pale narcissus, the many-colored crocuses from the mead, the primrose from the hedgerow-bank, the lily of the valley from the cool, shadowy grove—and strewed them, as they passed along, before the footsteps of the bride; chanting, as they did so, in the quaint old Gascon tongue, the bridal strain:—

“The roads should blossom, the roads should bloom,
So fair a bride shall leave her home,
Should blossom, should bloom with garlands gay,
So fair a bride shall pass to-day!”

After these, followed by her bridemaids, the bride stepped daintily and demurely along, the acknowledged beauty of the village, happy, and bright, and innocent—the young bride Marguerite.

Her hair was of the very deepest shade of brown—so dark, that at first thought you would have deemed it black; but when you looked again, you discovered, by the absence of the cold, metallic gloss upon its wavy surface, and by the rich, warm hue with which it glowed under the sunlight, what was its true color. Her forehead was not very high, but broad and beautifully formed, and as smooth as ivory; while her arched eyebrows showed as black as night, and as soft and smooth as though they had been stripes of sable Genoa velvet. Her nose, if not absolutely faultless—for it had the slight upward turn which was so charming in Roxabara—added an arch and sprightly expression to features which were otherwise passive and voluptuous rather than mirthful; but her eyes, her eyes were wonderful—like to no eyes on earth that have ever met my gaze, save thine, incomparable——, which still shine upon my soul, though long unseen, and far away, never, never to be forgotten!—not star-like, but like wells of living, loving, languid lustrousness—brown of the deepest shade, filled with a humid, rapturous tenderness, yet brighter than the brightest, but with a soft, voluptuous, luminous brightness; not flashing, not sparkling, but penetrating and imbuing the beholder with love at once and magic light. They were fringed, too, with lashes so long and dark, that, when her lids were lowered, they showed like fringes of raven-hued silk against the delicate blush of her round cheek. Her mouth, though perhaps rather wide, was exquisitely shaped, with the arched upper lip and

full, pouting lower lip, of the color of the ripe clove-carnation, that woos the kiss so irresistibly; with teeth as bright as mother-of-pearl, and a breath sighing forth sweeter than Indian summer.

Such was the face of Marguerite, the bride of that May morning; nor was her form inferior to it. Modelled in the fullest and roundest mould that is consistent with symmetry and grace, her figure was the very perfection, the beau-ideal of voluptuous, full-blown, yet youthful womanhood. The broad, falling shoulders; the fully-developed, glowing bust, swelling into twin hills of panting snow; the round, shapely arms, bare to the shoulder; the graceful and elastic waist; the rich curve of the arched hips, and the wavy outlines of her lower limbs, suggesting, by the rustling folds of her draperies as she walked the dewy greensward like a queen, the beauty of their unseen symmetry: these, combined with the exquisite features, the singular expression uniting, what would appear to be incongruous and contradictory, much roguish archness, something that was almost sensual in the wreathed smile, and yet withal the most perfect modesty and innocence, rendered Marguerite, the May-bride of Castel de Roche d'or, one of the loveliest, if not the very loveliest creature that ever walked to church with her affianced lover in that fair land of France.

She wore, like her bridesmaids—who, all pretty girls, were utterly eclipsed by her radiant beauty—a May-wreath on her head, and a large bouquet of fresh violets on the bosom of her low-cut white dress, which was looped up at one side with bunches of narcissus and violets, to show an under-skirt of pale peach-colored silk, the tints of which showed faintly through the thin draperies of her tunic; but, unlike them, she wore a long gauze veil, intertwined with silver threads, floating down among her luxuriant tresses, below her shapely waist.

Never was there seen in that region a lovelier, a purer, or a

happier bride. Immediately behind the bridesmaids, supported in his turn by an equal number of tall, sinewy, well-formed youths, dressed in their best attire, half-agricultural, half-martial, as feudal vassals of their lord, bound to man-service in the field, came on the stalwart bridegroom. He was a tall, athletic, well-made man of twenty-nine or thirty years, erect as a quarter-staff, yet showing in every motion an elastic pliability and grace, which, although in reality the mere result of nature, appeared to be the consequence either of innate gentility or of long usance to the habits of the upper classes.

His complexion was that of the south—rich, sunny olive, without a tinge of color in the clear, dark cheek; his hair black as the raven's wing, and his eyes of that wild, fiery shade of black which perhaps indicates a taint of Moorish blood. His features were very regular, and very calm in their regularity, though there was nothing pensive nor anything very grave in their expression. It was the calmness of latent passions, not the calmness of controlling principles—the stillness which precedes the thunderburst, not the stillness of the subsident and overmastered storm: for the firmly-compressed lips, the square outlines of the hard, massive jaw, the immense muscular development of the neck, and the deeply-indented frown between the eyebrows, intersecting a furrow crossing the forehead from brow to brow, would have indicated at once to the physiognomist that Maurice Champrêt was a man of the fiercest and most fiery energy and passions, concealed but not controlled—existing perhaps unsuspected, but utterly unchecked by any principle—and certain to start into a blaze at the first spark that should enkindle them.

His dress was the usual attire of a man in his station at the period, though of finer materials than was ordinary, consisting of a dark forest-green gambison, or short tunic of fine cloth, not very different in form from the blouse of the modern French-

man, gathered about his waist by a broad belt of black leather, fastened in front by a brazen buckle, and supporting on one side a heavy, buckhorn-hilted wood-knife, and on the other a large pouch or purse of black cordovan, bound with silver; his hose were of the same color with the tunic, fitting close to the shapely thigh, and above these he wore long boots of russet-tawny leather. His black hair fell in two heavy clubs or masses over each ear, nearly to the collar of his doublet, from beneath the cover of a small cap of black velvet, set jauntily on one side, and adorned with a single white-cock's feather.

His appearance on the whole, though he was very far inferior in regard of personal beauty to the exquisite creature whom he was so soon to call his wife, was manly and imposing; while the character of his dress and equipments, as well as the decorations of Marguerite and her attendant maidens, showed at once that they were all of a quality and station to the serfs employed in the cultivation of the lands of the great seigneurs, and indeed to that of the ordinary armed vassals and feudal tenants of the day.

In truth, Maurice Champrest was not only the richest farmer, but the highest military vassal under the fief of Raoul de Canillac, the marquis of Roche d'or, his ancestor having been banner-bearer to the first lord of the name, and his people having held and cultivated the same farm for many a century, bound only to homage and free man-service in the field under the banner of his lord, to which in war he was held to bring five spearmen and as many archers in full bodynge, as it was then technically termed, and effeyre-of-war. He was, in short, though not noble, nor what could be exactly termed a gentleman, of the very highest of feudal territorial vassals, not far removed from the class which were in England designated as franklins, although with fewer privileges and smaller real freedom, France having always been more rigidly feudal than the neighboring

island, owing to the absence of the large admixture of Saxon blood and Saxon liberty, the latter of which soon began to preponderate in the white-rocked isle of ocean. His beautiful bride Marguerite, though not his equal in birth—for her grandfather and grandmother, nay, her father himself, in his early youth, had been serfs—was a free-born and a gently-nurtured woman; the old people having been manumitted and presented with a few acres of land, in consequence of the gallantry with which he had rescued the then seigneur of Roche d'or, when unhorsed and at the mercy of the German communes at the bloody battle of Bovines, stricken between Philip the August and his rebellious barons.

This event had taken place years before the birth of Marguerite, and in fact when her father was a mere stripling; and, as her mother was a woman of free lineage, neither serf nor villeyne, she was, of course, beyond the reach of cavil. Nay, more than this, the unusual courage of the old man on that dreadful day, and the consideration always manifested toward him by the then marquis and his immediate successor, had won for him a far higher standing than was usually accorded to manumitted serfs by the class next above them. Her family, moreover, in both the last generations, had prospered in worldly wealth, for the old serf was shrewd and wary, had hoarded money, and increased the extent of his rural demesne, till Marguerite, who was an only daughter, was not only a beauty but an heiress; and probably, with the exception of her husband, would be, on the death of her parents, the richest person in the hamlet. She had received, moreover, advantages at that period very unusual indeed; for having, when a mere child, attracted the attention of the late marchioness de Canillac by her grace, her beauty, and the artless *naïveté* of her manners, she had been selected to attend, rather as a companion than a servant, on Mademoiselle de Roche d'or, a girl a few years her senior.

The young lady had become much attached to Marguerite, and on being sent to a convent in the principal town of the department for her education, as was usual, had obtained permission that Marguerite might attend her still ; so that the young peasant had enjoyed all the advantages of mental culture granted to the high-born damsel ; had profited by them to the utmost ; and had parted from her orphaned mistress only when, after the death of her parents, she was removed with her brother, the present marquis, to the guardianship of their next relative, the prince of Auvergne. In the meantime, while the marquis and his sister had breathed the atmosphere of courts and large cities, far away from their native province, Marguerite had returned to the humble home of her parents which she had filled with happiness by the light of her loving eyes, and the harmonies of her soft, low voice ; had expanded from the bud into the full-blown flower, admired and beloved of all ; had burst from the frail and graceful girl into the exquisite and complete woman ; and, having long been loved of Maurice Champrest, and bestowed upon him all the tenderness and truth of her maiden affections, was now about to surrender her hand also to him unto whom she had been during the whole of the last year affianced.

And now, with pipe and tabor, with the old, time-honored bridal-chorus, with flowers scattered along the way, and garlands swinging from the hedgerows by which she was to pass, and decorating the rude pillars and stern arches of the old Gothic church in which she was to wed, with all the village in her train, carolling and rejoicing at so suitable, so sweet a bridal, Marguerite, the bride of May, was led to the ceremony that should of the twain make one for ever and for ever, of which the word of God himself declared that whom he hath united no man shall put asunder.

Merrily, with louder strains and blither minstrelsey, they wound up the little dell among the oaks, paused for a moment

at the rustic fount to cross their brows with its holy waters, and entered the low portals of the village-chapel. The bells ceased tinkling; the brief ceremony was performed by the old priest who had baptized them both; the hand of the down-eyed, blushing bride, still sparkling and smiling amid her happy, soft confusion, was placed in the ardent grasp of Maurice, and she was now her own no longer, but a wedded wife.

She was wept over, blessed, caressed, and kissed, by half the company, and many a fervent prayer was breathed for the happiness, the complete and perfect bliss of Marguerite, the bride of May—alas for human hopes and the vain prayers of mortals!—and then, while the bells struck up a livelier, louder chiming, and the bride-maidens trolled the chorus forth more cheerily—

“The roads should blossom, the roads should bloom,
So fair a bride shall leave her home,
Should blossom, should bloom with garlands gay,
So fair a bride shall pass to-day!”—

with many a manly voice swelling more lustily the nuptial cadence, they passed the little green descending to the horse-road, Marguerite clinging now to his supporting arm and looking tenderly up into his with eyes suffused with happy tears and cheeks radiant with dimpled smiles and rosy blushes.

But at the moment when the bridal-train was wheeling down toward the road, and had now nearly reached the point of its intersection with the foot-path, the loud and noisy trampling of many horses, and the jingling clash of the harness of armed riders, was distinctly heard above the swelling chorus of the hymenean, above the chiming of the wedding-bells; and within a few seconds, two or three horsemen crossed the brow of the eastern hill, at a gentle trot, and were followed by a company of some fifty men-at-arms, under the guidance of an old officer, whose beard and hair, as white as snow, fell down over his

gorget from beneath the small, black-velvet cap, which alone covered his head, for his helmet hung at his saddle-bow. The troopers were all armed point-device, in perfect steel, with long, pennoned lances in their hands, two-handed broadswords slung across their shoulders from the left to the right, and battle-axe and mace depending on this side or that from the pommels of their steel-plated saddles. Their horses, too—strong, powerful brutes of the Norman stock, crossed with some lighter strain of higher blood—were barded, as it was termed, with cham-fronts and neck-plates, poytrels on the breast, and the bards proper covering the loins and croup; and all were arrayed under a broad, square banner, blazoned, as if every eye of the bridal-party could at once distinguish, with the bearings of the lords of Castel de Roche d'or.

No sooner had they discovered this, than they halted, and formed a line along the edge of the road, anxious to testify their respect to their young lord—who now, recently of age, was returning, after years of absence, from the chateau of his guardian—and eager to observe the passage of the cavalcade.

The persons who led the approaching band were three in number, two of whom rode a few horse-lengths in advance of the third, and were evidently of rank superior to the rest; while something seemed to indicate, though it was indefinite, and not very obvious how far it did so, that even between these two there subsisted no perfect equality.

He to the left was the elder by many years; a finely-formed and not ill-favored man, of some forty-five or fifty years; magnificently apparelled in a suit of rich half-armor, with russet-leather boots meeting the taslets or thigh-pieces at the knee; accoutred with heavy gilded spurs, and wearing on his head a crimson-velvet mortier, adorned by a massive gold chain, and a lofty plume of white feathers.

And he it was, who, although in his outward show he was

the more splendid—though he bestrode his steed with an air of pride so manifest, that you might have fancied he bestrode the universe—though he addressed all his inferiors with intolerable haughtiness, and appeared to look upon all his equals as inferiors—yet, by his demeanor toward the youth who reined his Arab courser by his side, and by his almost servile watching of his every motion, and lowering his voice at his every word, appeared to be oppressed in his presence by a sense of the utmost unworthiness, and scarcely to hold himself entitled to have an opinion of his own until sanctioned by that of the young marquis de Roche d'or.

The features of this man were certainly well-favored rather than the reverse—for the brow, the eyes, the outlines, were all good; and yet the expressions they assumed, as he was moved by varying passions, were so odious and detestable, that on a nearer view, a close observer would probably have styled him hideous, and avoided his advances. Pride, of the haughtiest and most intolerant form, would at one time writhe his lip and deform his every lineament; at another, it would yield to the basest, the most abject servility. Cruelty alone sat fixed and permanent in the thick, massive, animal jaw, the low and somewhat receding forehead, and the oblique glances of the cold, clear, gray eye; but sensuality, and sneering sarcasm, and utter want of veneration or belief for anything high or holy, had left their hateful traces in the lines about his mouth and nostrils: nor were these odious, ineradicable signs of an atrocious character redeemed by the evident presence of high intellect and pervading talents, for that intellect was of a shrewd, keen, cunning caste, and was in no wise akin to anything of an imaginative, a noble, or a virtuous type.

Such was the appearance, such the aspect, of a man renowned in his day far and wide through France, but renowned for evil only. Such was *Canillac le fou*—a soubriquet which he had

won throughout his province, for the insane, frantic, and unnatural vice and crime which had marked his whole career from boyhood. Canillac the madman!—and with good reason did the vassals of the old house of Roche d'or shrink upon themselves, and draw instinctively one toward the other, like wild-fowl when they see the shadow of the soaring falcon, with a foreboding of peril near at hand, when they beheld this fierce, voluptuous, pitiless monster—whose favorite boast it was that he had never spared a woman in his passion, nor a man in his hatred—riding at the bridle-rein of their young lord, as his chosen friend and companion, and probably as the arbiter of his pleasures, instigator of his vices!

And of a truth they had good cause to shrink and tremble, an' had they but then known that which was even now impending, to curse the very hour in which he or they were born—he to inflict, they to endure the last, worst outrages of feudal tyranny and wrong!

But they as yet knew nothing, nor, save instinctively, foreboded anything; but he, with his keen, furtive, ever-roving glances, noted (what none less sly, suspicious, and acute, would have suspected) the secret and intuitive horror with which the peasantry of Castel de Roche d'or regarded him, and vowed at once within his secret soul that they should have good cause to curse him, and that speedily.

His comrade, the young marquis, was, to the outward eye, a very different personage. Having barely reached his twenty-first year, he was as graceful and finely-framed a youth as ever sat a charger. His face, too, was very fine and regular, with the large, liquid, dark eyes, and deep, clear, olive tint, which are so common in the south of France. His hair was black as the raven's wing, with the same purplish, metallic lustre gleaming over its glossy surface, and fell in long, wavy, uncurled masses over the collar of the quilted gambison of rose-colored

silk, which he wore under a shirt of flexible chain-mail, polished so brilliantly, that it flashed and sparkled in the morning sunbeams like a network of diamonds.

The ordinary expression of his countenance was grave, calm, and melancholy ; yet it was impassive and cold, rather than thoughtful and imaginative, while there was an occasional flashing light in the sleepy eye, and a gleam of almost fierce intelligence in all the features, and a strange, animal curl of the pale lips, which seemed to tell that there lurked beneath that cold exterior a volcano of fierce and fiery passions, ready at any instant to leap into life, and consume whosoever should oppose his will.

The keen observer of humanity would have pronounced him one cold, rather than collected ; selfish at once, and careless of the rights and happiness of others ; sluggish, perhaps, and difficult to arouse, but, once aroused, impetuous, and of indomitable will—truly a fearful combination !

When the company had arrived within thirty or forty paces of the bridal-party, the villagers threw up their caps into the air, and raised a loud and joyous exclamation—"Vive Canillac ! vive Canillac ! Vive le beau marquis de Roche d'or !"—and, for the moment, the boy's face lighted up with a gleam of warm and honest feeling—gratification at the welcome of his people, and something of real sympathy with their condition.

But just as he had determined to ride forward and return their kindly greeting with words of cheer and promise of protection, the young and fiery Arab on which he was mounted, terrified by the shoutings, and the caps tossed into the air, reared bolt upright, made a prodigious bound forward, and then, wheeling round, yerked out his heels violently, and dashed away with such fury, that before the young rider, who sat as firmly in his saddle as though he had been a portion of the animal, could arrest him, they were almost among the men-at-arms.

The whole passed in a minute ; but that minute was of fearful import to many there assembled, many both innocent and guilty. Even in the point of time when the wild horse was plunging forward to the bridal-party, the young lord's eye, undiverted by the sense of his own keen peril, had fallen upon the lovely face and exquisite symmetry of the fair bride, who, moved by a timid apprehension for the safety of the handsome cavalier, leaned forward a little way in front of her young companions, with clasped hands and cheeks blanched somewhat by sympathetic fear and pity.

The blood rushed in a torrent to his cheek, and remained settled there in a red, hectic spot ; a fierce, unnatural light gleamed from his glassy eye, and his lip curled with an odious smile. A volume of fierce passions rushed over his soul, overpowering in an instant all his better characteristics. He was determined, in that instant, by that one glance, to possess her, reckless what misery and madness he might cause—reckless of all things, human or Divine !

And, whether the disembodied fiend, who, we are taught to believe, is ever ready at such moments of temptation to urge the incipient sinner on to deeper crime and ruin, did spur his wicked will or not—there was a human, sneering, tempting fiend, who, as he rode beside him, read his inmost soul in every look and gesture, and spared nothing of allurements to excite him onward on that fell road of evil passions which should insure his subjugation to his own sins and their readiest minister.

“ Ha ! what is this ? ” exclaimed the young man, almost angrily, as he pulled up his violent horse, at length, beside the aged seneschal ; “ what is this, Michael Rubempré—or who am I, that my villeyens and serfs wed at their will, without my consent, or consideration of my droits and dues ? ”

“ So please you, beau seigneur, these be no serfs,” replied

the old man, bowing low, "but vassals of the highest class, in this your lordship of Roche d'or—free vassals, beau sire, of the highest class. Your consent was applied for duly, and granted, in all form, by me, as, in your absence, by letters of instruction, your representative and agent. The dues were all paid, and a large present above them, as a donation to mademoiselle, your sister, on whom the young bride attended, when she dwelt in the house of the Ursulines, in Clermont."

Darker and darker grew the brow of the young lord, as he listened; for he could not fail to perceive the obstacles which were opposed to the atrocious wrong he meditated. Yet he listened sullenly to the end.

"Ha!" he replied, moodily, "no droits, only dues, and those satisfied! The worse for them, by heaven and hell, and all who dwell therein!"

He paused a moment, with his hands clinched, and the veins upon his brow swollen into thick, azure cords, by the rush of the hot blood; and then resumed, in a low, hissing tone, widely different from his usually slow and modulated voice:—

"Who be they, Michael Rubempré? I would give half my lands, they could be proved *serfs*. Can not this be done, Michael?"

"Impossible, beau sire!" replied the old man, firmly, though there was much of anxiety, and even of alarm, in his eye; "utterly impossible. The forefathers of Maurice Champrèst came into the lands of Roche d'or with the first Canillac, and he holds the same farm still, under the first grant, by tenure of man-service, only on the field of battle. He is your lordship's greatest vassal, and brings five spears and as many crossbows to the banner of Roche d'or, serving himself on horseback."

"Ha! curses on it! curses on it! And she—who is she! By heaven, she is the loveliest creature I ever looked upon! Who is she? ha!"

“ Her grandfather, beau sire, then a serf—permitted, through the exigency of the times, to bear arms in the field—saved the life of your lordship’s grandsire, by taking in his breast the pike-thrust intended for his lord. For this good deed, he was manumitted, with his wife and son, who is now a free vassal and a large tenant of Roche d’or, bringing six crossbows to your banner. Marguerite was selected by the marquise to wait on Mademoiselle de Canillac de Roche d’or, and was educated with her, almost as a friend. She is the best girl, too, in all the village.”

“ Ha! so much the worse! Curses on it—twenty thousand curses!”

And he had turned his horse’s head again, to ride on his way, apparently convinced that for this time, at least, his wicked will must be balked of its fulfilment; but at this moment, the voice of the tempter, Canillac the madman—mad in his crimes alone, for his wily and diverse intellect was clear as that of Catiline, whom he in some sort resembled—addressed him, calm, yet cutting and sarcastic:—

“ What is it that has moved you so much, beau cousin? Methinks your people’s greeting should enliven, not depress you.”

“ Tush!” the young man replied, almost savagely; “ tush! You are no fool, Canillac!”

“ Not much, I think; though they do call me *Canillac le fou!* But what then, what then, beau cousin?”

“ Did you not see her? did you not see her, Canillac? As I hope to live before God, she is the loveliest piece of woman’s flesh I ever looked upon! I would give—I would give half my lands, half my life, that I had droits seignorial over her; but I have dues, dues only, and they are satisfied. She is free—a free woman of her own right, and can not be mine.”

“ Were I you, cousin, and I so desired her as you do, she *should* be mine, ere nightfall!”

“How so? how so?” asked the young man, sharply. “Did I not tell you she is free—free—that I have no droits over her, and do you tell me I can make her mine?”

“What if she be? She is but a peasant-wench—one of the mere *canaille*. I would regard her squalling no more than a kitten’s mewing; nay, rather I would glory in it, for I am sick to death of your complaisant beauties. Besides, she is *not* free, if she was born while her father was a serf, unless she was named in the deed of manumission.”

“But she must have been born years afterward. Look at her, man: she could not have been born in my grandfather’s time.”

“Deny that she is free. Have her up with us to the castle, now. Hold her there as a hostage, till she be proven free. If you be not weary of her, ere the week is ended, I will find twenty men who shall swear she was born in the days of Sir Noah in the ark, if it be needful.” And he laughed scornfully.

“By Heaven, I will not weary of her in a week of years! But it is well advised. I will essay it.”

“Essay nothing: do it! Promise to hold her in all honor. Promises cost no man anything, nor oaths either, for that matter, which is fortunate; for, by mine honor, she is fitter to be a prince’s paramour than a *Jacque’s* wife. So forward!”

And, with the word, they galloped forward, and pausing exactly in front of the bride, who stood between her husband and the priest—shrinking with modesty and terror from the ardent and licentious gaze which he riveted on her glowing charms—he began to rate the latter for daring to wed a serf-girl to a free vassal without his lord’s consent, and the former for presuming to defraud his siegneur of his droits.

In vain the good curate explained and expostulated; in vain twenty oaths were proffered by contemporaries of the girl’s grandsire, that she was free; in vain the husband tendered

security, and offered rich donations ; in vain the village-maidens grovelled before the young lord's charger's hoofs, and clasped his knees in an agony of fruitless supplication ! The wrong was predetermined ; the wronger was a strong man, armed ; and how should humble innocence prevail against the might which makes the right, where violence is masterful, and law its abject servitor ?

To make a sad tale short, Raoul de Canillac announced his determination to carry her up to the castle presently, and hold her there in trust, until such time as a "court-baron" could be held to decide on the question of her manumission. He plighted his knightly word, however, his honor, as a peer of France, that she should be treated with all tenderness, as one who had waited on his sister ; and returned to her husband, in all honor, should she be pronounced free : but this on the condition only that she should render herself freely up and gently, and go without resistance or complaint. To this he added, that, as an act of grace and favor, and to prove that he would deal with them in all faithfulness of honor, he would himself hold court at high noon to-morrow, at which he cited all his vassals to appear, and enjoined it on the priest, the parents, and the bridegroom, then and there to produce the testimonials of her birth or manumission ; or, failing that, to remain for ever mute. Lovely as ever, if not lovelier, paler than the white lily, and like it drooping when its fair head is surcharged with dew-drops, and deluged with soft, silent tears, the miserable Marguerite sank on her husband's breast in one last, long embrace.

Fire flashed from the dark eyes of Raoul de Canillac, and the blood literally boiled in his veins, as he saw that lovely form clasped close by arms other than his own—those lips polluted, as he termed it, by the kiss of a peasant !

"Enough of this !" he cried. "Set her upon the palfrey—the gray palfrey we brought down for my sister. You, Amelot

de l'Aigle, guide it," he continued, "but keep her in the middle of the lances."

But the wretched girl had fainted; and they were forced to place her on a cloak, doubled upon the bows of the demipique, in front of the page, to whose waist she was bound by a silken scarf, to prevent her falling to the ground. The tears stood in the eyes of the good old senechal; and the faces of many of the men-at-arms, who were all of the same class with the bridegroom, and many of them his comrades and friends, were dark and sullen. None, however, dared to remonstrate, much less to resist the authoritative mandate of the feudal tyrant.

No words, however, can express the scene which ensued as the cavalcade swept onward at a rapid pace, leaving behind them agony, and desolation, and despair, where all, before their coming, had been happiness, and innocent, quiet bliss, and hopeful peace! The stifled wailing of the girls, the silent agony of the hopeless bridegroom, the deep, scarcely-smothered execrations of the men—it was a scene as terrible and heart-rending as that which preceded it had been delightful and cheering to the soul.

At length the priest, raising his arms toward heaven, cried in a low and plaintive voice—

"My children, let us pray; let us pray to the most high God, that he will keep our sweet sister Marguerite in innocence and honor, and give her back to us in happiness and peace. Let us pray!"

And every voice responded of all who heard his words; every voice, save one, responded, "Let us pray!" and every knee was bent as they bowed them in a sorrowing circle around their monitor and friend—every knee, save that of Maurice Champrêt; but he stood erect, and pulled his hat over his brows, and folded his arms across his chest, and exclaimed, as the ravishers of his sweet wife wound through the dale into the

larger valley : " Earth has no justice, Heaven no pity ! Man has no honor, God no vengeance !"

But on rode the tyrants, onward—careless of the ruin they had wrought, ruthless toward the innocence they had determined to destroy ; confident in the puissance of their prowess, and almost defying the thunders of Heaven, which were even then rolling and muttering far away among the volcanic peaks of the Mont d'or. Were these the omens of a coming storm ?

They reached the esplanade before the castle-gates, and Marguerite was still unconscious. Happy had she nevermore regained her consciousness ! But as the horses' hoofs thundered over the echoing drawbridge, the clang roused her from her swoon. She raised herself up, drew her hand across her brow, as if to clear away some imaginary mist obscuring her mental vision, and gazed wildly and hurriedly around her on the strange objects which met her eyes, as if she had not as yet realized to herself her condition, nor altogether knew her destination. As she was carried, however, through the dim, resounding vault of the barbican, and heard the grating clang of the portcullis when it thundered down behind her, a sense of her lost condition flashed upon her soul, and a voice seemed to whisper in her ear those words of horrible import which Danté, in after-days, inscribed upon the gates of hell : " On entering here, leave every hope behind !"

Still she shrieked not, nor wept, nor craved or sympathy or pity ; for too well did she know that the hearts of those to whom she should appeal were harder, colder than their own iron breastplates ; her only confidence was in her own strenuous virtue, her only hope in HIM who alone can save.

She was lifted from the horse, not only with some show of gentleness, but even of respect, without receiving word or sign of intelligence from the young lord of Roche d'or, who strode away, accompanied by his ill-counsellor, Canillac the madman,

toward the banqueting-room, wherein the noontide meal was prepared already, and where the flower of the knights and nobles of the province were assembled to welcome the new-comer. Then she was conducted by the page through several long, winding passages, to a sort of withdrawing-room, in which she found several female-servants of the higher class, to the care of one of whom she was consigned, with a few words of whispered orders, by her conductor, who bowed low and retired. The girls looked at her for a moment or two earnestly, inquiringly—eyeing her gay bridal-dress, so ill-suited to the mode of her arrival, with an air between suspicion and sympathy—until, at length, one of them seemed to recognise her, and exclaimed: “*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* if it be not the fair *Marguerite!*”

And then, as pity seemed to prevail over all other feelings, they crowded round her kindly and respectfully; and after a few kindly-intended but little-meaning words, one of them offered to conduct her to her appointed chamber, promising to bring her refreshments shortly, and saying that doubtless she would prefer to take some repose, and be alone.

Through dark, circuitous passages, vaulted with solid stone, and ribbed as though they had been hewn out of the living rock, and up interminable winding stairs, she led her, until her brain whirled round and round, and her senses were almost bewildered. At length they reached the topmost story of the huge, square tower, and, opening a low, arched door, the hapless bride was ushered into a room so sumptuously furnished as *Marguerite* had never seen or dreamed of; and then, with a deep reverence, and a half-compassionate air, the attendant maiden left her, a prisoner; for she heard the lock turned from without, and her heart fell at the sound.

The sun, which had turned already toward the westward, was pouring a rich stream of light through the oriel window, over the tapestried walls and floor; over the velvet bed in a deep

alcove ; over the soft arm-chairs, and central table covered with a splendid carpet, and strewn with illuminated books, and rich, sculptured cups and vases. But it was on none of these that the eyes of Marguerite dwelt meaningly ; for, as they wandered over these, half-marvelling amid her terrors at their beauty, she discerned an oaken *prie-Dieu*, in a small niche beside the window, with a missal on its embroidered cushion, and a crucifix with the sacrificed Redeemer looking down from it on the repentant sinner.

In an instant, she was on her knees before the image of her God, pouring forth the whole of her innocent and spotless soul, in the holiest of supplications. She prayed for aid from on high to preserve her unstained virtue ; she prayed for strength from on high to resist temptation ; she prayed for pardon from on high for her sins and errors past, for grace that she might err no more in future ; she prayed that HE, who alone could pity human suffering—for that he had suffered as no man suffereth—would touch the hearts of her ruthless persecutors, through his Virgin Mother ; she prayed that he would console her sorrowing parents, and him whom she scarcely dared think of, so terrible she knew must be his anguish ; lastly, she prayed for pardon to her persecutor, and that, if she were doomed that night to perish, her soul might be received to grace, through the intercession of the saints, and her, the ever-blessed, the Virgin Mother Mary !

Her prayer, if in form it were erroneous, in spirit was sincere and fervent ; and, as sincere and fervent prayers *will* ever, surely *must* hers have found a hearing at the throne of mercy, for she arose from her knees confirmed, if not consoled, and strengthened in her virtuous principles, and calm by the very strength of her resolves.

Then, opening the oriel window, she stepped out into the little balcony, or bartizan, which projected out beyond the face

of the wall—perhaps in the hope of finding some means of escape ; but, alas ! if such a hope had flattered her, it was delusive ; for there was no egress from it, nor any method of descending ; and it impended far over the broad, deep moat, a hundred feet or more above its dark, clear waters—which, she remembered to have heard men say, were fifty feet in depth to the bottom of their rock-hewn channel. Long, long she gazed over the lovely sunlit valley of her birth, which all lay mapped out in the glorious glow before her eyes ; the happy home among the limes, beneath which she was born ; the happier home of promise, into which she had hoped that day to be led by him whom she loved the best ; the little chapel in the dell, among the oaks, in which she had plighted, that very morn, her faith for ever, until death, and death alone, should dissolve the bonds.

“And death alone,” she exclaimed, as the thoughts swelled upon her soul, “and death alone shall dissolve them ! But I must not look upon these things—I must not think of him—or my spirit will sink into utter weakness !” Then she paused, and, leaning over the low breastwork of the bartizan, looked down with a steady eye into the abyss, and crossing herself as she rose—“May God assoil my soul, if I be driven to do this thing, as do it of a surety I will, if otherwise I may not save my honor !”

Then she returned into the chamber, leaving both lattices of the oriel open ; and seated herself calmly near the window, with her eyes fixed on the effigy of her dying God, expecting that which should ensue, in trembling and shuddering of the spirit, it is true, yet in earnest resignation and fixed purpose.

Ere long, a step approached the door, but it was light and gentle ; and, when the lock was turned, it was the girl who had led her thither, bearing wine and refreshments on a silver salver : but, though the attendant pressed her kindly to take comfort and to eat, that she might be strengthened, she refused all

consolation, and only drank a deep draught of the cold spring-water, to quench the feverish thirst which parched her very vitals. Seeing at once that the prisoner would not be consoled, nor enter into any conversation, the maiden bade her "Good-night, and God speed her!" and added that she believed she would not be disturbed that night, for the gentles were reveling furiously in the great hall: and the feast, she believed, would efface all thought of her.

"God grant that it may be so," she replied, fervently; "for if I live scatheless until to-morrow morn, I am free and happy! No court on earth can dare decide against the testimony we shall show to-morrow."

But, in His wisdom—we, blind wretches, can not discern, may not conjecture wherefore—HE did not grant it.

The sunlight faded from the sky, as the great orb went down; and the stars came out, one by one; and then the moon arose, nigh to the full, and filled the skies with glory, and the maiden May-bride's heart with increasing hope on earth, and gratitude toward Heaven. But little did she dream that he, she had that morning wedded, lay, even now, at the verge of the moat, watching her oriel window, with agony and desperation at his heart; yet so it was. When she stepped on the bartizan, he had been observing the castle with an angry and jealous eye from the skirts of the nearest woodland; and, though it was nearly a mile distant, the lover's glance of instinct had at once detected the loved and lovely figure. As the shades of evening closed, and night fell thick before the moon arose, he had crept up, pace by pace, till he had reached the brink of the moat, unseen of the warders on the keep and the flanking walls; and now he lay couched in the rank grass, almost within reach of his beloved, able to hear every sound—should sound come forth—from her gentle lips, yet powerless to succor, impotent to save!

It was now nigh midnight, and Marguerite had begun to frame to herself a hope that she was indeed forgotten; when suddenly the sound of feet, coming up the winding stair, aroused her. The sounds were of the feet of two men: the one, heavy and uncertain, as of a person who had drunk too deeply; the other light and agile.

She rose to her feet, with her heart throbbing as though it would have burst her boddice. "The time of my trial hath come! My God, my God, now aid, or, if need be, forgive thy servant!"

The door flew open, and at the sight hope fled her bosom, if any hope had so long dwelt within it.

Flushed with wine—inebriate, almost—with his doublet unbraced, and his points unfastened—with a glowing cheek, a sparkling eye, and an unsteady gait, Raoul de Canillac stood before her—the page Amelot bearing a waxen torch before him, which he placed in a candelabrum near the bed, and that done, retiring.

As the door closed, the young lord moved toward her, while she stood gazing at him like a deer at bay, with a sad, liquid eye, and the tears rolling down her cheeks, yet motionless and dauntless.

"Dry thy tears, sweet one," he exclaimed, "or rather weep on, till I kiss them from thy cheeks, and replace them by smiles of rapture. Girl, I adore thee. Be but mine, and I will change thine every bunch of silly-flowers for gems worth an earl's ransom; better to be—"

"Seigneur Raoul de Canillac," she interrupted him, in tones so calm, that he was compelled to pause and listen—"marquis of Roche d'or, knight of the Holy Ghost, as you are prince and noble, as you are peer of France and belted knight, hear me, and spare me! By the soul of your mother, who was chaste wife to your lordly father! by the honor of your sister, who is

spotless demoiselle! spare *me*, who am at once chaste wife and spotless maiden! Conquer me you may, perchance, by brute force; win me, by words, you never can! Nor would I yield to thee one favor, were death itself the alternative!"

"Brute force, then, be it!" he replied, though, half-awed by her manner, he advanced no farther; "for, conquer thee I will, if I may not win thee, though my mother's soul stood palpable between us, and my sister's honor were trampled underneath my feet, as I spring on to seize thee!"

"False knight, your plighted honor! bad lord, your promised faith!" she cried, so loud and clear, that her every accent reached the ear and tore the heart of Maurice Champrèst below.

"Honor!" he shouted, sneeringly; "to the wild winds with honor! Faith! who kept faith with a woman ever?"

And he dashed at her with a bound so sudden and unexpected, that he cleared the space between them, and had his arms around her, in an instant.

She thought that she was lost, and uttered one wild shriek, so long, so shivering, so thrilling, that not one ear that heard it but felt as if a lance had pierced it. But virtue gave her strength, as vice and excess had robbed him of it; and, with a perfect majesty, she thrust him from her, that he staggered and fell headlong.

One spring, and she had cleared the oriel window; another, and she stood upon the dizzy brink. "My God, forgive mine enemy! Jesus, receive my soul!"

She veiled her head with her bridal-veil, and, with her white arms clasped above it, stooped herself, and plunged headlong!

For one second, there was seen by every eye, within eye-shot, a long, white gleam, glancing downward through the misty moonlight—

For one second, there was heard by every ear, within ear-shot, a dreadful, hurtling sound—

And then a sudden splash, and the waters of the moat flashed upward in the serene moonlight, and closed over the head of chaste, unspotted Marguerite !

But another plunge followed instantly ; and, within one second, she was drawn forth and clasped in her husband's arms, shattered and stunned, and beyond all hope of life, yet still not wholly dead.

A few long minutes passed—minutes as long as years—and then, warmed into life by the pressure of that fond breast, she revived ; her dying eyes looked into his ; she knew him—she was blest !—

“ Maurice—I am thine—in death, as in life—thine own, thine own, pure Marguerite—kiss—kiss me ! I am gone—hus-husband !”

And she died, happy—died, may we not trust, forgiven !—

And he howled out a hideous curse against the castle, and against its lord, and against all whom its guilty walls protected ; and then, bearing his dead bride in his arms, away through the darkness of the night—away, with a speed mocking the fleet pursuit of horses !

The sunrise of the morrow shone down upon the corpse of Marguerite, clad in her bridal-veil and marriage-garments, dripping and soiled with moisture, outstretched upon the very altar before which the preceding dawn had seen her wedded.

But years elapsed ere Maurice Champrèt was seen again in the hamlet of Castel de Roche d'or ; and, when he was seen there, it was a sorry sight to many a noble eye, and the very stones cried “ Wo !” when the Vassal's Wife was avenged on her destroyer.

CHAPTER II.

THEY were dark and dismal days in the fair land of France. Foreign invasion was triumphant, domestic insurrection was rife.

The terrible and fatal field of Poitiers, the field of the Black Prince, had stricken down at a single stroke the might of a great, a glorious nation; her king a captive in a foreign dungeon; one third of the best and bravest nobles dead on the field of honor, or languishing in English fetters; a weak and nerveless regent on her throne; and Charles, the bad king of Navarre, the counsellor, the nearest to his ear.

Half of the realm at least was held directly under English sway, with garrisons of English archers in the towns, and the red-cross banner of St. George floating above her vanquished towers; and in the provinces, still nominally French, armies of free companions sweeping the fields of their harvests far and near, plundering the cottage, pillaging the castle, levying contributions on open towns, storming by force strongholds—English, Gascons, and Normans—led for the most part by men of name and renown—bastards, in many cases, of great and noble houses, such as the bourg de Maulion, and the bourg de Kernlouet, and a hundred others of scarcely inferior fame—had subjected the country scarcely less effectually than it had been done elsewhere by open, honorable warfare.

To this appalling state of things a fresh horror was now added, where horror was least needed—and that the most tremendous of all horrors, a servile insurrection—the sudden, and spontaneous, and victorious outbreak of ignorant, down-trodden, vicious, cruel, frenzied, and brutal slaves!

The nobles themselves—who, had they been combined, and acted promptly and in unison, could have crushed the life out of the insurrection in a week—divided into hostile parties, dispirited by the wonderful successes of the victorious English, intimidated and crest-fallen—held themselves aloof the one from the other; and, attempting to defend their isolated fortresses singly, without either concert or system, allowed themselves to be surprised in detail, and butchered upon their own hearthstones, by the infuriated serfs.

All horrors, all atrocities that can be conceived, were perpetrated by the victors, maddened by long years of servitude and suffering, by deprivation of all the rights and decencies which belong of nature to every living man, and by the enforcement of droits so infamous and unnatural, that it is only wonderful how men should have so long endured them! Not the least galling of these was that feudal right which permitted the seigneur to compel the virgin bride on her wedding-day to his own bed, and then return her dishonored to the arms of her impassive husband—a right which not merely existed in abeyance, or, as in latter days, was compounded by a fine, but which was an every-day occurrence, a usage of the land—to enforce which was no more considered cruel or tyrannical than to collect rents, or tithes, or any other feudal dues—and which was not finally abolished until the reign of Louis XIV., when it was at length suppressed in those memorable assizes, known as the *grands jours d'Auvergne*, when many of the noblest of the land died by the hands of the common executioner for tyranny and persecution.

When, therefore, crimes like these, and worse, were perpetrated daily under the sanction and authority of feudal law; when they had been endured for years—not, indeed, without feelings of the direst bitterness and rage, but without loud complaint or general resistance, by all the serfs and villeyns of the

land—what wonder was it that these miserable, trampled wretches, scarcely human, save in form, from the squalid wretchedness of their condition, and the studious care of their oppressors to prevent their progress or improvement—what wonder, I say, was it, that, seeing at length their opportunity, when their lords were distracted by foreign conquests, by the devastations of robber-bands, and by their own political dissensions or social feuds, they should have sprung to arms everywhere—their cry, “ War to the castle, peace to the cottage !” —seeking redress or revenge, and braving death willingly, as less intolerable than the wrongs they had been so long enduring in sullen desperation ? What wonder was it, that, when victorious, they, who never had been spared, should have shown themselves unsparing ; that they, whose hearths had been to them no* safeguards for any sanctity of domestic life, no asylums for any age or sex, should have wreaked upon the dwellers of the castles the wrongs which for ages had been the inheritance of the inmates of the cottages ; that they, whose wives and daughters had never found protection from worse than brutish violence in tender years, in innocence of unstained virtue, in the weakness of imploring beauty, should have requited, on the wives and daughters of their tyrants, pollution by pollution, infamy, and death ?

Such, such, alas ! is human nature ; and rare it is indeed that suffering at the hands of man teaches man moderation to the sufferers when it becomes his turn to suffer. Injustice hardens, not melts, the heart ; and we have it, from no less an authority than the word of Him who can not lie, that “ persecution maketh wise men mad ” —but, of a surety, the wretched serfs and *Jacquerie* were far enough removed from wisdom, however they might be deemed mad, nor were many of their actions very far removed from madness. Knights crucified above the altars of their own castle-chapels, while their wives were dishonored,

tortured, and slain, with all extremities of cruelty, before their eyes ; infants tossed upon pikes, or burnt alive, in the presence of their frantic mothers ; women compelled to eat the flesh of their own husbands, roasted at their own kitchen-grates ere yet life was extinct ; the whole land filled with blood and ruin, and the smoke of conflagration going up night and day to the indignant and polluted heavens—these were the signs of those dark and awful times, these were the first fruits of the conquered liberty of the emancipated helots of the feudal system !

And when, nerved at length by the very extremity of peril, the nobles took up arms to make common cause against the common enemy, they found themselves isolated and hemmed in on all sides, unable to draw together so as to make head against the countless numbers of the enemy, which, like the waters of an inundation, increased hourly, and waxed wider, deeper, stronger, as it rolled onward. Large bodies could not be collected ; small bodies were cut off ; till at length so completely were the proud and warlike nobles of the most warlike land in Europe cowed and disheartened by the triumph of their despised and degraded slaves, that fifty men, armed cap-à-pie, and mounted on their puissant destriers, who would, six months before, have couched their lances confidently, and ridden scatheless through thousands of the skinclad Jacquery—trampling them at leisure under the hoofs of their barded horses, and, invulnerable themselves, spearing them at their will from their lofty demipiques—now felt their proud hearts tremble at the mere blast of a peasant's horn, and fled ingloriously before an equal number of undisciplined and half-armed serfs !

About the period, however, of which I write, several encounters had taken place, especially in Touraine, in the Beauvoisis, and the country about the Seine, between the chivalry and their insurgent villeyens, in which the former had been worsted, not so much by superior forces as by superior courage, discipline,

and skill. And it came to be rumored far and near that there was one band, and that the fiercest and most cruel of all—consisting of above a thousand foot, spears, and crossbow-men, and led by a powerful man-at-arms, before whose lance everything was said to go down—at the head of nearly a hundred fully-equipped lances, which was in no respect unequal to the best arrays of the nobility with their feudal vassals.

What was at first mere rumor, soon came to be accredited—soon came to be undoubted truth; for, emboldened by their successes from attacking the parties of chivalry in detail, as they fell upon them traversing the country in the vain hope of combinations, this great band now began to sit down before strong towns and fortified holds, to besiege them in due form of war, and were in every instance successful.

Their numbers, too, increased with their success, for every knight or man-at-arms who fell, or was taken prisoner, mounted and armed a peasant; and it was singular to observe with what skill and judgment the leader apportioned his best spoils to his best men: so that, developing his resources slowly—never admitting any man to enter his cavalry who had not approved himself a soldier, who could not ride well, and charge a lance fearlessly, nor enrolling any one among his footmen who was not well armed with a corslet or shirt-of-mail, and steel cap or sallet, with sword, dagger, and pike, or crossbow—he was soon at the head of two thousand excellent foot, and above three hundred lances, admirably mounted, who fought under his own immediate orders.

Who he was, no one knew, or conjectured. It was reported that his own men were unacquainted with his name, and that his face, when the vizor of his helmet was raised, was covered by a sable mask. How much of truth or falsehood there might be in these vague rumors, no man seemed to know; but it is certain that a mysterious and almost supernatural terror at-

tached to the "Black Rider," as he was universally termed, whenever he was spoken of—a terror which perhaps he took a secret pleasure in augmenting, either from motives of policy or of pride.

The strong suit of knight's armor which he wore, of the best Milan steel, was black as night from the crest to the spur, without relief of any kind, or device on the shield, or heraldic crest on the burgonet. The plume which he wore on his casque was similar to those affixed in modern days to hearses; and another, its counterpart, towered between the ears of his charger, which was a coal-black barb, without one white hair in its glossy hide, barded with chamfron, poitrel, neck-plates, and bard proper, all of black steel, with funeral-housings of black cloth.

Such was the man who alone of the leaders of the Jacquerie seemed to make war on a system, acting according to the dictates of the soundest judgment rather than, like the others, by wantonness or whim; permitting no license, nor promiscuous individual pillaging, but causing all plunder to be brought together for the common weal—thus making war support war, according to the prescribed plan of the greatest of modern conquerors—and subsisting his men on the spoils of the powerful and rich, without trespassing in any wise on the property of the poor, whose favor it was his object to conciliate.

It came, too, to be understood, ere long, that his cruelty was no less systematic than his plundering. No wanton barbarity, no torturing, roast, crucifying, or the like, was ever perpetrated by his band; and of himself, it was notorious that, except in open warfare or in the heat of battle, he had never dealt a blow against a man, or laid a rude hand on a woman, of the hated caste of nobles. Still, neither man nor woman ever escaped his rancorous and premeditated vengeance.

Every male noble, of whatever age—gray-haired, or full-grown man, stripling, or child, or infant in the cradle—no

sooner was he taken than he was hanged on the next tree if in the open field, or from the pinnacles of his own castle if within stone walls.

Every female of noble birth—and to these, though he never looked on them himself, nor was tempted by the charms of the fairest—was delivered at once to the mercies of his men, subjected to the last dishonor; and then, when life was intolerable to them, and death welcome, they were drowned in the nearest stream or lake, if in the open country, or cast from the battlements into the moat, if captured within the precincts of a fortalice.

So rigidly did he adhere to this last mode of execution, often carrying his victims along with the band for several days until he could find a suitable place for drowning them, that it was soon determined that he must have some secret motive, or strong vow, binding him to this strange course—the rather that there were many reasons for believing him to be a man naturally of a feeling and generous temper, hardened by circumstances into this vein of cold and adamant cruelty.

Though he had never been known to relent, tears had been known to fall fast through the bars of his *avantaille*, as he repulsed the outstretched arms and rejected the passionate entreaties of some lovely, innocent maiden, imploring death itself as a boon, so she might save her honor.

At such times, it was affirmed—and they were of no unusual occurrence—when he seemed on the point of relenting, he needed only to clasp in his mailed fingers a long, heavy tress of female hair—once of the loveliest shade of dark brown, verging almost upon black, but now bleached by exposure to the summer sun and the wintry storm—which he wore among the black plumes of his casque, when he became on the instant cold, iron, and impenetrable, as the proof-harness which he wore; and the words would come from his lips slow, stern,

irrevocable, speaking the miserable creature's doom, so that even she would plead no longer!—

“Away with her! away! For *she*, too, was beautiful, and innocent, and good; and which of these availed her, that she should not perish? Away with her, I say, and do your will with her; but let me not look on her any more!”

Up to this time, the insurrection had been confined to the northeast of France, and more especially to the Beauvoisis and the regions adjacent to the capital, the armed commons of which appeared ready to encourage and assist, if not openly to join them; but, at the period when my tale commences, it began to spread like a conflagration, and rapidly extended itself in all directions.

Auvergne still continued, however, free from disturbance, and the knights and nobles whose demesnes lay within that fair province went about their ordinary avocations and amusements, unmolested and unsuspecting of danger, without any more display of military force than was usual in those dark and dangerous times, and with no more than ordinary trains of feudal dependants and retainers.

This, however, was now brought to a sudden and alarming conclusion by the occurrence of an incident so terrible and hideous in its character, that it struck a panic-terror into every heart that heard tell of it, and that it still survives, though centuries have elapsed, as clear and distinct as if it had but just occurred, in the memories of the peasantry of Auvergne.

It was a beautiful morning in the latter part of June, when the whole face of the country was overspread by a garb of the richest summer greenery, when the skies were glowing with perfect and cloudless azure, and when the atmosphere was perfumed with the breath of flowers and vocal with the melody of birds. It was a morning when all nature seemed to be at peace, the bridal, as are old pock-words of the earth and sky—when

even the angry passions of man, the great destroyer, seem to be at rest, and when it is difficult to believe in the existence or commission of any violence or wrong.

It was on such a morning that a gay cavalcade of knights and ladies issued from the gates of the castle of Roche d'or, with a numerous train of half-armed retainers; with grooms, and foresters, and falconers; with hounds, gazehounds, and spaniels, fretting in their leashes; and goss-hawks, jer-falcons, peregrines, and marlins, horded upon their wrists, or cast upon frames suspended by thongs about the waists of the varlets who carried them.

At the head of this gallant company rode a finely-formed man of stately presence, and apparelled in the rich garments of a person of distinction in an age when every station and rank of life had its distinctive garb, and when the sumptuary laws were enforced with much strictness, rendering it highly penal for one class to assume the dress of the station next above it. Velvet, and rich furs, and ostrich-plumes, rustled and waved in the garb of this puissant noble, and many a gem of rare price flashed from the hilts of his weapons, and even from the accoutrements of his splendid Andalusian charger. On either hand of him rode a lady, beautiful both of them, and young, but in styles of beauty utterly dissimilar: for one was dark-browed and black-haired, with the complexion of a clear-skinned brunette, suffused with a rich, sunny color, and large, languid black eyes; while the other had a skin as white as snow, with the slightest possible tinge of rose on the soft, rounded cheeks—eyes of the hues of the dewy violet—and long, streaming tresses of warm, golden brown.

In the dark-haired lady it was easy to trace a resemblance, of both outline and complexion, to the gentleman who rode between them, and it would not have needed a very keen observer to discover at a glance that they were brother and sister. And

such was the truth : for the personages were Raoul de Canillac, the marquis of Roche d'or ; Louise de Canillac, his lovely sister ; and Clemente, his late-wedded wife, formerly Clemente Isaure de Saint Angely, who was the wonder of the country for beauty, and its idol for her charity and goodness.

Next this lady, on the outer side, there rode one who was as much and as deservedly detested by the neighborhood as she was admired and beloved—a strange compound of all the foul and hideous vices which can render humanity detestable, unredeemed by one solitary virtue, if bravery be excepted, which was a quality so general and necessary—being, in fact, almost unavoidable, from the peculiar nature of chivalrous institutions—that it must be regarded rather as a virtue of the age and military caste of nobles, than of this or that individual. He had earned himself a fearful reputation, and how well he had deserved no one could doubt who looked upon his face, all scathed and furrowed by the lines stamped on it by habitual indulgence in every hateful vice, habitual surrender to every fiery passion. A cousin of the marquis, and his nearest male relative, he had done much to deprave and corrupt his mind ; and though an accomplished and gallant gentleman, honorable, and affable, and companionable to his own caste, a fond husband, a kind brother, and a warm friend, he had succeeded in rendering him as cruel and unmerciful an oppressor of all beneath him as a feudal seigneur in those days could be, if his power was equalled by his will to do evil. He also was Canillac, the reproach and disgrace of an old and noble name, and was known far and wide, for his furious and frantic crimes—which seemed, so perfectly unprovoked were they at times and devoid of meaning, to arise from actual insanity—by the soubriquet of *Canillac le fou*, the madman—a title of which, so shameless was he in his infamous renown, he actually appeared to glory, signing it as a portion of his name, or an honorable title of distinction.

On the other side, next to Louise de Roche d'or, rode a tall and handsome youth, wearing the belt and spurs of knighthood, and gazing at times into the face of the beautiful girl with eyes full of deep, ardent affection, and speaking to her in those low, earnest tones which denote so certainly the existence of strong and pervading interest and affection. The knight, already famous far beyond his years, for deeds of dauntless daring, was Sir Louis de Montfaçon, a puissant baron of Auvergne, whose bands marched with those of Castel de Roche d'or, and the affianced husband of the young and fair Louise. Pages and equerries, with the usual attendants, followed, and the courtyard rang and re-echoed with the clang of hoofs, the neighing of coursers, the deep baying of the bloodhounds, and the screams of the frightened falcons.

They issued from the castle-gates ; wound through the open park, and the dense woodland chase beyond it ; swept down a steep descent into a broad and fertile valley, watered by a great, clear river, which they crossed by a wooden bridge : traversed the narrow, sandy street of the village of Castel de Roche d'or, and, turning off short to the right, entered a little dell, through which a bright, clear rivulet murmured over its pebbly bed, on its way to join the larger river in the valley.

The lower part of this little dell was principally open pasturage, dotted here and there with brakes and solitary bushes of hawthorn ; and along the margin of the rivulet there ran a fringe of willow and alder thickets, but a little higher up it degenerated into a mere gorge or ravine, thickly overshadowed by the gnarled arms and dense, verduous umbrage of huge, immemorial oaks, the outskirts and advanced guard, as it were, of a vast oak-forest, which covered leagues on leagues of rough and broken country, to which this dell formed the readiest means of access.

Just in the jaws of this pass, overhung by the oaks, stood a

small, gray, rustic chapel, supported on four clustered columns, with groined arches intersecting each other resting upon them, a small, arched canopy containing a bell on the summit of its steep, slated roof, and a low-browed door, with a round arch, decorated with the wolf-toothed carvings of the earliest Norman style. Immediately in front of the door, the little rivulet which watered the dell burst out of the other in a strong, gushing spring, which had been blessed by some saint of old, and, being surmounted by a vaulted canopy, was held to be peculiarly holy by the superstitious rustics of the region.

This lovely spot, however, peaceful as it showed, and calm in its tranquil and sequestered security, had been the scene, some two or three years before, of a fearful and cruel crime: had witnessed the violent seizure of a sweet, innocent, and rarely lovely bride, fresh from the marriage benediction, by this very Raoul de Canillac; and the girl had escaped pollution only by self-immolation.

It was a cursed deed—and cursed was the vengeance it provoked!

Just as the company I have described wheeled into the lower end of the little dell, conversing joyously together, and enjoying the sweet influences of the season and the place, they were saluted by the long, keen blast of a bugle, well and clearly wind-ed, in that peculiarly note known at that period as the *mort*, being the call that announced the death of the game, whatever it was, which might be the object of pursuit.

This call came from the oaks above the chapel, although no performer was seen, nor was there any baying of hounds or clamor of hunters, such as usually accompanies the termination of a chase.

There was no privilege at that time more highly regarded by the nobles than the rights of the chase, nor was there any crime more jealously pursued and punished more vindictively than the

infraction of the forest-laws ; so much so, indeed, that the death of a stag or wild-boar by unlicensed hands was visited with a far deeper meed of vengeance than the murder of a man !

It was with a face, therefore, inflamed by the fiercest ire, a flashing eye, and a knitted brow, that Raoul de Canillac unsheathed his sword, and spurred his horse into a gallop, calling upon his men with a vehement and angry oath to follow him, for there were of a surety villeyens in the wood slaughtering the deer.

The ladies of the party checked their horses on the instant in affright, while the men rushed forward in confusion, drawing their weapons, and casting loose the hounds and hawks which they had led or carried, in order to wield their arms with more advantage ; and between the shouts of the feudal retainers, the deep baying of the released bloodhounds, and the wild screams of the hawks, all that calm and peaceful solitude was transformed on the instant into a scene of the wildest turmoil and confusion. At this moment, just as the lord of Roche d'or spurred his horse up the slight eminence toward the little church, a man of great height and powerful frame stepped slowly forward from among the oaks, clad in a full suit of knightly armor, of plain, unornamented black steel, with no device or bearing on his shield, and no crest on his casque, which was overshadowed by an immense plume of black ostrich-feathers. He had a two-handed sword slung across his shoulders, and carried a ponderous battle-axe in his right hand.

Startled by this unexpected apparition, Raoul de Canillac checked his horse suddenly, exclaiming : " Treason ! fy ! treason ! Ride, ladies, for your lives !—ride ! ride ! "

But this warning came too late : for, simultaneously with the appearance of the leader, above five hundred crossbow-men and lancers poured out from the wood on either flank, with their weapons ready ; and a body of fifty or sixty mounted men-at-

arms drew out from behind a spur of the hills at the entrance of the gorge, and effectually cut off their retreat. Entirely surrounded, escape was impossible, and resistance hopeless, so great was the numerical superiority of the enemy, and so perfectly were they armed and accoutred for offence and defence, while the retainers of the lords had no defensive arms whatever, nor any weapons except their swords and hunting-staves, and a few bows and arbalasts.

The leader of the Jacquerie—for it needed not a second glance to inform Raoul de Canillac into whose hands he had fallen—waved his axe on high as a signal, and instantly a single crossbow was discharged; and the bolt, striking the horse of the seigneur full in the centre of the chest, he went down on the instant: and before he could recover his feet, the marquis was seized by a dozen stout hands, and bound securely hand and foot with stout hempen cords.

On perceiving this, the elder nobleman, Canillac the madman, with the desperate and reckless fury for which he was so conspicuous, dashed forward, sword in hand, with his paternal war-cry, followed by a dozen or two of the armed servitors, as if to rescue his kinsman. Perhaps he perceived the hopelessness of their condition, and preferred selling his life dearly to surrendering only to be slaughtered in cold blood: and if such was his notion, he was not all unwise.

Again the battle-axe was waved, and this time a close and well-aimed volley followed, the bolts taking effect fatally on the bodies of the old lord and several of his followers, three of whom with their chief were slain outright, while several others staggered back more or less severely wounded.

With this, all resistance ended, the men throwing down their arms, and crying for quarter, which—as they were all, with the exception of two pages and an esquire, men of low birth—was granted, and they were discharged without further condi-

tion. To those of gentle origin, however, no such clemency was extended. The pages and esquire were stripped of their costly garb, and immediately hanged up by the necks from the oak-trees, together with the young knight affianced to Mademoiselle Roche d'or, in spite of the entreaties and supplications of his beautiful betrothed.

The ladies were then compelled to dismount, and their arms being bound behind their backs, were tied with ropes to the tails of their captors' horses; and, together with Raoul de Canillac, whose feet were now released from their fetters, were dragged in painful and disgraceful procession back to the gates of the feudal fortalice from which they had so lately issued free and happy!

On the first summons of the leader of the Jacques—seeing their lord and the ladies captive, weak in numbers, dispirited, and without a leader—the garrison immediately surrendered: the portcullis was drawn up, the pontlevis lowered, and, with their wretched prisoners, the fierce marauders entered the walls, which, by their massive strength, might otherwise have long defied them.

Meantime, not one word had been uttered by the leader of the party, who indicated his demands to his men merely by the wafture of his hand or the gesture of his head, which were promptly understood and implicitly obeyed. In compliance with a sign, the prisoners were now led after him into their own magnificent abode, and carried through long, winding passages, and up an almost interminable stairway, to an apartment in the summit of a huge, square tower, overlooking the castle-moat, from a battlemented balcony, at the height of above a hundred feet. A dread foreboding shook the breast of Raoul de Canillac, as he was brought into that chamber, the scene of his outrageous cruelty to the lovely Marguerite in past years, and now to be the scene of its as cruel retribution.

The black warrior raised the vizor of his helmet, and gazed into the face of his former lord with the fixed, resolute, determined scowl of Maurice Champrèst, while the bad, bold oppressor shook before his captor with a visible, convulsive air.

“Ay! tremble, murderer and tyrant—tremble!” thundered the fierce avenger; “tremble! for thy time is at hand: and, Marguerite—lovely and beloved Marguerite—right royally shalt thou be now avenged! Away with these! away with them! their doom is spoken!”

And a scene of more than fiendish cruelty and violence ensued. Those innocent and lovely women, subjected to the last dishonor before the eyes of the husband and brother—tortured with merciless ingenuity when their violators were satiate of their beauties—and then cast headlong from the bartizan into the moat which had received the corpse of the Vassal's Wife! Raoul de Canillac, scourged till the flesh was literally torn from his bones, was plunged headlong after them!

Such was the Vassal's Vengeance!—and when he fell, shortly afterward, before the walls of Meaux, by the lance of the renowned Captal de Buch, his last words were: “I care not—I care not to live longer. My task was ended, my race won, when thou wert avenged, Marguerite—Marguerite!” and he perished with her name on his tongue. His crimes were great, but was not his temptation greater? Pray we, that we be not tempted!

TRUE LOVE'S DEVOTION:

A TALE OF THE TIMES OF LOUIS QUINZE.

PART I.

THERE was a mighty stir in the streets of Paris, as Paris's streets were in the olden time. A dense and eager mob had taken possession, at an early hour of the day, of all the environs of the Bastile, and lined the way which led thence to the Place de Grève in solid and almost impenetrable masses.

People of all conditions were there, except the very highest; but the great majority of the concourse was composed of the low populace, and the smaller bourgeoisie. Multitudes of women were there, too, from the girl of sixteen to the beldam of sixty, nor had mothers been ashamed to bring their infants in their arms into that loud and tumultuous assemblage.

Loud it was and tumultuous, as all great multitudes are, unless they are convened by purposes too resolutely dark and solemn to find any vent in noise. When that is the case, let rulers beware, for peril is at hand—perhaps the beginning of the end.

But this Parisian mob, although long before this period it had learned the use of barricades, though noisy, turbulent, and sometimes even violent in the demonstrations of its impatience, was anything but angry or excited.

On the contrary, it seemed to be on the very tip-toe of pleasurable expectation, and from the somewhat frequent allusions to *notre bon roi*, which circulated among the better order of spectators, it would appear that the government of the Fifteenth Louis was for the moment in unusually good odor with the good folks of the metropolis.

What was the spectacle to which they were looking forward with so much glee—which had brought forth young delicate girls, and tender mothers, into the streets at so early an hour—which, as the day advanced toward ten o'clock of the morning, was tempting forth laced cloaks, and rapiers, and plumed hats, and here and there, in the cumbrous carriages of the day, the proud and luxurious ladies of the gay metropolis?

One glance toward the centre of the Place de Grève was sufficient to inform the dullest, for there uprose, black, grisly, horrible, a tall stout pile of some thirty feet in height, with a huge wheel affixed horizontally to the summit.

Around this hideous instrument of torture was raised a scaffold hung with black cloth, and strewd with saw-dust, for the convenience of the executioners, about three feet lower than the wheel which surmounted it.

Around this frightful apparatus were drawn up two companies of the French guard, forming a large hollow-square facing outward, with muskets loaded, and bayonets fixed, as if they apprehended an attempt at rescue, although from the demeanor of the people, nothing appeared at that time to be further from their thoughts than anything of the kind.

Above was the executioner-in-chief, with two grim, truculent-looking assistants, making preparations for the fearful operation they were about to perform, or leaning indolently on the instruments of slaughter.

By and by, as the day wore onward, and the concourse kept still increasing both in numbers and in the respectability of

those who composed it, something of irritation began to show itself, mingled with the eagerness and expectation of the populace, and from some murmurs, which ran from time to time through their ranks, it would seem that they apprehended the escape of their victim.

By this time the windows of all the houses which overlooked the precincts of that fatal square on which so much of noble blood has been shed through so many ages, were occupied by persons of both sexes, all of the middle, and some even of the upper classes, as eager to behold the frightful and disgusting scene, which was about to ensue, as the mere rabble in the open streets below.

The same thing was manifest along the whole line of the thoroughfare by which the fatal procession would advance, with this difference alone, that many of the houses in that quarter belonging to the high nobility, and all with few exceptions being the dwellings of opulent persons, the windows, instead of being let like seats at the opera, to any who would pay the price, were occupied by the inhabitants, coming and going from their ordinary avocations to look out upon the noisy throng, when any louder outbreak of voices called their attention to the busy scene.

Among the latter, in a large and splendid mansion, not far from the Porte St. Antoine, and commanding a direct view of the Place de la Bastille, with its esplanade, drawbridge, and principal entrance, a group was collected at one of the windows, nearly overlooking the gate itself, which seemed to take the liveliest interest in the proceedings of the day, although that interest was entirely unmixed with anything like the brutal expectation, and morbid love of horrible excitement which characterized the temper of the multitude.

The most prominent persons of this group was a singularly noble-looking man, fast verging to his fiftieth year, if he had

not yet attained it. His countenance, though resolute and firm, with a clear, piercing eye, lighted up at times, for a moment, by a quick, fiery flash, was calm, benevolent, and pensive in its ordinary mood, rather than energetical or active. Yet it was easy to perceive that the mind, which informed it, was of the highest capacity both of intellect and imagination.

The figure and carriage of this gentleman would have sufficiently indicated that, at some period of his life he had borne arms and led the life of a camp—which, indeed, at that day was only to say that he was a nobleman of France—but a long scar on his right brow, a little way above the eye, losing itself among the thick locks of his fine waving hair, and a small round cicatrix in the centre of his cheek, showing where a pistol ball had found entrance, proved that he had been where blows were falling thickest, and that he had not spared his own person in the *melee*.

His dress was very rich, according to the fashion of the day, though perhaps a fastidious eye might have objected that it partook somewhat of the past mode of the regency, which had just been brought to a conclusion as my tale commences, by the resignation of the witty and licentious Philip of Orleans.

If, however, this fine-looking gentleman was the most prominent, he certainly was not the most interesting person of the company, which consisted, besides himself, of an ecclesiastic of high rank in the French church, a lady, now somewhat advanced in years, but showing the remains of beauty which, in its prime, must have been extraordinary, and of a boy in his fifteenth or sixteenth year.

For notwithstanding the eminent distinction, and high intellect of the elder nobleman, the dignity of the abbé, not unsupported by all which men look for as the outward and visible signs of that dignity, and the grace and beauty of the lady, it

was upon the boy alone that the eye of every spectator would have dwelt, from the instant of its first discovering him.

He was tall of his age, and very finely made, of proportions which gave promise of exceeding strength when he should arrive at maturity, but strength uncoupled to anything of weight or clumsiness. He was unusually free, even at this early period, from that heavy and ungraceful redundance of flesh which not unfrequently is the forerunner of athletic power in boys just bursting into manhood; for he was already as conspicuous for the thinness of his flanks, and the shapely hollow of his back, as for the depth and roundness of his chest, the breadth of his shoulders, and the symmetry of his limbs.

His head was well set on, and his whole bearing was that of one who had learned ease, and grace, and freedom, combined with dignity of carriage, in no school of practice and mannerism, but from the example of those with whom he had been brought up, and by familiar intercourse from his cradle upward with the high-born and gently nurtured of the land.

His long rich chestnut hair fell down in natural masses undisfigured as yet by the hideous art of the court hair-dresser, on either side his fine broad forehead, and curled, untortured by the crisping-irons, over the collar of his velvet jerkin. His eyes were large and very clear, of the deepest shade of blue, with dark lashes, yet full of strong, tranquil light. All his features were regular and shapely, but it was not so much in the beauty of their form, or in the harmony of their coloring, that the attractiveness of his aspect consisted, as in the peculiarity and power of his expression.

For a boy of his age, the pensiveness and composure of that expression were indeed almost unnatural, and they combined with a calm firmness and immobility of feature, which promised, I know not what of resolution and tenacity of purpose. It was not gravity, much less sternness, or sadness, that lent

so powerful an expression to that young face ; nor was there a single line which indicated coldness or hardness of heart, or which would have led to a suspicion that he had been schooled by those hard monitors, suffering and sorrow. No, it was pure thoughtfulness, and that of the highest and most intellectual order, which characterized the boy's expression.

Yet, though it was so thoughtful, there was nothing in the aspect whence to forebode a want of the more masculine qualifications. It was the thoughtfulness of a worker, not of a dreamer—the thoughtfulness which prepares, not unfits a man for action. If the powers portrayed in that boy's countenance were not deceptive to the last degree, high qualities were within and a high destiny before him.

But who, from the foreshowing and the bloom of sixteen years, may augur of the finish and the fruit of the threescore-and-ten, which are the sum of human toil and sorrow ?

It was now nearly noon, when the outer drawbridge of the Bastille was lowered, and its gate opened ; and forth rode, two abreast, a troop of the musquetaires or lifeguard, in the bright steel casques and cuirases, with the musquetoons, from which they derived their name, unslung and ready for action. As they issued into the wider space beyond the bridge, the troopers formed themselves rapidly into a sort of hollow column, the front of which, some eight file deep, occupied the whole width of the street, two files in close order composing each flank, and leaving an open space in the centre completely surrounded by the horsemen.

Into this space, without a moment's delay, there was driven a low, black cart, or hurdle as it was technically called, of the rudest construction, drawn by four powerful black horses—a savage-faced official guiding them by the ropes which supplied the place of reins. On this ill-omened vehicle there stood three persons—the prisoner, and two of the armed wardens of

the Bastile—the former ironed very heavily, and the latter bristling with offensive weapons.

Immediately in the rear of this car followed another troop of the lifeguard, which closed up in the densest and most serried order around and behind the victim of the law, so as to render any attempt at rescue useless.

The person, to secure whose punishment so strong a military force had been produced, and to witness whose execution so vast a multitude was collected, was a tall, noble-looking man of forty or forty-five years, dressed in a rich mourning-habit of the day, but wearing neither hat nor mantle. His dark hair, mixed at intervals with thin lines of silver, was cut short behind, contrary to the usage of the times, and his neck was bare, the collar of his superbly-laced shirt being folded broadly back over the cape of his pourpoint.

His face was very pale, and his complexion being naturally of the darkest, the hue of his flesh, from which all the healthful blood had receded, was strangely livid and unnatural in its appearance. Still it did not seem that it was fear which had blanched his cheeks, and stolen all the color from his compressed lip, for his eye was full of a fierce, scornful light, and all his features were set and steady with an expression of the calmest and most iron resolution.

As the fatal vehicle which bore him made its appearance on the esplanade without the gates of the prison, a deep hum of satisfaction ran through the assembled concourse, rising and deepening gradually into a savage howl like that of a hungry tiger.

Then, then blazed out the haughty spirit, the indomitable pride of the French noble! Then shame, and fear, and death itself, which he was looking even now full in the face, were all forgotten, all absorbed, in his overwhelming scorn of the people!

The blood rushed in a torrent to his brow, his eye seemed to lighten forth actual fire, as he raised his right hand aloft—loaded although it was with such a mass of iron as a Greek athlete might have shunned to lift—and shook it at the clamorous mob, with a glare of scorn and fury that showed how, had he been at liberty, he would have dealt with the revilers of his fallen state.

“*Sacré canaille!*” he hissed through his hard-set teeth—“back to your gutters, and your garbage; or follow, if you can, in silence, and learn, if ye lack not courage to look on, how a man should die!”

The reproof told: for, though at the contemptuous tone and fell insult of the first words, the clamor of the rabble-rout waxed wilder, there was so much true dignity in the last sentiment he uttered, and the fate to which he was going was so hideous, that a key was struck in the popular heart, and thenceforth the tone of the spectators was changed altogether.

It was the exultation of the people over the downfall and disgrace of a noble, that had found tongue in that savage conclamation; it was the apprehension that his dignity, and the interest of his great name, would win him pardon from the partial justice of the king, that had rendered them pitiless and savage: and now that their own cruel will was about to be gratified, as they beheld how dauntlessly the proud lord went to a death of torture, they were stricken with a sort of secret shame, and followed the dread train in sullen silence.

As the black car rolled onward, the haughty criminal turned his eyes upward—perchance from a sentiment of pride, which rendered it painful to him to meet the gaze, whether pitiful or triumphant, of the Parisian populace; and as he did so, it chanced that his glance fell on the group which I have described as assembled at the windows of a mansion which he knew well, and in which, in happier days, he had passed gay

and pleasant hours. Every eye of that group, with but one exception, was fixed upon himself, as he perceived on the instant; the lady alone having turned her head away, as unable to look upon one in such a strait, whom she had known under circumstances so widely different. 'There was nothing, however, in the gaze of all these earnest eyes that seemed to embarrass, much less to offend, the prisoner. Deep interest, earnestness, perhaps horror, was expressed by one and all; but that horror was not, nor in anywise partook of, the abhorrence which appeared to be the leading sentiment of the populace below. As he encountered their gaze, therefore, he drew himself up to his full height, and, laying his right hand upon his heart, bowed low and gracefully to the windows at which his friends of past days were assembled.

The boy turned his eye quickly toward his father, as if to note what return he should make to that strange salutation. If it were so, he did not remain in doubt a moment, for that nobleman bowed low and solemnly to his brother-peer with a very grave and sad aspect; and even the ecclesiastic inclined his head courteously to the condemned criminal.

The boy perhaps marvelled, for a look of bewilderment crossed his ingenuous features; but it passed away in an instant, and, following the example of his seniors, he bent his ingenuous brow and sunny locks before the unhappy man, who never was again to interchange a salute with living mortal.

It would seem that the recipient of that last act of courtesy was gratified beyond the expectation of those who offered it, for a faint flush stole over his livid features, from which the momentary glow of indignation had now entirely faded, and a slight smile played upon his pallid lip, while a tear—the last he should ever shed—twinkled for an instant on his dark lashes. "True," he muttered to himself approvingly; "the nobles are true ever to their order!"

The eyes of the mob likewise had been attracted to the group above, by what had passed, and at first it appeared as if they had taken umbrage at the sympathy showed to the criminal by his equals in rank ; for there was manifested a little inclination to break out again into a murmured shout, and some angry words were bandied about, reflecting on the pride and party spirit of the proud lords.

But the inclination was checked instantly, before it had time to render itself audible, by a word which was circulated, no one knew whence or by whom, through the crowded ranks—“Hush! hush! it is the good lord of St. Renan!” And therewith every voice was hushed—so fickle is the fancy of a crowd—although it is very certain that four fifths of those present knew not nor had ever heard the name of St. Renan, nor had the slightest suspicion what claims he who bore it had on either their respect or forbearance.

The death-train passed on its way, however, unmolested by any further show of temper on the part of the crowd ; and the crowd itself, following the progress of the hurdle to the place of execution, was soon out of sight of the windows occupied by the family of the count de St. Renan.

“Alas! unhappy Kerguelen!” exclaimed the count, with a deep and painful sigh, as the fearful procession was lost to sight in the distance. “He knows not yet half the bitterness of that which he has to undergo.”

The boy looked up into his father's face with an inquiring glance, which he answered at once, still in the same subdued and solemn voice which he had used from the first.

“By the arrangement of his hair and dress I can see that he imagines he is to die as a nobleman, by the axe. May Heaven support him when he sees the disgraceful wheel.”

“You seem to pity the wretch, Louis,” cried the lady, who had not hitherto spoken, nor even looked toward the criminal

as he was passing by the windows—"and yet he was assuredly a most atrocious criminal. A cool, deliberate, cold-blooded poisoner! Out upon it! out upon it! The wheel is fifty times too good for him!"

"He was all that you say, Marie," replied her husband gravely; "and yet I do pity him with all my heart, and grieve for him. I knew him well, though we have not met for many years, when we were both young, and there was no braver, nobler, better man within the limits of fair France. I know, too, how he loved that woman, how he trusted that man—and then to be so betrayed! It seems to me but yesterday that he led her to the altar, all tears of happiness, and soft maiden blushes. Poor Kerguelon! he was sorely tried."

"But still, my son, he was found wanting. Had he submitted him as a Christian to the punishment the good God laid upon him—"

"The world would have pronounced him a spiritless, dishonored slave, father," said the count, answering the ecclesiastic's speech before it was yet finished, "and gentlemen would have refused him the hand of fellowship."

"Was he justified then, my father?" asked the boy eagerly, who had been listening with eager attention to every word that had yet been spoken. "Do you think, then, that he was in the right; that he could not do otherwise than to slay her? I can understand that he was bound to kill the man who had basely wronged his honor—but a woman!—a woman whom he had once loved too!—that seems to me most horrible; and the mode, by a slow poison! living with her while it took effect! eating at the same board with her! sleeping by her side! that seems even more than horrible, it was cowardly!"

"God forbid, my son," replied the elder nobleman, "that I should say any man was justified who had murdered another in cold blood; especially, as you have said, a woman, and by a

method so terrible as poison. I only mean exactly what I said, that he was tried very fearfully, and that under such trial the best and wisest of us here below can not say how he would act himself. Moreover, it would seem, that mistaken as he was perhaps in the course which he seems to have imagined that honor demanded at his hands, he was, more mistaken in the mode which he took of accomplishing his scheme of vengeance. It was made very evident upon his trial that he did nothing, even to that wretched traitress, in rage or revenge, but all as he thought in honor. He chose a drug which consumed her by a mild and gradual decay, without suffering or spasm; he gave her time for repentance, nay, it is clearly proved that he convinced her of her sin, reconciled her to the part he had taken in her death, and exchanged forgiveness with her before she passed away. I do not think myself that to commit a crime himself can clear one from dishonor cast upon him by another's act, but at the same time I can not look upon Kerguelen's guilt as of that brutal and felonious nature which calls for such a punishment as this—to be broken alive on the wheel, like a hired stabber—much less can I assent to the stigma which is attached to him on all sides, while that base, low-lived, treacherous, cogging miscreant, who fell too honorably by his honorable sword, meets pity—God defend us from such justice and sympathy!—and is entombed with tears and honors, while the avenger is crushed, living, out of the very shape of humanity by the hands of the common hangman.”

The churchman's lips moved for a moment, as if he were about to speak in reply to the false doctrines which he heard enunciated by that upright and honorable man, and good father, but, ere he spoke, he reflected that those doctrines were held at that time, throughout Christian Europe, unquestioned, and confirmed by prejudice and pride beyond all the power of argument or of religion to set them aside, or invalidate them.

The law of chivalry, sterner and more inflexible than that Mosaic code requiring an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, which demanded a human life as the sacrifice for every rash word, for every wrongful action, was the law paramount of every civilized land in that day, and in France perhaps most of all lands, as standing foremost in what was then deemed civilization. And the abbé well knew that discussion of this point would only tend to bring out the opinions of the count de St. Renan, in favor of the sanguinary code of honor, more decidedly, and consequently to confirm the mind of the young man more effectually in what he believed himself to be a fatal error.

The young man, who was evidently very deeply interested in the matter of the conversation, had devoured every word of his father, as if he had been listening to the oracles of a God; and, when he ceased, after a pause of some seconds, during which he was pondering very deeply on that which he had heard, he raised his intelligent face and said in an earnest voice—

“I see, my father, all that you have alleged in palliation of the count's crime, and I fully understand you—though I still think it the most terrible thing I ever have heard tell of. But I do not perfectly comprehend wherefore you ransack our language of all the deepest terms of contempt which to heap upon the head of the chevalier de la Rochederrien? He was the count's sworn friend, she was the count's wedded wife; they both were forsworn and false, and both betrayed him. But in what was the chevalier's fault the greater or the viler?”

Those were strange days, in which such a subject could have been discussed between two wise and virtuous parents and a son, whom it was their chiefest aim in life to bring up to be a good and honorable man—that son, too, barely more than a boy in years and understanding. But the morality of those

times was coarser and harder, and, if there was no more real vice, there was far less superficial delicacy in the manners of society, and the relations between men and women, than there is now-a-days.

Perhaps the course lies midway; for certainly if there was much coarseness then, there is much cant and much squeamishness now, which could be excellently well dispensed with.

Beside this, boys were brought into the great world much earlier at that period, and were made men of at an age when they would have been learning Greek and Latin, had their birth been postponed by a single century.

Then, at fifteen, they held commissions, and carried colors in the battle's front, and were initiated into all the license of the court, the camp, and the forum.

So it came that the discussion of a subject such as that which I have described, was very naturally introduced even between parents and a beloved and only son by the circumstances of the day. Morals, as regards the matrimonial contract, and the intercourse between the sexes, have at all times been lower and far less rigid among the French, than in nations of northern origin; and never at any period of the world was the morality of any country, in this respect, at so low an ebb as was France under the reign of the Fifteenth Louis.

The count de St. Renan replied, therefore, to his son with as little restraint as if he had been his equal in age, and equally acquainted with the customs and vices of the world, although intrigue and crime were the topics of which he had to treat.

"It is quite true, Raoul," replied the count, "that so far as the unhappy lord of Kerguelen was concerned, the guilt of the chevalier de la Rochederrien was, as you say, no deeper, perhaps less deep than that of the miserable lady. He was, indeed, bound to Kerguelen by every tie of friendship and honor; he had been aided by his purse, backed by his sword, nay, I

have heard and believe, that he owed his life to him. Yet for all that he seduced his wife; and to make it worse, if worse it could be, Kerguelen had married her from the strongest affection, and till the chevalier brought misery, and dishonor, and death upon them, there was no wedded couple in all France so virtuous or so happy."

"Indeed, sir!" replied Raoul, in tones of great emotion, staring with his large, dark eyes as if some strange sight had presented itself to him on a sudden.

"I know well, Raoul, and if you have not heard it yet, you will soon do so, when you begin to mingle with men, that there are those in society, *those* whom the world regards, moreover, as honorable men, who affect to say that he who loves a woman, whether lawfully or sinfully, is at once absolved from all considerations except how he most easily may win—or in other words—ruin her; and consequently such men would speak slightly of the chevalier's conduct toward his friend, Kerguelen, and affect to regard it as a matter of course, and a mere affair of gallantry! But I trust you will remember this, my son, that there is nothing *gallant*, nor can be, in lying, or deceit, or treachery of any kind. And further, that to look with eyes of passion on the wife of a friend, is in itself both a crime, and an act of deliberate dishonor."

"I should not have supposed, sir," replied the boy, blushing very deeply, partly it might be from the nature of the subject under discussion, and partly from the strength of his emotions, "that any cavalier could have regarded it otherwise. It seems to me that to betray a friend's honor is a far blacker thing than to betray his life—and surely no man with one pretension to honor would attempt to justify that."

"I am happy to see, Raoul, that you think so correctly on this point. Hold to your creed, my dear boy, for there are who shall try ere long to shake it. But be sure that it is the

creed of honor. But, although I think La Rochederrien disgraced himself even in this, it was not for this only that I termed him, as I deem him, the very vilest and most infamous of mankind. For when he had led that poor lady into sin; when she had surrendered herself up wholly to his honor; when she had placed the greatest trust—although a guilty trust, I admit—in his faith and integrity that one human being can place in another, the base dog betrayed her. He boasted of her weakness, of Kerguelen's dishonor, of his own infamy."

"And did not they to whom he boasted of it," exclaimed the noble boy, his face flushing fiery red with excitement and indignation, "spurn him at once from their presence, as a thing unworthy and beyond the pale of law."

"No, Raoul, they laughed at him, applauded his gallant success, and jeered at the lord of Kerguelen."

"Great heaven! and these were gentlemen!"

"They were called such, at least; gentlemen by name and descent they were assuredly, but as surely not right gentlemen at heart. Many of them, however, in cooler moments, spoke of the traitor and the braggart with the contempt and disgust he merited. Some friend of Kerguelen's heard what had passed, and deemed it his duty to inform him. The most unhappy husband called the seducer to the field, wounded him mortally, and—to increase yet more his infamy—even in the agony of death the slave confessed the whole, and craved forgiveness like a dog. Confessed the *woman's crime*—you mark me, Raoul!—had he died mute, or died even with a falsehood in his mouth, as I think he was bound to do in such extremity, affirming her innocence with his last breath, he had saved her, and perhaps spared her wretched lord the misery of knowing certainly the depth of his dishonor."

The boy pondered for a moment or two without making any answer; and although he was evidently not altogether satisfied,

probably would not have again spoken, had not his father, who read what was passing in his mind, asked him what it was that he desired to know further.

Raoul smiled at perceiving how completely his father understood him, and then said at once, without pause or hesitation:—

“I understand you to say, sir, that you thought the wretched man of whom we spoke was bound, under the extremity in which he stood, to die with a falsehood in his mouth. Can a gentleman ever be justified in saying the thing that is not? Much more, can it be his bounden duty to do so?”

“Unquestionably, as a rule of general conduct, he can not. Truth is the soul of honor; and without truth, honor can not exist. But this is a most intricate and tangled question. It never can arise without presupposing the commission of one guilty act—one act which no good or truly moral man would commit at all. It is, therefore, scarcely worth our while to examine it. But I do say, on my deliberate and grave opinion, that if a woman, previously innocent and pure, have sacrificed her honor to a man, that man is bound to sacrifice everything—his life without a question, and I think his truth also—in order to preserve her character, so far as he can, unscathed. But we will speak no more of this; it is an odious subject, and one of which I trust you, Raoul, will never have the sad occasion to consider.”

“Oh, never, father, never I!” cried the ingenuous boy; “I must first lose my senses, and become a madman.”

“All men are madmen, Raoul,” said the churchman—who stood in the relation of maternal uncle to the youth—“who suffer their passions to have the mastery of them. You must learn, therefore, to be their tyrant; for if you be not, be well assured that that they will be yours—and merciless tyrants they are to the wretches who become their subjects.”

“I will remember what you say, sir,” answered the boy,

“and, indeed, I am not like to forget it, for altogether this is the saddest day I ever have passed ; and this is the most horrible and appalling story that I have ever heard told. It was but just that the lord of Kerguelen should die, for he did a murder ; and since the law punishes that in a peasant, it must do so likewise with a noble. But to break him upon the wheel ! —it is atrocious ! I should have thought all the nobles of the land would have applied to the king to spare him that horror.”

“Many of them did apply, Raoul ; but the king, or his ministers in his name, made answer that during the regency the count Horn was broken on the wheel for murder, and therefore that to behead the lord of Kerguelen for the same offence, would be to admit that the count was wrongfully condemned.”

“Out on it ! out on it ! what sophistry ! Count Horn murdered a banker, like a common thief, for his gold ; and this unhappy lord hath done the deed for which he must suffer in a mistaken sense of honor, and with all tenderness compatible with such a deed. There is nothing similar or parallel in the two cases ; and if there were, what signifies it now to Count Horn, whether he were condemned rightfully or not ? Are these men heathen, that they would offer a victim to the offended manes of the dead ? But is there no hope, my father, that his sentence may be commuted ?”

“None whatever. Let us trust, therefore, that he has died penitent, and that his sufferings are already over ; and let us pray, ere we lay us down to sleep, that his sins may be forgiven to him, and that his soul may have rest.”

“Amen !” replied the boy, solemnly, at the same moment that the ecclesiastic repeated the same word — though he did so, as it would seem, less from the heart, and more as a matter of course.

Nothing further was said on that subject, and in truth the conversation ceased altogether. A gloom was cast over the

spirits of all present, both by the imagination of the horrors which were in progress at that very moment, and by the recollection of the preceding enormities of which this was but the consummation ; but the young viscount Raoul was so completely engrossed by the deep thoughts which that conversation had awakened in his mind, that his father, who was a very close observer, and correct judge of human nature, almost regretted that he had spoken, and determined, if possible, to divert him from the gloomy revery into which he had fallen.

“Viscount,” said he, after a silence which had endured now for many minutes, “when did you last wait upon Mademoiselle Melanie d’Argenson ?”

Raoul’s eyes brightened at the name, and again the bright blush, which I noticed before, crossed his ingenuous features ; but this time it was pleasure, not embarrassment, which colored his young face so vividly.

“I called yesterday, sir,” he answered, “but she was abroad with the countess, her mother. In truth, I have not seen her since Friday last.”

“Why, that is an age, Raoul ! Are you not dying to see her again by this time ? At your age, I was far more gallant.”

“With your permission, sir, I will go now and make my compliments to her.”

“Not only my permission, Raoul, but my advice to make your best haste thither. If you go straightways, you will be sure to find her at home, for the ladies are sure not to have ventured abroad with all this uproar in the streets. Take Martin the equerry with you, and three of the grooms. What will you ride—the new Barb I bought for you last week ! Yes ! as well him as any ; and, hark you, boy, tell them to send Martin to me first : I will speak to him while you are beautifying yourself to please the *beaux yeux* of Mademoiselle Melanie.”

“I am not sure that you are doing wisely, Louis,” said the

lady—as her son left the saloon, her eye following him wistfully—“in bringing Raoul up as you are doing.”

“Nor I, Marie,” replied her husband, gravely; “we poor, blind mortals can not be sure of anything, least of all of anything the ends of which are incalculably distant. But in what particular do you doubt the wisdom of my method?”

“In talking to him as you do, as though he were a man already; in opening his eyes so widely to the sins and vices of the world; in discussing questions with him such as those you spoke of with him but now. He is a mere boy, you will remember, to hear tell of such things!”

“Boys hear of such things early enough, I assure you—far earlier than you ladies would deem possible. For the rest, he must hear of them one day; and I think it quite as well that he should hear of them, since hear he must, with the comments of an old man, and that old man his best friend, than find them out by the teachings and judge of them according to the light views of his young and excitable associates. He who is forewarned is fore-weaponed. I was kept pure, as it is termed—or, in other words, kept ignorant of myself and of the world I was destined to live in—until one fine day I was cut loose from the apron-strings of my lady-mother, and the tether of my abbé-tutor, and launched head-foremost into that vortex of temptation and iniquity, the world of Paris, like a ship without a chart or a compass. A precious race I ran in consequence, for a time; and if I had not been so fortunate as to meet you, Marie—whose bright eyes brought me out, like a blessed beacon, safe from that perilous ocean—I know not but I should have suffered shipwreck, both in fortune, which is a trifle, and in character, which is everything. No, no; if that is all in which you doubt, your fears are causeless.”

“But that is not all. In this you may be right—I know not; at all events, you are a fitter judge than I! But are you

wise in encouraging so very strongly his fancy for Melanie d'Argenson?"

"I'faith, it is something more than a fancy, I think: the boy loves her!"

"I see that, Louis, clearly; and you encourage it."

"And wherefore should I not? She is a good girl—as good as she is beautiful!"

"She is an angel!"

"And her mother, Marie, was your most intimate, your bosom friend."

"And now a saint in heaven!"

"Well, what more? She is as noble as a De Rohan or a Montmorency; she is an heiress with superb estates adjoining our own lands of St. Renan; she is, like our Raoul, an only child; and what is the most of all, I think, although it is not the mode in this dear France of ours to attach much weight to that, it is no made-up match, no cradle-plinghting between babes—to be made good, perhaps, by the breaking of hearts—but a genuine, natural, mutual affection between two young, sincere, innocent, artless persons; and a splendid couple they will make. What can you see to alarm you in that prospect?"

"Her father."

"The sieur d'Argenson! Well, I confess, he is not a very charming person; but we all have our own faults or weaknesses: and, after all, it is not he whom Raoul is about to marry."

"I doubt his good faith, very sorely."

"I should doubt it too, Marie, did I see any cause which should lead him to break it. But the match is in all respects more desirable for him than it is for us; for, though Mademoiselle d'Argenson is noble, rich, and handsome, the viscount de Douarnenez might be well justified in looking for a wife far higher than the daughter of a simple sieur of Bretagne. Be

sides, although the children loved before any one spoke of it—before any one saw it, indeed, save I—it was D'Argenson himself who broke the subject. What, then, should induce him to play false?"

"I do not know; yet I doubt—I fear him."

"But that, Marie, is unworthy of your character—of your mind."

"Louis, she is *too* beautiful!"

"I do not think Raoul will find fault with her on that score."

"Nor would one greater than Raoul."

"Whom do you mean?" cried the count, now for the first time startled.

"I have seen eyes fixed upon her in deadly admiration, which never admire but they pollute the object of their admiration."

"The king's, Marie?"

"The king's!"

"And then—?"

"And then I have heard it whispered that the baron de Beaulieu has asked her hand of the sieur d'Argenson."

"The baron de Beaulieu! and who the devil is the baron de Beaulieu, that the sieur d'Argenson should doubt for the nine hundredth part of a minute between him and the viscount de Douarnenez for the husband of his daughter?"

"The baron de Beaulieu, count, is the very particular friend, the right-hand man, and most private minister, of his most Christian majesty King Louis XV."

"Ha! is it possible? Do you mean that—"

"I mean even *that*—if, by that, you mean all that is most infamous and loathsome on the part of Beaulieu, all that is most licentious on the part of the king. I believe—nay, I am well-nigh sure—that there is such a scheme of villany on foot against that sweet, unhappy child; and therefore would I pause

ere I urged too far my child's love toward her, lest it prove most unhappy and disastrous."

"And do you think D'Argenson capable—" exclaimed her husband—

"Of anything," she answered, interrupting him, "of anything that may serve his avarice or his ambition."

"Ah! it may be so. I will look to it, Marie; I will look to it narrowly. But I fear that, if it be as you fancy, it is too late already; that our boy's heart is devoted to her entirely; that any break now, in one word, would be a heart-break!"

"He loves her very dearly, beyond doubt," replied the lady; "and she deserves it all, and is, I think, very fond of him likewise."

"And can you suppose for a moment that she will lend herself to such a scheme of infamy?"

"Never! She would die sooner."

"I do not apprehend, then, that there will be so much difficulty as you seem to fear. This business which brought all of us Bretons up to Paris, as claimants of justice for our province, or courtiers of the king's grace, as they phrase it, is finished happily; and there is nothing to detain any of us in this great wilderness of stone and mortar any longer. D'Argenson told me yesterday that he should set out homeward on Wednesday next; and it is but hurrying our own preparations a little to travel with them in one party. I will see him this evening, and arrange it."

"Have you ever spoken with him concerning the contract, Louis?"

"Never, directly, or in the form of a solemn proposal. But we have spoken oftentimes of the evident attachment of the children, and he has ever expressed himself gratified, and seemed to regard it as a matter of course. But hush! here comes the boy: leave us a while, and I will speak with him."

Almost before his words were ended the door was thrown open, and young Raoul entered, splendidly dressed, with his rapier at his side, and his plumed hat in his hand—as likely a youth to win a fair maid's heart as ever wore the weapon of a gentleman.

“Martin is absent, sir. He went out soon after breakfast, they tell me, to look after a pair of fine English carriage-horses for the countess my mother, and has not yet returned. I ordered old Jean François to attend me, with the four other grooms.”

“Very well, Raoul. But look you—your head is young, and your blood hot. You will meet, it is very like, all this canaille returning from the slaughter of poor Kerguelen. Now mark me, boy, there must be no vamping on your part, or interfering with the populace; and even if they should, as very probably they may, be insolent, and utter outcries and abuse against the nobility, even bear with them. On no account strike any person, nor let your servants do so, nor encroach upon their order; unless, indeed, they should so far forget themselves as to throw stones, or to strike the first blow.”

“And then, my father?”

“Oh, then, Raoul, you are at liberty to let your good sword feel the fresh air, and to give your horse a taste of those fine spurs you wear. But even in that case, I should advise you to use your edge rather than your point. There is not much harm done in wiping a saucy burgher across the face to mend his manners, but to pink him through the body makes it an awkward matter. And I need not tell you by no means to fire, unless you should be so beset and maltreated that you can not otherwise extricate yourself; yet you must have your pistols loaded. In these times it is necessary always to be provided against all things. I do not, however, tell you these things now because you are likely to be attacked; but such events

are always possible, and one can not provide against such too early."

"I will observe what you say, my father. Have I your permission now to depart?"

"Not yet, Raoul; I would speak with you first a few words. This Mademoiselle Melanie is very pretty, is she not?"

"She is the most beautiful lady I have ever seen," replied the youth, not without some embarrassment.

"And as amiable and gentle as she is beautiful?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, sir. She is all gentleness and sweetness, yet is full of mirth, too, and graceful merriment."

"In one word, then, she seems to you a very sweet and lovely creature."

"Doubtless she does, my father."

"And I beseech you tell me, viscount, in what light do you appear in the eyes of this very admirable young lady?"

"Oh, sir!" replied the youth, now very much embarrassed, and blushing actually from shame.

"Nay, Raoul, I did not ask the question lightly, I assure you, or in the least degree as a jest. It becomes very important that I should know on what terms you and this fair lady stand together. You have been visiting her now almost daily, I think, during these three months last past. Do you conceive that you are very disagreeable to her?"

"Oh! I hope not, sir. It would grieve me much if I thought so!"

"Well, I am to understand, then, that you think she is not blind to your merits, sir?"

"I am not aware, my dear father, that I have any merits which she should be called to observe."

"Oh, yes, viscount! That is an excess of modesty which touches a little, I am afraid, on hypocrisy. You are not altogether without merits. You are young, not ill-looking, nobly

born, and will, in God's good time, be rich. Then you can ride well, and dance gracefully, and are not generally ill-educated or unpolished. It is quite as necessary, my dear son, that a young man should not undervalue himself, as that he should not think of his deserts too highly. Now, that you have some merits, is certain—for the rest, I desire frankness of you just now, and beg that you will speak out plainly. I think you love this young girl: is it not so, Raoul?"

"I do love her sir, very dearly—with my whole heart and spirit!"

"And do you feel sure that this is not a mere transient liking—that it will last, Raoul?"

"So long as life lasts in my heart, so long will my love for her last, my father!"

"And you would wish to marry her?"

"Beyond all things in this world, my dear father."

"And do you think that, were her tastes and views on the subject consulted, she would say likewise?"

"I hope she would, sir. But I have never asked her."

"And her father—is he gracious when you meet him?"

"Most gracious, sir, and most kind; indeed, he distinguishes me above all the other young gentlemen who visit there."

"You would not, then, despair of obtaining his consent."

"By no means, my father, if you would be so kind as to ask it."

"And you desire that I should do so?"

"You will make me the happiest man in all France, if you will!"

"Then go your way, sir, and make the best you can of it with the young lady. I will speak myself with the sieur d'Argenson to-night; and I do not despair any more than you do, Raoul. But look you, boy, you do not fancy, I hope, that you are going to church with your lady-love to-morrow or the next

day! Two or three years hence, at the earliest, will be all in very good time. You must serve a campaign or two first, in order to show that you know how to use your sword."

"In all things, my dear father, I shall endeavor to fulfil your wishes, knowing them to be as kindly as they are wise and prudent. I owe you gratitude for every hour since I was born, but for none so much as for this, for indeed you are going to make me the happiest of men."

"Away with you then, Sir Happiness! Betake yourself on the wings of love to your bright lady; and mind the advice of your favorite, Horace, to pluck the pleasures of the passing hour, mindful how short is the sum of mortal life!"

The young man embraced his father gayly, and left the room with a quick step and a joyous heart; and the jingling of his spurs, and the quick, merry clash of his scabbard on the marble staircase, told how joyously he descended its steps.

A moment afterward his father heard the clear, sonorous tones of his fine voice calling to his attendants, and yet a few seconds later the lively clatter of his horse's hoofs on the resounding pavement.

"Alas for the happy days of youth, which are so quickly flown!" exclaimed the father, as he participated in the hopeful and exulting mood of his noble boy; "and alas for the promise of mortal happiness, which is so oft deceitful and a traitress!" He paused for a few moments, and seemed to ponder, and then added, with a confident and proud expression: "But I see not why one should forebode aught but success and happiness to this noble boy of mine. Thus far, everything has worked toward the end as I would wish it. They have fallen in love naturally and of their own accord, and D'Argenson, whether he like it or not, can not help himself. He must needs accedet proudly and joyfully, to my proposal; he knows his estates to be in my power far too deeply to resist. Nay, more—though

he be somewhat selfish, and ambitious, and avaricious, I know nothing of him that should justify me in believing that he would sell his daughter's honor, even to a king, for wealth or title! My good wife is all too doubtful and suspicious.—But, hark! here comes the mob, returning from that unfortunate man's execution! I wonder how he bore it?"

And with the words he moved toward the window, and, throwing it open, stepped out upon the spacious balcony. Here he learned speedily, from the conversation of the passing crowd, that, although dreadfully shocked and startled by the first intimation of the death he was to undergo, which he received from the sight of the fatal wheel, the lord of Kerguelen had died as becomes a proud, brave man, reconciled to the church, forgiving his enemies, without a groan or a murmur, under the protracted agonies of that most horrible of deaths, the breaking on the wheel!

Meanwhile the day passed onward; and when evening came, and the last and most social meal of the day was laid on the domestic board, young Raoul had returned from his visit to the lady of his love, full of high hopes and happy anticipations. Afterward, according to his promise, the count de St. Renan went forth and held debate until a late hour of the night with the sieur d'Argenson. Raoul had not retired when he came home, too restless in his youthful ardor even to think of sleep. His father brought good tidings: the father of the lady had consented, and on their arrival in Bretagne the marriage-contract was to be signed in form.

That was to Raoul an eventful day; and never did he forget it, or the teachings he drew from it. That day was his fate.

PART II.

THE castle of St. Renan, like the dwellings of many of the nobles of Bretagne and Gascony, was a superb old pile of solid masonry towering above the huge cliffs which guard the whole of that iron coast with its gigantic masses of rude masonry. So close did it stand to the verge of these precipitous crags on its seaward face, that whenever the wind from the westward blew angrily and in earnest, the spray of the tremendous billows which rolled in from the wide Atlantic, and burst in thunder at the foot of those stern ramparts, was dashed so high by the collision that it would often fall in salt, bitter rain, upon the esplanade above, and dim the diamond-paned casements with its cold mists.

For leagues on either side, as the spectator stood upon the terrace above and gazed out on the expanse of the everlasting ocean, nothing was to be seen but the salient angles or deep recesses formed by the dark, gray cliffs, unrelieved by any spot of verdure, or even by that line of silver sand at their base, which often intervenes between the rocks of an iron coast and the sea. Here, however, there was no such intermediate step visible; the black face of the rocks sunk sheer and abrupt into the water, which, by its dark-green hue, indicated to the practised eye, that it was deep and scarcely fathomable to the very shore.

In places, indeed, where huge caverns opening in front to the vast ocean, which had probably hollowed them out of the earth-fast rock in the course of succeeding ages, yawned in the mimicry of Gothic arches, the entering tide would rush, as it were, into the bowels of the land, roaring and groaning in

those strange subterranean dungeons like some strong prisoner, Typhon, Enceladus, or Ephialtes, in his immortal agony. One of these singular vaults opened right in the base of the rock on the summit of which stood the castle of St. Renan, and into this the billows rushed with rapidity so tumultuous and terrible that the fishers of that stormy coast avowed that a vortex was created in the bay by their influx or return seaward, which could be perceived sensibly at a league's distance; and that to be caught in it, unless the wind blew strong and steadily off land, was sure destruction. However that might be, it is certain that this great subterranean tunnel extended far beneath the rocks into the interior of the land, for at the distance of nearly two miles from the castle, directly eastward, in the bottom of a dark, wooded glen, which runs for many miles nearly parallel to the coast, there is a deep, rocky well, or natural cavity, of a form nearly circular, which, when the tide is up, is filled to overflowing with bitter sea-water, on which the bubbles and foam-flakes show the obstacles against which it must have striven in its landward journey. At low water, on the contrary, "the Devil's Drinking-Cup," for so it is named by the superstitious peasantry of the neighborhood, presents nothing to the eye but a deep, black abyss, which the countryfolks, of course, assert to be bottomless. But, in truth, its depth is immense, as can easily be perceived, if you cast a stone into it, by the length of time during which it may be heard thundering from side to side, until the reverberated roar of its descent appears to die away, not because it has ceased, but because the sound is too distant to be conveyed to human ears.

On this side of the castle everything differs as much as it is possible to conceive from the view to the seaward, which is grim and desolate as any ocean scenery the world over. Few sails are ever seen on those dangerous coasts; all vessels bound to the mouth of the Garonne, or southward to the shores

of Spain, giving as wide a berth as possible to its frightful reefs and inaccessible crags, which to all their other terrors add that, from the extraordinary prevalence of the west wind on that part of the ocean, of being, during at least three parts of the year, a *lee* shore.

Inland, however, instead of the bleak and barren surface of the ever-stormy sea, indented into long rolling ridges and dark tempestuous hollows, all was varied and smiling, and gratifying to every sense given by nature for his good to man. Immediately from the brink of the cliffs the land sloped downward southwardly and to the eastward, so that it was bathed during all the day, except a few late evening hours, in the fullest radiance of the sunbeams. Over this immense sloping descent the eye could range from the castle battlements for miles and miles, until the rich green champaign was lost in the blue haze of distance. And it was green and gay over the whole of that vast expanse, here with the dense and unpruned foliage of immemorial forests, well stocked with every species of game, from the gaunt wolf and the tusky boar, to the fleet roebuck and the timid hare ; here with the trim and smiling verdure of rich orchards, in which nestled around their old, gray shrines the humble hamlets of the happy peasantry ; and everywhere with the long intersecting curves, and sinuous irregular lines of the old hawthorn hedges, thick set with pollard trees and hedge-row timber, which make the whole country, when viewed from a height, resemble a continuous tract of intermingled glades and coppices, and which have procured for an adjoining district the well-known, and in after-days far celebrated name of the Bocage.

Immediately around the castle, on the edge as it were of this beautiful and almost boundless slope, there lay a large and well-kept garden in the old French style, laid out in a succession of terraces, bordered by balustrades of marble, adorned at

frequent intervals by urns and statues, and rendered accessible each from the next below by flights of ornamented steps of regular and easy elevation; pleached bowery walks, and high clipped hedges of holly, yew, and hornbeam, were the usual decorations of such a garden, and here they abounded to an extent that would have gladdened the heart of an admirer of the tastes and habits of the olden time. In addition to these, however, there were a profusion of flowers of the choicest kinds known or cultivated in those days—roses and lilies without number, and honeysuckles, and the sweet-scented clematis, climbing in bountiful luxuriance over the numberless seats and bowers which everywhere tempted to repose.

Below this beautiful garden a wide expanse of smooth, green turf, dotted here and there with majestic trees, and at rarer intervals diversified with tall groves and verdant coppices, covered the whole descent of the first hill to the dim wooded dell which has been mentioned as containing the singular cavity known throughout the country as the "Devil's Drinking-Cup." This dell, which was the limit of count de St. Renan's demesnes in that direction, was divided from the park by a ragged paling many feet in height, and of considerable strength, framed of rough timber from the woods, the space within being appropriated to a singular and choice breed of deer, imported from the East by one of the former counts, who, being of an adventurous and roving disposition, had sojourned for some time in the French settlements of Hindostan. Beyond this dell again, which was defended on the outer side by a strong and lofty wall of brick, all overrun with luxuriant ivy, the ground rose in a small rounded knoll, or hillock of small extent, richly wooded, and crowned by the gray turrets and steep flagged roof of the old *château d'Argenson*.

This building, however, was as much inferior in size and stateliness to the grand feudal fortalice of St. Renan, as the lit-

the round-topped hill on which it stood, so slightly elevated above the face of the surrounding country as to detract nothing, at least in appearance, from its general slope to the southeastward, was lower than the great rock-bound ridge from which it overlooked the territories, all of which had in distant times obeyed the rules of its almost princely dwellers.

The sun of a lovely evening in the latter part of July had already sunk so far down in the west that only one half of its great golden disk was visible above the well-defined, dark outline of the seaward-crags, which, relieved by the glowing radiance of the whole western sky, stood out massive and solid like a huge purple wall, and seemed so close at hand that the spectator could almost persuade himself that he had but to stretch out his arm, in order to touch the great barrier, which was in truth several miles distant.

Over the crest, and through the gaps of this continuous line of highland, the long level rays streamed down in the slope in one vast flood of golden glory, which was checkered only by the interminable length of shadows which were projected from every single tree, or scattered clump, from every petty elevation of the soil, down the soft glimmering declivity.

Three years had elapsed since the frightful fate of the unhappy lord of Kerguelen, and the various incidents, which in some sort took their origin from the nature of his crime and its consequence, affecting in the highest degree the happiness of the families of St. Renan and D'Argenson.

Three years had elapsed—three years! That is a little space in the annals of the world, in the life of nations, nay, in the narrow records of humanity. Three years of careless happiness, three years of indolent and tranquil ease, unmarked by any great event, pass over our heads unnoted, and, save in the gray hairs which they scatter, leave no memorial of their transit, more than the sunshine of a happy summer day. They are, they are gone, they are forgotten.

Even three years of gloom and sorrow, of that deep anguish which at the time the sufferer believes to be indelible and everlasting, lag on their weary, desolate course, and when they too are over-passed, and he looks back upon their transit, which seemed so painfully protracted, and, lo! all is changed, and *their* flight also is now but as an ended minute.

And yet, what strange and sudden changes altering the affairs of men, changing the hearts of mortals, yea, revolutionizing their whole intellects, and overturning their very natures—more than the devastating earthquake or the destroying lava transforms the face of the everlasting earth—have not been wrought, and again well nigh forgotten within that little period.

Three years had passed, I say, over the head of Raoul de Douarnenez—the three most marked and memorable years in the life of every young man—and from the ingenuous and promising stripling, he had now become in every respect a man, and a bold and enterprising man, moreover, who had seen much and struggled much, and suffered somewhat—without which there is no gain of his wisdom here below—in his transit, even thus far, over the billows and among the reefs and quicksands of the world.

His father had kept his promise to that loved son in all things, nor had the sieur d'Argenson failed of his plighted faith. The autumn of that year, the spring of which saw Kerguelen die in unutterable agony, saw Raoul de Douarnenez the contracted and affianced husband of the lovely and beloved Melanie.

All that was wanted now to render them actually man and wife, to create between them that bond which, alone of mortal ties, man can not sunder, was the ministration of the church's holiest rite, and that, in wise consideration of their tender years, was postponed until the termination of the third summer.

During the interval it was decided that Raoul, as was the

custom of the world in those days, especially among the nobility, and most especially among the nobility of France, should bear arms in active service, and see something of the world abroad, before settling down into the easier duties of domestic life. The family of St. Renan, since the days of that ancestor who has been already mentioned as having sojourned in Pondicherry, had never ceased to maintain some relations with the East Indian possessions of France, and a relation of the house in no very remote degree was at this time military governor of the French East Indies, which were then, previous to the unexampled growth of the British empire in the East, important, flourishing, and full of future promise.

Thither, then, it was determined that Raoul should go in search of adventures, if not of fortune, in the spring following the signature of his marriage contract with the young demoiselle d'Argenson. And, consequently, after a winter passed in quiet domestic happiness on the noble estates, whereon the gentry of Brittany were wont to reside in almost patriarchal state—a winter, every day of which the young lovers spent in company, and at every eve of which they separated more in love than they were at meeting in the morning—Raoul set sail in a fine frigate, carrying several companies of the line, invested with the rank of ensign, and proud to bear the colors of his king, for the shores of the still half-fabulous oriental world.

Three years had passed, and the boy had returned a man, the ensign had returned a colonel, so rapid was the promotion of the nobility of the sword in the French army, under the ancient regime; and—greatest change of all, ay, and saddest—the viscount of Douarnenez had returned count de St. Renan. An infectious fever, ere he had been one year absent from the land of his birth, and had cut off his noble father in the very pride and maturity of his intellectual manhood; nor had his

mother lingered long behind him whom she had ever loved so fondly. A low, slow fever, caught from that beloved patient whom she had so affectionately nurtured, was as fatal to her, though not so suddenly, as it had proved to her good lord; and when their son returned to France full of honors achieved, and gay anticipations for the future, he found himself an orphan, the lord in lonely and unwilling state of the superb demesnes which had so long called his family their owners.

There never in the world was a kinder heart than that which beat in the breast of the young soldier, and never was a family more strictly bound together by all the kindly influences which breed love and confidence, and domestic happiness among all the members of it, than that of St Renan. There had been nothing austere or rigid in the bringing up of the gallant boy; the father, who had at one hour been the tutor and the monitor, was at the next the comrade and the playmate, and at all times the true and trusted friend, while the mother had been ever the idolized and adored protectress, and the confidante of all the innocent schemes and artless joys of boyhood.

Bitter, then, was the blow stricken to the very heart of the young soldier, when the first tidings which he received, on landing in his loved France, was the intelligence that those—all those, with but one exception—whom he most tenderly and truly loved, all those to whom he looked up with affectionate trust for advice and guidance, all those on whom he relied for support in his first trials of young manhood, were cold and silent in the all-absorbing tomb.

To him there was no hot, feverish ambition prompting him to grasp joyously the absolute command of his great heritage. In his heart there was none of that fierce yet sordid avarice which finds compensation for the loss of the scarce-lamented dead in the severance of the dearest natural bonds, in the possession of wealth, or the promise of power. Nor was this all,

for, in truth, so well had Raoul de Douarnenez been brought up, and so completely had wisdom grown up with his growth, that when, at the age of nineteen years, he found himself endowed with the rank and revenues of one of the highest and wealthiest peers of France, and in all but mere name his own master—for the abbé de Chastellar, his mother's brother, who had been appointed his guardian by his father's will, scarcely attempted to exercise even a nominal jurisdiction over him—he felt himself more than ever at a loss, deprived as he was, when he most needed it, of his best natural counsellor; and instead of rejoicing, was more than half inclined to lament over the almost absolute self-control with which he found himself invested.

Young hearts are naturally true themselves, and prone to put trust in others; and it is rarely, except in a few dark and morose and gloomy natures, which are exceptions to the rule and standard of human nature, that man learns to be distrustful and suspicious of his kind, even after experience of fickleness and falsehood may have in some sort justified suspicions, until his head has grown gray.

And this in an eminent degree was the case with Raoul de St. Renan, for henceforth he must be called by the title which his altered state had conferred upon him.

His natural disposition was as trustful and unsuspecting as it was artless and ingenuous; and from his early youth all the lessons which had been taught him by his parents tended to preserve in him unblemished and unbroken that bright gem, which once shattered never can be restored, confidence in the truth, the probity, the goodness of mankind.

Some ruder schooling he had met in the course of his service in the eastern world—he had already learned that men, and—harder knowledge yet to gain—women also, can feign friendship, ay, and love, where neither have the least root in

the heart, for purposes the vilest, ends the most sordid. He had learned that bosom friends can be secret foes ; that false loves can betray ; and yet he was not disenchanted with humanity, he had not even dreamed of doubting, because he had fallen among worldly-minded flatterers and fickle-hearted coquettes, that absolute friendship and unchangeable love may exist, even in this evil world, stainless and incorruptible among all the changes and chances of this mortal life.

If he had been deceived, he had attributed the failure of his hopes hitherto to the right cause—the fallacy of his own judgment, and the error of his own choice ; and the more he had been disappointed the more firmly had he relied on what he felt certain could not change, the affection of his parents, the love of his betrothed bride.

On the very instant of his landing he found himself shipwrecked in his first hope ; and on his earliest interview with his uncle, in Paris, he had the agony—the utter and appalling agony to undergo—of hearing that in the only promise which he had flattered himself was yet left to him, he was destined in all probability to undergo a deeper, deadlier disappointment.

If Melanie d'Argenson had been a lovely girl, the good abbé said, when she was budding out of childhood into youth, so utterly had she outstripped all the promise of her girlhood, that no words could describe, nor imagination suggest to itself the charms of the mature yet youthful woman. There was no other beauty named, when loveliness was the theme, throughout all France, than that of the young betrothed of Raoul de Douarnenez. And that which was so loudly and so widely bruited abroad, could not fail to reach the ever open, ever greedy ears of the vile and sensual tyrant who sat on the throne of France, at that time heaping upon his people that load of suffering and anguish which was in after-times to be avenged so bitterly and bloodily upon the innocent heads of his unhappy descendants.

Louis had, moreover, heard years before, nay, looked upon the nascent loveliness of Melanie d'Argenson, and, with that cold-blooded voluptuary, to look on beauty was to lust after it, to lust after it was to devote all the powers his despotism could command to win it.

Hence as the abbé de Chastellar soon made his unfortunate nephew and pupil comprehend, a settled determination had arisen on the part of the odious despot to break off the marriage of the lovely girl with the young soldier whom it was well known that she fondly loved, and to have her the wife of one who would be less tender of his honor, and less reluctant to surrender, or less difficult to be deprived of a bride, too transcendently beautiful to bless the arms of a subject, even if he were the noblest of the noble.

All this was easily arranged, the base father of Melanie was willing enough to sell his exquisite and virtuous child to the splendid infamy of becoming a king's paramour, and the yet baser chevalier de la Rochederrien was eager to make the shameful negotiation easy, and to sanction it to the eyes of the willingly hoodwinked world, by giving his name and rank to a woman, who was to be his wife but in name, and whose charms and virtue he had precontracted to make over to another.

The infamous contract had been agreed upon by the principal actors ; nay, the wages of the iniquity had been paid in advance. The sieur d'Argenson had grown into the comte of the same, with the governorship of the town of Morlaix added, by the revenues of which to support his new dignities ; while the chevalier de la Rochederrien had become no less a personage than the marquis de Ploermel, with a captaincy in the musquetaires, and Heaven knows what beside of honorary title and highly-gilded sinecure, whereby to reconcile him to such depth of sordid infamy as the meanest galley-slave could have

scarce undertaken as the price of exchange between his fetters and his oars, and the great noble's splendor.

Such were the tidings which greeted Raoul on his return from honorable service to his king—service for which he was thus repaid; and, before he had even time to reflect on the consequences, or to comprehend the anguish thus entailed upon him, his eyes were opened instantly to comprehension of two or three occurrences which previously he had been unable to explain to himself, or even to guess at their meaning by any exercise of ingenuity. The first of these was the singular ignorance in which he had been kept of the death of his parents by the government officials in the East, and the very evident suppression of the letters which, as his uncle informed him, had been despatched to summon him with all speed homeward.

The second was the pertinacity with which he had been thrust forward, time after time, on the most desperate and deadly duty—a pertinacity so striking, that, eager as the young soldier was, and greedy of any chance of winning honor, it had not failed to strike him that *he* was frequently *ordered* on duty of a nature which, under ordinary circumstances, is performed by volunteers.

Occurrences of this kind are soon remarked in armies, and it had early become a current remark in the camp that to serve in Raoul's company was a sure passport either to promotion or to the other world. But to such an extent was this carried, that when time after time that company had been decimated, even the bravest of the brave experienced an involuntary sinking of the heart when informed that they were transferred or even promoted into those fatal ranks.

Nor was this all, for twice it had occurred, once when he was a captain in command of a company, and again when he had a whole regiment under his orders as its colonel, that his superiors, after detaching him on duty so desperate that it

might almost be regarded as a forlorn hope, had entirely neglected either to support or recall him, but had left him exposed to almost inevitable destruction.

In the first instance, not a man whether officer or private of his company had escaped, with the exception of himself. And he was found, when all was supposed to be over, in the last ditch of the redoubt which he had been ordered to defend to the uttermost, after it had been retaken, with his colors wrapped around his breast, still breathing a little, although so cruelly wounded that his life was long despaired of, and was only saved at last by the vigor and purity of an unblemished and unbroken constitution. On the second occasion, he had been suffered to contend alone for three entire days with but a single battalion against a whole oriental army; but then, that which had been intended to destroy him had won him deathless fame, for by a degree of skill in handling his little force, which had by no means been looked for in so young an officer, although his courage and his conduct were both well known, he had succeeded in giving a bloody repulse to the overwhelming masses of the enemy, and when at length he was supported—doubtless when support was deemed too late to avail him aught—by a few hundred native horse and a few guns, he had converted that check into a total and disastrous rout.

So palpable was the case that although Raoul suspected nothing of the reasons which had led to that disgraceful affair, he had demanded an inquiry into the conduct of his superior; and that unfortunate personage being clearly convicted of unmilitary conduct, and having failed in the end which would have justified the means in the eyes of the voluptuous tyrant, was ruthlessly abandoned to his fate, and actually died on the scaffold with a gag in his mouth, as did the gallant Lally a few years afterward to prevent his revelation of the orders which he had received and for obeying which he perished.

All this, though strange and even extraordinary, had failed up to this moment to awaken any suspicion of undue or treasonable agency in the mind of Raoul.

But now as his uncle spoke the scales fell from his eyes, and he saw all the baseness, all the villany of the monarch and his satellites, in its true light.

"Is it so? Is it, indeed, so?" he said mournfully. And it really appeared that grief at detecting such a dereliction on the part of his king, had a greater share in the feelings of the noble youth than indignation or resentment. "Is it indeed so?" he said; "and could neither my father's long and glorious services, nor my poor conduct, avail aught to turn him from such infamy? But tell me," he continued, the blood now mounting fiery red to his pale face, "tell me this, uncle, is she true to me? is she pure and good? Forgive, me, Heaven, that I doubt her; but in such a mass of infamy where may a man look for faith or virtue? Is Melanie true to me, or is she, too, consenting to this scheme of infamous and loathsome guilt?"

"She was true, my son, when I last saw her," replied the good clergyman; "and you may well believe that I spared no argument to urge her to hold fast to her loyalty and faith, and she vowed then, by all that was most dear and holy, that nothing should induce her ever to become the wife of Rochederrien. But they carried her off into the province, and have immured her, I have heard men say, almost in a dungeon, in her father's castle, for now above a twelvemonth. What has fallen out no one as yet knows certainly; but it is whispered now that she has yielded, and the court scandal goes that she has either wedded him already, or is to do so now within a few days. It is said that they are looked for ere the month is out in Paris."

"Then I will to horse, uncle," replied Raoul, "before this night is two hours older for St. Renan."

"Great Heaven! to what end, Raoul? For the sake of all

that is good—by your father's memory—I implore you, do nothing rashly!"

"To know of my own knowledge if she be true or false, uncle."

"And what matters it, Raoul? My boy, my unhappy boy! False or true, she is lost to you alike, for ever! You have that against which to contend, which no human energy can conquer."

"I know not the thing which human energy can not conquer, uncle! It is years now ago that my good father taught me this—that there is no such word as *cannot*! I have proved it before now, uncle-abbé: I may, should I find it worth the while, prove it again, and that shortly. If so, let the guilty and the traitors look to themselves—they were best, for they shall need it!"

Such was the state of St. Renan's affections and his hopes when he left the gay capital of France, within a few hours after his arrival, and hurried down at the utmost speed of man and horse into Bretagne, whither he made his way so rapidly, that the first intimation his people received of his return from the East was his presence at the gates of the castle.

Great, as may be imagined, was the real joy of the old, true-hearted servitors of the house, at finding their lord thus unexpectedly restored to them, at a time when they had in fact almost abandoned every hope of seeing him again. The same infernal policy which had thrust him so often, as it were, into the very jaws of death—which had intercepted all the letters sent to him from home, and taken, in one word, every step that ingenuity could suggest to isolate him altogether in that distant world—had taken measures as deep and iniquitous at home to cause him to be regarded as one dead, and to obliterate all memory of his existence.

Three different times reports so circumstantial, and accom-

panied by such minute details of time and place, as to render it almost impossible for men to doubt their authenticity, had been circulated with regard to the death of the young soldier; and as no tidings had been received of him from any more direct source, the last news of his fall had been generally received as true, no motive appearing why it should be discredited.

His appearance, therefore, at the castle of St. Renan, was hailed as that of one who had been lost and was now found—of one who had been dead, and lo! he was alive. The *bancloche* of the old feudal pile rang forth its blithest and most jovial notes of greeting; the banner, with the old armorial bearings of St. Renan, was displayed upon the keep; and a few light pieces of antique artillery—falcons, and culverins, and demi-cannon, which had kept their places on the battlements since the days of the leagues—sent forth their thunders far and wide over the astonished country.

So generally, however, had the belief of Raoul's death been circulated, and so absolute had been the credence given to the rumor, that when those unwonted sounds of rejoicing were heard to proceed from the long-silent walls of St. Renan, men never suspected that the lost heir had returned to enjoy his own again, but fancied that some new master had established his claim to the succession, and was thus celebrating his investiture with the rights of the counts of St. Renan.

Nor was this wonderful, for ocular proof was scarcely enough to satisfy the oldest retainers of the family of the young lord's identity; and indeed ocular proof was rendered in some sort dubious by the great alteration which had taken place in the appearance of the personage in question.

Between the handsome stripling of sixteen and the grown man of twenty summers there is a greater difference than the same lapse of time will produce at any other period of human life. And this change had been rendered even greater than

usual by the burning climate to which Raoul had been exposed, by the stout endurance of fatigues which had prematurely enlarged and hardened his youthful frame, and above all by the dark experience which had spread something of the thoughtful cast of age over the smooth and gracious lineaments of boyhood.

When he left home, the viscount de Douarnenez was a slight, slender, graceful stripling, with a fair, delicate complexion, a profusion of light hair waving in soft curls over his shoulders, a light, elastic step, and a frame which, though it showed the promise already of strength to be attained with maturity, was conspicuous as yet for ease, and agility, and pliability, rather than for power or robustness.

On his return, he had lost, it is true, no jot of his gracefulness or ease of demeanor, but he had shot up and expanded into a tall, broad-shouldered, round-chested, thin-flanked man, with a complexion burned to the darkest hue of which a European skin is susceptible, and which perhaps required the aid of the full, soft blue eye to prove it to be European—with a glance as quick, as penetrating, and at the same time as calm and steady, as that of the eagle when he gazes undazzled at the noontide splendor.

His hair had been cut short to wear beneath the casque, which was still carried by cavaliers, and had grown so much darker, that this alteration alone would have gone far to defy the recognition of his friends. He wore a thick, dark mustache on his upper lip, and a large "royal," which we should now-a-days call an "imperial," on his chin.

The whole aspect and expression of face, moreover, was altered, even in a greater degree than his complexion or his person. All the quick, sparkling play and mobility of feature, the sharp flash of rapidly-succeeding sentiments and strong emotions, expressed on the ingenuous face as soon as they were

conceived within the brain—all these had disappeared completely—disappeared, never to return.

The grave composure of the thoughtful, self-possessed, experienced soldier, sufficient in himself to meet every emergency, every alternation of fortune, had succeeded the imaginative, impulsive ardor of the impetuous, gallant boy.

There was a shadow, too, a heavy shadow of something more than thought; for it was, in truth, deep, real, heartfelt melancholy, which lent an added gloom to the cold fixity of eye and lip—which had obliterated all the gay and gleeful flashes which used, from moment to moment, to light up the countenance so speaking and so frank in its disclosures.

Yet it would have been difficult to say whether Raoul de St. Renan—grave, dark, and sorrowful, as he now showed—was not both a handsomer and more attractive person than he had been in his earlier days, as the gay and thoughtless viscount de Douarnenez.

There was a depth of feeling as well as of thought now perceptible in the pensive brow and calm eye; and if the ordinary expression of those fine and placid lineaments was fixed and cold, that coldness and rigidity vanished when his face was lighted up by a smile, as quickly as the thin ice of an April morning melts away before the first glitter of the joyous sunbeams. Nor were these smiles rare or forced, though not now as habitual as in those days of youth unalloyed by calamity, and unsunned by passion, which, once departed, never can return in this world!

The morning of the young lord's arrival passed gloomily enough. It was the very height of summer, it is true, and the sun was shining his brightest over field, and tree, and tower, and everything appeared to partake of the delicious influence of the charming weather, and to put on its blithest and most radiant apparel.

Never perhaps had the fine grounds, with their soft, mossy, sloping lawns, and tranquil, brimful waters, and shadowy groves of oak and elm—great, immemorial trees—looked lovelier than they did that day to greet their long-absent master.

But, inasmuch as nothing in this world is more delightful, nothing more unmixed in its means of conveying pleasure, than the return, after long wanderings in foreign climes, among vicissitudes, and cares, and sorrows, to an unchanged and happy home, where the same faces are assembled to smile on your late return which wept at your departure—so nothing can be imagined sadder or more depressing to the spirit than, so returning, to find all things inanimate unchanged, or if changed, more beautiful and brighter for the alteration, but all the living, breathing, sentient creatures—the creatures whose memory has cheered our darkest days of sorrow, whose love we desire most to find unaltered—gone, never to return, swallowed by the cold grave, deaf, silent, unresponsive to our fond affection!

Such was St. Renan's return to the house of his fathers. Until a few short days before, he had pictured to himself his father's moderate and manly pleasure, his mother's holy kiss and chastened rapture at beholding once again, at clasping to her happy bosom, the son, whom she sent forth a boy, returned a man worthy the pride of the most ambitious parent.

All this Raoul de St. Renan had anticipated, and bitter, bitter was the pang when he perceived all this gay and glad anticipation thrown to the winds irreparably.

There was not a room in the old house, not a view from a single window, not a tree in the noble park, not a winding curve of a trout-stream glimmering through the coppices, but was in some way connected with his tenderest and most sacred recollections—but had a memory of pleasant hours attached to it—but recalled the sound of the kindest and dearest words, couched in the sweetest tones—the sight of persons but to

think of whom made his heart thrill and quiver to its inmost core.

And for hours he had wandered through the long, echoing corridors, the stately and superb saloons, feeling their solitude as if it had been actual presence weighing upon his soul, and peopling every apartment with the phantoms of the loved and lost.

Thus had the day lagged onward; and, as the sun stooped toward the west, darker and sadder had become the young man's fancies, and he felt as if his last hope were about to fade out with the fading light of the declining day-god. So gloomy, indeed, were his thoughts—so sadly had he become inured to woe within the last few days—so certainly had the reply to every question he had asked been the very bitterest and most painful he could have met—that he had, in truth, lacked the courage to assure himself of that on which he could not deny to himself that his last hope of happiness depended. He had not ventured yet to ask even of his own most faithful servants whether Melanie d'Argenson—who was, he well knew, living scarcely three bow-shots distant from the spot where he stood—was true to him—was a maiden or a wedded wife!

And the old servitors, well aware of the earnest love which had existed between the young people, and of the contract which had been entered into with the consent of all parties, knew not how their young master now stood affected toward the lady, and consequently feared to speak on the subject.

At length, when he had dined some hours, while he was sitting with the old bailiff, who had been endeavoring to seduce him into an examination of I know not what of rents and leases, dues and droits, seignorial and manorial—while the bottles of ruby-colored Bordeaux wine stood almost untouched before them—the young man made an effort, and raising his head suddenly after a long and thoughtful silence, asked his compan-

ion whether the comte d'Argenson was at that time resident at the château.

“Oh, yes, monseigneur,” the old man returned immediately, “he has been here all the summer, and the château has been full of gay company from Paris. Never such times have been known in my days: hawking-parties one day, and hunting-matches the next, and music and balls every night, and cavalades of bright ladies, and cavaliers all ostrich-plumes and cloth of gold and tissue, that you would think our old woods here were converted into fairy-land. The young lady Melanie was wedded only three days since to the marquis de Ploermel; but you will not know him by that name, I trow: he was the chevalier only—the chevalier de la Rochederrien—when you were here before.”

“Ah, they *are* wedded, then,” replied the youth, mastering his passions by a terrible exertion, and speaking of what rent his very heartstrings asunder, as if it had been a matter which concerned him not so much even as a thought; “I heard it was about to be so shortly, but knew not that it had yet taken place.”

“Yes, monseigneur, three days since; and it is very strangely thought of in the country, and very strange things are said on all sides concerning it.”

“As what, Matthieu?”

“Why, the marquis is old enough to be her father, or some say her grandfather, for that matter; and little Rosalie, her fille-de-chambre, has been telling all the neighborhood that Mademoiselle Melanie hated him with all her heart and soul, and would far rather die than go to the altar as his bride.”

“Pshaw! is that all, good Matthieu?” answered the youth, very bitterly—“is that all? Why, there is nothing strange in that; that is an every-day event. A pretty lady changes her mind, breaks her faith, and weds a man she hates and de-

spises! Well! that is perfectly in rule; that is precisely what is done every day at court! If you could tell just the converse of this tale—that a beautiful woman had kept her inclinations unchanged, her faith unbroken, her honor pure and bright—that she had rejected a rich man or a powerful man because he was base or bad, and wedded a poor and honorable one because she loved him—then, indeed, my good Matthieu, you would be telling something that would make men open their eyes wide enough, and marvel what should follow. Is this all that you call strange?”

“You are jesting at me, monseigneur, for that I am country bred,” replied the steward, staring at his youthful master with big eyes of astonishment; “you can not mean that which you say!”

“I do mean precisely what I say, my good friend; and I never felt less like jesting in the whole course of my life. I know that you good folk down here in the quiet country judge of these things as you have spoken; but that is entirely on account of your ignorance of court life, and what is now termed nobility. What I tell you is strictly true: that falsehood, and intrigue, and lying—that daily sales of honor—that adultery and infamy of all kinds—are every-day occurrences in Paris; and that the wonders of the time are truth and sincerity, and keeping faith and honor! This, I doubt not, seems strange to you, but it is true for all that.”

“At least, it is not our custom down here in Bretagne,” returned the old man, “and that, I suppose, is the reason why it appears to be so extraordinary to us here. But you will not say, I think, monsieur le comte, that what else I shall tell you is nothing strange or new.”

“What else will you tell me, Matthieu? Let us hear it, and then I shall be better able to decide.”

“Why, they say, monseigneur, that she is no more the mar-

quis de Ploermel's wife than she is yours or mine, except in name alone ; and that he does not dare to kiss her hand, much less her lips ; and that they have separate apartments, and are, as it were, strangers altogether ; and that the reason of all this is, that Ma'mselle Melanie is never to be his wife at all, but that she is to go to Paris in a few days, and to become the king's mistress ! Will you tell me that this is not strange—and more than strange, infamous—and dishonoring to the very name of man and woman ?”

“ Even in this, were it true, there would be nothing, I am grieved to say, very wondrous now-a-days—for there have been several base and terrible examples of such things, I am told, of late ; for the rest, I must sympathize with you in your disgust and horror of such doings, even if I prove myself thereby a mere country hobereau, and no man of the world, or of fashion. But you must not believe all these things to be true which you hear from the country gossips,” he added, desirous still of shielding Melanie, so long as her guilt should be in the slightest possible degree doubtful, from the reproach which seemed already to attach to her. “ I hardly can believe such things possible of so fair and modest a demoiselle as the young lady of D'Argenson : nor is it easy to me to believe that the count would consent to any arrangement so disgraceful, or that the chevalier de la Rocheder—I beg his pardon, the marquis de Ploermel, would marry a lady for such an infamous object. I think, therefore, good Matthieu, that, although there would not even in this be anything very wonderful, it is yet neither probable nor true.”

“ Oh, yes, it is true ! I am well assured that it is true, monseigneur,” replied the old man, shaking his head obstinately ; “ I do not believe that there is much truth or honor in this lady either, or she would not so easily have broken one contract, or forgotten one lover !”

“Hush, hush, Matthieu!” cried Raoul, “you forget that we were mere children at that time; such early troth plightings are foolish ceremonials at the best; besides, do you not see that you are condemning me also as well as the lady?”

“Oh, that is different—that is quite different!” replied the old steward, “gentlemen may be permitted to take some little liberties which with ladies are not allowable. But that a young demoiselle should break her contract in such wise is disgraceful.

“Well, well, we will not argue it to-night, Matthieu,” said the young soldier, rising and looking out of the great oriel window over the sunshiny park; “I believe I will go and walk out for an hour or two and refresh my recollections of old times. It is a lovely afternoon as I ever beheld in France or elsewhere.”

And with the word he took up his rapier which lay on a slab near the table at which he had been sitting, and hung it to his belt, and then throwing on his plumed hat carelessly, without putting on his cloak, strolled leisurely out into the glorious summer evening.

For a little while he loitered on the esplanade, gazing out toward the sea, the ridgy waves of which were sparkling like emeralds tipped with diamonds in the grand glow of the setting sun. But ere long he turned thence with a sigh, called up perhaps by some fancied similitude between that bright and boundless ocean, desolate and unadorned even by a single passing sail, and his own course of life so desert, friendless, and unaccompanied.

Thence he strolled listlessly through the fine garden, inhaling the rare odors of the roses, hundreds of which bloomed on every side of him, there in low bushes, there in trim standards, and not a few climbing over tall trellices and bowery alcoves in one mass of living bloom. He saw the happy swallows

darting and wheeling to and fro through the pellucid azure, in pursuit of their insect prey. He heard the rich mellow notes of the blackbirds and thrushes, thousands and thousands of which were warbling incessantly in the cool shadow of the yew and holly hedges. But his diseased and unhappy spirit took no delight in the animated sounds, or summer-teeming sights of rejoicing nature. No, the very joy and merriment, which seemed to pervade all nature, animate or inanimate around him, while he himself had no present joys to elevate, no future promises to cheer him, rendered him, if that were possible, darker and gloomier, and more mournful.

The spirits of the departed seemed to hover about him, forbidding him ever again to admit hope or joy as an inmate to his desolate heart; and, wrapt in these dark phantasies, with his brow bent, and his eyes downcast, he wandered from terrace to terrace through the garden, until he reached its farthest boundary, and then passed out into the park, through which he strolled, almost unconscious whither, until he came to the great deer-fence of the utmost glen, through a wicket of which, just as the sun was setting, he entered into the shadowy woodland.

Then a whole flood of wild and whirling thoughts rushed over his brain at once. He had strolled without a thought into the very scene of his happy rambles with the beloved, the faithless, the lost Melanie. Carried away by a rush of inexplicable feelings, he walked swiftly onward through the dim wildwood path toward the Devil's Drinking-Cup. He came in sight of it—a woman sat by its brink, who started to her feet at the sound of his approaching footsteps.

It was Melanie—alone—and if his eyes deceived him not, weeping bitterly.

She gazed at him, at the first, with an earnest, half-alarmed, half-inquiring glance, as if she did not recognise his face, and,

perhaps, apprehended rudeness, if not danger, from the approach of a stranger.

Gradually, however, she seemed in part to recognise him. The look of inquiry and alarm gave place to a fixed, glaring, icy stare of unmixed dread and horror; and when he had now come to within six or eight paces of her, still without speaking, she cried, in a wild, low voice—

“Great God! great God! has he come up from the grave to reproach me! I am true, Raoul; true to the last, my beloved!”

And with a long, shivering, low shriek, she staggered, and would have fallen to the earth had he not caught her in his arms.

But she had fainted in the excess of superstitious awe, and perceived not that it was no phantom's hand, but a most stalwart arm of human mould that clasped her to the heart of the living Raoul de St. Renan.

PART III.

“For there were seen in that dark wall,
Two niches, narrow, dark, and tall.
Who enters by such grisly door,
Shall ne'er, I ween, find exit more.”—WALTER SCOTT.

It would be wonderful, were it not of daily occurrence, and to be observed by all who give attention to the characteristics of the human mind, how quickly confidence, even when shaken to its very foundations, and almost obliterated, springs up again, and recovers all its strength in the bosoms of the young of either sex.

Let but a few more years pass over the heart, and when once broken, if it be only by a slight suspicion, or a half unreal cause, it will scarce revive again in a lifetime; nor then, unless proofs the strongest and most unquestionable can be adduced to overpower the doubts which have well-nigh annihilated it.

In early life, however, before long contact with the world has blunted the susceptibilities, and hardened the sympathies of the soul, before the constant experience of the treachery, the coldness, the ingratitude of men has given birth to universal doubt and general distrust, the shadow vanishes as soon as the cloud which cast it is withdrawn, and the sufferer again believes, alas! too often, only to be again deceived.

Thus it was with St. Renan, who a few moments before had given up even the last hope, who had ceased, as he thought, to believe even in the possibility of faith or honor among men, of constancy, or purity, or truth, in women, no sooner saw his Melanie, whom he knew to be the wife of another, solitary and in tears, no sooner felt her inanimate form reclining on his bosom,

than he was prepared to believe anything, rather than believe her false.

Indeed, her consternation at his appearance, her evident dismay, not unnatural in an age wherein skepticism and infidelity were marvellously mingled with credulity and superstition, her clear conviction that it was not himself in mortal blood and being, did go far to establish the fact, that she had been deceived either casually or—which was far more probable—by foul artifice, into the belief that her beloved and plighted husband was no longer with the living.

The very exclamation which she uttered last, ere she sunk senseless into his arms, uttered, as she imagined, in the presence of the immortal spirit of the injured dead, "I am true, Raoul—true to the last, my beloved!" rang in his ears with a power and a meaning which convinced him of her veracity.

"She could not lie!" he muttered to himself, "in the presence of the living dead! God be praised! she is true, and we shall yet be happy!"

How beautiful she looked, as she lay there, unconscious and insensible even of her own existence. If time and maturity had improved Raoul's person, and added the strength and majesty of manhood to the grace and pliability of youth, infinitely more had it bestowed on the beauty of his betrothed. He had left her a beautiful girl just blooming out of girlhood, he found her a mature, full-blown woman, with all the flush and flower of complete feminine perfection, before one charm has become too luxuriant, or one drop of the youthful dew exhaled from the new expanded blossom.

She had shot up, indeed, to a height above the ordinary stature of women—straight, erect, and graceful as a young poplar, slender, yet full withal, exquisitely and voluptuously rounded, and with every sinuous line and swelling curve of her soft form full of the poetry and beauty of both repose and motion.

Her complexion was pale as alabaster ; even her cheeks, except when some sudden tide of passion, or some strong emotion sent the impetuous blood coursing thither more wildly than its wont, were colorless, but there was nothing sallow or sickly, nothing of that which is ordinarily understood by the word pallid, in their clear, warm, transparent purity ; nothing, in a word, of that lividness which the French, with more accuracy than we, distinguish from the healthful paleness which is so beautiful in southern women.

Her hair, profuse almost to redundance, was perfectly black, but of that warm and lustrous blackness which is probably the hue expressed by the ancient Greeks by the term hyacinthine, and which in certain lights has a purplish metallic gloss playing over it, like the varying reflections on the back of the raven. Her strongly defined, and nearly straight eyebrows, were dark as night, as were the long, silky lashes which were displayed in clear relief against the fair, smooth cheek, as the lids lay closed languidly over the bright blue eyes.

It was a minute or two before Melanie moved or gave any symptoms of recovering from her fainting fit, and during those minutes the lips of Raoul had been pressed so often and so warmly to those of the fair insensible, that had any spark of perception remained to her, the fond and lingering pressure could not have failed to call the "purple light of love," to her ingenuous face.

At length a long, slow shiver ran through the form of the senseless girl, and thrilled, like the touch of the electric wire, every nerve in St. Renan's body.

Then the soft rosy lips were unclosed, and forth rushed the ambrosial breath in a long, gentle sigh, and the beautiful bust heaved and undulated, like the bosom of the calm sea, when the first breathings of the coming storm steal over it, and wake, as if by sympathy, its deep pulsations.

He clasped her closer to his heart, half-fearful that when life and perfect consciousness should be restored to that exquisite frame, it would start from his embrace, if not in anger or alarm, at least as if from a forbidden and illicit pleasure.

Gradually a faint rosy hue, slight as the earliest blushes of the morning sky, crept over her white cheeks, and deepened into a rich passionate flush; and at the same moment the azure-tintured lids were unclosed slowly, and the large, radiant, bright blue eyes beamed up into his own, half languid still, but gleaming through their dewy languor, with an expression which he must have been, indeed, blind to mistake for aught but the strongest of unchanged, unchangeable affection.

It was evident that she knew him now; that the momentary terror, arising rather, perhaps, from fear than from superstition, which had converted the young ardent soldier into a visitant from beyond those gloomy portals through which no visitant returns, had passed from her mind, and that she had already recognised, although she spoke not, her living lover.

And though she recognised him, she sought not to withdraw herself from the enclosure of his sheltering arms, but lay there on his bosom, with her head reclined on his shoulder, and her eyes drinking long draughts of love from his fascinated gaze, as if she were his own, and that her appropriate place of refuge.

“Oh! Raoul,” she exclaimed, at length, in a low, soft whisper, “is it, indeed, you—you, whom I have so long wept as dead—you, whom I was even now weeping as one lost to me for ever, when you are thus restored to me?”

“It is I, Melanie,” he answered mournfully, “it is I, alive, and in health; but better far had I been in truth dead, as they have told you, rather than thus a survivor of all happiness, of all hopes; spared only from the grave to know *you* false, and myself forgotten.”

“Oh, no, Raoul, not false!” she cried wildly, as she started

from his arms, "oh, not forgotten! think you," she added, blushing crimson, "that had I loved any but you, that had I not loved you with my whole heart and being, I had lain thus on your bosom, thus endured your caresses? Oh, no, no, never false! nor for one moment forgotten?"

"But what avails it, if you do love no other—what profits it, if you do love me? Are you not—are you not, false girl—alas! that these lips should speak it—the wife of another—the promised mistress of the king?"

"I—I—Raoul!" she exclaimed, with such a blending of wonder and loathing in her face, such an expression of indignation on her tongue, that her lover perceived at once, that, whatever might be the infamy of her father, of her husband, of this climax of falsehood and self-degradation, she, at least, was guiltless.

"The mistress of the king! what king? what mean you? are you distraught?"

"Ha! you are ignorant, you are innocent of that, then. You are not yet indoctrinated into the noble uses for which your honorable lord intends you. It is the town's talk, Melanie. How is it you, whom it most concerns, alone have not heard it?"

"Raoul," she said, earnestly, imploringly, "I know not if there be any meaning in your words, except to punish me, to torture me, for what you deem my faithlessness, but if there be, I implore you, I conjure you, by your father's noble name, by your mother's honor, show me the worst; but listen to me first, for by the God that made us both, and now hears my words, I am not faithless."

"Not faithless? Are you not the wife of another?"

"No!" she replied enthusiastically. "I am not. For I am yours, and while you live I can not wed another. Whom God hath joined man can not put asunder."

“ I fear me that plea will avail us little,” Raoul answered. “ But say on, dearest Melanie, and believe that there is nothing you can ask which I will not give you gladly—even if it were my own life-blood. Say on, so shall we best arrive at the truth of this intricate and black affair.”

“ Mark me, then, Raoul, for every word I shall speak is as true as the sun in heaven. It is near two years now since we heard that you had fallen in battle, and that your body had been carried off by the barbarians. Long, long I hoped and prayed, but prayers and hopes were alike in vain. I wrote to you often, as I promised, but no line from you has reached me since the day when you sailed for India, and that made me fear that the dread news was true. But at the last, to make assurance doubly sure, all my own letters were returned to me six months since, with their seals unbroken, and an endorsement from the authorities in India that the person addressed was not to be found. Then hope itself was over; and my father, who never from the first had doubted that you were no more—”

“ Out on him! out on him! the heartless villain!” the young man interrupted her indignantly. “ He knows, as well as I myself, that I am living; although it is no fault of his or his co-adjutors that I am so. He knows not as yet, however, that I am *here*; but he shall know it ere long to his cost, my Melanie.”

“ At least,” she answered in a faltering voice, “ at least he *swore* to me that you were dead; and never having ceased to persecute me, since the day that fatal tidings reached us, to become the wife of La Rochederrien, now marquis de Ploermel, he now became doubly urgent—”

“ And you Melanie! you yielded! I had thought you would have died sooner.”

“ I had no choice but to yield, Raoul. Or at least but the choice of that old man's hand, or an eternal dungeon. The

lettres de cachet were signed, and you dead, and on the conditions I extorted from the marquis, I became in name, Raoul, only in name, by all my hopes of heaven! the wife of the man whom you pronounce, wherefore, I can not dream, the basest of mankind. Now tell me."

"And did it never strike you as being wonderful and most unnatural that this Ploermel, who is neither absolutely a dotard nor an old woman, should accept your hand upon this condition?"

"I was too happy to succeed in extorting it to think much of that," she answered.

"*Extorted!*" replied Raoul bitterly; "and how, I pray you, is this condition which you extorted ratified or made valid?"

"It is signed by himself, and witnessed by my own father, that, being I regard myself the wife of the dead, he shall ask no more of familiarity from me than if I were the bride of heaven!"

"The double villains!"

"But wherefore villains, Raoul?" exclaimed Melanie.

"I tell you, girl, it is a compact—a base, hellish compact—with the foul despot, the disgrace of kings, the opprobrium of France, who sits upon the throne, dishonoring it daily! A compact such as yet was never entered into by a father and a husband, even of the lowest of mankind! A compact to deliver you a spotless virgin-victim to the vile-hearted and luxurious tyrant. Curses! a thousand curses on his soul! and on my own soul! who have fought and bled for him, and all to meet with this, as my reward of service!"

"Great God! can these things be," she exclaimed, almost fainting with horror and disgust. "Can these things indeed be? But speak, Raoul, speak; how can you know all this?"

"I tell you, Melanie, it is the talk, the very daily, hourly gossip of the streets, the alleys, nay, even the very kennels of

Paris. Every one knows it—every one believes it, from the monarch in the Louvre to the lowest butcher of the Faubourg St. Antoine!

“And they believe it—of me, of *me*, they believe this infamy!”

“With this addition, if any addition were needed, that you are not a deceived victim, but a willing and proud participator in the shame.”

“I will—that is—” she corrected herself, speaking very rapidly and energetically—“I *would* die sooner. But there is no need now to die. You have come back to me, and all will yet go well with us!”

“It never can go well with us again,” St. Renan answered gloomily. “The king never yields his purpose, he is as tenacious in his hold as reckless in his promptitude to seize. And they are paid beforehand.”

“Paid!” exclaimed the girl, shuddering at the word. “What atrocity. How paid?”

“How, think you, did your good father earn his title and the rich governorship of Morlaix? What great deeds were rewarded to La Rochederrien by his marquise, and this captaincy of musquetaires. You know not yet, young lady, what virtue there is now-a-days in being the accommodating father, or the convenient husband of a beauty!”

“You speak harshly, St. Renan, and bitterly.”

“And if I do, have I not cause enough for bitterness and harshness?” he replied almost angrily.

“Not against me, Raoul.”

“I am not bitter against you, Melanie. And yet—and yet—”

“And yet *what*, Raoul?”

“And yet had you resisted three days longer, we might have been saved—you might have been mine—”

“I am yours, Raoul de St. Renan. Yours, ever and for ever! No one’s but only yours.”

“You speak but madness—your vow—the sacrament!”

“To the winds with my vow—to the abyss with the fraudulent sacrament!” she cried, almost fiercely. “By sin it was obtained and sanctioned—in sin let it perish. I say—I swear, Raoul, if you will take me, I am yours.”

“Mine? Mine?” cried the young man, half bewildered. “How mine, and when?”

“Thus,” she replied, casting herself upon his breast, and winding her arms around his neck, and kissing his lips passionately and often. “Thus, Raoul, thus, and now!”

He returned her embrace fondly once, but the next instant he removed her almost forcibly from his breast, and held her at arm’s length.

“No, no!” he exclaimed, “not thus, not thus! If at all, honestly, openly, holily, in the face of day! May my soul perish, ere cause come through me why you should ever blush to show your front aloft among the purest and the proudest. No, no, not thus, my own Melanie!”

The girl burst into a paroxysm of tears and sobbing, through which she hardly could contrive to make her interrupted and faltering words audible.

“If not now,” she said at length, “it will never be. For, hear me, Raoul, and pity me, to-morrow they are about to drag me to Paris.”

The lover mused for several moments very deeply, and then replied, “Listen to me, Melanie. If you are in earnest, if you are true, and can be firm, there may yet be happiness in store for us, and that very shortly.”

“Do you doubt me, Raoul?”

“I do not doubt you, Melanie. But ever as in my own wildest rapture, even to gain my own extremest bliss, I would

not do aught that could possibly cast one shadow on your pure renown, so, mark me, would I not take you to my heart were there one spot, though it were but as a speck in the all-glorious sun, upon the brightness of your purity."

"I believe you, Raoul. I feel, I know that my honor, that my purity is all in all to you."

"I would die a thousand deaths," he made answer, "ere even a false report should fall on it, to mar its virgin whiteness. Marvel not then that I ask as much of you."

"Ask anything, St. Renan. It *is* granted."

"In France we can hope for nothing. But there are other lands than France. We must fly; and thanks to these documents which you have wrung from them, and the proofs which I can easily obtain, this cursed marriage can be set aside, and then, in honor and in truth you can be mine, mine own Melanie."

"God grant it so, Raoul."

"It shall be so, beloved. Be you but firm, and it may be done right speedily. I will sell the estates of St. Renan—by a good chance, supposing me dead, the lord of Yrvilliac was in treaty for it with my uncle. That can be arranged forthwith. Conduct yourself according to your wont, cool and as distant as may be with this villain of Ploermel; avoid above all things to let your father see that you are buoyed by any hope, or moved by any passion. Treat the king with deliberate scorn, if he approach you over-boldly. Beware how you eat or drink in his company, for he is capable of all things, even of drugging you into insensibility, and here," he added, taking a small poniard, of exquisite workmanship, with a gold hilt and scabbard, from his girdle, and giving it to her, "wear *this* at all times, and if he dare attempt violence, were he thrice a king, *use it!*"

"I will—I will—trust me, Raoul! I *will* use it, and that to

his sorrow! My heart is strong, and my hand brave *now*—now that I know you to be living. Now that I have hope to nerve me, I will fear nothing, but dare all things.”

“Do so, do so, my beloved, and you shall have no cause to fear, for I will be ever near you. I will tarry here but one day; and ere you reach Paris, I will be there, be certain. Within ten days, I doubt not I can convert my acres into gold, and ship that gold across the narrow straits; and that done, the speed of horses, and a swift ship will soon have us safe in England; and if that land be not so fair, or so dear as our own France, at least there are no tyrants there, like this Louis; and there are laws, they say, which guard the meanest man as safely and as surely as the proudest noble.”

“A happy land, Raoul. I would we were there even now.”

“We will be there ere long, fear nothing. But tell me, whom have you near your person on whom we may rely. There must be some one through whom we may communicate in Paris. It may be that I shall require to see you.”

“Oh! you remember Rose, Raoul—little Rose Faverney, who has lived with me ever since she was a child—a pretty little black-eyed damsel.”

“Surely I do remember her. Is she with you yet? That will do admirably, then, if she be faithful, as I think she is; and unless I forget, what will serve us better yet, she loves my page Jules de Marlien. He has not forgotten her, I promise you.”

“Ah! Jules—we grow selfish, I believe, as we grow old, Raoul. I have not thought to ask after one of your people. So Jules remembers little Rose, and loves her yet; that will indeed, secure her, even had she been doubtful, which she is not. She is as true as steel—truer, I fear, than even I; for she reproached me bitterly four evenings since, and swore she would be buried alive, much more willingly imprisoned, than

be married to the marquis de Ploermel, though she was only plighted to the vicomte Raoul's page! Oh! we may trust in her with all certainty."

"Send her, then, on the very same night that you reach Paris, so soon as it is dark, to my uncle's house in the place de St. Louis. I think she knows it, and let her ask—not for me—but for Jules. Ere then I will know something definite of our future; and fear nothing, love, all shall go well with us. Love such as ours, with faith, and right, and honesty, and honor to support it, can not fail to win, blow what wind may. And now, sweet Melanie, the night is wearing onward, and I fear that they may miss you. Kiss me, then, once more, sweet girl, and farewell."

"Not for the last, Raoul," she cried, with a gay smile, casting herself once again into her lover's arms, and meeting his lips with a long, rapturous kiss.

"Not by a thousand, and a thousand! But now, angel, farewell for a little space. I hate to bid you leave me, but I dare not ask you to stay; even now I tremble lest you should be missed and they should send to seek you. For were they but to suspect that I am here and have seen you, it would, at the best, double all our difficulties; fare you well, sweetest Melanie."

"Fare you well," she replied; "fare you well, my own best beloved Raoul," and she put up the glittering dagger, as she spoke, into the bosom of her dress; but as she did so, she paused and said, "I wish *this* had not been your first gift to me, Raoul, for they say that such gifts are fatal, to love at least, if not to life."

"Fear not! fear not!" answered the young man, laughing gayly, "our love is immortal. It may defy the best steel blade that was ever forged on Milan stithy to cut it asunder. Fare you—but, hush! who comes here; it is too late, yet fly—fly, Melanie!"

But she did not fly, for as he spoke, a tall, gayly-dressed cavalier burst through the coppice on the side next the château d'Argenson, exclaiming: "So, my fair cousin!—this is your faith to my good brother of Ploermel is it?"

But, before he spoke, she had whispered to Raoul, "It is the chevalier de Pontrein, de Ploermel's half-brother. Alas! all is lost."

"Not so! not so!" answered her lover, also in a whisper, "leave him to me, I will detain him. Fly, by the upper pathway and through the orchard to the château, and remember—you have not seen this dog. So much deceit is pardonable. Fly, I say, Melanie. Look not behind for your life, whatever you may hear, nor tarry. All rests now on your steadiness and courage."

"Then all is safe," she answered firmly and aloud, and without casting a glance toward the cavalier, who was now within ten paces of her side, or taking the smallest notice of his words, she kissed her hand to St. Renan, and bounded up the steep path, in the opposite direction, with so fleet a step as soon carried her beyond the sound of all that followed, though that was neither silent nor of small interest.

"Do you not hear me, madam. By Heaven! but you carry it off easily!" cried the young cavalier, setting off at speed, as if to follow her. "But you must run swifter than a roe if you look to 'scape me;" and with the words he attempted to rush past Raoul, of whom he affected, although he knew him well, to take no notice.

But in that intent he was quickly frustrated, for the young count grasped him by the collar as he endeavored to pass, with a grasp of iron, and said to him in an ironical tone of excessive courtesy.

"Sweet sir, I fear you have forgotten me, that you should give me the go-by thus, when it is so long a time since we have met, and we such dear friends, too."

But the young man was in earnest, and very angry, and struggled to release himself from St. Renan's grasp, until, having no strong reasons for forbearance, but many for the reverse, Raoul, too, lost his temper.

"By Heaven!" he exclaimed, "I believe that you do *not* know me, or you would not dare to suppose that I would suffer you to follow a lady who seeks not your presence or society."

"Let me go, St. Renan!" returned the other fiercely, laying his hand on his dagger's hilt. "Let me go, villain, or you shall rue it!"

"Villain!" Raoul repeated calmly, "villain! It is so you call me, hey?" and he did instantly release him, drawing his sword as he did so. "Draw, De Pontrien—that word has cost you your life!"

"Yes, villain!" repeated the other, "villain to your teeth! But you lie! it is your life that is forfeit—*forfeit* to my brother's honor!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Raoul, savagely. "Ha-ha-ha-ha! your brother's honor! who the devil ever heard before of a pandar's honor—even if he were Sir Pandarus to a king? Sa! sa! have at you!"

Their blades crossed instantly, and they fought fiercely, and with something like equality for some ten minutes. The chevalier de Pontrien was far more than an ordinary swordsman, and he was in earnest, not angry, but savage and determined, and full of bitter hatred, and a fixed resolution to punish the familiarity of Raoul with his brother's wife. But that was a thing easier proposed than executed; for St. Renan, who had left France as a boy already a perfect master of fence, had learned the practice of the blade against the swordsmen of the East, the finest swordsmen of the world, and had added to skill, science, and experience, the iron nerves, the deep breath, and the unwearied strength of a veteran.

If he fought slowly, it was that he fought carefully—that he meant the first wound to be the last. He was resolved that De Pontrien never should return home again to divulge what he had seen, and he had the coolness, the skill, and the power to carry out his resolution.

At the end of ten minutes he attacked. Six times within as many seconds he might have inflicted a severe, perhaps a deadly wound on his antagonist; and he, too, perceived it, but it would not have been surely mortal.

“Come, come!” cried De Pontrien, at last, growing impatient and angry at the idea of being played with. “Come, sir, you are my master, it seems; make an end of this.”

“Do not be in a hurry,” replied St. Renan, with a deadly smile, “it will come soon enough. There! will that suit you?”

And with the word he made a treble feint and lounged home. So true was the thrust that the point pierced the very cavity of his heart. So strongly was it sent home that the hilt smote heavily on his breast-bone. He did not speak or groan, but drew one short, broken sigh, and fell dead on the instant.

“The fool!” muttered St. Renan. “Wherefore did he meddle where he had no business? But what the devil shall I do with him? He must not be found, or all will out—and that were ruin.”

As he spoke, a distant clap of thunder was heard to the eastward, and a few heavy drops of rain began to fall, while a heavy mass of black thunder-clouds began to rise rapidly against the wind.

“There will be a fierce storm in ten minutes, which will soon wash out all this evidence,” he said, looking down at the trampled and blood-stained greensward. “One hour hence, and there will not be a sign of this, if I can but dispose of him. Ha!” he added, as a quick thought struck him, “the Devil’s Drinking-Cup! Enough! it is done!”

Within a minute's space he had swathed the corpse tightly in the cloak, which had fallen from the wretched man's shoulders as the fray began, bound it about the waist by the scarf, to which he attached firmly an immense block of stone, which lay at the brink of the fearful well, which was now—for the tide was up.—brimful of white boiling surf, and holding his breath atween resolution and abhorrence, hurled it into the abyss.

It sunk instantly, so well was the stone secured to it; and the fate of the chevalier de Pontrien never was suspected, for that fatal pool never gave up its dead, nor will until the judgment-day.

Meantime the flood-gates of heaven were opened, and a mimic torrent, rushing down the dark glen, soon obliterated every trace of that stern, short affray.

Calmly Raoul strode homeward, and untouched by any conscience, for those were hard and ruthless times, and he had undergone so much wrong at the hands of his victim's nearest relatives, and dearest friends, that it was no great marvel if his blood were heated, and his heart pitiless.

"I will have masses said for his soul in Paris," he muttered to himself; and therewith, thinking that he had more than discharged all a Christian's duty, he dismissed all further thoughts of the matter, and actually hummed a gay opera-tune as he strode homeward through the pelting storm, thinking how soon he should be blessed by the possession of his own Melanie.

No observation was made on his absence, by either the steward or any of the servants, on his return, though he was well-nigh drenched with rain, for they remembered his old half-boyish, half-romantic habits, and it seemed natural to them that on his first return, after so many years of wandering, to scenes endeared to him by innumerable fond recollections, he should wander forth alone to muse with his own soul in secret.

There was great joy, however, in the hearts of the old ser-

vitors and tenants in consequence of his return, and on the following morning, and still on the third day, that feeling of joy and security continued to increase, for it soon got abroad that the young lord's grief and gloominess of mood were wearing hourly away, and that his lip, and his whole countenance, were often lighted up with an expression which showed, as they fondly augured, that days and years of happiness were yet in store for him.

It was not long before the tidings reached him that the house of D'Argenson was in great distress concerning the sudden and unaccountable disappearance of the chevalier de Pontrien, who had walked out, it was said, on the preceding afternoon, promising to be back at supper-time, and who had not been heard of since.

Raoul smiled grimly at the intimation, but said nothing, and the narrator judging that St. Renan was not likely to take offence at the imputations against the family of Ploermel, proceeded to inform him, that in the opinion of the neighborhood there was nothing very mysterious, after all, in the disappearance of the chevalier, since he was known to be very heavily in debt, and was threatened with deadly feud by the old Sieur de Plouzurde, whose fair daughter he had deceived to her undoing. Robinet the smuggler's boat, had been seen off the Penmarcks when the moon was setting, and no one doubted that the gay gallant was by this time off the coast of Spain.

To all this, though he affected to pay little heed to it, Raoul inclined an eager and attentive ear, and as a reward for his patient listening, was soon informed, furthermore, that the bridegroom marquis and the beautiful bride, being satisfied, it was supposed, of the chevalier's safety, had departed for Paris, their journey having been postponed only in consequence of the research for the missing gentleman, from the morning when it should have taken place, to the afternoon of the same day.

For two days longer did Raoul tarry at St. Renan, apparently as free from concern or care about the fair Melanie de Ploermel, as if he had never heard her name. And on this point alone, for all men knew that he once loved her, did his conduct excite any observation, or call forth comment. His silence, however, and external nonchalance were attributed at all hands to a proper sense of pride and self-respect; and as the territorial vassals of those days held themselves in some degree ennobled or disgraced by the high bearing or recreancy of their lords, it was very soon determined by the men of St. Renan that it would have been very disgraceful and humiliating had their lord, the lord of Duarnenez and St. Renan, condescended to trouble his head about the little demoiselle d'Argenson.

Meanwhile our lover, whose head was in truth occupied about no other thing than that very same little demoiselle, for whom he was believed to feel a contempt so supreme, had thoroughly investigated all his affairs, thereby acquiring from his old steward the character of an admirable man of business, had made himself perfectly master of the real value of his estates, droits, dues, and all connected with the same, and had packed up all his papers, and such of his valuables as were movable, so as to be transported easily by means of pack-horses.

This done, leaving orders for a retinue of some twenty of his best and most trusty servants to follow him as soon as the train and relays of horses could be prepared, he set off with two followers only to return riding post, as he had come from Paris.

He was three days behind the lady of his love at starting; but the journey from the western extremity of Bretagne to the metropolis is at all times a long and tedious undertaking; and as the roads and means of conveyance were in those days, he found it no difficult task to catch up with the carriages of the marquis, and to pass them on the road long enough before they reached Paris.

Indeed, though he had set out three days behind them, he succeeded in anticipating their arrival by as many, and had succeeded in transacting more than half the business on which his heart was bent, before he received the promised visit from the pretty Rose Faverney, who, prompted by her desire to renew her intimacy with the handsome page, came punctual to her appointment. He had not, of course, admitted the good old churchman, his uncle, into all his secrets ; he had not even told him that he had seen the lady, much less what were his hopes and views concerning her.

But he did tell him that he was so deeply mortified and wounded by her desertion, that he had determined to sell his estates, to leave France for ever, and to betake himself to the new American colonies on the St. Lawrence.

There was not in the state of France in those days much to admire, or much to induce wise men to exert their influence over the young and noble, to induce them to linger in the neighborhood of a court which was in itself a very sink of corruption. It was with no great difficulty, therefore, that Raoul obtained the concurrence of his uncle, who was naturally a friend to gallant and adventurous daring. The estates of St. Renan, the old castle and the home park, with a few hundred acres in its immediate vicinity only excepted, were converted into gold with almost unexampled rapidity.

A part of the gold was in its turn converted into a gallant brigantine of some two hundred tons, which was despatched at once along the coast of Douarnenez bay, there to take in a crew of the hardy fishermen and smugglers of that stormy shore, all men well known to Raoul de St. Renan, and well content to follow their young lord to the world's end, should such be his will.

Here, indeed, I have anticipated something the progress of events, for hurry it as much as he could in those days, St.

Renan could not, of course, work miracles; and though the brigantine was purchased, where she lay ready to sail, at Calais, the instant the sale of St. Renan was determined, without awaiting the completion of the transfer, or the payment of the purchase-money, many days had elapsed before the news could be sent from the capital to the coast, and the vessel despatched to Brittany.

Everything was, however, determined; nay, everything was in process of accomplishment before the arrival of the fair lady and her nominal husband, so that at the first interview with Rose, Raoul was enabled to lay all his plans before her, and to promise that within a month at the farthest, everything would be ready for their certain and safe evasion.

He did not fail, however, on that account to impress upon the pretty maiden—who, as Jules was to accompany his lord, though not a hint of whither had been breathed to any one, was doubly devoted to the success of the scheme—that a method must be arranged by which he could have daily interviews with the lovely Melanie; and this she promised that she would use all her powers to induce her mistress to permit, saying, with a gay laugh, that her permission gained, all the rest was easy.

The next day, the better to avoid suspicion, Raoul was presented to the king, in full court, by his uncle, on the double event of his return from India, and of his approaching departure for the colony of Acadie, for which it was his present purpose to sue for his majesty's consent and approbation.

The king was in great good humor, and nothing could have been more flattering or more gracious than Raoul de St. Renan's reception. Louis had heard that very morning of the fair Melanie's arrival in the city, and nothing could have fallen out more *apropos* than the intention of her quondam lover to depart

at this very juncture, and that, too, for an indefinite period, from the land of his birth.

Rejoicing inwardly at his good fortune, and of course, ascribing the conduct of the young man to pique and disappointment, the king, while he loaded him with honors and attentions, did not neglect to encourage him in his intention of departing on a very early day, and even offered to facilitate his departure by making some remissions in his behalf from the strict regulations of the Douane.

All this was perfectly comprehensible to Raoul ; but he was far too wise to suffer any one, even his uncle, to perceive that he understood it ; and while he profited to the utmost by the readiness which he found in high places to smooth away all the difficulties from his path, he laughed in his sleeve as he thought what would be the fury of the licentious and despotic sovereign when he should discover that the very steps which he had taken to remove a dangerous rival, had actually cast the lady into that rival's arms.

Nor had this measure of Raoul's been less effectual in sparing Melanie much grief and vexation, than it had proved in facilitating his own schemes of escape ; for on that very day, within an hour after his reception of St. Renan, the king caused information to be conveyed to the marquis de Ploermel that the presentation of madame should be deferred until such time as the vicomte de St. Renan should have set sail for Acadie, which it was expected would take place within a month at the furthest.

That evening when Rose Faverney was admitted to the young lord's presence, through the agency of the enamored Jules, she brought him permission to visit her lady at midnight in her own chamber ; and she brought with her a plan, sketched by Melanie's own hand, of the garden, through which, by the aid of a master-key and a rope-ladder, he was to gain access to her presence.

“My lady says, Monsieur Raoul,” added the merry girl, with a light laugh, “that she admits you only on the faith that you will keep the word which you plighted to her, when last you met, and on the condition that I shall be present at all your interviews with her.”

“Her honor were safe in my hands,” replied the young man, “without that precaution. But I appreciate the motive, and accept the condition.”

“You will remember, then, my lord—at midnight. There will be one light burning in the window, when that is extinguished, all will be safe, and you may enter fearless? Will you remember?”

“Nothing but death will prevent me. Nor that, if the spirits of the dead may visit what they love best on earth. So tell her, Rose. Farewell!”

Four hours afterward St. Renan stood in the shadow of a dense trellice in the garden, watching the moment when that love-beacon should expire. The clock of St. Germain l’Auxerre struck twelve, and on the instant all was darkness. Another minute and the lofty wall was scaled, and Melanie was in the arms of Raoul.

It was a strange, grim, gloomy, gothic chamber, full of queer niches and recesses of old stone-work. The walls were hung with gilded tapestries of Spanish leather, but were interrupted in many places by the antique stone groinings of alcoves and cupboards, one of which, close beside the mantelpiece, was closed by a curiously carved door of heavy oak-work, itself sunk above a foot within the embrasure of the wall.

Lighted as it was only by the flickering of the wood-fire on the hearth, for the thickness of the walls, and the damp of the old vaulted room, rendered a fire acceptable, even at midsummer, that antique chamber appeared doubly grim and ghostly; but little cared the young lovers for its dismal seeming; and

if they noticed it at all, it was but to jest at the contrast of its appearance with the happy hours which they passed within it.

Happy, indeed, they were—almost too happy—though as pure and guiltless as if they had been hours spent within a nunnery of the strictest rule, and in the presence of a sainted abbess.

Happy, indeed, they were ; and, although brief, oft repeated. For, henceforth, not a night passed but Raoul visited his Melanie, and tarried there enjoying her sweet converse, and bearing to her every day glad tidings of the process of his schemes, and the certainty of their escape, until the approach of morning warned him to make good his retreat ere envious eyes should be abroad to make espials.

And ever the page, Jules, kept watch at the ladder-foot in the garden : and the true maiden, Rose, who ever sate within the chamber with the lovers during their stolen interviews, guarded the door, with ears as keen as those of Cerberus.

A month had passed, and the last night had come, and all was successful—all was ready. The brigantine lay manned and armed, and at all points prepared for her brief voyage at an instant's notice at Calais. Relays of horses were at each post on the road. Raoul had taken formal leave of the delighted monarch. His passport was signed—his treasures were on board his good ship—his pistols were loaded—his horses were harnessed for the journey.

For the last time he scaled the ladder—for the last time he stood within the chamber.

Too happy ! ay, they were too happy on that night, for all was done, all was won ; and nothing but the last step remained, and that step so easy. The next morning Melanie was to go forth, as if to early mass, with Rose and a single valet. The valet was to be mastered and overthrown as if in a street broil, the lady, with her damsel, was to step into a light caleche,

which should await her, with her lover mounted at its side, and hie! for Calais—England—without the risk—the possibility of failure.

That night he would not tarry. He told his happy tidings, clasped her to his heart, bid her farewell till to-morrow, and in another moment would have been safe—a step sounded close to the door. Rose sprang to her feet, with her finger to her lip, pointing with her left hand to the deep cupboard-door.

She was right—there was not time to reach the window—at the same instant, as Melanie relighted the lamp, not to be taken in mysterious and suspicious darkness, the one door closed upon the lover just as the other opened to the husband.

But rapid and light as were the motions of Raoul, the treacherous door by which he had passed into his concealment, trembled still as Ploermel entered. And Rose's quick eye saw that he marked it.

But if he saw it, he gave no token, made no allusion to the least doubt or suspicion; on the contrary, he spoke more gayly and kindly than his wont. He apologized for his untimely intrusion, saying that her father had come suddenly to speak with them, concerning her presentation at court, which the king had appointed for the next day, and wished, late as it was, to see her in the saloon below.

Nothing doubting the truth of his statement, which Raoul's intended departure rendered probable, Melanie started from her chair, and telling Rose to wait, for she would be back in an instant, hurried out of the room, and took her way toward the great staircase.

The marquis ordered Rose to light her mistress, for the corridor was dark; and as the girl went out to do so, a suppressed shriek, and the faint sounds of a momentary scuffle followed, and then all was still.

A hideous smile flitted across the face of De Ploermel, as he

cast himself heavily into an arm-chair, opposite the door of the cupboard in which St. Renan was concealed, and taking up a silver bell which stood on the table, rung it repeatedly and loudly for a servant.

“Bring wine,” he said, as the man entered. “And, hark you, the masons are at work in the great hall, and have left their tools and materials for building. Let half a dozen of the grooms come up hither, and bring with them brick and mortar. I hate the sight of that cupboard, and before I sleep this night, it shall be built up solid with a good wall of mason-work ; and so here’s a health to the rats within it, and a long life to them !” and he quaffed off the wine in fiendish triumph.

He spoke so loud, and that intentionally that Raoul heard every word that he uttered.

But if he hoped thereby to terrify the lover into discovering himself, and so convicting his fair and innocent wife, the villain was deceived. Raoul heard every word—knew his fate—knew that one word, one motion would have saved him ; but that one word, one motion would have destroyed the fair fame of his Melanie.

The memory of the death of that unhappy Lord of Kerguelen came palpably upon his mind in that dread moment, and the comments of his dead father.

“I, at least,” he muttered between his hard set teeth, “I at least will not be evidence against her. I will die silent—*fiel hasta, la muerte !*”

And when the brick and mortar were piled by the hands of the unconscious grooms, and when the fatal trowels clanged and jarred around him, he spake not—stirred not—gave no sign.

Even the savage wretch, De Ploermel, unable to believe in the existence of such chivalry, such honor, half doubted if he

were not deceived, and the cupboard were not untenanted by the true victim.

Higher and higher rose the wall before the oaken door; and by the exclusion of the light of the many torches by which the men were working, the victim must have marked, inch by inch, the progress of his living immurement. The page, Jules, had climbed in silence to the window's ledge, and was looking in, an unseen spectator, for he had heard all that passed from without, and suspected his lord's presence within the fatal precinct.

But as he saw the wall rise higher—higher—as he saw the last brick fastened in its place solid, immovable from within, and that without strife or opposition, he doubted not but that there was some concealed exit by which St. Renan had escaped, and he descended hastily and hurried homeward.

Now came the lady's trial—the trial that shall prove to De Ploermel whether his vengeance was complete. She was led in with Rose, a prisoner. *Lettres de cachet* had been obtained, when the treason of some wretched subordinate had revealed the secret of her intended flight with Raoul; and the officers had seized the wife by the connivance of the shameless husband.

“See!” he said, as she entered, “see, the fool suffered himself to be walled up there in silence. There let him die in agony. You, madam, may live as long as you please in the Bastille, *au secret*.”

She saw that all was lost—her lover's sacrifice was made—she could not save him! Should she, by a weak divulging of the truth, render his grand devotion fruitless? Never!

Her pale cheek did not turn one shade the paler, but her keen eye flashed living fire, and her beautiful lip writhed with loathing and scorn irrepressible.

“It is thou who art the fool!” she said, “who hast made all

this coil, to wall up a poor cat in a cupboard, as it is thou who art the base knave and shameless pandar, who has attempted to do murder, and all to sell thine own wife to a corrupt and loathsome tyrant!"

All stood aghast at her fierce words, uttered with all the eloquence and vehemence of real passion, but none so much as Rose, who had never beheld her other than the gentlest of the gentle. Now she wore the expression, and spoke with the tone of a young Pythoness, full of the fury of the god.

She sprang forward as she uttered the last words, extricating herself from the slight hold of the astonished officers, and rushed toward her cowed and craven husband.

"But in all things, mean wretch," she continued, in tones of fiery scorn, "in all things thou art frustrate—thy vengeance is naught, thy vile ambition naught, thyself and thy king, fools, knaves, and frustrate equally, and now," she added snatching the dagger which Raoul had given her from the scabbard, "now die, infamous, accursed pandar!" and with the word she buried the keen weapon at one quick and steady stroke to the very hilt in his base and brutal heart.

Then, ere the corpse had fallen to the earth, or one hand of all those that were stretched out to seize her had touched her person, she smote herself mortally with the same reeking weapon, and only crying out in a clear, high voice, "Bear witness, Rose, bear witness to my honor! Bear witness all that I die spotless!" fell down beside the body of her husband, and expired without a struggle or a groan.

Awfully was she tried, and awfully she died. Rest to her soul, if it be possible.

The caitiff marquis de Ploermel perished, as she had said in all things frustrated; for though his vengeance was in very deed complete, he believed that it had failed, and in his very agony that failure was his latest and his worst regret.

On the morrow, when St. Renan returned not to his home, the page gave the alarm, and the fatal wall was torn down, but too late.

The gallant victim of love's honor was no more. Doomed to a lingering death he had died speedily, though by no act of his own. A blood vessel had burst within, through the violence of his own emotions. Ignorant of the fate of his sweet **Melanie**, he had died as he had lived, the very soul of honor; and when they buried him, in the old chapel of his Breton castle, beside his famous ancestors, none nobler lay around him; and the brief epitaph they carved upon his stone was true, at least, if it were short and simple, for it ran only thus—

Raoul de St. Renan.

Fiel hasta la Muerte.

LEGENDS

OF

S C O T L A N D .

PASSAGES FROM THE LIFE OF MARY STUART.

CHASTELAR.

“Fired by an object so sublime,
What could I choose but strive to climb?
And as I strove I fell.
At least 't is love, when hope is gone,
Through shame and ruin to love on.” — AXON.

THE last flush of day had not yet faded from the west, although the summer moon was riding above the verge of the eastern horizon, in a flood of mellow glory, with the diamond-spark of Lucifer glittering in solitary brightness at her side. It was one of those enchanting evenings which, peculiar to the southern lands of Europe, visit, but at far and fleeting intervals, the sterner clime of Britain. Not Italy, however, could herself have boasted a more delicious twilight than this, which now was waning into night, above the rude magnificence of Scotland's capital. The fantastic dwellings of the city, ridge above ridge, loomed broadly to the left, partially veiled by those wreaths of vapor, which have been the origin of its provincial name; while, far above the misty indistinctness of the town, the glorious castle towered aloft upon its craggy throne, displaying a hundred fronts of massive shadow, and as many salient angles jutting abruptly into sight. The lovely vale of the

King's park, with its velvet turf and shadowy foliage, shone out in quiet lustre from beneath the dark-gray buttresses of Arthur's seat; while from the trim alleys and pleached evergreens, which at that day formed a belt of lawn, and shrubbery, and royal garden, around the venerable pile of Holyrood, the rich song of the throstle—the nightingale of Scotland—came in repeated bursts upon the ear.

Delightful as such an evening must naturally be to all who have hearts awake to the influence of sweet sounds and lovely sights, how inexpressibly soothing must it seem to one who, languishing beneath the ungenial atmosphere of a northern region, and sighing for the bluer skies and softer breezes of his fatherland, feels himself at once transported, by the unusual aspect of the heavens, to the distant home of his regrets! It was, perhaps, some fancied similarity to the nights in which he had been wont to court the favor of the high-born dames of France with voice and instrument, that had awakened the melody of some foreign cavalier, more suitable perchance to the light murmurs of the Seine than to the distant booming of the seas that lash the coasts of Scotland. Such, however, was the illusion produced by the unwonted softness of the hour, that the tinkling of a lute and the full, manly voice of the singer did not at the moment seem so inconsistent to the spirit of the country and of the times as in truth it was. The words were French, and the air, though sweet, so melancholy, that it left a vague sensation of pain upon the listener—as though none but a heart diseased could give birth to notes so plaintive. “*Pensez à moi ! pensez à moi !—noble dame—Pensez à moi !*”—the burden of the strain swelled clearly audible in the deepest tones of feeling, although the intermediate words were lost amid the accompaniment of the silver strings. Never, perhaps, since the unfortunate Chatelain de Concy first chanted his extemporaneous farewell to the lady of his heart, had his simple words

been sung with taste or execution more appropriate to their subject. In truth, it was impossible to listen to the lay without feeling a conviction that the heart of the minstrel was in his song. There were, moreover, moments in which a practised ear might have discovered variations, not in the tune only, but in the words, as the singer exerted his unrivalled powers to adapt the text, which he had chosen, to his own peculiar circumstances; nor would it have required more than a common degree of fancy to have traced the sounds, "O Reine Marie!" mingling with the proper refrain of the chant, although it would have been less easy to distinguish whether the fervent expression with which the words were invested was applied to an object of mortal idolatry or of immortal adoration. It would seem, however, that there were listeners near, to whom this doubt had not so much as once occurred; for in a shadowy bower, not far distant from the spot where the concealed musician sang, there stood a group of ladies, drinking with breathless eagerness every note that issued from his lips. Foremost in place, as first in rank, was one whose charms have been said and sung, not by the poet and the romancer only, but by the muse of history herself, who almost seems to have dipped her graver pencil in the hues of fiction when describing Mary Stuart of Scotland. Her form, rather below than above the middle stature of the female form, was fashioned with such perfect elegance, that it was equally calculated to exhibit the extremes of grace and majesty. Her ringlets of the deepest auburn, glancing in the light with a glossy, golden lustre, and melting into shadows of dark chestnut; the statue-like contour of her Grecian head; her eyes, on which no man had ever gazed with impunity to his heart—more languid and at the same time far more brilliant than those of created beauty; her mouth, whose wreathed smile might have almost tempted angels to descend and worship; her swan-like neck of dazzling whiteness; and, above all, the glo-

rious blending of feminine ease with regal dignity—of condescension and affability toward the meanest of her fellow-men, with the exalted consciousness of all that was due, not to her rank, but to herself—combined to render her perhaps the loveliest, as after-events proved her beyond a doubt the most unfortunate, of queens or women. Sorrow at this time had scarcely cast a shadow on that transparent brow ; or, if an occasional recollection of the ill-fated Francis did leave a trace behind, it was a sadness of that gentle and spiritualized description which is, perhaps, a more attractive expression to be marked in the features of a lovely woman, than the full blaze of happiness and self-enjoyment. Simple almost to plainness in her attire, the queen of Scotland moved before her four attendant Maries, ten thousand times more lovely from the contrast of her unadornment to the gorgeous dresses of those noble dames, who had been selected to be near her person, with especial regard, not to exalted rank alone, or to the distinctive name, which they bore in common with their royal mistress, but to intellect, and beauty, and all those accomplishments which, general as they are in our day, were then at least as highly valued for their rarity, as for their intrinsic merits. A robe of sable velvet, with the closely-fitted *corsage* peculiar to the age in which she lived, a falling ruff from the fairest looms of Flanders, and the picturesque head-gear which has ever borne her name, with its double tressure of pearls, and a single string of the same precious jewels around her neck, completed Mary's dress, while rustling trains of many-colored satin, guarded with costly laces and stomachers studded with gems, bracelets, and carcanets, and chains of goldsmith's work, gleamed on the persons of her ladies. Still the demeanor of the little group was more in accordance to the simplicity of the mistress than to the splendor of the others. No rigid etiquette was there ; none of that high and haughty ceremonial which, in the courtly festivals of the

rival queen of England, froze up the feelings even of those trusted few who bore with the caprices, in seeking for the favors, of Elizabeth. The titles of grace and majesty were lisped indeed by the lips of the fair damsels, but the character of their remarks, the polished raillery, the light laugh, and the freedom of intercourse, were rather those of the younger members of a family toward an elder sister, than of a court-circle toward a powerful queen. As the last notes of the song died away, she who was nearest to Mary's person whispered in a sportive tone, “ Your grace has heard that lute before —”

“ In France, Carmichael,” answered Mary, with a breath so deeply drawn as almost to resemble a sigh, “ in our beautiful France ; when, when shall I look upon that lovely land again.”

While she was yet speaking the music recommenced. A dash of impatience was mingled with the plaintive sweetness of the strain, and the words “ *pensez à moi*” swept past their ears with all the energy of disappointed feelings.

“ It is the voice —”

“ Of the sieur de Chastelar,” interrupted the queen ; “ we would thank the gentleman for his minstrelsey. Seyton, *ma mignonne*, hie thee across yon woodbine-maze, and summon this night-warbler to our presence.”

With an arch smile the lively girl bounded forward, and was for an instant lost among the foliage of the garden.

“ Dost thou remember, Carmichael,” said the queen, whose thoughts had been reflected by the well-remembered strains — “ dost thou remember our sylvan festivals in the lovely groves of Versailles, with hound and hawk for noonday pastime, and the lute, the song, and the unfettered dance upon the green sward, beneath moons unclouded by the hazy gloom of this dark Scotland's ?”

“ And does your grace remember,” laughed the other in reply, “ a certain *fête* in which the palm of minstrelsey was award-

ed by your royal hand to a masked hunter of the forest? Yet was his bearing somewhat gentle for a ranger of the greenwood, and his hand was passing white to have handled the tough bow-string? Does your grace's memory serve to recall the air whose executions gained that prize of harmony? Methinks it did run somewhat thus,"—and she warbled the same notes which had formed the burthen of the serenade.

Whether some distant recollections conjured up the mantling color to the cheeks of Mary, or whether she dreaded the misconstruction of the serenader, on his hearing his own tender words repeated in a voice of female melody, it was with brow, neck and bosom of the deepest crimson that she turned to Mary Carmichael—

"Peace, silly minion!" she said, with momentary dignity; "wouldst have it said that Mary of Scotland is so light of bearing as to trill love-ditties in reply to unseen ballad-mongers?" Nay, weep not neither, Marie; if I spoke somewhat shortly, 't was that the gentleman was even then approaching. Cheer up, my girl; thou hast, we know it well, a kind, a gentle, and a trusty heart, though nature has coupled the gift to that of a thoughtless head and random tongue. Take not on thus, or I shall blame myself in that I checked thee, though surely not unkindly. Mary of Stuart loves better far to look upon a smiling lip than a wet eye, even if it be a stranger's—much less that of one whom she loves—as I love thee, Carmichael."

There was, perhaps, no circumstance more remarkable than the power which, at every period of her momentous life, Mary appears to have possessed of winning, as it were at a glance, the affections of all who came in contact with her. The deep devotion, not of the barons and the military chiefs alone, who bled in defence of her cause, but of the ladies, the pages, the chamberlains of her court, nay, of the very grooms and servi-

tors, with whom she could have held no intercourse beyond a smile or inclination of the head, in return for their lowly obeisance, was ever ready for the proof, when circumstances might demand its exercise. Not shown by outward acts of heroism only, or by those deeds which men are wont to perform, no less at the instigation of their wishes for renown, or of rivalry with some more famed competitor, this devotion was constantly manifested in the eagerness of all around her to execute even the most menial duties to Mary's satisfaction ; in the promptness to anticipate her slightest wish ; in the lively joy which one kind word from her could awaken, as if by magic, on every brow ; and, above all, in the utter despondency which seemed to sink down upon those whom she might deem it necessary to check, even with the slightest remonstrance. In the present instance the sensitive girl, to whom the queen had uttered her commands in the nervous quickness of excitement, rather than with any feeling of harshness or offended pride, felt, it was evident, more bitterness of grief at the rebuke of one whom she loved no less than she revered, than she would have experienced beneath the pressure of some real calamity. As quickly, however, as the sense of sorrow had been excited, did it pass away, before the returning smiles, the soft caresses, and the winning manners of the most fascinating of women the most amiable of superiors.

Scarcely had the tears of Mary Carmichael ceased to flow, when the footsteps, which for some moments previously had been heard approaching, sounded close at hand ; the branches of the embowering shrubbery were gently put asunder, and the lady Seyton stood again before the queen, attended by a gentleman of noble aspect, and whose very gesture was fraught with that easy and graceful politeness which, perhaps, showed even more to advantage in that iron age and warlike country, displayed, as it often was, in contrast to the rude demeanor and

stern simplicity of the warrior lords of Scotland, than in his native France.

The sieur de Chastelar was at this time in the very prime of youthful manhood, and might have been some few years, and but few, the senior of the lovely being before whose presence he bent in adoration humbler, and more fervently expressed, than the reverence due from a mere subject to a mortal queen. Tall and fairly-proportioned, with a countenance in which almost feminine softness of expression was blended, with an aspect of the eye and lip, which proved the vicinity of bolder and more manly qualities, slumbering but not extinct, he seemed at the first glance a man most eminently qualified to win a female heart. And who, that looked upon the broad and massive brow, and the quick glance of that eye, fraught with intelligence, could doubt but that the mind within was equal to the more perishable beauties of the form in which it was encompassed? And when to all this was added, that the sieur de Chastelar had already won a name in his green youth that ranked with those of gray-haired veterans in the lists of glory; that in all manly exercises, as in all softer accomplishments, he owned no superior; that the most skilful master of defence, the far-famed *Vicentio Saviola*, confessed De Chastelar his equal in the quickness of eye, the readiness of hand and foot which had combined to render him the most distinguished swordsman of the day; that the wildest and most untameable chargers that ever were compelled to undergo the *manége*, might as well have striven to shake off a portion of themselves, as to dismount De Chastelar by any display of violence and power; that his hand could draw the clothyard arrow to the head, and speed it to its aim as truly as the fleetest archer that ever twanged a bow in Sherwood; that he moved in the stately measure of the pavon, or the livelier *galliarde*, with that grace peculiar to his nation; that, in the richness of his voice, his execution and taste on

lute or guitar, he might have vied with the sons of Italy herself; in short, that all perfections which were deemed most requisite to form a gentleman were united in De Chastelar, what female heart, that was not proof to all the allurements of love or fancy, could hope to make an adequate resistance? Young, handsome, romantic, ardent in his hopes, enthusiastic almost to madness in his affections, he had been captivated years before in the gay salons of the French capitol, by the beauty and irresistible fascinations of the princess.

In the intercourse of French society, which even in the times of the *Medici*, as it has been in all succeeding ages, was far more liberal in its distinctions, and less restricted by the formalities of etiquette, than in any other court, a thousand opportunities had occurred, by which the youthful cavalier had profited to rivet the attention of the princess; at every *carousel* he bore her colors; in every masque he introduced some delicate allusion, some soft flattery, palpable to her alone; in every contest of musical skill, which yet survived in Paris, the sole remnant of the troubadours, some covert traces of his passion might be discovered, if not by every ear, at least by that of Mary. Intoxicated as she was, at this stage of her life, by the adulation of all, by the consciousness of beauty, power, and rank, far above all her fellows, the queen of Scotland owed much of her misery in after-years to the unclouded brilliancy of her youthful prospects, and to the wide distinction between the manners of that court, in which her happiest hours were spent; and of her northern subjects, by whom her *gaieté de cour*, her love for society less formal than the routine of courts, and her predilections for all innocent amusements, were ever looked upon in the light of grave derelictions from decorum and morality.

That she had regarded the gallant boy, whose accomplishments were so constantly before her eyes, with favorable inclinations was not to be doubted; and that at times she had lav-

ished upon him marks of her good will in rather too profuse a degree, was no less true ; but whether this line of conduct was dictated merely by a natural impulse, which ever leads us to distinguish those whom we approve from the common herd of our acquaintance, or by a warmer feeling, can never now be ascertained. It mattered not, however, to the youth, from which cause the conduct of the lovely princess was derived ; it was enough for him that she had marked his attentions, that she had deigned to look upon him with favorable eyes, that she might at some future period learn to love.

Not long, however, was it permitted to him to indulge in those fair but fallacious dreams ; the marriage of the Scottish princess with the royal Francis was ere long publicly announced, the ceremonies of the betrothal, and lastly of the wedding itself, were solemnized with all the pomp and splendor of the mightiest realm in Europe, and the aspirations of the united nations ascended in behalf of Francis and his lovely bride.

It was then, for the first time, that Mary was rendered fully aware of the misery which her unthinking freedom had entailed upon the ardent nature of De Chastelar ; it was then, for the first time, that she learned how deep and powerful had been the passion which he had nourished in his heart of hearts — that she was awakened to a consciousness that she was loved, not wisely, but too well. Heretofore she had believed, that the eagerness of the gay and gallant Frenchman to display his equestrian skill, his musical accomplishments, before her presence, and as it were in her behalf, and the devotedness with which he turned all his powers to a single object, were rather to be attributed to a desire of gaining general approbation as a gentle cavalier, a slave to beauty, and a favored servant of earth's loveliest lady, than to a passion, the romance of which, considering the wide distinction of their sphere, would have amounted to actual insanity. Now she perceived, to her deep

regret, that the arrow had been shot home, and that the barb had taken hold too firmly to be disengaged by a sudden effort, how vehement soever. She saw, in the pale cheek and hollow eye, that he had cherished hopes which reason and reality must bid him discard, at once and for ever; but which he yet had not the fortitude to tear up by the roots, and cast into oblivion. For a time he had wandered about, a spectre of his former person, among the festivities and happiness of all around him, paler every day, and more abstracted in his mien; then he had exiled himself at once from rejoicings in which he could have no share, and had buried his hopes, his anxieties, his misery, in the loneliness of his own secluded chamber.

Thus had passed weeks and months; and when at length he had come forth again to join the world and all its vanities, he was, as it seemed to all, a wiser and a sadder man. The queen, ever kind and affectionate in her disposition, imagining that he had struggled with the demon which possessed him, and cast his hopeless love behind him, met his return to the courtly circle with her wonted condescension. On his preferring his request to be installed her chamberlain, willing to mark her high sense of his imagined integrity, in thus manfully shaking off his weakness, she granted his request; and trusting that his own acuteness would readily perceive the distinction between royal favor to a trusted servant and feminine affections to a preferred lover, assumed nothing of formality or etiquette, more than had characterized their former days of unrestricted intercourse. Her own first trial followed; the first year of her nuptials had not yet flown, when the gallant Francis, the earliest, the worthy object of her young love, sickened with a disease which from its very commencement permitted but slight hopes of his recovery. Then came the wretchedness of anxiety, hoping all things, yet too well aware that all

was hopeless ; the watchings by his feverish bed, when watching, it was too obvious, could be of no avail ; the agony when the announcement that all was over, long foreseen, but never to be endured, burst on her mind ; the long, heart-rending sorrow, the repinings after pleasures that were never to return ; and, last of all, the cold, stern carelessness of despair. She awoke at length from her lethargy of wo ; awoke to leave the lovely climate which she had learned almost to deem her own ; to be torn from the friends whom she had loved, and the society of which she had been the brightest gem, to return to a country which, though it was the country of her birth, had never conjured up to her imagination any pictures save of a gloomy hue and melancholy nature.

A few who had served her in the sunny land of France adhered to her with unshaken resolution, despising all inconveniences, setting at naught all dangers, save that separation from a mistress, whom, to have attended once, was to love for ever. Among those few was De Chastelar. The alteration in her condition had undoubtedly suggested to the widowed queen the necessity of an alteration in her conduct toward De Chastelar, particularly when it was added, that familiarity between a creature so young and lovely as herself and a gentleman so noble, even in his melancholy, as the chamberlain, would have at once excited the indignation of her stern and rigid subjects. In these circumstances it would perhaps have been a wiser, though not a more considerate plan, to have confided the cause of her embarrassment to the causer of it, and to have requested his absence from her court. It was not, however, in Mary's nature to give pain, if she could possibly avoid it, to the meanest animal, much less to a friend valued and esteemed, as he who was the innocent cause of her anxiety. She adopted, therefore, what, being always the most easy, is ever the most dangerous, an intermediate course. In public De Chastelar

received no marks of approbation from the queen, much less of regard from the woman ; but in her hours of retirement, when surrounded by the ladies of her court, the most of whom had followed her footsteps northward from gay Paris, she delighted to efface from his mind the recollections of neglect before the eyes of the censorious Scots, by a delicacy of attention, and a warmth of friendship, which, while it fully answered her end of soothing his wounded feelings, led him to cherish ideas most fatal in the end to his own happiness, and to that of the fair being whom he so adored. It was with a heightened color and throbbing breast that Mary turned to address her unconfessed lover, yet there was no flutter in the clear, soft voice with which she spoke.

“ We would thank,” she said, “ the sieur de Chastelar for the delightful sounds by which he has rendered our walk on this sweet evening even more agreeable than the mild air and cloudless heaven could have done without his minstrelsey. Yet ’t was a mournful strain, De Chastelar,” she continued, “ and one which, if we err not, flows from a wounded heart. Would that we knew the object of so true a servant’s worship, that we might whisper our royal pleasure in her ear, that she should list the suit of one whom we regard so highly. Is she in truth so obdurate, this fair of thine, De Chastelar ? she must be hard of heart to slight so gallant a cavalier.”

“ Not so, your grace,” replied the astonished lover, in a voice scarcely less sonorous than the music he had made so lately. “ She to whom all my vows are paid, she who has ever owned the passionate aspirations of a devoted heart, is as pre-eminently raised in all the sweet and amiable sentiments of the mind as is unrivalled beauty above all mortal beings.”

For an instant the queen was dumb ; she had hoped, by affecting ignorance of his sentiments, that she should have been enabled to make him comprehend the madness, the utter

inutility of his passion, and she felt that she had failed ; that words had been addressed to her, which, however she might feign to others that she had not perceived their bearing, he must be well aware she could not possibly have failed to understand. It was with an altered mien, and with an air of cold and haughty dignity, that she again addressed him as she passed onward toward the palace.

“ We wish thee, then, fair sir, a better fortune hereafter, and until then good night.” Without uttering a syllable in reply, he bowed himself almost to the earth ; nor did he raise his head again until the form he loved to look upon had vanished from his sight : then slowly lifting his eyes he gazed wistfully after her, dashed his hand violently upon his brow, and turning aside rushed hastily from the spot.

An hour had scarcely elapsed before the lights were extinguished throughout the vaulted halls of Holyrood ; the guards were posted for the night, the officers had gone their rounds, the ladies of the royal circle were dismissed, and all was darkness and silence. In Mary’s chamber a single lamp was burning in a small recess, before a beautifully-executed painting of the virgin, but light was not sufficient to penetrate the obscurity which reigned in the many angles and alcoves of that irregular apartment, although the moonbeams were admitted through the open casement.

Her garb of ceremony laid aside, her lovely shape scantily veiled by a single robe of spotless linen, her auburn tresses flowing in unrestrained luxuriance almost to her feet, if she had been a creature of perfect human beauty, when viewed in all the pomp of royal pageantry, she now appeared a being of supernatural loveliness. Her small white feet, unsandalled, glided over the rich carpet with a grace which a slight degree of fancy might have deemed the motion peculiar to the inhabitants of another world. For an instant, ere she turned to her

repose, she leaned against the carved mullions of the window, and gazed pensively, and it might be sadly, upon the garden, where she had so lately parted from the unhappy youth, whose life was thus embittered by that very feeling which, above all others, should have been its consolation. Withdrawing her eyes from the moonlit scene, she knelt before the lamp and the shrine which it illuminated, and her whispered orisons arose pure as the source from which they flowed; the prayers of a weak and humble mortal, penitent for every trivial error, breathing all confidence to Him who alone can protect or pardon; the prayers of a queen for her numerous children, and last, and holiest of all, a woman's prayers for her unfortunate admirer. Yes, she prayed for Chastelar, that strength might be given to him from on high, to bear the crosses of a miserable life, and that by Divine mercy the hopeless love might be uprooted from his breast. The words burst passionately from her lips, her whole frame quivered with the excess of her emotion, and the big tears fell like rain from her uplifted eyes. While she was yet in the very flood of passion a sigh was breathed, so clearly audible, that the conviction flashed like lightning on her soul, that this most secret prayer was listened to by other ears than those of heavenly ministers. Terror, acute terror took possession of her mind, banishing, by its superior violence, every less engrossing idea. She snatched the lamp from its niche, waved it slowly around the chamber, and there, in the most hallowed spot of her widowed chamber, a spy upon her unguarded moments, stood a dark figure. Even in that moment of astonishment and fear, as if by instinct, the beautiful instinct of purely female modesty, she snatched a velvet mantle from the seat on which it had been cast aside, and veiled her person even before she spoke—"O God! it is De Chastelar!"

"Sweet queen," replied the intruder, "bright, beautiful ruler of my destinies, pardon—"

“What ho!” she screamed, in notes of dread intensity, “*à moi, à moi mes Français*. My guards! Seyton! Carmichael! Fleming! will ye leave your queen alone! alone with treachery and black dishonor! Villain! slave!” she cried, turning her flashing eyes upon him, her whole form swelling as it were with all the fury of injured innocence, “didst thou dare to think that Mary—Mary, the wife of Francis—the anointed queen of Scotland, would brook thine infamous addresses? Nay, kneel not, or I spurn thee! What ho! will no one aid in mine extremity?”

“Fear naught from me,” faltered the wretched Chastelar, but with a voice like that of some inspired Pythoness she broke in—“Fear! thinkst thou that I could fear a thing, an abject coward thing like thee? a wretch that would exult in the infamy of one whom he pretends to love? Fear thee! by heavens! if I could have feared, contempt must have forbidden it.”

“Nay, Mary, hear me! hear me but one word, if that word cost my life—”

“Thy life! hadst thou ten thousand lives, they would be but a feather in the scale against thy monstrous villany. What ho!” again she cried, stamping with impotent anger at the delay of her attendants, “treason! my guards! treason!”

At length the passages rang with the hurried footsteps of the startled inmates of the palace; with torch and spear, and brandished blades, they rushed into the apartment; page, sentinel, and chamberlain, ladies with dishevelled hair, and faces blanched with terror. The queen stood erect in the centre of the room, pointing, with one white arm bare to the shoulder, toward the wretched culprit, who, with folded arms, and head erect, awaited his doom in unresisting silence. His naked rapier, with which alone he might have foiled the united efforts of his enemies, lay at his feet; his brow was white as sculptured marble, and no less rigid, but his eyes glared

wildly, and his lips quivered as though he would have spoken

The queen, still furious at the wrong which he had done her fame, marked the expression. "Silence!" she cried—"degraded! wouldst thou meanly beg thy forfeit life? Wert thou my father, thou shouldst die to-morrow! Hence with the villain! Bid Maitland execute the warrant. Ourselves—ourselves will sign it—away! Chastelar dies at daybreak!"

"'Tis well," replied he, calmly, "it is well—the lips I love the best pronounce my doom, and I die happy, since I die for Mary. Wouldst thou but pity the offender, while thou dost doom the offence, De Chastelar would not exchange his shortened span of life, and violent death, for the brightest crown in Christendom. My limbs may die—my love will live for ever! Lead on, minions; I am more glad to die than ye to slay! Mary, beautiful Mary, think—think hereafter upon Chastelar!"

The guards passed onward; last of the group, unfettered and unmoved, De Chastelar stalked after them. Once, ere he stooped beneath the low-browed portal, he paused, placed both hands on his heart, bowed lowly, and then pointed upward, as he chanted once again the words, "*Pensez à moi, noble dame, pensez à moi.*" As he vanished from her presence she waved her hand impatiently to be left alone—and all night long she traversed and re-traversed the floor of her chamber, in paroxysms of the fiercest despair. The warrant was brought to her—silently, sternly, she traced her signature beneath it; not a sign of sympathy was on her pallid features, not a tremor shook her frame; she was passionless, majestic, and unmoved. The secretary left the chamber on his fatal errand, and Mary was again a woman. Prostrate upon her couch she lay, sobbing and weeping as though her very soul was bursting from her bosom, defying all consolation, spurning every offer at remedy.

“ ’Tis done !” she would say, “ ’tis done ! I have preserved my fame, and murdered mine only friend !”

The morning dawned slowly, and the heavy bells of all the churches clanged the death-peal of De Chastelar. The tramp of the cavalry defiling from the palace-gates struck on her heart as though each hoof dashed on her bosom. An hour passed away, the minute-bells still tolling ; the roar of a culverin swept heavily downward from the castle, and all was over. He had died as he had lived, undaunted — as he had lived, devoted ! “ Mary, divine Mary,” were his latest words, “ I love in death, as I loved in life, thee, and thee only.” The axe drank his blood, and the queen of Scotland had not a truer servant left behind than he, whom, for a moment’s frenzy, she was compelled to slay. Yet was his last wish satisfied ; for though the queen might not relent, the woman did forgive ; and in many a mournful hour did Mary think on Chastelar.

R I Z Z I O .

Bru. Do you know them!

Luc. No, sir; their hats are plucked about their brows,
And half their faces buried in their cloaks,
That by no means I may discover them
By any marks of favor.—JULIUS CÆSAR.

THE shadows of an early evening, in the ungenial month of March, were already gathering among the narrow streets and *wynds* of the Scottish metropolis. There was a melancholy air of solitude about the grim and dusky edifices, which towered to the height of twelve or thirteen stories against the gray horizon. No lights streamed from the casements, no voices sounded in loud revelry or chastened merriment from the dwellings of the gloomy quarter in which the scene of our narrative is laid. The cheerless aspect of the night, together with the drizzling rain, which fell in silent copiousness, had banished every human being from the streets; and, except the smoke which eddied from the dilapidated chimneys, and was instantly beat down to earth by the violence of the shower, there was no sign of any other inhabitants, than the famished dogs which were snarling over the relics of some thrice-picked bone. Suddenly the sharp clatter of hoofs, in rapid motion over the broken pavement, rose above the splashing of the flooded gutters, betokening the approach of men; and ere a minute had elapsed two horsemen, gallantly mounted, rode hotly up the street. The foremost bestriding, with the careless ease of an accomplished rider, a jennet, whose thin jaws, expanded nostril, and flashing eye, no less than the deerlike springiness of its gait, and its unrivalled symmetry, proclaimed it sprung from the best blood of the desert, was of a figure that could not be

looked upon, however slightly, without awakening a sense of interest, perhaps of admiration, in all beholders.

His countenance, of an oval form, and of a darker hue than the blue-eyed sons of northern latitudes are wont to exhibit—the full and somewhat wild expression of his dark eye, the melancholy smile which played upon his curling lip, pencilled mustache, and the peaked beard—contributing to form a face that Antonio Vandyke would have loved to paint, and after ages to admire, when invested with the life of his rich coloring. His dress of russet velvet slashed with satin, his feathered cap, with its gay fanfaron* and enamelled medal, his jeweled rapier, and the bright spurs in his falling buskins, were well adapted to the agile limbs and slender, though symmetrical proportions of the horseman.

The second rider was a boy, whose black and scarlet liveries—the well-known colors of all servitors of the Scottish crown—were but imperfectly hidden by the frieze cloak which had been cast over them, evidently for the purposes of concealment, rather than of comfort; yet he, too, like the gallant whom he followed—if any faith was to be placed in the evidence of raven hair and olive complexion—owed his birth to some more southern clime.

After winding rapidly through several dim and unfrequented lanes, the leading horseman, checking his speed, gazed around him with a doubtful and bewildered eye.

“*Madre di Dio,*” he exclaimed at length, “what a night is here; a thousand curses on this learned fool, that he must dwell in such a den of thieves as this; or rather a thousand curses on the blind and heretical Scots, that drive a man of wisdom, beyond their shallow comprehension, to bed with the

* The *Fanfaron* was a richly-fashioned chain of goldsmith's work, not worn about the neck, but twisted in two or more circuits around the rim of the cap, or bonnet, and terminating in a heavy medal. It was probably of Spanish origin, but was much in vogue in the courts of Mary and Elizabeth.

very outcasts of society. Pietro, what ho!" and he raised his voice above the key in which he had pitched his soliloquy, "knowest thou the dwelling of this sage—this Johan Dami-etta? methought that I had noted the spot, yet have these sordid lanes banished the recollection. *Presto*, time fails already."

Without uttering a syllable in reply, the page sprung from his horse, and pointed to the doorway of a mansion, dilapidated even more than those in its vicinity, yet bearing in its site the marks of having been constructed in former days for the residence of some proud baron. Nor even now—although all the appliances of comfort were utterly neglected, although the casements were void of glass, and the chimneys sent up no volumes from a cheerful hearth—were the external defences of the pile forgotten; heavy bars of iron crossed and recrossed the deep-set embrasure which once had held the windows, and the oaken gate was clenched with many a massive nail and plate of rusted iron. The cavalier alighted, cast the rein to his servitor, and with the single word "Prudence," ascended the stone steps, and struck thrice at measured intervals upon the wicket with his rapier's hilt. The door flew open, but without the agency, as it appeared, of any living being, and, as the visiter entered, was closed again behind him with a heavy crash.

A narrow passage was before him, scarcely rendered visible by the flickering light of a cresset suspended from the ceiling, and nourished, as it seemed, with spirit, rather than with the richer food of oil. Uncertain, however, as was the illumination, it served to show a second door, even more strongly constructed than the first, fronting the intruder at the distance of some ten paces; while the wall, perforated with loops for musketry, or more probably, if the remote antiquity of the building were considered, for arrows, proved that the hostile intruder

had effected but little in forcing his way through the outward entrance. It would be wrong, in the description of this difficult passage, to omit the mention of certain orifices, or slits, extending in length from the floor even to the ceiling of the side-walls, but not exceeding a single inch in width, as they may tend perhaps to cast some light upon an invention of the darkest ages of Scottish history, the reality of which has been considered doubtful by acute antiquarians. From the upper extremity of these slits protruded on either side the blades of six enormous swords, which, being placed alternately, and worked by some concealed machinery, must inevitably hew to atoms, when once set in motion, any obstacle to their appalling sway. This was the dreaded swordmill first discovered by the wizard baron Soulis, and thence invested with superstitious error, which was needless, at the least, when the actual horrors of the engine were considered. It is, however, probable, that these gigantic relics of an earlier age were no longer capable of being rendered available at the period of which we write; at all events they hung in rusty blackness, suspended like the sword of Damocles above the head of the intruder, rendering his position awful, at least, if not in reality insecure.

Notwithstanding the warlike and turbulent character of Scotland during the reign of Mary, there was nevertheless enough of the uncommon in the defences of this dark and dangerous entrance to have riveted the attention of a man less anxiously engaged than was the foreign cavalier. Apparently undismayed by the wild contrivances around him, the gallant strode forward to repeat his signal on the inner wicket, when a broad glare of crimson light, produced by some chemical preparation, considered in that dark age supernatural, was shot into his very face from an aperture above, clearly displaying to some concealed observer the form and features of his visiter.

“Ha!” cried a voice so shrill and grating as to produce a

painful impression on the nerves of the hearer. "Thou art come hither, Sir Italian; enter, then—enter in the name of Alunazar!—enter, the hour is propitious, and thou art waited for!"

The door revolved noiselessly on its hinges, and a few steps brought the Italian to the chamber of the sage. It was a small and central cell, without the slightest visible communication with the outward air. Books of strange characters and instruments of singular device were scattered on the floor, the tables, and the seats; astrolabes, globes of the terrestrial and celestial world, crucibles, and vials of rare and potent mixtures, lay beside discolored bones, reptiles, and loathsome things from tropical climes, some stuffed, and others carefully preserved in spirit. A huge furnace glimmered in the corner, covered with vessels containing, doubtless, alembics of unearthly power; a large black cat—to which inoffensive animal wild notions of infernal origin were then attached—and a gigantic owl, perched on a fleshless skull, completed the ornaments of this receptacle of superstitious quackery, which was rendered as light as day by the aid of some composition, burning in a lamp so brilliantly as to dazzle the firmest eye. In the midst of this confused assemblage of things, useless and revolting alike to reason and humanity, the master-spirit of his tribe was seated—a small old man, whose massive forehead, pencilled with the deep lines of thought, would have betokened a profound and powerful mind, had not the quick flash of the small and deeply-seated eye belied, by its crafty and malignant glances, all symptoms of a noble nature.

"Hail, Signor David!" he said, but without raising his eyes from the retort over which he was poring. "Hail! methought that thou didst hold the wisdom of the sage mere quackery! Ha! out upon such changeful, feather-pated knaves, who scoff before men at that which they respect—ay, which they trem-

ble at in private!—tremble! well mayst thou tremble—for thy doom is fixed! See,” he cried, in a fearfully unnatural tone, as he raised the metallic rod with which he had been stirring the contents of the glass vessel, and exhibited it dripping with some crimson-colored liquid—“see! it is gore—thy gore, Signor David!—ha, ha, ha!” and he laughed with fiendish glee at the evident discomposure of his guest.

“Nay, nay, good father—” he began, when the other cut him off abruptly—

“‘Good father!’—ha, ha, ha! Good devil! Fool, dost think that thou canst change the destinies that were eternal, before so vain a thing as thou wast in existence, by thine unmeaning flatteries? I spit upon such courtesies! ‘Good father!’ listen to my words, and mark if I be good. Thou hast risen by meanness, and flattery, and cringing, and vice; thou hast disgraced thy rise by insolence and folly—weak, drivelling folly; and thou shalt fall—ha, ha, ha!—fall like a dog! Look to thyself!—‘Good father!’ Begone, or thou shalt hear more, and that which thou wilt like even less than this—begone!”

“I meant not to offend thee,” replied the astonished courtier, “and I pray thee be not distempered. I have broken in on thy retirement to witness that unearthly skill of which men speak, and I would ask of thee in courtesy mine horoscope, that I may so report thee—”

“Thou! thou report me, David Rizzio! the wire-pinching, sonned-jingling, base-born scullion, report of Johan Damietta! Get thee away! I know thee! Begone—nay, if thou wilt have it, listen: bloody shall be thine end, and base. A bastard foeman is in thy house of life. Tremble at the name—”

“Rather,” interrupted the Italian, enraged at the language of the conjurer, “rather let that bastard tremble at the name of Rizzio; and thou, old man, I leave thee as I came, undaunted by thy threats, and unconvinced by thy jugglery.”

“To-night! to-night!” hissed the old man, in notes of horrible malignity—“to-night shalt thou know if Damietta be a juggler! If thou wouldst live—for I would have thee live, poor worm—fly from the hatred of the Scottish nobles!—away!”

“Know’st thou,” asked Rizzio, tauntingly, “a Scottish proverb—if not, I will instruct thee—framed, if I read it rightly, to express the character of their own factious brawlers? ‘The bark is aye waur than the bite.’ Adieu, old man! to-morrow thou shalt learn if Rizzio fears or thee or thy most doughty brawlers.”

“Ha, ha, ha!—to-morrow! mark that—to-morrow!” and a yell of laughter burst from every corner of the chamber; the mixture in the retort exploded with a stunning crash, the lights were extinguished, and, without being aware of the manner of his exit, the royal secretary found himself beyond the outer gate of the wizard’s dwelling, with a throbbing pulse and swimming brain, but still, to do him justice, undismayed by that which his naturally incredulous and sneering turn of mind, rather than any clear conviction of the truth, led him to consider as a mere imposture.

Without replying a syllable to the inquiries of the terrified page, who had heard the frightful sounds within, he flung himself into his saddle, plunged the rowels into the flanks of the jennet until she reared and plunged with terror, and dashed homeward at a fearful rate through alleys now as dark as midnight. Nor did he draw his bridle till he had passed the guarded portals of the palace, and galloped into the inmost court of Holyrood: there indeed he checked his courser with a violence which almost hurled her on her haunches, sprang from her back, and, without looking round, hurried into the most private entrance, and disappeared.

Scarcely had he passed through the gateway, and ere yet

the page had left the courtyard with the horses, when the sentinel, who had permitted the well-known secretary of the queen to pass unquestioned, brought down his partisan to the charge, and challenged, as a tall figure, whose clanging step announced him to be sheathed in armor cap-à-pie, muffled in a dark mantle, with a hood like that worn by the Romish priesthood drawn close around his head, approached him.

“Stand, ho! the word—”

“Another word, and thou never speakest more!” replied the other, in a hoarse, rapid whisper, offering a petronel, cocked, and his finger on the trigger, at the very throat of the astonished soldier; “the king requires no password!”

“The king?” replied the sentinel, doubtfully, “the king?—I know not, nor would I willingly offend; but thou art not, methinks, his majesty.”

“Take that, thou fool, to settle all thy doubts!” cried the other, in the same deep whisper as before; while, casting his weapon into the air, he caught it by the muzzle as it turned over, and sunk the loaded butt deep into the forehead of the unwary sentinel. The whole was scarcely the work of an instant; and ere the heavy body could fall to earth, the ready hand of the assailant had caught it, and suffered it to drop so gently as to create no sound. In another moment he was joined by three or four other persons similarly disguised, and followed by a powerful guard of spearmen. A heavy watch of these was posted at the principal gateway, and knots of others were disposed around the court at every private entrance, with orders to let none pass on any pretext whatsoever. “Warn them to stand back twice! the third time kill!” was the muttered order of the chief actor in the previous tragedy. “So far, my liege, all’s well!” he continued, turning with an air of some respect to another of the muffled figures, of a port somewhat less commanding than his own huge proportions; “and

Morton must, ere this, have seized all the remaining avenues." While he was yet speaking, a slight bustle was heard at a distance, and in a second's space they were joined by him of whom they spoke.

"How goes the business, Morton?" said the first speaker.

"All well!—the gates are ours, and not a soul disturbed; the villain sentinels laid down their arms at once, and are even now in ward! Let us be doing: a deed like this permits of no delay!"

"On, friends! Be silent, and be certain!"

And one by one they filed through the same portal by which the Italian had, so short a time before, sped to the presence of his royal mistress.

In the meantime, unconscious of the fearful tragedy that was even then in preparation, the lovely queen, with her most trusted servants, the devoted David, and the noble countess of Argyle, had retired from the strict ceremonies of the court circle to the privacy of her own apartments.

In a small antechamber, scarcely twelve feet in width, communicating with the solitary chamber of the queen—solitary, for the notorious profligacy and insolent neglect of Darnley had left her an almost widowed wife—the board was spread, glittering with gold and crystal, and covered with the delicacies of the evening meal.

The beautiful queen, freed from the galling chains of ceremony, her robes of state thrown by, and attired in the elegant simplicity of a private lady, sat there—her lovely features beaming with condescension and with unaffected pleasure, conversing joyously with those whom she had selected from her court as worthiest of her especial favor. Bitterly, cruelly had she been deceived in the character of him whom she had in truth made a king; for whose gratification she had almost exceeded the rights of her prerogative, and given deep offence to

her haughty and suspicious nobles ; having discovered, when too late, that, while possessed of all the graces and accomplishments that constitute an elegant and agreeable admirer, Henry Darnley was deficient, miserably deficient, in all that can render a man eligible as a friend and husband. Deserted, neglected, outraged in a woman's tenderest point, almost before the first month of her nuptials had elapsed, the flattering dream had passed away which had promised years of happy, peaceful communion with one loved and loving partner. Ever preferring the society of any other fair one to that of the lovely being to whom he should have been bound by every tie of love and gratitude, the king had early left his disconsolate bride to pine in total seclusion, or to seek for recreation in the society of those whose qualities of mind, if not their rank, might render them fit companions for her solitude ; and she, poor victim of a brutal husband, and unhappy mistress of a turbulent and warlike nation, fell blindly but most innocently into the snare of her unrelenting enemies.

Of all who were around her person, Rizzio alone was such by habits, education, and accomplishments, as could lend attraction to the circle of a gay and youthful queen. Accustomed, from her earliest youth, to the elegant and polished manners of the French nobility, the rude and illiterate barons—with whom the highest grade of knowledge was the marshalling of a host for the battle-field, and the highest merit the fighting in the front rank when marshalled—could appear to her in no other light than that of brutal and uneducated savages. What wonder, then, that a youth well skilled as David Rizzio in all the arts and elegances most suitable to a noble cavalier, handsome withal and courteous, attentive even to adoration to her slightest wish, and ever contrasting his cultivated mind with the untutored rudeness of the warrior-lords of Scotland, should have been admitted to a degree of intimacy by his forsaken mistress,

innocent, undoubtedly, and pardonable, even should we be disposed to admit that it was imprudent ?

Two menials in the royal livery waited upon that noble company, but without the servile reverence which was exacted at the public festivals of royalty. The fair Argyle, who, in any other presence than that of her unrivalled mistress, would have been second to none in loveliness, jested and smiled with Mary more in the manner of a beloved companion than that of an attendant to a queen. But on the brow of David there was a deep and heavy gloom ; and when he answered to the persiflage and polished railleries of the queen or that young countess, although his words were gay, and at times almost tender, the tones of his voice were grave almost to sadness.

“What has befallen our worthy secretary ?” said Mary, after many fruitless efforts to inspire him with livelier feelings. “Thou art no more the gay and gallant Signor David of other days than thou resemblest the stern and steel-clad—”

Even as she spoke, it seemed as though her words had conjured up an apparition : for a figure, sheathed in steel from crest to spur, strode, with a step that faltered even amid its pride, from out the shadows of her private chamber into the full glare of the lamps. The vizor was raised, and the pale brow and haggard eye, the uncombed beard, and the corpse-like hue of the whole visage, better beseemed the character of some foul spirit released from its peculiar place, than of a noble baron in the presence of his queen. A loud shriek from the terrified Argyle first called the attention of Mary to the strange intruder. But David sat with his eye glaring, in a horrible mixture of personal apprehension and superstitious dread, upon the person of his deadliest foe.

“Arise, David, thou minion ! arise, and quit the presence to which thou art a foul and plague-like blot !” cried the deep

voice of Ruthven, ere a word had yet found its way to the lips of the indignant queen

“ Sir Patrick Ruthven—if our eyes deceive us not,” she said at length, erecting her noble figure to its utmost, and bending upon him a glance which, hardened as he was in crime and cruelty, he could no more have met with his than the vile raven have gazed upon the noonday sun—“ Sir Patrick Ruthven, we would learn what means this insolent intrusion ?”

“ It means, fair madam,” replied Darnley—who now followed his savage instrument, accompanied by his no less fierce accomplices, the base-born Douglas, the brutal Ker of Fawdon-side, in bearing and in manners fitted rather for the guardhouse than the court, and the most thorough ruffian of the party, Patrick de Balantyne—“ it means that your vile minion’s race is run !”

“ Ha ! comes the blow from thee ?—I might indeed have deemed it so,” she replied, calmly but scornfully. “ What is your grace’s pleasure ?” and she smiled in beautiful contempt.

“ My pleasure is that he—yon base Italian, yon destroyer of my honor, and of yours—of your honor, madam, if you know such a word—shall perish !”

“ Never, Henry Darnley ! mine own life sooner !” And she confronted him with flashing eyes and heightened color, her whole frame quivering with resolve and indignation. “ Thinkst thou to put a stain like this upon the honor of a queen, and that queen, too, thine own much-injured wife ? Out, out upon thee, for a heartless, coward thing ! A man, a brute, hath some affection, hath some touch of love for those who have loved him, as I have once loved thee ; of gratitude toward those who have elevated him—not, no ! not as I have elevated thee—for never yet did woman lavish honor, power, kingdom, upon mortal man, as I have lavished them on thee ! Away, insolent and ungrateful, hence ! Thinkst thou to do murder, foul murder, in the

presence of a woman, of a wife—a wife soon, wretch that she is, to be the mother of a child—of thy child, Henry? Hence, and I will forgive thee all—even this last offence! Banish these murderous ruffians from my presence; spare an honest and a noble servant—one who hath never, never wronged thee or thine! spare him, and I will take thee yet again unto my heart, and love thee, as I have loved thee ever, even when thou hast been most cruel—ever, Henry Darnley, ever!”

The king was moved, his lips quivered, and he would have spoken: all might still have been explained, all might have been forgiven; but it was not so decreed.

“Tush, we but dally,” cried the brutal Ruthven, “we but dally! On, gentlemen, and drag the villain from the presence!”

Foremost himself, he strode to seize the unarmed wretch, who, broken in spirits, and appalled more perhaps by the recollection of the wizard's doom than by the sordid fear of death, clung to the robe of his adored mistress, poor wretch, as though the altar itself would have been to him a sanctuary against his ruthless murderers.

“Mercy!” shrieked the miserable queen; “mercy, for the love of Him that made you! mercy, Henry—mercy, for my sake, or, if not for mine, mercy for thine unborn infant's sake! Ruthven—villain, false knight, uncourteous traitor—forego thy hold!” and she struggled madly with the assassins. “To arms!” she screamed in shriller tones, “to arms!—O God! O God! have I no guards, no friends, no husband? Oh, that I had been born a man, and ye should rue this day—ay, and ye shall rue it!”

Ruthven had clutched his victim with a grasp of iron, and, whirling him from his frail tenure, cast him to the attendant murderers. “Spare him!” she shrieked once more; “spare him, and I will bless you! Ay, strike!” she continued in calmer tones, as the ruffian Ker brandished his naked dagger at her

throat; "and thou, too, fire—fire upon thy mistress and thy queen!" Maddened by her resistance, and fearful that the citizens might rise in her behalf, Balantyeue cocked his petronel. "Fire, thou coward! why dost thou pause? I am a woman, true—a queen, a wife—about to be a mother; but what is that to such as thee? Fire, and make your butchery complete!"

But, as the words passed from her lips, the bloody deed was over. Even in the presence of the queen, dirk after dirk was plunged into the unresisting wretch. Long after life was extinguished, the maddened assassins continued to mangle the senseless clay with their bloodthirsty weapons. So long as life remained, and so long as the horrid strife was doubtful, did Mary's fearful cries for mercy ring upon the ears of those who neither heard nor heeded her. The massacre was ended, and, with a degree of unmanly insensibility that would alone have stamped him the worst and fiercest of his race, Ruthyen seated himself before the outraged woman, the insulted queen, and calmly wiped his brow, still reeking with her favorite's life-blood. "My sickness," he said, "must pardon me for sitting in your presence. I had arisen from my bed to do this deed, and am now somewhat weary and o'erspent. I pray your highness command your minions to bear yon winecup hither."

Without regarding for an instant this fresh insult, she dried her streaming eyes. "We have demeaned ourselves to pray for mercy from butchers. Tears are for men! I have one duty left me, and I will fulfil it—one aim to my existence, one study for my ingenuity, and one prayer to my God: my duty, mine aim, my study, and my prayer, shall be, to be avenged!"

THE KIRK OF FIELD.

“It is the curse of kings to be attended
By slaves, that take their humors for a warrant
To break within the bloody house of life;
And, on the winking of authority,
To understand a law; to know the meaning
Of dangerous majesty, when, perchance, it frowns
More upon humor than advised respect.”—KING JOHN.

It was a dark and stormy night without, such as is not unfrequent, even during the height of summer, under the changeable influences of the Scottish climate. The west wind, charged with moisture collected from the vast expanse of ocean it had traversed since last it had visited the habitations of man, rose and sank in wild and melancholy cadences; now howling violently, as it dashed the rain in torrents against the rattling casements; now lulling till its presence could be traced alone in the small, shrill murmur, which has been compared so aptly to the voice of a spirit. The whole vault of heaven was wrapped in blackness, of that dense and smothering character which strikes the mind as pertaining rather to the gloom of a closed chamber than to that of a midnight sky.

Yet within the halls of Holyrood neither storm nor darkness had any influence on the excited spirits of the guests who were collected there to celebrate, with minstrelsey and dance, the marriage of Sebastian. Hundreds of lights flashed from the tapestried walls; wreaths of the choicest flowers were twined around the columns; rich odors floated on the air; and the voluptuous swell of music entranced a hundred young and happy hearts with its intoxicating sympathies. All that there was of beautiful and chivalrous in old Dunedin thronged to the court

of its enchanting queen on that eventful evening; and it appeared for once as though the hate of party and the fierce zeal of clashing creeds had for a time agreed to sink their differences in the gay whirl of merriment. The stern and solemn leaders of the covenant relaxed the austerity of their frown; the enthusiastic chieftains of the Romish faith were content to mingle in the dance with those whom they would have met as gladly in the fray.

With even more than her accustomed grace, brightest and most bewitching where all were bright and lovely, did Mary glide among her high-born visitors; no shade of sorrow dimmed that transparent brow, or clouded the effulgence of that dazzling smile; it was an evening of conciliation and rejoicing—of forgiveness for the past, and hope rekindled for the future. There was no distinction of manner as she passed from one to another of the animated groups that conversed, or danced, or hung in silent rapture on the musicians' strains, on every side. Her tone was no less bland, as she addressed the gloomy Morton, or the dark-browed Lindesay, but now returned from exile in the sister-kingdom, than as she turned to her gayer and more fitting associates. Never was the influence of Mary's beauty more effective than on that occasion; never did her unaffected grace, her sweet address, her courtesy bestowed alike on all, exert a mightier influence over the minds of men than on the very evening when her hopes were about to be for ever blighted, her happiness extinguished, her very reputation blasted, by the villany of false friends, and the violence of open foes.

The weak and vicious Darnley yet lingered on his bed of sickness, but with the vigor of health many of the darker shades of his character had passed away; and Mary had again watched beside the bed of him whose foul suspicions and unmanly violence—no less than his scandalous neglect of her unrivalled charms, his low and infamous amours, his studied hatred of all

whom she delighted to honor—had almost alienated the affections of that warm heart which once had beat so tenderly, so devotedly, and, had he but deserved its constancy, so constantly for him. Oh, how exquisite a thing is woman's love! how beautiful, how strange a mystery, is woman's heart! 'Twas but a little month ago that she had almost hated. Neglect had chilled the stream of her affections: that he whom she had made a king, whom she had loved with such total devotion of heart and mind—that he should repay her benefits with outrage, her affections with cold, chilling, insolent disdain—these were the thoughts that had worked her brain to the very verge of madness and of crime.

The "glorious, rash, and hazardous"* young earl of Orkney had ever in these hours of bitter anguish been summoned, she knew not how, to her imagination: the warm yet delicate attentions, the reverential deference to her slightest wish, the dignified and chaste demeanor, through which gleamed ever and anon some flash of chivalrous affection—some token that in the recesses of his heart he worshipped the woman as fervently as he served the sovereign truly; the overmastering passion always apparent, but so apparent that it seemed involuntarily present; the eye dwelling for ever on her features, yet sinking modestly to earth, as shamed by his own boldness, if haply it met hers; the hand that trembled as it performed its office; the voice that faltered as it answered to the voice he seemed to love so dearly—all these, all these, had they been multiplied a hundred-fold, and aided by the deepest magic, had effected nothing to wean her heart from Darnley, had not his own infatuated cruelty furnished the strongest argument in favor of the young and noble Bothwell. As it was, harassed by the deepest wrongs from him who was most bound to cherish and support her, and assailed by the allurements of one who coupled

* Throgmorton's letter to Elizabeth.

to a beauty equal to that of angels a depth of purpose and dissimulation worthy of the fiend, Mary had tottered on the precipice's verge! Darnley fell sick, and she was saved! Him whom she had almost learned to hate while he had rioted in all the insolence of manly strength and beauty, she now adored when he was stretched languid and helpless on the bed of anguish. She had rushed to his envenomed chamber, she had braved the perils of his contagious malady; her hand had soothed his burning brow, her lip had tasted the potion which his feverish palate had refused; day and night she had watched over him as a mother watches over her sick infant, in mingled agonies of hope and terror; she had marked the black sweat gathering on his brow, and the film veiling his bright eye, and she had felt that her very being was wound up in the weal or woe of him whose death, one little month before, she would have hailed as a release from misery. She had noted the dawn of his recovery, she had fainted from excess of happiness; she had pardoned all, all his past misdoings; she was again the dotting, faithful, single-hearted wife of her repentant Henry.*

Now in the midst of song, and revelry, and mirth, while the gay masquers passed in gorgeous procession before her eyes, her mind was far away in the chamber of her recovered lord, within the solitary kirk of Field. The masque had ended, and the hall was cleared; the wedding-posset passed around, beakers were brimmed, and amid the clang of music the toast went round—"Health to Sebastian and his bride!" The hall was cleared for the dance: a hundred brilliant couples arose to lead the Branle; the minstrels tuned their prelude; when the fair young bride, blushing at the boldness of her own request, entreated that her grace would make her condescension yet more

* Knox and Buchanan would make it appear that his reconciliation was insincere. But Knox and Buchanan wrote under the influence of political and religious hostility, and could never allow a single merit to Mary. It is a sound rule that every mortal is innocent till proved guilty.

perfect by joining in that graceful measure which none could lead so gracefully.

If there was one failing in the character of Mary, which tended above all others to render her an object for unjust suspicions, and a mark for cruel reverses, it was an inability to refuse aught that might confer pleasure on any individual, however low in station—a gentle failing, if it indeed be one, but not the less pernicious to the fortunes of all, and above all of kings. With that ineffable smile beaming upon her face, she rose; and as she rose, Bothwell sprang forth, and in words of deep humility, but tones of deeper passion, besought the queen to make her slave the most happy, the most exalted of mankind, by yielding to him her inestimable hand, even for the space of one short dance.

For a single moment Mary paused; but it was destined that she should be the victim of her confidence, and she yielded. Never, never did a more perfect pair stand forth in lordly hall, or on the emerald turf, than Mary Stuart and her destroyer. Both in the flush and flower of gorgeous youth: she invested with beauty such as few before or since have ever had to show, with grace, and symmetry, and all that nameless something which goes yet further to excite the admiration, and call forth the love of men, than loveliness itself; he strong, yet elegant in strength—proud, yet with that high and spiritual pride which had nothing offensive in his display—taller and more stately than the noblest barons of the court—they were indeed a pair unmatched amid ten thousand; so rich in natural advantages, so exquisite in personal attractions, that the tasteful splendor of their habits was as little marked as is the golden halo which encompasses but adds no glory to the sainted heads of that delightful painter whose name so aptly chimes with the peculiar sweetness of his sublime creations.

Even the iron brow of Ruthven—for he, too, was there—

relaxed as, leaning on her partner's extended hand, she passed him with a smile of pardon, and he muttered to his dark comrade, Lindesay of the Byres—"She were in sooth a most fair creature, if that her mind might match the beauties of its mansion." As he spoke, the measured symphony rang out, and in slow order the dancers moved forward; anon the measure quickened, and the motions of the young and beautiful obeyed its impulses. It was a scene more like some fairy dream than aught of hard, terrestrial reality: the waving plumes, the glittering jewels, the gorgeous robes, and, above all, the lovely forms, which rather imparted their own brilliancy to these adornments than borrowed anything from them, combined to form a picture such as imagination can scarcely depict, much less experience suggest, from aught beheld in ballrooms of the present day, wherein the stiff and graceless costume of modern times is but a poor apology for the majestic bravery of the sixteenth century.

Suddenly, while all were glancing round in the swiftest mazes of the dance, those who stood by observed the blood flash with startling splendor over brow, neck, and bosom of the youthful queen; nay, her very arms, white in their wonted hue as the snow upon Shehallion, crimsoned with the violence of her emotions. Her eyes sparkled, her bosom rose and fell almost convulsively, her lips parted, but it seemed as though her words were choked by agitation. For a single instant she stood still; then bursting through the throng, she sank nearly insensible upon one of the many cushioned seats that girded the hall; but, rallying her spirits, she murmured something of the heat and the unusual exercise, drained the goblet of pure water presented by the hand of Orkney, and again resumed her station in the dance.

"Pardon, pardon, I beseech you," whispered the impassioned tones of the tempter—"pardon, sweet sovereign, the boldness

that was born but of a moment's madness. Believe me—I would tear my heart from out my bosom, did it cherish one thought that could offend my mistress—my honored, my adored—

“Hush! oh, hush! for my sake, Bothwell—for my sake, if for naught else, be silent! I do believe that you mean honestly and well; but words like these 'tis madness in you to utter, and sin in me to hear them! Bethink you, sir,” she continued, gaining strength as she proceeded, and speaking so low that no ear but his might catch a solitary sound amid the quick rustle of the “many twinkling feet,” and the full concert—“bethink you! you address a wife—a wedded, loyal wife—the wife of your lord, your king. I know that you are my most faithful servant, my most trusted friend; I know that these words, which sound so wildly, are not to be weighed in their full sense, but as a servant's homage to his liege-lady: yet think what yon stern Knox would deem, think of the wrath of Darnley—”

“If there were naught more powerful than Darnley's wrath,” he muttered, in the notes of deep determination, “to bar me from my towering hopes, then were I blest beyond all hopes of earth, of heaven—supremely blest!”

“What mean you, sir? We understand you not! What should there be more powerful than the wrath of thy lawful sovereign? Speak; I would not doubt you, yet methinks your words sound strangely. What be these towering hopes of thine? Pray God they tower not too high for honesty or honor! Say on, we do command thee!”

“I will say on, fair queen,” he replied, in a voice trembling as it were with the fear of offending and the anxiety of love—“I will say on, so you will hear me to the end, nor doubt the most devoted of your slaves!”

“Hear you?” she replied, considerably softened by his hu-

mility, "when did ever Mary Stuart refuse to hear the meanest of her subjects, much less a trusted and a valued friend, as thou hast ever been to her, as thou wilt ever be to her—wilt thou not, Bothwell?"

There was a heavenly purity, a confidence in his integrity, and a firm and full reliance on her own dignity, in every word she uttered, that might have converted the wildest libertine from his career of sin; that might have confirmed the wariest and most subtle spirit that its guilty craft could never prevail against a heart fortified against its attacks by purity and by the stronger and more holy influences of wedded love; but on the fixed purpose, on the interminable pride, the desperate passion, and the unscrupulous will of Bothwell, every warning was lost.

"I have adored you," he said, slowly and impressively—"adored you, not as a queen, but as a woman. Mary, angelic Mary, pardon—pity—and oh, love me! You do, you do already love me! I have read it in your eye, I have marked it in your flushing cheek, in your heaving bosom! If this night you were free, would you not, sweet lady, lovely queen, would you not reward the adoration, the honest adoration of your devoted Bothwell?"

"Stand back, my lord of Bothwell!" cried the now indignant queen, "stand back! your words are madness! Nay, but we will be heard," she continued, with increasing impetuosity, as he endeavored again to speak. "Thinkest thou, vain lord, that I—I, Mary of France and Scotland—because I have favored and distinguished a subject, who, God aid me, merited not favor nor distinction—thinkest thou that I, a queen anointed—a mother and a wife—that I could love so wantonly as to descend to thee? Back, sir, I say! and if I punish not at once thy daring insolence, 'tis that thy past services, in some sort, nullify thy present boldness. Oh, my lord!" she proceeded, in a softer tone, and a big tear-drop trembled in her bright eye as

she spoke, "Mary has miseries enough, that thou shouldst spare to add thy quota to the general ingratitude. If thou didst love me, as thou sayest, thy love would be displayed as that of a zealous votary to the shrine at which he worships; as that of the magi bending before their particular star—not as that of a wild and wicked wanton to a frail, fickle woman!"

It may be that the words with which Mary concluded her reproof kindled again the hope which had well nigh passed away from Bothwell's breast.

"Nay, Mary, say not thus. Do I not know thy trials? have I not marked thy miseries? and will I not avenge them? If thou wert free—did I say, if? By Heaven, fair queen, those locks of thine, that flow so unrestrained down that most glorious neck, are not more free than thou art! Did I not hear thy cry for vengeance on the slaughterers of hapless Rizzio? did I not hear, and have I not achieved the deed that secures at once thy freedom and thy vengeance?"

The spell was broken on the instant: the soft, the tender-hearted, the most gentle of women, was aroused almost to frenzy. The blood rushed in torrents to her princely brow, and left it again pale as the sculptured marble, but to return once more in deeper hues of crimson. Her eyes flashed with unnatural brightness; her bosom heaved and fell like that of a young priestess laboring with the throes of prophetic inspiration; she shook the tresses, he had dared to praise, back from her lovely face, and stamping her delicate foot in the passion of the moment on the oaken floor—

"A guard!" she cried, in notes that might have vied with the clangor of a trumpet, so shrilly did they pierce the ears of all; "a guard for my lord of Bothwell!"

Had the thunder of heaven darted its sulphurous and scathing bolt into the midst of that assembly, a greater change its terrors could not have effected than did that thrilling cry. A hundred

rapiers flashed in the bright torchlight, as with bent brows and angry voices the barons of the realm rushed to the aid of their liege-lady. An air of cool defiance sat on the massive forehead of the culprit; his eye was fixed upon the queen in sorrow, as it would seem, rather than in anger; his sword lay quietly in his scabbard, although there were a hundred there with weapons thirsting for his blood, and hearts burning with the insatiable hate of ancient feuds. Murray and Morton, speaking eagerly and even sternly to the queen, urged his immediate seizure; and the gray-haired duke of Lennox, clutching his poniard's hilt with the palsied gripe of eighty years, awaited but a sign to slay, he knew not and he recked not why, the ancient foeman of his race.

But so it was not fated! Before a word was spoken, the deep and sullen roar as of an earthquake burst upon their ears, and stunned their very hearts; a second din, as of some mighty tower rushing from its base, succeeded, ere the casements had ceased to rattle with the shock of the first.

“God of my fathers!” shouted Murray, “what means that din? Treason, my lords, treason! Look to the queen—secure the traitor! Thou, duke of Lennox, with thy followers, haste straight to the kirk of Field! Without, there—let my trumpets sound to horse! By Him that made me,” he continued, “the populace are rising!”—for the deep swell of voices, that rose without, announced the presence of a mighty multitude.

In an instant the vaulted arches of the palace echoed with the flourished cadences of the royal trumpets, the ringing steps of steel-clad men, the tramp of hoofs in the courtyard, the gathering cries of the followers of each fierce baron, succeeding wildly to the soft breathings of minstrelsey and song. At this instant Murray had resolved himself to act, and, with his hand upon the pommel of his sword, slowly but resolutely

stepped forward. "Yield thee!" he said, in stern, low tones; "yield thee, my lord of Bothwell! Hence from this presence thou canst not pass until all this night's strange occurrences be fully manifested; ay, and if there be guilt—as I misdoubt me much there is—till it be fearfully avenged!"

The touch of Murray on his shoulder, lightly as it fell, and grave as were the words of that high baron, aroused the reckless disposition of Bothwell almost to madness. "Thou liest, lord!" he shouted, in the fierce impulse of the moment—"thou liest, if thou dare to couple the name of guilt with Bothwell! Forego thy hold, or perish!"—and his dagger's blade was seen slowly emerging from its sheath, while his clinched teeth and the starting veins of his broad forehead spoke volumes of the bitterness of his wrath. Another second, and blood, the blood of Scotland's noblest, would have been poured forth like water, and in the presence of the queen; the destinies of a great kingdom would have perchance been altered, and the history of ages changed, all by the madness of a single moment. In the fearful crisis, a wild shriek was heard from the upper end of the hall, to which the ladies of the court had congregated, round the queen, like the songsters of spring when the dark pinions of the hawk are casting down a shadow of terror on their peaceful groves.

"Help! help!—her grace is dying!" And, in truth, it did seem as though she were about to pass away. Better, a thousand times better, and happier, had it been for her, to have then died quietly in the palace of her forefathers, with the nobles of her land around her, than to have borne, for many an after-year, the chilling miseries which were showered by pitiless fortune on her head, till that most fatal hour of her tragic life arrived, and Mary was at length at rest!

Murray relaxed his hold, turned on his heel, and strode abruptly to the elevated dais, on which the queen had sunk in

worn-out nature's weariness. For a minute's space Bothwell glared on him as he strode away, like a tiger balked of his dear revenge. It was most evident he doubted—doubted whether he should set all, even now, upon a cast, strike down a foeman in the very fortress of his power, and if he must die, like the crushed wasp, sting home in dying. Prudence, however, conquered: he also turned upon his heel, and with a glance of the deepest scorn and hatred on the baffled lords, who, in the absence of their master-spirit, had lost all unison, stalked slowly through the portal of the hall, and disappeared.

Before ten seconds had elapsed, the rapid clatter of hoofs, the jingling of mail, and the war-cry—"A Bothwell! ho! a Bothwell!" proclaimed that he had escaped the toils, and was surrounded by his faithful followers.

When Murray reached the couch on which the queen was extended, gasping as though in the last extremity, her case indeed was pitiable. Her long locks had burst from their confinement, and flowed over her person like a veil; her corsage had been cut asunder by the damsels of her court, and her bosom, bare in its unspeakable beauty, was disclosed to the licentious gaze of the haughty nobles. An angle of the couch, as she had fallen, had grazed her temple, and the blood streamed down her cheek and neck, giving, by the contrast of its dark crimson, an ashy, deathlike whiteness to her whole complexion.

"Ha!" he whispered, with deep emotions, "what means this? Back, back, my lords, for shame, if not for pity! would ye gaze upon your sovereign, in the abandonment of utter grief, as though she were a peasant-quean? Stand back, I say, and let the halls be cleared; and hark thee, Paris," he continued, as a cringing, terrified-looking Frenchman entered the apartment, "bid some one call Galozzi hither: the poison-vending, cozening Tuscan hath skill at least, and it shall go hardly with him so he exert it not! But ha! what ails the man? St. An-

drew, he will faint! What ails thee, craven? Speak, speak, or I shake the coward soul from out thy carcass!"—and he shook the trembling servitor fiercely by the throat.

"The king—the king—" he faltered forth at length, terrified yet more by the wrath of Murray than by the scene which he had witnessed.

"What of the king, thou dastard? Speak—I say, what of Henry Darnley?"

"Murdered, your highness—murdered!"

"Nay, thou art made to say it!"

"He speaks too truly, Murray," cried Morton, entering, with his bold visage blanched, and his dark locks bristling with unwonted terror; "the king is murdered—fouly, most fouly murdered!"

"By the villain Bothwell!" muttered Murray, between his hard-set teeth; "but he shall rue the deed! But say on, Morton, say on: how knowest thou this? Say on—and you, ladies, attend the queen."

"I saw it, Murray—with these eyes I saw it—the cold, naked, strangled corpse—flung, like a carrion-carcass, on the garden-path; and the kirk of Field a pile of smoking and steaming ruins—blown up with gunpowder, to give an air of accident to this accursed treason. I tell you, man," he continued, as he saw Murray about to speak, "I tell you that I saw, in that drear garden, cast like a murrained sheep upon a dike, all that remained of Henry Darnley!"

"'Tis false!" shrieked the wretched Mary, starting to her feet, with the wild glare of actual insanity in her eye; "who saith I slew him? Henry Darnley! 'Sdeath, lords!—the king, I say—the king! Now, by my halydom, he shall be king of Scotland! Dead—dead! who said the earl of Orkney was no more? Faugh! how the sulphur steams around us! It chokes—it smothers! Traitor, false traitor! know, earl, I will arraign thee. What! kill a king? whisper soft, low words

to a queen? Ho! this is practice, my lord duke, foul practice; and deeply shall you rue it if you but hurt a hair of Darnley!—Nay, Henry, sweet Henry, frown not on me! Oh! never woman loved as I love thee, my Darnley! Rizzio—ha! what traitor spoke of Rizzio? But think not of it, Henry: the faithful servant is lost, but 't was not thou that did it. Lo! how dark Morton glares on me! Back, Ruthven, fiend! wouldst slay me? But I forgive thee all—all—Henry Darnley, all! Live—only live to bless my longing sight! No! no!” she shrieked more wildly, “he is not dead! to arms! what, ho!—to arms! a king, and none to rescue him! 'To arms, I say! I will myself to arms! Fetch forth my Milan harness; saddle me Rosabelle! French—Paris, ah! my petronels! And ye, why do ye linger, wenches—Seyton, Carmichael, Fleming?—my head-gear and my robes! The queen goes forth to day! To horse, and to the rescue!”

She made a violent effort to rush forward, but staggered, and if her brother had not received her in his arms, she would have fallen again to the earth. “Bear her hence, ladies; bear her to her chamber!—thou hast a heavy weird—poor sister!—What ponder you so, Morton? you would not mark her words: 'tis sheer distraction—the distraction of most utter sorrow!”

“Distraction! I say ay! but sorrow, no! Sorrow takes it not on thus wildly. It savors more of guilt, Lord Murray—dark, damning, bloody guilt! Heard ye not what she said of Orkney? Distraction, but no sorrow: guilt, believe me, guilt!”

“Not for my life would I believe it, nor must thou: if Morton and Murray hunt henceforth in couples—hark in thine ear!”—and he whispered, glancing his eyes uneasily around, as though the very stones might bear his words to other listeners. A grim smile passed athwart Morton's visage; he bowed his head in token of assent. They passed forth from the banquet-hall together, and Mary was left to her misery.

BOTHWELL.

“ Marshal, demand of yonder champion
The cause of his arrival here in arms :
Ask him his name, and orderly proceed
To swear him in the justice of his cause.”—KING RICHARD II.

THE summer sun was pouring down a flood of lustre over wood and moorland, tangled glen, and heathery fells, with the broad and blue expanse of the German ocean sparkling in ten thousand ripples far away in the distance. But the radiance of high noon fell not upon the forest and the plain in their solitary loveliness, but on the marshalled multitudes of two vast hosts, arrayed in all the pomp and circumstance of antique warfare, glittering with helms and accoutrements, arquebuss and pike, and waving with a thousand banners, of every brilliant hue and proud device. On a gentle eminence, the very eminence on which, a few short years before, the English Somerset had posted his gallant forces, lay the army of the queen, its long front bristling with rows of the formidable Scottish spear, its wings protected by chosen corps of cavalry, the firm and true adherents of the house of Stuart, or the daring, though licentious vassals of the duke of Orkney, and the royal banner, with its rich embroidery, floating in loud supremacy. Yet, gay and glorious as it showed upon its ground of vantage, and gallantly as it might have contested that field against even superior numbers, that array was but in name an army. Thousands were there who, though they had flocked with bow and arrow to the call of their sovereign, felt not distaste alone, but actual disgust to the services on which they were about to be employed ; and not a few were among them who knew too well how little was the probability that they, a raw, tumultuary force, led on by

men of gallantry indeed, but not of that well-proved experience which, to a leader, is more than the truncheon of his command, should come off with victory, or even without defeat, from an encounter with veteran troops, retainers of the most warlike lords in Scotland, marshalled by soldiers with whose fame the air of every European kingdom was already rife—soldiers such as Lyndesay of the Byres, Kirkaldy of the Grange, Murray of Tullibardin, and a hundred others of reputation, if second, second to none but these. Nor was this all; voices were not wanting, even in the army of the queen, to exclaim, that if the royal banner were displayed, its purity was sullied by the presence of a murderer; and that success could never be hoped for, so long as Bothwell rode by the right hand of Mary. One exception there was, however, to this general feeling of dissatisfaction, if not of despair. A band of determined men, whose scar-seamed visages and stern demeanor, no less than the splendid accuracy of their equipments, and the admirable discipline with which they maintained their post, far in advance of the main body, and exposed to inevitable destruction on the advance of the confederated forces, should they be suffered, as it appeared too probable that they would, to remain unsupported against such desperate odds. But these were men to whom the most deadly conflict was but a game of chance; inured from their youth upward to deeds of blood and danger—lawless and licentious in time of peace, even as they were cruel, brave, and fearless in the fight—the picked retainers, the desperate, of the duke of Orkney.

Dark glances of contempt, if not of hatred, were shot ever and anon from beneath the scowling brows of these wild desperadoes toward the wavering ranks of the main army, as, unrestrained by the exhortations or menaces of their officers—unmoved by the eloquent beauty of Mary herself, who rode among the trembling ranks, praying them, as they loved their

country, as they valued honor, as they would not see their wives, their mothers, and their daughters, delivered to the malice of unrelenting foemen, to strike one blow for Scotland's crown—to give once, once only, their voices to the exulting clamor, "God and the queen"—troop after troop broke away from the rear, and scattering themselves, singly, or in parties of two or three, over the open country, sought for that safety in mean and dastard flight, which they should have asked from their own bold hearts and strong right hands.

It was at this moment that the heads of the confederated columns were seen advancing, in dark and dense masses, at three different points, against the front, which was still preserved in Mary's army by the strenuous exertions of the leaders, rather than by any soldierly feelings on the part of the common herd. So nearly had they advanced to the royal lines that the stern and solemn countenances of the leaders, as they rode in complete steel, but with their vizors raised, each at the head of his own leading, were visible, feature for feature. The matches of the arquebusses might be clearly distinguished, blown already into a bright flame, while the pieces themselves were evidently grasped by ready and impatient hands, and the long spears of the vanguard were already lowered; but not a movement of eagerness, not a murmur, or a shout, was heard throughout the thousands, whose approach was ushered to the ears alone by the incessant trampling sound, borne steadily onward, like the flow of some great river, occasionally broken by the shrill neighing of a charger, or the jingling clash of arms.

The borderers of Bothwell, on the contrary, as they noted the advance, raised, from time to time, the wild and fearful yells with which it was their custom to engage, brandishing their long lances, and giving the spur to their horses, till they sprang and bolted like hunted deer; and it required all the influence of hereditary chiefs to restrain these savage moss-troop-

ers from rushing headlong with their handful of men against the unbroken line of the confederate pikes, which swept onward, sullen and steady as the tide when it comes in six feet abreast. The effect of such a movement would have been at once fatal to their wretched mistress. It was too evident that, for a wavering, coward multitude, like that arrayed beneath the banner of the queen, there could be no hope to fight against men such as those who were marching, in determined resolution, up that gentle eminence ; and all that now remained was an attempt at negotiation.

It was at this moment, when the advanced guard of the two armies were scarcely ten spear's-lengths asunder, when the determination or wavering of every individual might be read by the opposite party in his features as clearly as in the pages of a book, that a single trumpet from the centre of the queen's army broke the silence with a wild and prolonged flourish. It was no point of war, however, that issued from its brazen mouth, no martial appeal to the spirits and courage of either host, but the prelude to a pacific parley—and straightway the banners throughout the host were lowered, and a white flag was waved aloft, in place of Scotland's blazonry. The ranks were slowly opened, and from their centre, with trumpeter and pursuivant, and king-at-arms, rode forth Le Croc, the French ambassador. This movement, as it seemed, was wholly unexpected by the confederate lords ; at least, the ranks continued their deliberate advance unchecked by the symbols of peace that glittered above the weapons of the rival host, till suddenly a foaming horse and panting rider furiously galloped from the rear. A single word was uttered, in a low, impressive whisper ; it passed from mouth to mouth like an electric spark ; and, as though it were but a single man, that mighty column halted on the instant. There was no confusion in the manœuvre, no hurry, nor apparent effort : the long lines of lances, so beauti-

fully regular in their advance, sank as regularly to their rest; and, but for the fluttering of their plumage in the summer air, those beings, strangely composed of every vehement and stirring passion, might have passed for images of molten steel. But a few seconds had elapsed, and the flourish of the peaceful trumpets was yet ringing in the ears of all, when a dozen horsemen proceeded slowly forward, to meet the royal cavalcade.

It was a singular and most impressive spectacle, that meeting. It was, as it were, the fearful pause between life and death—the moment of breathless silence that precedes the first crash of the thunderstorm. Every eye was riveted in either army on those two groups; every heart beat thick, and every ear tingled with excitement. And, even independent of the appalling interest of the crisis, there was much to mark, much to admire, in the handful that had come together to speak the doom of thousands; to decide whether hundreds and tens of hundreds of those living creatures, who stood around them now, so glorious in the pride, the beauty, and the strength of manhood, should, ere the sun might sink, be as the clods of the valley; to decree, with their ephemeral breath, whether the soft west wind, that wafted now the perfumes of a thousand hills to their invigorated senses, should, ere the morrow, be tainted like the vapor from some foul charnel-house!

On the one side, on his light and graceful Arab, champing its gilded bits and shaking its velvet housings, sat the gay and gallant Frenchman—his long, dark locks uncovered, and his fair proportions displayed to the best advantage in his rich garb of peace. No weapon did he bear—not even the rapier, without which no gentleman of that period ever went abroad—but which, the more fully to manifest the candor and sincerity of his instructions, a handsome page held by his master's stirrup. Behind him, with pale visages and anxious mien, Marchmont,

and Bute, and Islay, and the lion King, awaited the result of this their last resource.

On the other hand, distinguished from their followers only by the beauty of their powerful chargers, and their own knightly bearing, halted the rebel chiefs. Plain almost to meanness in his attire, with his armor stained and rusty, and his embroidered baldrick frayed and rent, Lord Lyndesay of the Byres was foremost in the group. Morton was there, and Murray, all steel from crest to spur; the best warrior, where all were good, the noblest spirit, the most upright man, Kirkaldy of the Grange.

“Nobles and knights of Scotland,” said the proud envoy, in a tone so calm and yet so clear that every accent could be noted far and wide, “I come to ye—a gentleman of France—the servant of a mighty monarch, unbought by friendship and unprejudiced by favor. For myself, or for my royal master, it recks us little whether or not ye choose to turn those swords, which should be the bulwarks of your country, against her vitals. Yet should it not be said that Scottishmen, like ill-trained dogs of chase, prefer to turn their fangs against each other, than to chase a nobler quarry. Ye are in arms against your queen—nay, interrupt me not, my lords—against your queen, I say! or, as perchance ye word it, against her counselors. That ye complain of grievances I know, and, for aught I know, justly complain. Yet pause, brave gentlemen, pause and reflect which is the greater grievance—a country torn with civil factions, internal war with all its dread accompaniments of massacre and conflagration, or those ills which now have stung you to exchange your loyalty for rebel arms? Bethink ye, that in such a cause as this it matters not who wins—to vanquish countrymen and brothers is but a worse and deadlier evil than defeat by foreign foemen. Think ye this fatal field of Pinkie, whereon ye are arrayed, hath not already drunk enough of Scottish blood, that ye we would deluge it again?—

or that its name is not yet terrible enough to Scottish ears, that ye would now bestow a deeper blazonry of sin and shame? Brave warriors, noble gentlemen, forbear! Let the sword of civil discord, I beseech you, enter its scabbard for once bloodless; let amicable parley gain the terms which bloodless news purchased! Strive ye for your country's glory?—lo, it calls on you to pause! For your own peculiar fame?—it bids ye halt while there is yet the time, lest neither birth, nor rank, nor valor, nor high deeds, nor haughty virtues, preserve ye from the blot which lies even yet, though ages have passed, on those who have warred against their country! Is it terms, fair terms, for which ye crowd in arms around yon awful banner?"—pointing to the colors of the rebel lords, emblazoned with the corpse of the murdered Darnley, and his orphan infant praying for judgment and revenge—"lo, terms are here! Peace, then, my lords; give peace to Scotland, and eternal credit to yourselves. Her majesty bears not the wonted temper, the stern resentment of offended kings: even now she offers peace and amity, pardon for all offences—ay, and the hand of friendship, to all who will at once retire from this sacrilegious field. Subjects, your queen commands you; nobles and knights, a lady, the fairest lady of her sex, appeals to your chivalry and honor. Hear, and be forgiven!—"

"Forgiven!" shouted Glencairn, in tones of deep feeling and yet deeper scorn—"forgiven! we came not here to ask for pardon, but for vengeance, and vengeance will we have! The blood of Darnley craves for punishment upon his murderers! We are come to punish; not to sue for pardon, not to return in peace, until our end is gained, and Scotland's slaughtered king avenged!"

"Fair sir," cried Morton—calmer, and for that very reason more to be dreaded, than his impetuous comrades—"fair sir, we rear no banner and we lift no blade against her grace of

Scotland! Against her husband's murderer have we marched, nor will we turn a face, or draw a bridle, till that murderer lies in his blood, or flies for ever from the land he has polluted by his unnatural homicide! Thou hast thine answer, sir. Yet thus much for our ancient friendship, and to testify our high esteem for the noble monarch whom thy services here represent: here will we pause an hour. That passed, our word is, 'Forward! forward!' and may the God of battles judge between us! Brothers in arms, and leaders of our host, say, have I spoken fairly?"

"Fairly hast thou spoken, noble Morton; and as thou hast spoken, we will it so to be. An hour we pause, and then forward!" The voices of the barons, as they replied, gave no signs of hesitation; there was no faltering in their tones, no wavering in their fixed and steady glances. At once the gallant mediator saw that he had failed in his appeal, and that all further words were needless. Slowly and disconsolately he bent his way back to the royal armament, where the miserable Mary awaited, in an agony of shame and anguish, the doom, for such in truth it was, of her rebellious subjects.

On the summit of a little knoll she sat, girt by the few undaunted spirits who clung to the last to Mary's cause, and who were ready at her least word to perish, if by perishing they might preserve her. Lovely as she had seemed in the gay halls of Holyrood, her brow beaming with rapture, innocence, majesty, far lovelier was she now in pale and hopeless sorrow. In the vain hope of inspiring ardor to her dispirited and coward forces, she had girt her slender form in glittering steel. A light, polished casket reflected the bright sunshine above her auburn tresses, and a cuirass of inlaid and jewelled metal flashed on her bosom. Not a warrior in either host sat firmer or more gracefully upon his destrier than Mary upon Rosabelle. A demipique of steel and loaded petronels, with the butt of which

her fingers played in thoughtless nervousness, had replaced the rich housings of that favored jennet; but though arrayed in all the pride and pomp of war, there was neither pride nor pomp in the expression of that pallid cheek and quivering lip.

“Noble Le Croc,” she cried, breathless with eagerness as he approached her presence, “what tidings from our misguided subjects? will they depart in peace? Speak out, speak fully: this is no time for well-turned sentences or courteous *étiquette*. Say, is it peace or war?”

With deep feeling painted on his dark lineaments, the Frenchman answered: “War, your grace, war to the knife; or peace on terms such as I dare not name to you.”

“Then be it war!” cried she, the eloquent blood mantling to her cheeks in glorious indignation, her eyes flashing, and her bosom heaving with emotion; “then be it war! We have stooped low enough in suing thus for peace from those whom we are born to govern, and we will stoop no longer. Better to die, to fall as our gallant father fell, leading his faithful countrymen, devoted subjects, against enemies not half so fierce as these, who should be brothers. Sound trumpets, advance our guards! Seyton, Fleming, Huntley, to your leadings, and advance! ourselves will see the tourney.”

“Your grace forgets,” replied the experienced leader to whom she first addressed herself, “your grace forgets that not one dastard of this fair army, as it shows upon this ground of vantage, will advance one lance’s length against the foe. Some scores there are, in truth, followers oft tried and ever-faithful of mine own, and some if I mistake not of the earl of Orkney, who will fight well when shaft and steel-point hold together; but ’twere but butchery to lead the rugged vassals upon certain death! for what are scores to thousands such as stand thirsting for the battle yonder—thousands led on, too, by the first martialists of Europe? Nevertheless, say but the word, and it is

done. Seyton hath ever lived for Stuart—it rests but now to die!” He paused—but in an instant, taking his cue from Mary’s extended nostril and still-flashing eye, he shouted, in a voice of thunder: “Mount, mount, and make ready! A Seyton, a Seyton for the Stuart!” Already had he dashed the rowels into his steed, and another instant would have precipitated his little band upon the inevitable destruction that awaited them in the crowded ranks which, at the well-known sound of that wild slogan, had brought their lances to the charge, and waited but a word to bear down all opposition.

Happily, so miserable a consummation was warded off. The earl of Orkney, who had stood silent and thunder-stricken by the side of his lovely bride, sprang forward, and grasping with impetuous vehemence the bridle-rein of Seyton—

“Not so!” he hissed through his set teeth, “not so, brave baron; this is my quarrel now, mine only; and dost think that I will veil my crest to mortal man? Lo! in yonder lines the haughty rebels have drawn their weapons, and against me only shall they wield them! What, ho there, heralds! take pursuivant and trumpet, and bear my gauntlet, the earl of Orkney’s gauntlet, to yonder misproud caitiffs: say that Bothwell defies them—defies them to the mortal combat, here before this company, here in the presence of men and angels, to prove his innocence, their bold and overweening treason!”—and he hurled his ponderous glove to earth.

“Well said and nobly, gallant earl!” cried Seyton; “so shall this foul calumny be stayed, and floods of Scottish blood be spared. On to thy devoir, and God will shield the right.”

And at the word the heralds rode forth again, the foremost bearing the glove of the challenger high on a lance’s point. Again the trumpets flourished, but not now as before, in peaceful strains. At the loud clangor of defiance, the confederate chiefs again strode to the front, their horses led behind them by

page or squire ; and as the menace of the challenger was proclaimed loudly and clearly by the king-at-arms, a smile of fierce delight flashed over every brow.

“ I claim the privilege of battle !” shouted the impetuous Glencairn.

“ And I !” — “ And I !” — “ And I !” rose hoarsely into air the mingled tones of Morton, Lyndesay, and Kirkaldy, as each sprang forth to seize the proffered gauntlet. “ I am the senior baron !” shouted one. “ And I the leader of the van !” cried another ; and for a minute’s space all was confusion, verging fast toward strife, among those chiefs of late so closely linked together — till the deep, sonorous voice of Murray, in after-days the regent of the realm, was heard above the tumult.

“ For shame, my lords, for shame ! Seems it so much of honor to do the hangman’s office on a murderer, that ye would mar our fair array with this disgraceful bruit for the base privilege ? By Heaven, should the duty fall on me, I should perform it, doubtless, even as I would prefer the meanest work that came before me under the name of duty ; but, trust me, I should hold the deed a blot upon mine ancient escutcheon, rather than honor ! But to the deed, my lords ; the herald awaits our answer. Lord Lyndesay, thine is the strongest claim : if thou wilt undertake the deed, thou hast my voice.”

“ As joyfully,” muttered Lyndesay beneath his grizzly mustache, “ as joyfully as to the banquet do I go forth against the craven traitor ! Morton, lend me thy falchion for the trial — the two-handed espaldron which slew Spens of Kilspindie, at the brook of Fala, in the hands of Archibald of Douglas, thy renowned forefather. God give me grace to wield it, and it shall do as trusty service on the carcass of yon miscreant !”

“ It is decided, then,” cried Murray ; and not a voice replied, for none had the presumption to dispute the fitness of the choice which thus had fallen on a leader so renowned for strength and

valor. "Herald," he continued, "go bear our greeting to her majesty of Scotland, and say to her, we do accept the challenge. An hour's truce we grant—an equal field here, on this hill of Carbury. The noble earl of Lyndesay will here prove, upon the crest and limbs of that false recreant, James, some time the earl of Bothwell, the justice of our cause: and so may God defend the right!"

The shout which rang from earth to heaven, at the noble confidence of Murray, bore to the ears of Mary and her trembling followers the assurance that the challenge was accepted; an assurance that sounded joyfully in every ear but that of his who uttered the bravado. Many a time and oft had Bothwell's crest shone foremost in the tide of battle; many a time had he confronted deadliest odds with an undaunted visage and a victorious blade. Yet now he faltered; his bold brow blanched with sudden apprehension; his frame, muscular and lofty as a giant's, actually shook with terror; and his quivering lip paled, ere he heard the name of his antagonist. Whether it was that guilt sat heavy on his heart, and weighed his strong arm down, or that his soul was cowed by the consciousness that he was unsupported and forsaken by all his friends, he turned upon his heel, and, muttering some inarticulate sounds, half lost within the hollows of his beaver, he strode to his pavilion, and thence sent his squire forth, to say that he was ill at ease, and could not fight until the morrow! Mary herself—the fond, confiding, deceived Mary—burst on the instant into loud contempt at this hardly-credible baseness.

"What! James of Bothwell false!" she cried; "then perish hope! I yield me to the malice of my foes; I will resist no longer. O man, man—base, coward, miserable man!—is it for this we give our hearts, our lives, ourselves, to your vile guidance? is it for this that I have given thee mine all—mine honor, and, perchance, my soul? that thou shouldst cowardly

desert me at mine utmost need ! Little, oh how little, doth the cold world know of woman's heart and woman's courage ! For thee would I have perished, oh, how joyfully !—and thou, O God ! O God ! it is a bitter, bitter punishment for my credulity and love : but if I have deserved to suffer, I deserved it not at thy hands, James of Bothwell ! Seyton, true friend, to thee I trust mine all. Go summon Kirkaldy to a parley : say Mary, queen of Scotland, rather than look upon the blood of Scottishmen, will grant to her rebellious lords those terms which they desire ! Nay, interrupt us not, Lord Seyton. We care not what befall that frozen viper whom we warmed within our bosom till he stung us ! Away !—let Orkney quit our camp ; for, by the glorious light of heaven, we never will behold him more !”

She spoke with an elevated voice, and features glowing with contending passions, till the faithful baron had departed on his mission ; but then, then the false strength yielded to despair, and in an agony of unfettered grief she sank into the arms of her attendants, murmuring amid her tears, “ O God, how I did adore that man !” and was borne, almost a corpse, into her tent.

An hour passed heavily away, and at its close Mary came forth, with a brow from which, though pale as the first dawning, every trace of grief had vanished. The terms had been accepted. Without a tear she saw the man for whom she had sacrificed all—all, to her very reputation—mount and depart for ever ! Without a tear she backed her own brave palfrey, and rode, attended by a dozen servitors, faithful amid her sorrows as they had been in brighter days, into the rebel host. Little was there of courtesy, of that demeanor which becomes a subject in presence of his queen, a true knight before a lady. Amid the taunts and jeers of the vile soldiery, covered with dust and humiliation, she entered upon that fatal progress which, commencing in a conditional surrender, ended only when she was immured, beyond a hope of rescue or redemption, within the dungeon-towers of Loch Leven !

THE CAPTIVITY.

“Long years! — It tries the thrilling frame to bear,
And eagle-spirit of a child of song —
Long years of outrage, calumny, and wrong;
And the mind’s canker in its savage mood,
When the impatient thirst of light and air
Scorches the heart; and the abhorred grate,
Marring the sunbeams with its hideous shade,
Works through the throbbing eyeball to the brain
With a hot sense of heaviness and pain!” — LAMENT OF TASSO.

EIGHTEEN long years of solitary grief — of that most wretched sickness that arises, even to a proverb, from hope too long deferred — had already passed away since, in the fatal action of Langside, the wretched Mary had for the last time seen her banner fall, and her adherents scattered like chaff before the wind by the determined valor of her foes. All, all was lost! It had been the work of months to draw that gallant army to a head, of which so many now lay stark in their curdled gore; while the miserable remnant were hunted like beasts of chase, to perish, when taken, upon the ignominious scaffold. And now, of all the noble gentlemen who had thronged to her bridle-rein on that fatal morning, high in hope as in valor, the merest had escaped to guard the person of that sovereign whom they loved so truly, and in behalf of whom they had endured so deeply. Her crown was lost for ever; nor her crown only, but her country.

Of all the glorious gifts which, at an earlier period of her eventful life, nature appeared to shower upon her head, freedom alone remained. The palfrey which bore her from the battlefield was now the sole possession of the titular monarch of three fair domains; the wild moors, over which she fled in desperate

haste, her only refuge from persecutors the most unrelenting that ever joined sagacity to hatred in the performance of their plans; the dozen gallant hearts who rallied yet around their queen, beneath the guiding of the stout and loyal Herries, her only court, her only subjects. Still she was free; and to one who for months before had never seen the blessed light of heaven but its lustre was sullied by the dim panes through which it forced its way, to lend no solace to her captivity, the fresh breeze which eddied across the purple moorlands of her native land had still the power to impart a sense of pleasure, fleeting, it is true, and doubtful, but still, in all its forms and essentials, absolute and real pleasure.

At the full distance of sixty Scottish miles from the accursed field which had witnessed the downfall of all her hopes, worn out in body and depressed in spirit, she paused to take, in the abbey of Dundrennan, a few hours of that repose without which, even in the most trying circumstances, the mind can not exist in its undiminished powers. At this juncture, it appeared to those about her person that Mary was utterly deserted by that wonderful sagacity, that clear insight into the motives of others, which had ever constituted one of the strongest points of her character. The chief object of the faithful few, who had clung to her with unblenching steadiness through this her last misfortune, had been to bear her in security to some point whence she might effect her escape to the sunny shores of that land wherein she had passed the happiest, the only truly happy, hours of her checkered existence. Queen-dowager herself of France, knit by the closest ties of interest and friendship to the court of Versailles—to which, moreover, Scotland had ever been considered an auxiliar and well-affected state, no less than an easy pretext for hostilities against its natural antagonist—she had been there secure, not of safety only, but of the full enjoyment of rank, and wealth, and dignity, and pleasure, if

indeed pleasure were yet within the reach of one who had herself suffered, and who had beheld all those that loved her suffer, as Mary the last queen of Scotland. Inclination, it would have seemed, no less than policy, should have urged the hapless sovereign to the measure advocated by each and all of her devoted train; for but a few years had flown since she had felt all those pangs which render exile to a delicate and sensitive mind the heaviest of human punishments, on parting from the fair shores of that land, which even then perhaps some prophetic spirit whispered, she must behold no more! Herries, the bold and loyal Herries, bent his knee, stiffened with years of toil and exposure, to sue of his adored mistress the only boon of all his labors, all his sufferings, that she would avoid the fatal soil of England.

“Remember,” he had cried, in tones which seemed in after-days of more than human foresight—“remember how the false and wily woman, who sways the sceptre of England with absolute and undisputed sway—remember, I say, with what unflinching determination she has thwarted you in every wish of your heart; with what depth of secret enmity she has at all times, and in all places, cherished your foes, and injured all who were most dear to you! and wherefore, oh wherefore, my beloved mistress, wherefore should her course of action now be altered, when she has no longer a powerful queen with whom to strive, but rather a fugitive rival to oppress? Elizabeth of England—believe me, noble lady—has marked this crisis as it drew nigh, with that unerring instinct which directs the blood-raven to its destined victim while life yet revels in its veins; and surely, so surely as you enter her accursed eyry, shall you feel her vulture-talons busy about your heartstrings! For years, my noble mistress, has Herries been your servant; at council or in field, with ready hand and true word, has he ever served the Stuart. It becomes me not to boast, yet will I speak:

when Seyton, and Ogilvy, and Huntley, were dismayed—when Hamilton himself hung back—Herries was ever nigh.”

“Ever, ever true and loyal!” cried the hapless queen, touched even beyond the consideration of her own calamities by the speech of the brave veteran—“my noble, noble Herries, and bitter, most bitter has been the reward of truth and valor; but so has it ever been with Mary. I tell thee, baron, for me to love a bird, a tree, a flower, much less a creature such as thou art, an honorable, upright, and devoted friend, was but that creature’s doom: all whom I have loved have I destroyed! Alas, alas for the undaunted spirits that were severed from the forms they filled so nobly, on that dark battle-field!”

“Think not of them, my liege—mourn not for them,” interrupted the baron. “Knightly, and in their duty, have they fallen. Their last blow was stricken, and their last slogan shouted, in a cause the fairest that ever hallowed warrior’s blade. They are at rest, and they are happy. But think of those who, having lost their earthly all to save thee, would yet esteem themselves pre-eminently happy so they might see thee free and in security. Oh! hear me, Mary—hear for the first, last time—hear the prayer of Herries! Go not, go not—as you love life, and dignity, and liberty—as you would prove your faith to those who have never been faithless to you—go not to this accursed England!”

But it had all been vain. The fiat had gone forth, and reason had deserted, as it would seem, the destined victim. No arguments, however lucid—no fears, however natural, could divert her from this fatal project. With the choice of good and evil fairly set before her—honor, and rank, and liberty, in France, a prison and an axe in England—deliberately and resolutely she rushed upon her fate! And when she might have found a willing asylum in the arms of kindred monarchs, she yielded herself to the tender mercies of a rival queen, a rival

beauty ; a fierce, unforgiving, unfeminine foe ; a being who, as she aped the name, so also displayed the attributes and nature of the lion ! How could Mary—a professed foe, a claimant of her crown, a woman fairer, and of brighter parts even than her own—a mother, while she was but a barren stake—how could Mary, with so many causes to awaken her deathless hostility, hope for generosity or for mercy from a queen who could even sacrifice without a pang her inclinations to her interest ; whose favors but marshalled those on whom they fell to the scaffold and the block ; whose dearest favorites, whose most faithful servants had fallen, one by one, beneath the headsman's axe ; who had proved herself, in short, a worthy heiress to the soulless tyrant from whom she had sprung, by the violence of her uncurbed passions, and by the hereditary pleasure with which, through all her long and glorious reign (glorious, as it is termed, for with the multitude the ends will ever justify the means, and foreign conquest hallow domestic tyranny), she rioted in innocent and noble blood !

The Rubicon had been passed—and scarcely passed, before Mary had discovered the entire justice, no less than the deep love, manifested by the parting words of Herries. As her last sovereignty, she had stepped aboard the barge that was to waft her from her discontented and ungrateful subjects to a free and happy home, as she too fondly hoped, in merry England. Girt with the bills and bows which had battened so deeply and so often in the gore of Scottishmen, gallantly dressed, and himself of gallant bearing, Lowther, the sheriff of the marches, received the royal fugitive. With every mark of deference that manly strength is bound to show to female weakness, with all the chivalrous respect a good knight is compelled by his order to display to innocence and beauty—nay, more, with all the profound humility of a subject before his queen—did he conduct the hapless lady aboard his bark. Yet, while the words of wel-

come were upon his tongue, while he dwelt with loyal eagerness on the sincerity and love of England's Elizabeth toward her sister-queen—by his refusal to admit above a limited and trifling portion of her train to share the asylum of their mistress, he had already drawn the distinction between the royal captive and the royal guest.

And so it afterward appeared. In vain did Mary petition as a favor, or claim as a right, an interview with her relentless persecutor. She should have known that even if Elizabeth could, by her constitution, have pardoned her assumption of the style or titles of the English monarchy, she could yet never overlook, never forgive her surpassing loveliness, her elegant accomplishments, her brilliant wit, her more than mortal grace! She might have condescended to despise the rival queen—she could only stoop to hate the rival beauty. From castle to castle had she been transferred, with no regard for either her rank or convenience. From prison to prison, from warder to warder, had she been conveyed, as each abode seemed in turn insecure to the lynx-eyed jealousy of her tormentor, or every jailer in turn sickened at the loathsome weariness of his hateful and degrading employment. No better proof—if proof were needed—could be adduced of Elizabeth's tyrannical and cruel despotism, than the unconstitutional authority by which she forced noble after noble, the very pride and flower of the English aristocracy, to change their castles into prisonhouses, their households into warders and turnkeys, their very lives into a state of anxious misery, which could only be surpassed by that of the unhappy prisoner they were, so contrary to their will, compelled to guard.

After the base mockery of the trial instituted at York, but a few months after her arrival—that trial wherein a brother was brought forward to convict his sister of adultery and murder—that trial which, though it pronounced the prisoner unconvicted,

yet inflicted on her all the penalties of conviction — it scarcely appears that Mary ever entertained a hope of obtaining her liberty, much less the station which was her right, from either the justice or the generosity of the lion-queen. In vain had every course been tried, in vain had every human means been employed. In vain had Scotland sued; in vain had France and Spain threatened, and even prepared to act upon their threats. For Mary there was no amelioration, no change!

From day to day, from year to year, her hopes had fallen away one by one. Her spirits, so buoyant and elastic once, had now subsided into a heavy, settled gloom; her very charms were but a wreck and shadow of their former glory. For a time she had endeavored, by all those beautiful occupations of the pencil, the needle, or the lyre, in which none had equalled her in her young days of happiness, to while away the deep and engrossing weariness which by long endurance becomes even worse than pain. For a time she had been permitted to vary the monotony of her domestic labors by her favorite exercises in the field and forest. Surrounded by a train of mail-clad horsemen, warders with bended bows and loaded arquebuses, she had a few times been allowed to ride forth into the free woodland, and to forget, amid the gay sights and heart-stirring sounds of the chase, the cares that were heavy at her heart. But how should that heart forget, when at every turn it encountered the haggard eye of the anxious keeper — anxious, for the slightest relaxation of his duty were certain death! How should the ear thrill to the enlivening music of the pack, or to the wild flourish of the bugles, when the clash of steel announced on every side the minions of her oppressor? How should the gallop over the velvet turf, beneath the luxuriant shadow of the immemorial oaks, convey aught of freshness to the spirit that was about to return thence to chambers no less a dungeon for being decked with the mockeries of state, than

though they had presented to the eye those common accessories of bar, and grate, and chain, which they failed not to set before the mind? After a while, even these liberties were curtailed! It seemed too much of freedom, that the titular sovereign of three realms—the cynosure of every eye, the beauty at whose very name every heart thrilled and every pulse bounded—should be permitted to taste the common air of heaven, even when hemmed in, without the possibility of escape, by guards armed to the teeth, and sworn to exercise those arms, not only against all who should attempt the rescue, but against the miserable captive herself, should she attempt to profit by any efforts made for her release!

And efforts were made—efforts by the best and noblest of the British peerage—by men whose names were almost sufficient to turn defeat to victory and shame to glory. Norfolk and Westmoreland, and a hundred others, of birth scarcely less distinguished, and of virtues no less brilliant, revolted from the soul-debasing despotism of Elizabeth, and attempted, now by secret stratagem, and now by open warfare, to force the victim from the clutches of the lion. With the deepest regret did Mary witness the destruction of so many noble spirits, and with yet deeper fury did Elizabeth behold star after star of her boasted galaxy of nobles shoot madly from their spheres in pursuit of a meteor. Bitter were her feelings, and deadly was her vengeance. The bloody reign of Mary might almost have been deemed to have returned, as day by day the death-bells tolled, as the traitor's gate admitted another and another occupant to that above, whence the only egress was by the axe and scaffold. Nor was this all. A thousand wild and fearful rumors began to float among the multitude. The perils of a catholic insurrection, the intended assassination of the queen, the establishment of a papistical dynasty upon the throne of England, were topics of ordinary conversation, but of no ordinary excite-

ment. At one time it was reported that a Spanish fleet was actually in the channel ; at another that the duke of Guise, with a vast army, had effected a landing on the Kentish coast, and might hourly be expected in the capital. Nor is it uncharitable to suppose that these reports were designedly spread abroad, this excitement purposely kept alive, by the wily ministers of Elizabeth. That the despot-queen had long ago determined on the slaughter of her rival, is certain ; nor have we any just cause for doubting that Bacon and Walsingham were men as fully capable of goading the terrors of a multitude into fury as was their mistress of recommending the private murder of her hapless victim !

It was at this period that popular madness was raised to its utmost height by the detection of Babington's conspiracy. Rich, young, brave, and romantic ; stimulated by the hope of gaining the hand of Mary, forgetful that the personal loveliness for which she had once been conspicuous must long have yielded to the joint influence of misery and time ; and deceived by the fatal maxim, then too much in vogue, that means are justified by ends — this gentleman resolved on bringing about the liberation of the Scottish by the murder of the English queen. The affair was not looked upon as so atrocious, but that twelve associates were easily found for the execution of the plot ; and it is barely possible that, had they proceeded at once to action, their desperate effort might have been crowned with success. They delayed — they talked — they were discovered ! Beneath the protracted agonies of the question, one was found of these convicted traitors who asserted the privity of Mary to the whole affair ; and at once, as though a torch had been applied to some train long prepared, the whole of England burst forth into a perfect frenzy of terror. A people are never so terrible, never so barbarous, as when they are thoroughly and needlessly terrified. From every quarter of the kingdom the cry was at once for blood ;

and Elizabeth, looking in cool delight upon the tumult, perceived that the moment had arrived when she might gratify, without fear, her jealous thirst for her hated guest's destruction. Addresses showered into either house of parliament, beseeching the queen and her ministers to awaken themselves at once to the perils of the people; to provide against the impending dangers of a catholic succession; and to remove at once all possibility of future conspiracies by the immediate removal of her who was, as they asserted, not the cause only, but the principal mover of every successive plot.

It is not to be supposed that, after pining so long in secret for an opportunity of gratifying her malice, Elizabeth doubted an instant. It is true indeed that, with a loathsome affectation of tender-heartedness, she pretended to regret the stern necessity; that she whined forth doleful remonstrances to her trusty ministers, entreating them to discover some mode by which she might herself be preserved from the risk of assassination, without undergoing the misery of seeing her well-beloved cousin of Scotland suffer in her stead! Well, however, did those ministers know the meaning of the motives of their odious mistress; well were they aware that there was no more of pity or reluctance in the bosom of Elizabeth than there is of mirth in that of the hyena when he sends forth his yells of laughter above his mangled prey!

It was a lovely morning in the autumn; the sun was shedding a mellow light upon the long glades and velvet turf of a park-like lawn before the feudal towers of the earl of Shrewsbury. Before the gate were assembled a group of liveried domestics, with many a noble steed pawing the earth and champ-ing its foamy bits; hounds clamored in their couples, and falcons shook themselves and clapped their restless wings in vain impatience. It was evident that the attendants were but awaiting the approach of some distinguished personage, to commence

their sports ; and by their whispered conversation it appeared that this personage was no other than the wretched Mary. The castle-gates were thrown open ; a heavy guard, with arquebuss, and pike, and bow, filed through the gloomy gateway ; and then, leaning upon the arm of the still stately Shrewsbury, the poor victim of inveterate persecution came slowly forward. Several gentlemen in rich attire, and among them Sir Thomas Georges, blazing in the royal liveries of England, yet bearing on his soiled buskins and the bloody spurs that graced them tokens of a long and hasty journey, followed ; and another band of warders brought up the rear.

The charms which had once rendered Mary the loveliest of her sex, had faded, it is true ; the dimpled cheek was sunken, and its hues, that once had vied with the carnation, had fled for ever ; her tresses were no longer of that rich and golden brown that had furnished subjects for a thousand sonnets, for many a line of gray marked the premature and wintry blight which had been cast upon her beauties by the sternness and misery of her latter years. Still, there was an air of such sweet resignation in every feature, such a dignity in the port of her person—still symmetrical, though it had lost something of its roundness—such a majesty in her still-brilliant eyes—that even the wretches who had determined on her destruction dared not meet the glance of her whom they so foully wronged.

She was already seated in the saddle, and the reins just grasped in a delicate but masterly hand, when Georges, stepping forward and bending a knee—almost, as it would seem, in mockery—informed her that her confederates in the meditated slaughter of Elizabeth were convicted ; that it was the pleasure of the queen that her grace of Scotland should proceed at once to the sure castle of Fotheringay, and that it was resolved that she should set forth upon the instant. For a moment, but for a single moment, did Mary gaze into the eyes of

the courtly speaker, with a gaze of incredulity, almost of terror; a quick shudder ran through every limb; and once she wrung her hands bitterly—but not a word escaped her pallid lips, not a tear disgraced her noble race.

“It is well, sir,” she said, “it is well. We thank you, no less for your pleasant tidings, than the knightly considerations which prompted you to choose so well your opportunity for conveying them to our ear when we were about to set forth in search of such brief pleasure as might for a moment gild the monotony of a prisoner’s life! We thank you, sir, most warmly, and we doubt not your own noble heart will reward you by that best of gifts, a happy and approving conscience! For the rest—lead on! it matters little to the wretched and the captive by what title the prison-bars, which shut them out from light, and liberty, and hope, are dignified; and well do we know that for us there is but one exit from our dungeon, or rest from our calamities—the grave!”

She had commenced her speech in that tone of calm and polished raillery for which she had in her earlier days been so renowned, and which even pierced deeper into the feelings of those who writhed beneath it than the most bitter sarcasm; but her concluding sentences were uttered with deep feeling: and, as she turned her liquid eyes toward heaven, it seemed most wonderful that men should exist capable of exciting a single pang in the heart of such a creature.

The gates of Fotheringay received her; and, as she rode beneath the gloomy archway, a prophetic chill fell upon her soul, and she felt that here her wanderings and her sorrows would shortly be brought to a close! Scarcely had she reached the miserable privacy of her chamber, when steps were heard without. Mildmay, Paulet, and Barker, entered, and delivering a letter full of hypocritical regrets and feigned affection, informed her that the queen’s commissioners were even then assembled

in the castle-hall, and prayed the lady Mary to descend and refute the foul charges preferred against her name.

Enfeebled as she had been by sufferings and sorrows, wearied by her long and rapid journey, and, above all things, crushed by this last blow, it little seemed that so frail and delicate a form could have contained a soul so mighty as flashed forth in one blaze of indignation. Her pale cheek crimsoned, her sunken eye glared with unwonted fire; she started upon her feet, her limbs trembling, not with terror or debility, but with strong and terrible excitement.

“Knows not your mistress,” she cried, in clear, high tones, “that I, too, am a queen? or would she knowingly debase the dignity which is common to her with me? Away! I will not deign to plead! I—I, the queen of Scotland, the mother and the wife of kings—I plead to mine inferiors? Go tell your mistress that neither eighteen years of vile captivity, nor dread, nor misery, has sunk the soul of Mary Stuart so low, that she will speak one syllable to guard her life, save in the presence of her peers! Let her assemble her high courts of parliament, if she so will it: to them, and to them only, will I plead. Here she may slay me, it is true; but she must slay me by the assassin’s knife, not by the prostituted sword of justice. I have spoken!”—and she threw herself at once into a seat, immovable alike in position and in resolve.

Well had it been for her had she continued firm in that determination; but what could a weak woman’s unassisted intellect avail against the united force of talents such as those of Hatton and Burleigh? A thousand specious arguments were summoned to overcome her scruples, but summoned all in vain, till the last hint—that her unwillingness to plead could arise only from a consciousness of guilt—aroused her. Pride, fatal pride, determined the debate, and she descended. Eloquently, sorrowfully, manfully, did she plead her cause, combating the

vile chicaneries, the extorted evidences, the absence or the want of legal witnesses, with the native powers of a clear and vigorous mind. Once during that judicial mockery did her passions burst the control of her judgment, and she openly, in full court, charged the secretary, Walsingham—and, as many now believe, most justly charged him—with the forgery of the only documents that bore upon her character, or on the case in point. But all was fruitless! For what eloquence should convince men resolved in any circumstances to convict? what facts should clear away the imputed guilt of one whom it was fully determined to destroy?

The trial was concluded. With the air of a queen she stood erect, with a calm brow and serene eye, as the commissioners departed, one by one. No doom had been pronounced against her, but she read it in the eyes of all; and as she saw her mis-named judges quit her presence, she muttered, in the low notes of a determined spirit: “The tragedy is well nigh closed—the last act is at hand! Peace—peace—I soon shall find thee in the grave.”

THE CLOSING SCENE.

“Still as the lips that’s closed in death,
Each gazer’s bosom held his breath;
But yet afar, from man to man,
A cold, electric shiver ran,
As down the deadly blow descended,
On her whose love and life thus ended.”—PARISINA.

It was a dark, but lovely night; moonless, but liquid and transparent; the stars which gemmed the firmament glittered more brightly from the absence of the mightier planet, and from the influence of a slight degree of frost upon the atmosphere, although it was indeed so slight, that its presence could be traced only in the crispness of the herbage, and in the uncommon purity of the heavens. Beneath a sky such as I have vainly endeavored to portray, the towers of Fotheringay rose black and dismal above the ancestral oaks and sweeping glades of its demesne. It would have appeared to a casual observer that all were at rest, buried in utter forgetfulness of all their hopes and sorrows, within that massive pile, save the lonely sentinel, whose progress round the battlements, although invisible, might be traced by the clatter of his harness, and the sullen echoes of his steel-shod stride. But to a nearer and more accurate survey, a single light, feebly twinkling through a casement of the dungeon-keep, told a far different tale. At times that solitary ray streamed in unbroken lines far into the bosom of the darkness; at times it was momentarily obscured, as if by the passage of some opaque body, though the transit, if such it were, was too brief to reveal the form or motions of the obstacle. Once, however, the shadow paused, and then, as its outlines stood forth in strong relief against the illumination of the

chamber, the delicate proportions and musing attitude of a female might be discerned with certainty. It was the queen of Scotland. Her earthly sorrows were drawing to their close; the peace, for which she had long ceased to look, save in the silence of the tomb, was now within her grasp. Mary's last sun had set.

Of life she had taken her farewell long, long ago; and death—the bugbear of the happy, the terror of the dastard—dark, mysterious, unknown death—had become to her an intimate, and, as it were, familiar friend. It was not that she had lessened her shrinking spirit to endure with calmness that which it had shuddered to encounter; it was not that she had weaned her heart, yet clinging to the vanities of a heartless world, with difficulty and trembling, to their abandonment; least of all was it that she had been taught to regard that final separation with the stoic's apathy, or to look for that dull and sunless rest, that absence of all feelings, whether of good or evil; that total annihilation of mind, in the great hereafter, which, to a sensitive temperament, and soul not rendered wholly callous by the debasing contact with this world's idols, must seem a punishment secondary, if secondary, only to an eternity of wo. Born to a station lofty as the most vaulting ambition could desire, nurtured in gentleness and luxury, gifted with a mind such as rarely dwells within a mortal form, and having that mind invested in a frame, by its resplendent beauty fitted to be the door of immortality, she had felt, in a succession of sorrows almost unexampled, that the very qualities which should have ministered to her for bliss, had been converted into the instruments of misery and pain. Attached to her native land with the Switzer's patriotism, she had endured from it the extremities of scorn and hatred. Full of the warmest sympathies even for the meanest of mankind, she had never loved a single being but he had recompensed that love with coals of fire heaped upon her head;

or if a few had passed unscathed through the trying ordeal of benefits received, they had themselves miserably perished for their gratitude toward one whose love seemed fated to blight the virtues, or destroy the being of all on whom it was bestowed. If the sun of her morning had ridden gloriously forth in a serene heaven, with the promise of a splendid noontide and an unclouded setting, yet scarcely had it scaled one half of its meridian height, ere it had been compassed about with gloom and darkness; and ere its setting the thunders had rolled and the deadly lightnings flashed between the daygod and its scattered worshippers. She had been led step by step from the keenest enjoyment to the utmost disregard of the pleasures of the earth; she had drained the cup, and knew its bitterness too well to languish for a second draught. Yet there was nothing of resentment, nothing of hard-heartedness or scorn, in the feelings with which she looked back on the world and its adorers. She did not despise the many for that they still lingered in pursuit of a star which she had found, by sad experience, to be but a delusive meteor; much less did she hate the happy few to whom that valley, which had been to her indeed a vale of tears and of the shadow of death, had been a region of perpetual sunshine and unclouded happiness.

From Mary's earliest years there had been a deep spring of piety in her heart which, never utterly dried up, though choked at times, and turned from its true course by the thorny cares and troubles of life, had burst from the briers which so long concealed it in redoubled purity as it flowed nearer to the close. There was an innate tenderness in all her sentiments toward all men and all things which could never degenerate into hatred, much less into misanthropy. She looked then upon life in its true light; as a mingled landscape, now obscured by clouds, now called into glory by the sunshine; as a region, tangled here with forests, and cumbered with barren rocks, there swelling

into hills of vintage, or subsiding into glens of verdure. And if to her the landscape had been most viewed beneath the influence of a dark and threatening sky—if to her life's path had lain, for the most part, through the wilderness and over the mountains—she knew that such was the result of her own misfortune, perhaps of her own misconduct, not of defect in the wonderful contrivance, or of improvidence in the all-glorious contriver.

In proportion as she had learned to dwell on the insufficiency of earthly good to satiate that deep thirst for happiness which is not the least among the proofs of the soul's immortality, she had come to look upon the void of futurity as the unexplored region of bliss; upon death as the portal through which we must pass from the desert of toil and sorrow to the Eden of hope and happiness. That she was drawing rapidly near to this portal she had for a long time been aware; and, during the latter years of her captivity, she had longed to see the leaves of that gate unfolded for her exit, with a sense of pining sickness, similar to that of the imprisoned eagle. The mockery of her trial she had beheld as the avenue through which she should arrive, and that right shortly, at the desired end; and although she knew that the scaffold and the axe, or the secret knife of the assassin, must need be the key to that gate, she recked but little of the means, so that the way of escape was left open to her.

She had pleaded, it is true, with brilliant eloquence and earnestness, in behalf, not of life, but of her honor. She wished for death, and she cared not for the vulgar ignominy of the scaffold; but she did care, she did shrink from the ignominy of a condemnation—a condemnation not by the suborned commissioners, not by the jealous rival, not by the perjured and terror-stricken populace of the day, but by Time and by Eternity. This was the condemnation from which she shrank;

this was the ignominy which she combated ; this was the doom which, by the masterly and dauntless efforts of her unassisted woman heart, she turned not only from herself, but back upon her murderers.

From the departure of the commissioners, she had been convinced that she was hovering as it were on the confines of life and immortality. Happy and calm herself, she had labored to render calm and happy the little group of friends—for domestics, when faithful, are friends—who still preserved their allegiance. She craved no more the wanderings in the greenwood ; she had even refused to join in her once-loved sports of field and forest, which, denied to her when she would have grasped the boon, were freely proffered now, as though her enemies, with a far-reaching malignity that would stretch its arm beyond the grave, had wished to reawaken in her bosom that love for things of this life which had sunk to sleep, and to sharpen the bitterness of death by the added tortures of regret. If such, indeed, were their intentions—and who shall presume to judge?—their barbarity was frustrated ; and if they indeed envied their poor victim the miserable consolation of passing cheerfully and in peace from the sphere of her sorrows, we may be assured that the frustration of their wicked views was sufficient punishment to them while here, and none can even dare to conjecture what will be their doom hereafter.

This night had brought at length the balm to all her cares—the restless eagerness to be assured of that which was to come was over—the goal was reached, the gates were half-unclosed, and, to her enthusiastic and poetical imagination, the hymns and harpings of expectant seraphs seemed to pour in their soothing chimes, whispering of peace, pardon, and beatitude for evermore between the parted portals. With a bigotry, which in these days of universal toleration it is equally difficult to conceive or to condemn sufficiently, it was denied to the de-

parting sinner — for who that is most perfect here is other than a sinner — to enjoy the consolations of a priest of her own persuasion. A firm and conscientious, though not a bigoted catholic, it was a cruelty of the worst and most outrageous nature, to deny her that which she deemed of the highest importance to her eternal welfare, and which they could not deem prejudicial, without being themselves victims of a superstition so slavish as to disprove their participation in a faith which boasts itself no less a religion of freedom than of truth.

Steadily refusing the aid of the protestant divines, who harassed her with an assiduity that spoke more of polemical pride than of Christian sincerity, she had performed her orisons with deep devotion, and had arisen from their performance assured of forgiveness, confident in her own repentance, and in the mercy of Him who alone is perfect ; in peace and charity even with her direst foes, and happy in the anticipation of the morrow. She had sat down to her last earthly meal with an appetite unimpaired by the knowledge that it was to be her last ; she had conversed cheerfully, gayly, with her weeping friends ; she had drunk one cup of wine to their health and happiness, and, in token of her own gratitude, to each she had distributed some little pledge of her affectionate regard ; and then — amid the notes of dreadful preparation, the creaking of saws and the clang of hammers, busily converting the castle-hall into a place of slaughter, as it had been not long before a place of misnamed justice — she had sunk to sleep so calmly, and slumbered on with a countenance so moveless in its innocent repose, and with a bosom so regular in its healthful pulsations, that her admiring ladies began to look on her as one about to start upon a pleasant voyage to the harbor of all her wishes, rather than as one about to perish by a cruel and ignominious death on the scaffold. Hours flew over the lovely sleeper, and the eyes of her watchers waxed heavier, till they wept themselves to sleep ;

and one—an aged woman, who had watched her infancy and gloried in the promise of her youth—after her eyes were sealed in sleep, yet continued, by the heavy sobs which burst from the lips of the slumberer, to manifest the extent of that misery which abode in all its vividness within the mind, although the body was wrapt in that state which men have called oblivion.

Such had been the state of things in Mary's chamber from the first close of evening to the dead hour of midnight; but ere the east had begun again to redden with the returning glories of its luminary, sleep, which still sat leadlike on the eyelids of her attendants, forsook the hapless sovereign. Silently she arose, and, throwing a single garment carelessly about her person, passed from her sleeping-apartment into a little oratory adjoining, without disturbing from her painful slumbers one of those faithful beings to whom the distinct consciousness of waking sorrow must have been yet more painfully acute.

Here, as with a quick but regular step she traversed the narrow turret, she viewed as it were in the space of a single hour the crowded events of a life which, unnaturally shortened as it was about to be, yet contained naught of remote and rare occurrence, but in rapid and complete succession—those events which make an epoch and an era of every hour, and lengthen years of time into ages of the mind.

Calmly, piously, without a shade of sorrow for the past or of solicitude for the future, save that mysterious and yet natural anxiety which must haunt every mind, however well prepared to endure its final separation from the body, as the hour of dissolution approaches, did she expect the morning. This anxiety and this alone was blended with the various feelings which coursed through the soul of Mary during this the last night of her existence.

It was in such a frame of mind that Mary, in the solitude of that last earthly night, diverting her attention entirely from the

terrible shock she was about to undergo on the morrow, thought upon her native land, still dear though still ungrateful, a prey to the fierce contentions of her own factious offspring—of her son, torn at the earliest dawn of his affections from the arms of a mother, nurtured among those who would teach him to eradicate every warmer recollection—to pluck forth, as if it were an offending eye, every lingering tenderness for that being, who, amid all her sins and all her sorrows, had never ceased to love him with an entire and perfect love. There is, in truth, something more evidently divine, partaking more nearly of that which we believe to be the very essence of Divinity, in a mother's love, than in any other pang or passion—for every passion, how sweet soever it may be, has something of a pang mingled with it—in the human soul. All other love is liable to diminution, to change, or to extinction; all other love may be alienated by the neglect, chilled by the coldness, frozen to the core by the worthlessness, of the object once beloved. All other affections are influenced by a thousand trivial circumstances of time and place: absence may weaken their influence, time obscure their vividness, and, above all, custom may rob them of their value. But on the love of a mother—commencing as it does before the object of her solicitude possesses form or being; springing from agony and sorrow; ripening in anxiety and care, and reaping too often the bitter harvest of ingratitude—all incidental causes, all external influences, are powerless and vain. Time but excites her admiration, but increases her solicitude, but redoubles her affections. Absence but causes her to dwell with a more engrossing memory on him from whom her heart is never absent. Custom but hallows the sentiment to which nature has given birth. Neglect and coldness but cause her to strain every nerve to merit more and more the poor return of filial love—the solitary aim of her existence, if heartlessly denied to her. Nay, worthlessness itself but binds her more

closely to him whom the hard world has cast aside, to find a refuge in the only bosom which will not perceive his errors or credit his utter destitution.

Thus it was with Mary! She knew that the child of her affections regarded those affections as vile and worthless weeds! She knew that he was selfish, vain, and heartless! She knew that a single word from that child whom she still adored—if conveyed to her persecutor in the strong language of sincerity and earnestness—if borne, not by a fawning courtier, but by one of those high spirits which Scotland has found ever ready to her need—if enforced by threats of instant war—would have broken her fetters in a moment, and conveyed her from the dungeons of Fotheringay to the courts of Holyrood! All this she knew, yet her heart would not know it! And when all Europe rang with curses on the unnatural vacillation of that son; when every Scottish heart, whatever might be its policy or its party, despised his abject cringing; while Elizabeth herself, while she flattered his vanity, and affected to honor and esteem his virtue, scoffed in her royal privacy at the tool she designed to use in public—Mary alone, Mary, the only sufferer and victim of his baseness, still clung to the idea of his worth, still adored the child who was driving her out, as the scape-goat of the Jews, to expiate the sins of himself and his people by her own destruction! But it was not on James alone that her wayward memory was fixed. At a time when any soul less dauntless, any spirit less exalted, would have failed beneath its load of sorrows, Mary had a fond regret, a tear of sorrow, a sigh of sincere gratitude, for every gallant life that had devoted itself to ward from her that fate which their united loyalty had availed only to defer, not to avert. Chastelar passed before her, with his tones of sweetest melancholy, and that unutterable love, which made him invoke blessings on her who had doomed him to the block: and Darnley, as he had seemed

in the few short hours when he had been, when he had deserved to be, the idol of her heart : and Bothwell, the eloquent, the glorious, but guilty Bothwell, her ruin and her betrayer : and Douglas, the noble, hapless Douglas, he who had riven the bolts of Loch Leven, and sent her forth to a short freedom and worse captivity : Huntley, and Hamilton, and Seyton, and Kirkaldy, the most formidable of her foes until he became the firmest of her friends—all passed in sad review before the eyes of her entranced imagination.

Thus it was that the last queen of Scotland passed the latest night of her existence. With no consciousness of time, with no care for the present, no apprehension for the future, she had paced the narrow floor of her apartment during the still hours of midnight. Unperceived by her had the stars paled, then vanished from the brightening firmament ; unseen had the first dappling of the east gone into the clear, cold light of a wintry morning ; unheeded had the castle clock sent forth its giant echoes hour after hour, to be heard by every watcher over leagues of field and forest. Another sound rose heavily, and she was at once collected—time, place, and circumstances, flashed fully on her mind—she was prepared to meet them : it was the roar of the morning culverin ; and scarcely had its deafening voice passed over, before a single bell, hoarse, slow, and solemn, pealed minute after minute, the signal of her approaching dissolution.

Calmly, as if she were about to prepare for some gay festival, she turned to the apartment where her ladies, overdone by wo and watching, yet slumbered, forgetful of the dread occasion.

“ Arise,” she said, in sweet, low tones ; “ arise, my girls, and do your last of duties for the mistress ye have served so well ! Nay, start not up so wildly, nor blush that ye have slept while we were watching. Dear girls, the time has come—the time

for which my soul so long has thirsted. Array me, then, as to a banquet, a glorious banquet of immortality! See," she continued, scattering her long locks over her shoulders—"see, they were bright of yore as the last sunbeam of a summer day, yet I am prouder of them now, with their long streaks of untimely snow—for they now tell a tale of sorrows, borne as it becomes a queen to bear them. Braid them with all your skill, and place yon pearls around my velvet head-gear. We will go forth to die, clad as a bride; and now methinks the queen of France and Scotland owns but a single robe of fair device. Bring forth our royal train and broidered farthingale: it fits us not to die with our limbs clad in the garb of mourning, when Heaven knows that our heart is clothed in gladness!"

Tearless, while all around were drowned in lamentations, she strove to cheer them to the performance of this last sad office—not with the commonplace assurances, the miserable resources of earthly consolation, much less with aught of heartless levity, or of that unfeeling parade which has so often adorned the scaffold with a jest, and concealed the anxiety of a heart ill at ease beneath the semblance of ill-timed merriment—but by suffering them to read her inmost soul; by showing them the true position of her existence; by pointing out to them the actual hardships of the body, and the yet deeper humiliations of the soul, from which the door of her escape was even now unclosing.

Scarcely had she completed her attire, and tasted of the consecrated wafer—long ago procured from the holy Pius, and preserved for this extremity—when the tread of many feet without, and a slight clash of weapons at the door of the antechamber, announced that the hour had arrived.

Once and again, ere she gave the signal to unclothe the door, she embraced each one of her attendants. "Dear, faithful friends, adieu, adieu," she said, "for ever; and now remember,

remember the last words of Mary. Weep not for me, and, if ye love me, shake not my steadfastness, which, thanks to Him who is the Father and the Friend of the afflicted, the fear of death can not shake, by useless fear or lamentation. We would die as a martyr cheerfully, as a queen nobly! Fare ye well, and remember!" With an air of royal dignity she seated herself, and, with her maidens standing around her chair, she bore the mien of a high sovereign awaiting the arrival of some proud legation, rather than that of a captive awaiting a summons to the block. "And now," she said, as she arranged her draperies with dignified serenity, "admit their envoy."

The doors were instantly thrown open as she spoke, the sheriff uttered his ordinary summons, and without a shudder she rose. "Lead on," she said; "we follow thee more joyously than thou, methinks, canst marshal us. Sir Amias Paulet, lend us thine arm; it fits us not that we proceed, even to the death, without some show of courtesy. Maidens, bear up our train; and now, sir, we are ready."

But a heavier trial than the axe awaited the unhappy sovereign; for as she set her foot on the first step of the stairs, Melville, her faithful steward, flung himself at her feet, with almost girlish wailings. Friendly and familiarly she raised him from the ground. "Nay, sorrow not for me," she said, "true friend. Subject for sorrow there is none, unless thou grievest that Mary is set free—that for the captive's weeds she shall put on a robe of immortality, and, for a crown of earthly misery, the glory of beatitude."

"Alas! alas! God grant that I may die, rather than look upon this damned deed."

"Nay, live, good Melville, for my sake live; commend me to my son, and say to him, Mary's last thoughts on earth were given to France and Scotland, her last but these to him: say, that she died unshaken in her faith to God, unswerving in her

courage, confident in her reward. Farewell, true servant, take from the lips of Mary the last kiss that mortal e'er shall take of them, and fare thee well for ever."

At this moment the earl of Kent stepped forward, and roughly bade her dismiss her women also, "for the present matter tasked other ministers than such as these." For a moment she condescended to plead that they might be suffered to attend her to the last; but when she was again refused, her ancient spirit flashed out in every tone, as she cried, trumpet-like and clear, "Proud lord, beware! I too am cousin to your queen — I too am sprung from the high-blood of England's royalty — I too am an anointed queen. I say thou shalt obey, and these shall follow their mistress to the death, or with foul violence shall they force me thither. Beware! beware, I say, how thou shalt answer doing me this dishonor!"

Her words prevailed. Without a shudder she descended, entered the fatal hall, looked with an air of smiling condescension, almost of pity, on the spectators crowded almost to suffocation, and, mounting the scaffold, stood in proud and abstracted unconcern, while, in the measured sounds of a proclamation, the warrant for her death was read beside her elbow.

The bishop of Peterborough then drew nigh, and, in a loud voice and inflated style, harassed her ears with an oration, which, whatever might have been its merits, was at that time but a barbarous and useless outrage.

"Trouble not yourself," she broke in at length, disgusted with his intemperate eloquence, "trouble not yourself any more about this matter, for I was born in this religion, I have lived in this religion, and in this religion I am resolved to die." Turning suddenly aside, as if determined to hear no further, she knelt apart, fervently prayed, and repeatedly kissed the sculptured image which she bore of Him who died to save. As she arose from her orisons, the earl of Kent, her constant and

unrelenting persecutor, with heartless cruelty burst into loud revilings against "that popish trumpery" which she adored. "Suffer me now," she said, gazing on him with an expression of beautiful resignation, that might have disarmed the malice of a fiend, "suffer me now to depart in peace. I have come hither, not to dispute on points of doctrine, but to die."

Without another word she began to disrobe herself; but once, as her maidens hung weeping about her person, she laid her finger on her lips, and repeated emphatically the word "Remember." And once again, as the executioner would have lent his aid to remove her upper garments, "Good friend," she said, with a smile of ineffable sweetness, "we will dispense with thine assistance. The queen of Scotland is not wont to be disrobed before so many eyes, nor yet by varlets such as thou."

All now was ready. The lovely neck was bared. The wretch who was to perform the deed of blood stood grasping the fatal axe, and the fierce earl of Kent beat the ground with his heel in savage eagerness. Without a sigh she knelt; without a sign of trepidation, a quicker heave of her bosom, or a brighter flush on her brow, she laid down her innocent head, and without a struggle, or convulsion of her limbs, as the axe flashed, and the life-blood spouted, did her spirit pass away.

A general burst of lamentation broke the silence; but amidst that burst the heavy stride of Kent was heard, as he sprang upon the scaffold, and raised the ghastly visage, the eyes yet twinkling, and the lips quivering in the death-struggle. A single voice, that of the zealot bishop, cried aloud, "Thus perish all the foes of Queen Elizabeth." But ere the response had passed the lips of Kent, a shriller cry rang through the hall—the sharp yell of a small greyhound, the fond companion of the queen's captivity. Bursting from the attendants, who vainly strove to hold her back, with a short, sharp cry she dashed

full at the throat of the astonished earl ; but ere he could move a limb the danger, if danger there were, was passed. The spirit was too mighty for the little frame. The energies of the faithful animal were exhausted, its heart broken, in that death-spring. It struck the headless body of its mistress as it fell, and in an agony of tenderness, died licking the hand that had fed and cherished it so long. Wonderful, that when all men had deserted her, a brute should be found so constant in its pure allegiance ! And yet more wonderful, that the same blow should have completed the destiny of the two rival sovereigns ! and yet so it was ! The same axe gave the death-blow to the body of the Scottish, and to the fame of the English queen ! The same stroke completed the sorrows of Mary, and the infamy of Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH'S REMORSE.

———“Guilty! guilty!

I shall despair! There is no creature loves me:

And, if I die, no soul will pity me!

Nay, wherefore should they? since I myself

Find in myself no mercy to myself!” — KING RICHARD III.

THE twelfth hour of the night had already been announced from half the steeples of England's metropolis, and the echoes of its last stroke lingered in mournful cadences among the vaulted aisles of Westminster. It was not then, as now, the season of festivity, the high-tides of the banquet and the ball, that witching time of night. No din of carriages or glare of torches disturbed the sober silence of the streets, illuminated only by the waning light of an uncertain moon; no music streamed upon the night-wind from the latticed casements of the great, who were contented, in the days of their lion-queen, to portion out their hours for toil or merriment, for action or repose, according to the ministration of those great lights which rule the heavens with an indifferent and impartial sway, and register their brief career of moments to the peer as to the peasant by one unvarying standard.

A solitary lamp burned dim and cheerlessly before a low-browed portal in St. Stephen's; and a solitary warder, in the rich garb still preserved by the yeomen of the guard, walked to

and fro with almost noiseless steps—his corslet and the broad head of his shouldered partisan flashing momentarily out from the shadow of the arch, as he passed and repassed beneath the light which indicated the royal residence—distinguished by no prouder decorations—of her before whose wrath the mightiest of Europe's sovereigns shuddered. A pile of the clumsy fire-arms then in use, stacked beneath the eye of the sentinel, and the dark outlines of several bulky figures outstretched in slumber upon the pavement, seemed to prove that some occurrences of late had called for more than common vigilance in the guarding of the place.

The prolonged cry of the watcher, telling at each successive hour that all was well, had scarcely passed his lips, before the distant tramp of a horse, and the challenge of a sentry from the bridge, came heavily up the wind. For a moment the yeoman listened with all his senses; then, as it became evident that the rider was approaching, he stirred the nearest sleeper with the butt of his heavy halbert. "Up, Gilbert! up, man, and to your tools, ere they be wanted. What though the earl's proud head lie low?—he hath friends and fautors enough in the city, I trow, to raise a coil whene'er it lists them!" The slumbers of the yeomen were exchanged on the instant for the guarded bustle of preparations; and, before the horseman, whose approach had caused so much excitement, drew bridle at the palace-gate, a dozen bright sparks glimmering under the dark portal, like glow-worms beneath some bushy coppice, announced the readiness of as many levelled matchlocks.

"Stand, ho! the word—"

"A post to her grace of England!" was the irregular reply, as the rider, hastily throwing himself from off his jaded hackney, advanced toward the yeoman.

"Stand there, I say!—no nearer, on your life! Shoot, Gilbert, shoot, an' he stir but a hand-breadth!"

“Tush! friend, delay me not,” replied the intruder, halting, however, as he was required to do; “my haste is urgent, and that which I bear with me passeth ceremony—a letter to the queen! On your heads be it, if I meet impediment! See that ye pass it to her grace forthwith.”

“A letter? ha! There may be some device in this; yet pass it hitherward” A broad parchment, secured by a fold of floss silk, with its deeply-sealed wax attached, was placed in his hand. A light was obtained from the hatch of a caliver, and the superscription, evidently too important for delay, hurried the guards to action. “The earl of Nottingham”—it ran—“to his most high and sovereign lady, Elizabeth of England. For life! for life! for life!—Ride and run—haste, haste, post-haste, till this be delivered!”

After a moment’s conference among the warders, the bearer was directed to advance; a yeoman led the panting horse away to the royal meuf; and the corporal of the guard, striking the wicket with his dagger-hilt, shortly obtained a hearing and admission from the gentleman-pensioner on duty. Within the palace no result was immediately perceived from the occurrence which had caused so much bustle outside the gates; the soldiers on duty conversed for a while in stifled whispers, then relapsed into their customary silence; the night wore on without further interruption to their watch, and ere they were relieved they had well nigh forgotten the messenger’s arrival.

Not so, however, was the letter received by the inmates of the royal residence. Ushers and pages were awakened, lights glanced, and hurried steps and whispering voices echoed through the corridors. The chamberlain, so great was considered the urgency of the matter, was summoned from his pillow; and he with no small trepidation proceeded at once to the apartment of Elizabeth. His hesitating tap at the door of the ante-chamber—occupied by the ladies whose duty it was to watch the

person of their imperious mistress by night—failed indeed to excite the attention of the sleeping maidens, but caught at once the ear of the extraordinary woman whom they served.

“Without there!” she cried, in a clear, unbroken tone, although full sixty winters had passed over her head.

“Hunsdon, so please your grace, with a despatch of import from the earl of Nottingham.”

“God’s death! ye lazy wenches! hear ye not the man without, that I must rive my throat with clamoring? Up, hussies, up—or, by the soul of my father, ye shall sleep for ever!” The frightened girls sprang from their couches at the raised voice of their angry queen, like a covey of partridges at the yelp of the springer, and for a moment all was confusion.

“What now, ye fools!” she cried again, in harsh and excited accents, that reached the ears of the old earl without—“hear ye not that my chamberlain awaits an audience? Fling yonder robe of velvet o’er our person, and rid us of this night-gear—so!—the mirror now! my ruff and curch! and now—admit him!”

“Admit him! an’ it list your grace, it were scarce seemly in ladies to appear thus disarrayed—”

“Heard ye, or heard ye not? I say, admit him! Think ye old Hunsdon cares to look upon such trumpery as ye, or must I wait upon my wenches’ pleasure? God’s head, but ye grow malapert!”

The old queen’s voice had not yet ceased, before the door was opened; and although the ladies had taken the precaution of extinguishing the light, and seeking such concealment as the angles of the chamber afforded, the sturdy old earl—who, notwithstanding the queen’s assertion, had as quick an eye for beauty as many a younger gallant—could easily discover that the modesty which had demurred to the admission of a man was not by any means uncalled for or even squeamish. Had

he been, however, much more inclined to linger by the way than his old-fashioned courtesy permitted, he must have been a bold man to delay ; for twice, ere he could cross the floor to her chamber, did his name reach his ears in the impatient accents of Elizabeth : “ Hunsdon ! I say — Hunsdon ! ’s death ! art thou crippled, man ? ”

There was little of the neatness or taste of modern days displayed in the decorations of the royal chamber. Tapestries there were, and velvet hangings, carpets from Turkey, and huge mirrors of Venetian steel ; but a plentiful lack of linen, and of those thousand nameless comforts, which a peasant’s dame would miss to-day, uncared for in those rude times by princesses. Huge waxen torches flared in the wind, which found its way through the ill-constructed lattice ; and a greater proportion of the smoke, from the logs smouldering in the jams of a chimney wider than that of a modern kitchen, reeked upward to the blackened rafters of the unceiled roof.

Rigid and haughty, in the midst of this strange medley of negligence and splendor, sat the dreaded monarch, approached by none even of her most favored ministers save with fear and trembling. Her person, tall and slender from her earliest years, and now emaciated to almost superhuman leanness by the workings of her own restless spirit, even more than by her years, presented an aspect terrible, yet magnificent withal. It seemed as though the dauntless firmness of a more than masculine soul had won the power to support and animate a frame which it had rescued from the grave ; it seemed as though the years which had blighted had failed in their efforts to destroy ; it seemed as though that faded tenement of clay might yet endure, like the blasted oak, for countless years, although the summer foliage, which rendered it so beautiful of yore, had long since been scattered by the wild autumnal hurricane, or seared by the nipping frosts of winter. Her eye alone, in the general

decay of her person, retained its wonted brilliancy, shining forth from her pale and withered features with a lustre so remarkable as to appear almost supernatural.

“So! give us the letter—there! Pause not for thy knee, man; give us the letter!”—and tearing the frail band by which it was secured asunder, she was in a moment entirely engrossed, as it would seem, in its contents. Her countenance waxed paler and paler as she read; and the shadows of an autumn morning flit not more changefully across the landscape, as cloud after cloud is driven over the sun's disk, than did the varying expressions of anxiety, doubt, and sorrow, chase one another from the speaking lineaments of Elizabeth.

“Ha!” she exclaimed, after a long pause, “this must be looked to. See that our barge be manned forthwith, and tarry not for aught of state or ceremony. Thyself will go with us, and stop not thou to don thy newest-fashioned doublet: this is no matter that brooks ruffling!—’Sdeath, man! ’tis life or death! And now begone, sir! we lack our tirewoman’s service!”

An hour had not elapsed before a barge—easily distinguished as one belonging to the royal household, by its decorations, and the garb of the rowers—shot through a side arch of Westminster bridge, and passed rapidly, under sail and oar, down the swift current of the river, now almost at ebb tide. It was not, however, the barge of state, in which the progresses of the sovereign were usually made; nor was it followed by the long train of vessels, freighted with ladies of the court, guards, and musicians, which were wont to follow in its wake. In the stern-sheets sat two persons: a man advanced in years, and remarkable for an air of nobility, which could not be disguised even by the thick boat-cloak he had wrapped about him, as much perhaps to afford protection against the eyes of the inquisitive as against the dense mists of the Thames; and a lady, whose

tall person was folded in wrappings so voluminous as to defy the closest scrutiny. At a short distance in the rear, another boat came sweeping along, in the crew and passengers of which it would have required a penetrating glance to discover a dozen or two of the yeomen of the guard, in their undress liveries of gray and black, without either badge or cognizance, and their carbines concealed beneath a pile of cloaks.

It was Elizabeth herself, who, in compliance with the mysterious despatch she had so lately received, was braving the cold damps of the river at an hour so unusual, and in a guise so far short of her accustomed state. The moon had already set, and the stars were feebly twinkling through the haze that rose in massive volumes from the steaming surface of the water, but no symptoms of approaching day were as yet visible in the east; the buildings on the shore were entirely shrouded from view by the fog, and the few lighters and smaller craft, moored here and there between the bridges, could scarcely be discovered in time to suffer the barge to be sheered clear of their moorings. It was perhaps on account of these obstacles that their progress was less rapid than might reasonably have been expected from the rate at which they cut the water.

Of the six stately piles which may now be seen spanning the noble stream, but two were standing at the period of which we write; and several long reaches were to be passed before the fantastic mass of London bridge, with its dwelling-houses and stalls for merchandise towering above the irregular thoroughfares of the city, loomed darkly up against the horizon. Scarcely had they threaded its narrow and cavern-like arches, before a pale and sickly light, of a faint yellow hue, more resembling the glare of torches than the blessed radiance of the sun, gilded the decreasing fog-wreaths, and glanced upon the level water. The sun had risen, and for a time hung blinking on the misty horizon, and shorn of half his beams, till a fresh

breeze from the westward brushed the vapors aloft, and hurried them seaward with a velocity which shortly left the scenery to be viewed in unobscured beauty. Just as this change was wrought upon the face of nature, the royal barge was darting, with a speed that increased every instant, before the esplanade and frowning artillery of the 'Tower; the short waves were squabbling and splashing beneath the dark jaws and lowered portcullis of the "Traitor's Gate," that fatal passage through which so many of the best and bravest of England's nobility had entered, never to return!

Brief as was the moment of their transit in front of that sad portal, Hunsdon had yet time to mark the terrible expression of misery, almost of despair, that gleamed across the features of the queen. She spoke not, but she wrung her hands with a sigh, that uttered volumes of repentance and regret, too late to be availing; and the stern old chamberlain, who felt his heart yearn at the sorrows of a mistress whom he loved no less than he revered, knew that the mute gesture and the painful sigh were extorted from that masculine bosom only by the extremity of anguish. She had not looked upon that "den of drunkards with the blood of princes" since it had been glutted with its last and noblest victim. Essex, the princely, the valiant, the generous, and the noble Essex—the favorite of the people, the admired of men, the idol, the cherished idol of Elizabeth—had gone, a few short moons before, through that abhorred gateway—had gone to die—had died by her unwilling mandate! Bitter and long had been the struggle between her wounded pride and her sincere affection; between her love for the man and her wrath against the rebel: thrice had she signed the fatal warrant, and as often consigned it to the flames; and when at length her indignation prevailed, and she affixed her name to the fell scroll—which, once executed, she never smiled again—that indignation was excited, not so much by the violence

of his proceedings against her crown, as by his obstinate delay in claiming pity and pardon from an offended but indulgent mistress.

Onward, onward they went, the light boat dancing over the waves that added to its speed, the canvass fluttering merrily, and the swell which their own velocity excited laughing in their wake. It was a time and a scene to enliven every bosom, to make every English heart bound happily and proudly. Vessels-of-war, and traders, galliot, and caravel, and bark, and ship, lay moored in the centre of the pool and along the wharves, the thousand dwellings of a floating city. All this Elizabeth herself had done: the commerce of England was the fruit of her fostering; the power of her courage and sagacity; the mighty navy of her creation.

They passed below the dark broadsides and massive armaments of forty ships-of-war, some of the unwonted bulk of a thousand tons, with the victorious flags of Howard, Hawkins, Frobisher, and Drake, streaming from mast and yard; but not a smile chased the dull expression of fixed grief from the brow of her who had "marred the Armada's pride;" nor did the slightest symptom on board her three most chosen vessels—the Speedwell, the Tryeright, or the Blak-Galley, the very models of the world for naval architecture—show that the queen and mistress of them all was gliding in such humble trim below their victorious batteries.

The limits of the city were already left far behind; green meadows and noble trees now filled the place of the crowded haunts of wealth and industry, while here and there a lordly dwelling, with its trim avenues, and terraced gardens sloping to the water's edge, adorned the prospect. The turrets of Nottingham house, the suburban palace of that powerful peer, were soon in view; when a pageant swept along the river, stemming the ebb tide with a proud and stately motion—a pageant which,

at any other period, would have been calculated, above all things else, to wake the lion-like exultation of the queen, though now it was passed in silence, and unheeded. The rover Cavendish*—who, a few years before, a gentleman of wealth and worship, had dissipated his paternal fortunes, and in the southern seas and on the Spanish main had become a famous freebooter—was entering the river with his prizes in goodly triumph. The flag-ship, a caravel of a hundred and twenty tons only, led the van, close-hauled and laden almost gunwale-deep with the precious spoils of Spain. Her distended topsail flashed in the sunlight like a royal banner, a single sheet of the richest cloth of gold; her courses were of crimson damask, her mariners clad in garments of the finest silk; banners flaunted from every part of the rigging; and over all the “meteor flag of England,” the red cross of St. George, streamed rearward, as if pointing to the long train of prizes which followed. Nineteen vessels, of every size and description then in use—carracks of the western Indies, galleons of Castile and Leon, with the flag of Spain, so late the mistress of the sea, disgracefully reversed beneath the captor’s ensign—sailed on in long and even array; while in the rear of all, the remainder of the predatory squadron, two little sea-wasps of forty and sixty tons burden, presented themselves in proud contrast to their bulky prizes, the hardy crews filling the air with clamors, and the light cannon booming in feeble but proud exultation. Time was when such a sight had roused her enthusiastic spirit almost to frenzy, but now that spirit was occupied, engrossed by cares peculiarly its own. The coxswain of the royal barge, his eye kindling with patriotic pride, and presuming a little on his long and

* This incident, which is strictly historical, even to the smallest details, did in fact occur several years earlier; as the death of Elizabeth did not take place until the year 1603, whereas the triumphant return of Thomas Cavendish is related by Hume as having happened A. D. 1587. It is hoped that the anachronism will be pardoned, in behalf of the picture of the times afforded by its introduction.

faithful services, put up the helm, as if about to run alongside of the leading galley ; but a cold frown and a forward wafture of the hand repelled his ardor ; and the men their oars bending to the work, the barge was at her moorings ere many minutes had elapsed, by the water-gate of Nottingham-house—and the queen made her way, unannounced and almost unattended, to the chamber of the aged countess.

The sick woman had been for weeks wasting away beneath a slow and painful malady ; her strength had failed her, and for days her end had been almost hourly expected. Still, with that strange and unnatural tenacity through which the dying sometimes cling to earth, even after every rational hope of a day's prolonged existence has been extinguished—she had hovered as it were on the confines of life and death, the vital flame flickering like that of a lamp whose aliment has long since been exhausted, fitfully playing about the wick which can no longer support it. Her reason, which had been partially obscured during the latter period of her malady, had been restored to its full vigor on the preceding evening ; but the only fruit of its restoration was the utmost anguish of mental suffering and conscientious remorse. From the moment when the messenger, whose arrival we have already witnessed, had been despatched on his nocturnal mission, she had passed the time in fearful struggles with the last foe, wrestling as it were bodily with the dark angel ; now pleading with the Almighty, and adjuring him by her sufferings and by her very sins, to spare her yet a little while ; now shrieking on the name of Elizabeth, and calling her, as she valued her soul's salvation, to make no long tarrying. In the opinion of the leeches who watched around her pillow, and of the terrified preacher who communed with his own heart and was still, her life was kept up only by this fierce and feverish excitement.

At a glance she recognised the queen, before another eye

had marked her entrance. "Ha!" she groaned, in deep, sepulchral tones, "she is come, before whose coming my guilty soul had not the power to pass away! She is come to witness the damnation of an immortal spirit! to hear a tale of sin and sorrow that has no parallel! Hear my words, O queen! hear my words now, and laugh—laugh if you can; for, by Him who made us both, and is now dealing with me according to my merits, never shall you laugh again! Hereafter you shall groan, and weep, and tremble, and curse yourself, as I do! Laugh, I say, Elizabeth of England—laugh now, or never laugh again!"

For a moment the spirit of the queen, manly and strong as it was, beyond perhaps all precedent, was fairly overawed and cowed by the fierce intensity of the dying woman's manner. Not long, however, could that proud soul quail to any created thing.

"'Fore God, woman," she cried, "thou art bewitched, or desperately wicked! What, in the fiend's name, mean ye?"

"In the fiend's name truly, for he alone inspired me! Look here—and then pardon me, Elizabeth; in God's name, pardon me!"

As she spoke, she held aloft, in her thin and bird-like fingers, a massive ring of gold, from which a sapphire of rare price gleamed brilliantly, casting a bright, dancing spark of blue reflection upon her hollow, ghastly features. "Know you," she screamed, "this token?"

"Where got you it, woman? Speak, I say, speak, or I curse you!—where got you that same token?" The proud queen shook and shuddered as she spoke, like one in an ague-fit.

"Essex!" sighed the dying countess, through her set teeth—"the murdered Essex!"

"Murdered? God's death, thou liest! He was a traitor—done to death! O God! O God! I know not what I say!"

and a big tear-drop—the first in many a year, the first perhaps that ever had bedewed that iron cheek—slid slowly down the face of Elizabeth, and fell heavily on the brow of the glaring sufferer, who still held the ring aloft, in hands clasped close in attitude of supplication. “Speak,” she said again, in milder accents, “speak, Nottingham: what of—of Essex?”

“That ring he gave to me, to bear it to thy footstool, and to pray a gracious mistress’s favor to an erring but a grateful servant—”

“And thou, woman—thou!” absolutely shrieked the queen.

“Gave it not to thee—that Essex might die, not live!” was the steady reply. “Pardon me before I die; pardon me, as God shall pardon thee!—”

“God shall not pardon me, woman!—neither do I pardon thee! He, an’ he will, may pardon thee; but that will I do never! never!—by the life of the Eternal, NEVER!”—and, in the overpowering fury and agitation of the moment, she seized the dying sinner with an iron gripe, and shook her in the bed, till the ponderous fabric creaked and quivered. Not another word, not another sob passed the lips of the old countess: her frame was shaken by a mightier hand than that of the indignant queen; a deep, harsh rattle came from her chest; she raised one skinny arm aloft, and after the jaw had dropped, and the glaring eyeball fixed, that wretched limb stood erect, appealing as it were from a mortal to an immortal Judge!

The paroxysm was over. Speechless, and all but motionless, the miserable queen was borne by her attendants to the barge; the tide had shifted, and was still in their favor, though their course was altered. On their return, they again passed the triumphant fleet of Cavendish, bearing the mightiest sovereign of the world, the envied of all the earth—a wretched, feeble, heart-broken woman, grovelling like a crushed worm beneath the bitterest of human pangs, the agonies of self-merited

misery ! A few hours found her outstretched upon the floor of her chamber, giving away to anguish uncontrolled and uncontrollable. Refusing the earnest prayers of her women, and of her physicians, to suffer herself to be disrobed, and to recline upon her bed ; feeding on tears and groans alone ; uttering no sound but the name of Essex, in one plaintive and oft-repeated cry ; mocking at all consolation ; acknowledging no comforter except despair—ten long days and nights she lingered thus, in pangs a thousand times more intolerable than those which she had inflicted on her Scottish rival : and when, at length, the council of the state assembled, in her last moments, around the death-bed of a sovereign truly and not metaphorically lying in dust and ashes—she named to them, as her successor in the kingdom, the son of that same rival. Who shall say that the death of Mary Stuart went unavenged ?

THE MOORISH FATHER.

A TALE OF MALAGA.

IT was the morning of the day succeeding that which had beheld the terrible defeat, among the savage glens and mountain fastnesses of Axarquía, of that magnificent array of cavaliers which, not a week before, had pranced forth from the walls of Antiquera, superbly mounted on Andalusian steeds, fiery, and fleet, and fearless, with helm and shield and corslet engrailed with arabesques of gold, surcoats of velvet and rich broidery, plumes of the desert bird, and all in short that can add pomp and circumstance to the dread game of war. The strife was over in the mountain valleys; the lonely hollows on the bare hill-side, the stony channels of the torrent, the tangled thicket, and the bleak barren summit, were cumbered with the carcasses of Spain's most noble cavaliers. War-steeds beside their riders, knights of the proudest lineage among their lowliest vassals, lay cold and grim and ghastly, each where the shaft, the stone, the assagay, had stretched beneath him, beneath the garish lustre of the broad southern sun. The Moorish foe had vanished from the field, which he had won almost without a struggle—the plunderer of the dead plied his hateful trade even to satiety, and, gorged with booty that might well

satiate the wildest avarice, had left the field of slaughter to the possession of his brute comrades, the wolf, the raven, and the eagle.

It was now morning, and the broad sun, high already, was pouring down a flood of light over the giant crags, the deep precipitous defiles, and all the stern though glorious features which mark the mountain scenery of Malaga; and far beyond over the broad, luxuriant Vega, watered by its ten thousand streams of crystal, waving with olive-groves, and vineyards, and dark woodlands; and farther yet over the laughing waters of the bright Mediterranean. But one, who having found concealment during that night of wo and slaughter in some dark cave, or gully so sequestered that it had escaped the keen eyes of the Moorish mountaineers, now plied his bloody spurs almost in vain, so weary and so faint was the beautiful bay steed which bore him. He paused not to look upon the wonders of his road, tarried not to observe the play of light and shadow over that glorious plain, although by nature he was fitted to admire and to love all that she had framed of wild, of beautiful, or of romantic. Nay more, he scarcely turned his eye to gaze upon the miserable relics of some beloved comrade, who had so often revelled gayly, and in that last awful carnage had striven fearlessly and well, even when all was lost, beside him. He was a tall dark-featured youth, with a profusion of black hair clustered in short close curls about a high pale forehead; an eye that glanced like fire at every touch of passion, yet melted at the slightest claim upon his pity; an aquiline, thin nose, and mouth well cut, but compressed and closely set, completed the detail of his eminently handsome features. But the dark curls—for he had been on the preceding day unhelmed and slightly wounded—were clotted with stiff gore, matted with dust, and bleached by the hot sun under which he had for hours fought bareheaded. The keen, quick eye was dull

and glazed, the haughty lineaments clouded with shame, anxiety, and grief, and the chiselled lips pale and cold as ashes. His armor, which had been splendid in the extreme, richly embossed and sculptured, was all defaced with dust and gore, broken and dented, and in many places riven quite asunder. The surcoat which he had donned a few short days before, of azure damask, charged with the bearings of his proud ancestral race, fluttered in rags upon the morning breeze—his shield was gone, as were the mace and battle-axe which had swung from his saddle-bow—his sword, a long, cross-handled blade, and his lance, its azure pennoncelle no less than its steel head, crusted and black with blood, alone remained to him. The scabbard of his poignard was empty, and the silver hilt of his sword, ill-matched with the gilded sheath, showed plainly that it was not the weapon to which his hand was used. Yet still, though disarrayed, weary, and travel-spent, and worn with work and watching, no eye could have looked on him without recognising in every trait, in every gesture, the undaunted knight and the accomplished noble.

Hours had passed away, since, with the first gray twilight of the dawn he had come forth from the precarious hiding-place wherein he had spent a terrible and painful night; and so far he had seen no human form, living at least, and heard no human voice! Unimpaired, save by the faintness of his reeling charger, he had ridden six long leagues over the perilous and rugged path by which, late on the previous night, the bravest of the brave, Alonzo de Aguilar, had by hard dint of hoof and spur escaped from the wild infantry of El Zagal to the far walls of Antiquera; and now from a bold and projecting summit he looked down upon the ramparts of that city, across a rich and level plain, into which sloped abruptly the steep ridge on which he stood, at less than a league's distance. Here, for the first time, since he had set forth on his toilsome route, the knight

drew up his staggering horse—for the first time a gleam of hope irradiating his wan brow—and, as a pious cavalier is ever bound to do, stretched forth his gauntleted hands to Heaven, and in a low, deep murmur breathed forth his heartfelt thanksgivings to Him, who had preserved him from the clutches of the pitiless heathen. This duty finished, with a lighter heart he wheeled his charger round an abrupt angle of the limestone-rock, and, plunging into the shade of the dense cork-woods which clothed the whole descent, followed the steep and zigzag path, by which he hoped ere long to reach his friends in safety. His horse, too, which had staggered wearily and stumbled often, as he ascended the rude hills, seemed to have gained new courage; for as he turned the corner of the rock, he pricked his ears and snorted, and the next moment uttered a long, tremulous, shrill neigh, quickening his pace—which for the last two hours he had hardly done at the solicitation of the spur—into a brisk and lively canter. Before, however, his rider had found time to debate upon the cause of this fresh vigor, the neigh was answered from below by the sharp whinny of a war-horse, which was succeeded instantly by the clatter of several hoofs, and the long barbaric blast of a Moorish horn. The first impulse of the cavalier was to quit the beaten path, and dashing into the thickets to conceal himself until his foemen should have passed by. Prudent, however, as was his determination, and promptly as he turned to execute it, he was anticipated by the appearance of at least half a score of Moorish horsemen—who, sitting erect in their deep Turkish saddles, goring the sides of their slight Arabian coursers with the edges of their broad sharp stirrups, and brandishing their long assagays above their heads, dashed forward with their loud ringing Lelilies, to charge the solitary Spaniard. Faint as he was, and in ill-plight for battle, there needed but the sight of the heathen foe to send each drop of his

Castilian blood eddying in hot currents through every vein of the brave Spaniard. "St. Jago!" he cried, in clear and musical tones, "St. Jago and God aid!" and with the word he laid his long lance in the rest, and spurred his charger to the shock. It was not, however, either the usual mode of warfare with the Moors, or their intent at present to meet the shock of the impetuous and heavily armed cavalier. One of their number, it is true, dashed out as if to meet him—a spare gray-headed man, whose years, although they had worn away the soundness, and destroyed the muscular symmetry of his frame, had spared the lithe and wiry sinews; had dried up all that was superfluous of his flesh, and withered all that was comely of his aspect; but had left him erect, and strong and hardy as in his youngest days of warfare. His dress, castan and turban both, were of that dark-green hue, which bespoke an emir, or lineal descendant of the prophet—the only order of nobility acknowledged by the Moslem—the rich materials of which they were composed, the jewels which bedecked the hilt and scabbard of both cimeter and yatagan, the necklaces of gold which encircled the broad glossy chest of his high-blooded black Arabian, proved as unerringly his wealth and consequence. Forth he dashed then, with the national war-cry, "La illah allah la!" brandishing in his right hand the long, light javelin, grasped by the middle, which his countrymen were wont to hurl against their adversaries, with such unerring accuracy both of hand and eye; and swinging on his left arm a light round buckler, of the tough hide of the African buffalo, studded with knobs of silver; while with his long reins flying as it would seem quite loose, by aid of his sharp Moorish curb, he wheeled his fiery horse from side to side so rapidly as quite to balk the aim of the Spaniard's level lance: As the old mussulman advanced, fearlessly as it seemed, against the Christian knight, his comrades galloped on abreast with him, but by no means

with the same steadiness of purpose, the track was indeed so narrow that three could hardly ride abreast in it; yet narrow as it was, the nearest followers of the emir did not attempt to keep it; on the contrary, giving their wild coursers the sharp edge of their stirrups, they leaped and bolted from one side to the other of the path now plunging into the open wood on either hand, and dashing furiously over rock and stone, now pressing straightforward for perhaps a hundred yards as if to bear down bodily on their antagonist. All this, it must be understood, passed in less time than it has taken to describe it; for though the enemies, when first their eyes caught sight of one another, were some five hundred yards apart, the speed of their fleet horses brought them rapidly to close quarters. And now they were upon the very point of meeting—the Spaniard bowing his unhelmed head behind his charger's neck, to shield as best he might that vital part from the thrust of the flashing assagay with his lance projecting ten feet at the least, before the chamfron which protected the brow of his barbed war-horse, and the sheath of his twohanded broadsword clanging and rattling at every bound of the horse against the steel-plates which protected the legs of the man-at-arms!—the Moor sitting erect, nay, almost standing up in his short stirrups, with his keen, black eye glancing from beneath the shadow of his turban, and his spear poised and quivering on high. Now they were scarce a horse's length asunder, when, with a shrill, peculiar yell, the old Moor wheeled his horse out of the road, and dashed into the wood, his balked antagonist being borne aimlessly right onward into the little knot of men who followed on the emir's track. Not far, however, was he borne onward; for, with a second yell, even shriller than before, the moslem curbed his Arab, till he stood bolt upright, and turning sharp round, with such velocity that he seemed actually to whirl about as if upon a pivot, darted back on him, and with the speed of light

hurled the long assagay. Just at that point of time the lance point of the Spaniard was within a hand's breadth of the buckler—frail guard to the breast—of the second of those eastern warriors, but it was never doomed to pierce it. The light reed hurtled through the air, and its keen head of steel, hurled with most accurate aim, found a joint in the barbings of the war-horse. Exactly in that open and unguarded spot, which intervenes between the hip-bone and the ribs, it entered—it drove through the bright and glistening hide, through muscle, brawn, and sinew—clear through the vitals of the tortured brute, and even—with such tremendous vigor was it sent from that old arm—through the ribs on the farther side. With an appalling shriek, the agonized animal sprung up, with all his feet into the air, six feet at least in height, then plunged head foremost! Yet, strange to say, such was the masterly and splendid horsemanship, such was the cool steadiness of the European warrior, that, as his charger fell, rolling over and over, writhing and kicking in the fierce death-struggle, he alighted firmly and fairly on his feet. Without a second's interval, for he had cast his heavy lance far from him, while his steed was yet in air, he whirled his long sword from its scabbard, and struck with the full sweep of his practised arm at the nearest of the Saracens, who were now wheeling round him, circling and yelling like a flock of sea-fowl. Full on the neck of a delicate and fine-limbed Arab, just at the juncture of the spine and skull, did the sheer blow take place; and cleaving the vertebræ asunder, and half the thickness of the muscular flesh below them, hurled the horse lifeless, and the rider stunned and senseless to the earth at his feet. A second sweep of the same ponderous blade brought down a second warrior, with his right arm half-severed from his body; a third time it was raised; but ere it fell, another javelin, launched by the same aged hand, whizzed through the air, and took effect a little way below the elbow-joint, just

where the brassard and the gauntlet met, the trenchant-point pierced through between the bones, narrowly missing the great artery, and the uplifted sword sunk harmless! A dull expression of despair settled at once over the bright expressive features, which had so lately been enkindled by the fierce ardor and excitement of the conflict. His left hand dropped, as it were instinctively, to the place where it should have found the hilt of his dagger; but the sheath was empty, and the proud warrior stood, with his right arm dropping to his side, transfixed by the long lance, and streaming with dark blood, glaring, in impotent defiance, upon his now triumphant enemies. The nature of the Moorish tribes had been, it should be here observed, very materially altered, since they had crossed the straits; they were no longer the cruel, pitiless invaders offering no option to the vanquished, but of the Koran or the cimeter; but, softened by intercourse with the Christians, and having imbibed, during the lapse of ages spent in continual warfare against the most gallant and accomplished cavaliers of Europe, much of the true spirit of chivalry, they had adopted many of the best points of that singular institution. Among the principal results of this alteration in the national character was this—that they now no longer ruthlessly slaughtered unresisting foes, but, affecting to be guided by the principles of knightly courtesy, held all to mercy who were willing to confess themselves overcome. When, therefore, it was evident that any farther resistance was out of the question, the old emir leaping down from his charger's back, with all the agility of a boy, unsheathed his Damascus cimeter, a narrow, crooked blade, with a hilt elaborately carved and jewelled, and strode slowly up to face the wounded Christian.

“Yield thee,” he said, in calm and almost courteous tones—using the *lingua Franca*, or mixed tongue, half Arabic, half Spanish, which formed the ordinary medium of communication

between the two discordant races which at that time occupied the great peninsula of Europe—"yield thee, sir knight! thou art sore wounded, and enough hast thou done already, and enough suffered, to entitle thee to all praise of valor, to all privilege of courtesy."

"To whom must I yield me, emir?" queried the Christian, in reply; "to whom must I yield? since yield I needs must; for, as you truly say, I can indeed resist no longer. I pray thee, of thy courtesy, inform me?"

"To me—Muley Abdallah el Zagal!"

"Nor unto nobler chief or braver warrior could any cavalier surrender. Therefore, I yield myself true captive, rescue or no rescue!" and as he spoke he handed the long silver-hilted sword, which he had so well wielded, to his captor. But the old Moor put aside the proffered weapon. "Wear it," he said, "wear it, sir, your pledged word suffices that you will not unsheath it. Shame were it to deprive so good a cavalier of the sword he hath used so gallantly! But lo! your wound bleeds grievously. I pray you sit, and let your hurt be tended—Ho! Hamet, Hassan, lend a hand here to unarm this good gentleman. I pray you, sir, inform me of your style and title."

"I am styled Roderigo de Narvaez," returned the cavalier, "equerry and banner-bearer to the most noble Don Diego de Cordova, the famous count of Cabra!"

"Then be assured, Don Roderigo, of being, at my hands, entreated with all due courtesy and honor—till that the good count shall arrange for thy ransom or exchange."

A little while sufficed to draw off the gauntlet, to cut the shaft of the lance, where the steel protruded entirely through the wounded arm, and to draw it out by main force from between the bones, which it had actually strained asunder. But so great was the violence which it was necessary to exert, and so great was the suffering which it caused, that the stout war-

rior actually swooned away ; nor did he altogether recover his senses, although every possible means at that time known were applied for his restoration, until the blood had been stanchèd, and a rude, temporary litter, framed of lances bound together by the scarfs and baldrics of the emir's retinue, and strewn with war-cloaks was prepared for him. Just as this slender vehicle was perfected and slung between the saddles of four warriors, the color returned to the pallid lips and cheeks of the brave Spaniard, and gradually animation was restored. In the meantime, the escort of El Zagal had been increased by the arrival of many bands of steel-clad warriors, returning from the pursuit of the routed Spaniards ; until at length a grand host was collected, comprising several thousands of soldiery, of every species of force at that time in use—cavalry, archers, infantry, arrayed beneath hundreds of many colored banners, and marching gayly on to the blithe music of war-drum, atabal, and clarion. The direction of the route taken by this martial company was the same wild, desolate, and toilsome road, by which Don Roderigo had so nearly escaped that morning. All day long did they march beneath a burning sun and cloudless sky, the fierce heat insupportably reflected from the white limestone crags, and sandy surface of the roads ; and so tremendous were its effects, that many of the horses and mules, laden with baggage, which accompanied the cavalcade, died on the wayside ; while the wounded captive, between anxiety and pain, and the incessant jolting of the litter, was in a state of fever bordering nearly on delirium, during the whole of the long march.

At length, just when the sun was setting, and the soft dews of evening were falling silently on the parched and scanty herbage, the train of El Zagal reached the foot of a rugged and precipitous hill, crowned by a lofty watch-tower. Ordering his troops to bivouac as best they might, at the base of the steep

acclivity, the old Moor spurred up its side with his immediate train and his enfeebled captive. Just as he reached the brow the gates flew open, and the loveliest girl that ever met a sire's embrace, rushed forth with her attendants—the sternness melted from the old warrior's brow, as he clasped her to his bosom, before he entered the dark portal. Within that mountain fortalice long lay the Christian warrior, struggling midway between the gates of life and death; and when at length he awoke from his appalling dreams, strange visions of dark eyes compassionately beaming upon his, soft hands that tended his worn limbs, and shapes angelically graceful floating about his pillow, were blent with the dark recollections of his hot delirium, and that too so distinctly, that he long doubted whether these too were the creations of his fevered fancy. Well had it been for him, well for one lovelier and frailer being, had they indeed been dreams; but who shall struggle against his destiny!

Hours, days, and weeks, rolled onward; and, as they fled, brought health and vigor to the body of the wounded knight; but brought no restoration to his overwrought and excited mind. The war still raged in ruthless and unsparing fury, between the politic and crafty Ferdinand, backed by the chivalry of the most puissant realm of Europe, and the ill-fated Moorish prince, who, last and least of a proud race, survived to weep the downfall of that lovely kingdom which he had lacked the energy to govern or defend. Field after field was fought, and foray followed foray, till every streamlet of Grenada had been empurpled by the mingled streams of Saracen and Christian gore, till every plain and valley had teemed with that rank verdure, which betrays a soil watered by human blood. So constant was the strife, so general the havoc, so wide the desolation, that those who fell were scarcely mourned by their surviving comrades, forgotten almost ere the life had left them. Hardly a family in

Spain but had lost sire, son, husband, brother ; and so fast came the tidings in, of slaughter and of death, that the ear scarce could drink one tale of sorrow, before another banished it. And thus it was with Roderigo de Narvaez. For a brief space, indeed, after the fatal day of Axarquia, his name had been syllabled by those who had escaped from the dread slaughter, with those of others as illustrious in birth, as famous in renown, and as unfortunate, for all believed that he had fallen in the catastrophe of their career. For a brief space his name had swelled the charging cry of Antiquera's chivalry, when thirsting for revenge, and all on fire to retrieve their tarnished laurels, they burst upon their dark-complexioned foemen. A brief space, and he was forgotten ! His death avenged by tenfold slaughter—his soul redeemed by many a midnight mass—his virtues celebrated, and his name recorded, even while yet he lived, on the sepulchral marble, and the bold banner-bearer was even as though he had never been. Alone, alone in the small mountain tower, he passed his weary days, his long and woful nights. Ever alone ! He gazed forth from the lofty lattices over the bare and sun-scourged summits of the wild crags of Malaga, and sighed for the fair *huertas*, the rich vineyards, and the shadowy olives of his dear native province. He listened to the clank of harness, to the wild summons of the Moorish horn, to the thick-beating clatter of the hoofs, as with his fiery hordes old Muley el Zagal swooped like some bird of rapine from his far mountain eyry on the rich booty of the vales below ; but he saw not, marked not, at least, the gorgeousness and pomp of their array ; for, when he would have looked forth on their merry mustering, his heart would swell within him as though it would have burst from his proud bosom—his eyes would dazzle and grow dim, filled with unbidden tears, that his manhood vainly strove to check—his ears would be heavy with a sound, as it were of many falling waters. Thus, hour

by hour, the heavy days lagged on, and though the flesh of the imprisoned knight waxed stronger still and stronger, the spirit daily flagged and faltered. The fierce old emir noted the yielding of his captive soul, noted the dimness of the eye, the absence of the high and sparkling fire, that had so won his admiration on their first encounter ; he noted, and to do him justice, noted it with compassion ; and ever, when he sallied forth to battle, determined that he would grasp the earliest opportunity, afforded by the capture of any one of his own stout adherents, to ransom or exchange his prisoner. But, as at times, things will fall out perversely, and, as it were, directly contrary to their accustomed course ; though he lost many by the lance, the harquebus, the sword, no man of his brave followers was taken ; nay more, so rancorous and savage had the war latterly become, that Moor and Spaniard now, where'er they met, charged instantly—with neither word nor parley—and fought it out with murderous fury, till one or both had fallen. And thus it chanced, that, while his friends esteemed him dead, and dropped him quietly into oblivion, and his more generous captor would, had he possessed the power, have sent him forth to liberty on easy terms of ransom, fate kept him still in thrall.

After a while, there came a change in his demeanor ; the head no longer was propped listlessly from morn to noon, from noon “to dewy eve,” upon his burning hand ; the cheek regained its hue, the eye its quick clear glance, keen and pervading as the falcon's ; the features beamed with their old energy of pride and valiant resolution ; his movements were elastic, his step free and bold, his head erect and fearless ; and the old Moor observed the change, and watched, if he perchance might fathom the mysterious cause, and queried of his menials ; and yet remained long, very long, in darkness and in doubt.

And what was that mysterious cause, that sudden overmas-

tering power, that spell, potent as the magician's charm, which weaned the prisoner from its melancholy yearnings; which kindled his eye once again with its old fire; which roused him from his oblivious stupor, and made him bear himself once more, not as the tamè heart-broken captive, but as the free, bold, dauntless, energetic champion; clothed as in arms of proof, in the complete, invulnerable panoply of a soul; proud, active, and enthusiastic, and, at a moment's notice, prepared for every fortune? What should it be but love—the tamer of the proud and strong—the strengthener of the weak and timid—the tyrant of all minds—the change of all natures—what should it be but love?

The half-remembered images of his delirium—the strong and palpable impressions, which had so wildly floated among his feverish dreams, had been clothed with reality—the form, which he had viewed so often through the half-shut lids of agony and sickness, had stood revealed in the perfection of substantial beauty before his waking eyesight; the soft voice, which had soothed his anguish, had answered his in audible and actual converse. In truth, that form, that voice, those lineaments, were all-sufficient to have spell-bound the sternest and the coldest heart, that ever manned itself against the fascinations of the sex. Framed in the slightest and most sylph-like mould, yet of proportions exquisitely true, of symmetry most rare, of roundness most voluptuous, of grace unrivalled, Zelica was in sooth a creature, formed not so much for mortal love as for ideal adoration. Her coal-black hair, profuse almost unto redundancy, waving in natural ringlets, glossy and soft as silk—her wild, full, liquid eyes, now blazing with intolerable lustre, now melting into the veriest luxury of languor; her high, pale, intellectual brow; her delicately-chiselled lineaments, the perfect arch of her small ruby mouth, and, above all, the fleet and changeful gleams of soul that would flit over that rare face

—the flash of intellect, bright and pervading as the prophet's glance of inspiration; the sweet, soft, dream-like melancholy, half lustre and half shadow, like the transparent twilight of her own lovely skies; the beaming, soul-entrancing smiles, that laughed out from the eyes before they curled the ever-dimpling lips—these were the spells that roused the Christian captive from his dark lethargy of wo.

A first chance interview in the small garden of the fortress—for in the smallest and most iron fastnesses of the Moors of Spain, the decoration of a garden, with its dark cypresses, its orange-bowers, its marble fountains, and arabesque kiosk among its group of fan-like palms, imported with great care and cost from their far native sands, was never lacking—a first chance interview, wherein the Moorish maiden, bashful at being seen beyond the precincts of the harem unveiled, and that too by a giaour, was all tears, flutter, and dismay; while the enamored Spaniard—enamored at first sight, and recognising in the fair, trembling shape before him the ministering angel who had smoothed his feverish pillow, and flitted round his bed during those hours of dark and dread delirium—poured forth his gratitude, his love, his admiration, in a rich flood of soul-fraught and resistless eloquence: a first chance interview led by degrees, and after interchange of flowery tokens, and wavings of white kerchiefs by hands whiter yet, from latticed casements, and all those thousand nothings, which, imperceptible and nothing worth to the dull world, are to the lover confirmations strong as proofs of Holy Writ, to frequent meetings—meetings sweeter that they were stolen, fonder that they were brief, during the fierce heat of the noontide, when all beside were buried in the soft siesta, or by the pale light of the amorous moon, when every eye that might have spied out their clandestine interviews was sealed in deepest slumber.

Hours, days, and weeks, rolled onward, and still the Span-

ish cavalier remained a double captive in the lone tower of El Zagal. Captive in spirit, yet more than in the body—for, having spent the whole of his gay youth, the whole of his young, fiery manhood, in the midst of courts and cities; having from early boyhood basked in the smiles of beauty, endured unharmed the ordeal of most familiar intercourse with the most lovely maids and matrons of old Spain, and borne away a heart untouched by any passion, by any fancy, how transient or how brief soever; and having, at that period of his life when man's passions are perhaps the strongest, and surely the most permanent, surrendered almost at first sight his affections to this wild Moorish maiden—it seemed as if he voluntarily devoted his whole energies of soul and body to this one passion; as if he purposely lay by all other wishes, hopes, pursuits; as if he made himself designedly a slave, a blinded worshipper.

It was, indeed, a singular, a wondrous subject for the contemplation of philosophy, to see the keen, cool, polished courtier, the warrior of a hundred battles, the cavalier of the most glowing courts, the bland, sagacious, wily, and perhaps cold-hearted citizen of the great world, bowing a willing slave, surrendering his very privilege of thought and action, to a mere girl, artless, and frank, and inexperienced; devoid, as it would seem, of every charm that could have wrought upon a spirit such as his; skilled in no art, possessing no accomplishment, whereby to win the field against the deep sagacity, the wily worldly-heartedness of him whom she had conquered almost without a struggle. And yet this very artlessness it was which first enchained him; this very free, clear candor, which, as a thing he never had before encountered, set all his art at nothing.

Happily fled the winged days in this sweet dream; until at length the Spaniard woke—woke to envisage his position; to

take deep thought as to his future conduct; to ponder, to resolve, to execute. It needed not much of the deep knowledge of the world for which, above all else, Roderigo was so famous, to see that under no contingency would the old Moor—the fiercest foeman of Spain's chivalry, the bitterest hater of the very name of Spaniard—consent to such a union. It needed even less to teach him that, so thoroughly had he enchained the heart, the fancy, the affections of the young Zelica, that for him she would willingly resign, not the home only, and the country, and the creed of her forefathers, but name and fame, and life itself, if such a sacrifice were called for. Fervently, passionately did the young Spaniard love—honestly too, and in all honor; nor would he, to have gained an empire, have wronged that innocent, confiding, artless being, who had set all the confidence of a young heart, which, guileless in itself, feared naught of guile from others, upon the faith and honor of her lover. At a glance he perceived that their only chance was flight. A few soft moments of persuasion prevailed with the fair girl; nor was it long ere opportunity, and bribery, and the quick wit of Roderigo, wrought on the avarice of one, the trustiest of old Muley's followers, to plan for them an exit from the guarded walls, to furnish them with horses and a guide, the very first time the old emir should go forth to battle.

Not long had they to wait. As the month waned, and the nights grew dark and moonless, the note of preparation once again was heard in hall, and armory, and stable. Harness was buckled on, war-steeds were barbed for battle, and, for a foray destined to last three weeks, forth sallied El Zagal.

Three days they waited, waited in wild suspense, in order that the host might have advanced so far, that they should risk no interruption from the stragglers of the rear. The destined day arrived, and slowly, one by one, the weary hours lagged on. At last—at last—the skies are darkened, and Lucifer,

love's harbinger, is twinkling in the west. Three saddled barbs, of the best blood of Araby, stand in a gloomy dingle, about a bow-shot from the castle-walls, tended by one dark, turbaned servitor. Evening has passed, and midnight, dark, silent, and serene, broods o'er the sleeping world. Two figures steal down from the postern gate: one a tall, stately form, sheathed cap-à-pie in European panoply; the other a slight female figure, veiled closely, and bedecked with the rich, flowing draperies that form the costume of all oriental nations. 'Tis Roderigo and Zelica. Now they have reached the horses; the cavalier has raised the damsel to her saddle, has vaulted to his demipique. Stealthily for a hundred yards they creep away at a foot's pace, till they have gained the greensward, whence no loud clank will bruit abroad their progress. Now they give free head to their steeds—they spur, they gallop! Ha! whence that wild and pealing yell—"La illah, allah la!" On every side it rings—on every side—and from bush, brake, and thicket, on every side, up spring turban, and assagay, and cimeter—all the wild cavalry of El Zagal!

Resistance was vain; but, ere resistance could be offered, up strode the veteran emir. "This, then," he said, in tones of bitter scorn, "this is a Christian's gratitude—a Spaniard's honor!—to bring disgrace—"

"No, sir!" thundered the Spaniard, "no disgrace! A Christian cavalier disgraces not the noblest demoiselle or dame by offer of his hand!"

"His hand?" again the old Moor interrupted him; "his hand—wouldst thou then marry—"

"Had we reached Antiquera's walls this night, to-morrow's dawn had seen Zelica the all-honored bride of Roderigo de Narvaez!"

"Ha! is it so, fair sir?" replied the father; "and thou, I trow, young mistress, thou too art nothing loath?" and taking

her embarrassed silence for assent—"be it so!" he continued, "be it so! deep will we feast to-night, and with to-morrow's dawn Zelica shall be the bride of Roderigo de Narvaez!"

Astonishment rendered the Spaniard mute, but ere long gratitude found words, and they returned gay, joyous, and supremely happy, to the lone fortress.

There, in the vaulted hall, the board was set, the feast was spread, the red wine flowed profusely, the old Moor on his seat of state, and right and left of him that fair young couple; and music flowed from unseen minstrels' harps, and perfumes steamed the hall with their rich incense, and lights blazed high, and garlands glittered: but blithe as were all appliances, naught was so blithe or joyous as those young, happy hearts.

The feast was ended; and Abdallah rose, and filled a goblet to the brim—a mighty goblet, golden and richly gemmed—with the rare wine of Shiraz. "Drink," he said, "Christian, after your country's fashion—drink to your bride, and let her too assist in draining this your nuptial chalice."

Roderigo seized the cup, and with a lightsome smile drank to his lovely bride—and deeply he quaffed, and passed it to Zelica; and she, too, pleased with the ominous pledge, drank as she ne'er had drunk before, as never did she drink thereafter!

The goblet was drained, drained to the very dregs; and, with a fiendish sneer, Muley Abdallah arose once again.

"Christian, I said to-morrow's dawn should see Zelica Roderigo's bride, and it shall—in the grave! To prayer—to prayer! if prayer may now avail ye! Lo! your last cup on earth is drained; your lives are forfeit—nay, they are gone already!"

Why dwell upon the hateful scene—the agony, the anguish, the despair? For one short hour, in all the extremities of torture, that hapless pair writhed, wretchedly convulsed, before

the gloating eyes of the stern murderer! Repressing each all outward symptoms of the tortures they endured, lest they should add to the dread torments of the other—not a sigh, not a groan, not a reproach was heard! Locked in each other's arms, they wrestled to the last with the dread venom; locked in each other's arms, when the last moment came, they lay together on the cold floor of snowy marble—unhappy victims, fearful monuments of the dread vengeance of a Moorish father!

THE END.

Hf.





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